

RHODES UNIVERSITY
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**AN INVESTIGATION OF FEMALE LEADERS'
PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND
LEADERSHIP IN A CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL**

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

For the past thirty years, leadership theories have focused on the importance of the individual within the school organisation. The shared assumptions and beliefs of the individuals working in the same organisation shape the school's organisational culture, and organisational culture is a salient factor which should be considered when understanding educational leadership. The focus of my study is to explore the relationship between organisational culture and leadership. In the same context, new approaches to the study of leadership have explored the issue of gender in leadership. Female leadership studies - the second focus of this study - seek not only to restore the place of the individual but also argue a place for women in educational leadership.

Based in the interpretive paradigm, this is a case study of a Catholic all-girl secondary school called the Loreto Convent School of Pretoria. Historically, the Loreto schools have aimed at promoting and empowering girls' education and female leadership. It was therefore an appropriate site in which to explore organisational culture and its relationship with leadership, particularly female leadership. I purposefully chose three of the school's female leaders - the school's principal, the High school Head of Department and the High school head girl - focusing on their perceptions and experiences of their leadership and the school's culture.

My research findings show that an understanding of the relationship between organisational culture and leadership cannot be complete without acknowledging the importance of the leader as an individual, with his/her personal background and values, taking into account gender as well as the multiple roles that the individual has in society. Furthermore, the 'humane' characteristic of educational leadership leads to an understanding that the leader is often confronted with conflicting situations where he/she is caught between personal/organisational values and the need to achieve the task. Finally, my findings show that contemporary leaders are now called upon to work and participate in the promotion of social justice in order to fight against society's socio-economic inequality and improve the quality of education and life.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the Loreto sisters, past and present.

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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION: MY INTEREST

I always felt that my secondary school was a special kind of school but I had never been able to put my finger on what made it so unique. As a student, I spent seven years in one of the six Loreto Convent schools of Mauritius and after my undergraduate studies, I taught in the same school for four years. When I was introduced to the coursework module on leadership and gender issues in the M Ed programme at Rhodes University, I tried to relate the concepts to my experience in my school. I could not associate my experience of school leadership with the literature (Greyvenstein 2000:32; Shakeshaft 1989:13) which stated that women were under-represented and largely silenced in educational administration. My experience of leadership was that it was a distinctly female phenomenon. The Loreto schools have always been led by female leaders: initially the schools were led by the Loreto sisters, and later by lay female principals.

This phenomenon was due to the fact that the school was founded three centuries ago by a Congregation of religious women who aimed at offering education to young girls. It was one of the founder's values to encourage girls to participate actively in society as well take up leadership roles. The other point of interest was that the school's organisational structure was different from what was described in the current literature which seems to focus on the experiences of women leaders striving to make their way in male-dominated organisations. The leadership of Loreto Convent Schools has always been in the hands of women. Hence I was motivated to study women principals in a school setting which promotes female leadership.

Furthermore, I wanted to explore the Catholic ethos, values and beliefs of the school. I was aware that the educational goal of Catholic education is to provide a human-centred and holistic approach to the child's education (Laghi & Martins 1997). This 'humane' and cultural approach of education and leadership is supported by contemporary school

management and leadership studies (Kauria 2003:82-83; Cahill 1994:252-253; Greenfield & Ribbins 1993:164). It was precisely the culture (which I could not express, or rather put a name to) of the school which I wanted to investigate. Through my reading, I encountered the concept of organisational culture which was extensively discussed by many theorists, notably Sergiovanni (in Sergiovanni & Corbally 1986) and Schein (1992). I felt that beneath the visible elements of the school's organisational culture such as rituals, ceremonies, symbols, there were more important aspects of the school's culture which were not easily seen, namely, the underlying values and beliefs.

Since organisational culture is such a significant feature of the Loreto schools, and since the leaders are women in an exclusively female context I decided to explore the leadership/school culture relationship in a Loreto School.

1.2 CONTEXT OF THIS RESEARCH

In teaching circles, more and more people are realising that organisational culture determines the successful outcomes of education (Janson as quoted by Van der Westhuizen 2002: 119)

Over the past century, educational management and leadership theories have gradually shifted away from their industrial background (Bush 2003: 13; Hoy & Miskel 1996:12) in order to provide a framework for understanding schools as unique organisations, with their own specificities in terms of aims, role and context. In this respect, schools were gradually recognised as organisations primarily concerned with people. This feature had a significant impact on the managerial structures of schools which are often characterised by flat and open structures and collaborative practices where all stakeholders participate in the decision-making and school life (Bush 2003:58).

Another major paradigm shift was to acknowledge the fact that schools were not organisations which are concerned with maximising production and profits like businesses. Whereas South African schools are increasingly challenged to be financially independent and obliged to find means of raising funds, their primary goal is to be concerned with people: the students who are entrusted to them as well the teaching and

non-teaching staff working within them. Hence, there is the need to recognise the importance of each individual with his/her personal background, talents and ways of understanding (Greenfield & Ribbins 1993: 164).

The renewed interest in the 'human' aspect of organisations led to the emergence of the perspective of schools as 'communities' rather than 'organisations'. Each person's contribution in the school leads to the sharing of common assumptions, values and beliefs by a group of people. Over time, the norms and values are transformed into deeply-rooted ways of behaving or interacting with each other and taken-for-granted assumptions which are the essence of organisational culture. The process brings a spirit of togetherness, wholeness and purpose which binds the individuals together in order to form a community. Therefore, the creation of a school's culture springs from the individual's role in the school community. Sergiovanni (in Sergiovanni & Corbally 1986: 8) asserted: "Underlying the cultural perspective is the concept of community and the importance of shared meanings and shared values". Hence, schools are made up of the cultural artifacts, the personal beliefs of the group of individuals at the heart of the school community.

Since organisational culture reflects the "personality" of the individuals within the organisation, the school culture is bound to be enriched by the diversity of individuals as well as change when people change and develop. This radical shift in organisation and management theories consequently has had an impact on leadership concepts which are also transformed in order to adopt a more person-centred and 'cultural metaphor' perspectives. Since the school has become a community, the school leader can no longer use the traditional hierarchical and bureaucratic approach but instead he/she needs to use a cultural, symbolical and moral-driven leadership which seeks the welfare of all the school members (Sergiovanni 2001: 105).

However, the relationship between leadership and organisational culture is quite complex: Schein (1992: 15) believed that "culture and leadership are two sides of the same coin..." and that the leader, as an individual, defines and nurtures the organisational culture. In a school context, this can be seen in a principal's efforts to promote values of integrity and professionalism (such as punctuality) or creating rituals and ceremonies to initiate a spirit of togetherness and community. On the other hand, Sergiovanni asserted that it is a

school's culture which shapes the leader who becomes one of the symbols of the organisational culture: "The real value of leadership rests with the meanings which actions import to others than the actions themselves" (Sergiovanni & Corbally 1986: 8). In both cases, there is evidence that organisational culture is closely related to leadership but the complexity lies in the question of which concept influences the other. Thus, the organisational-leadership relationship is about whether it is organisational culture which defines the leader or whether the leader shapes the organisational culture.

Alongside the above mentioned relationship, I also sought to explore the issue of female leadership, more specifically the importance of socialisation in understanding gender and leadership. Rosener (1990: 124) and Curry (2003: 1-2) claimed that socialisation instilled in women the belief that they were not meant to lead. Hence, women have internalised the imposed societal values of their 'inferior' status compared to men. These societal values also influence organisational cultures which can become additional barriers to women's access to educational leadership occupations (Mitchell & Correa as quoted by Greyvenstein 2000: 31). Nonetheless, school cultures can also promote female leadership by various means. For instance, it can be the discourse used by the staff, leader or management team which supports and promotes female leadership.

This study thus looks at three key issues in education leadership: organisational culture, leadership and gender in leadership.

1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THIS STUDY

As previously mentioned, one of the aims of this study was to explore the organisational culture made up of the underlying beliefs and values and norms of the Loreto Convent School. The values of the school were inspired by the founder of the congregation of Loreto sisters and the Catholic educational goals. The school culture also encourages female leadership and I set out to capture the female leaders' experience of their leadership as well as the school's organisational culture.

There is practically no literature on the subject in a South African context. Undertaking research on this topic may therefore be of value to those who seek to improve the quality of education in South African schools, provide a space for multi-racial and cultural dialogues in the school context as well as promote female leadership.

1.4 GOALS OF THIS RESEARCH

Thus, from my interest in this field of study, the following research goals arise:

- To explore the relationship between organisational culture and leadership.
- To explore participants' perceptions of female leadership and its relationship with organisational culture.
- To investigate the role of an educational organisation in promoting female leadership.

1.5 RESEARCH SITE AND SAMPLING

Since I intended to explore participants' subjective experiences and understanding of leadership and organisational culture, the interpretive orientation to research seemed the most appropriate approach. When adopting this orientation, one understands "the subjective world of human experience [as] efforts are made to get inside the person and to understand from within" (Cohen & Manion 1994:36). The method which I chose was the case study method since it is "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (Stake 1995: xi). The case which I wished to study was the Loreto Convent School in Pretoria. The school is the oldest Loreto Convent School in South African, and was established in 1878 by the Loreto sisters.



Loreto Convent School



The Loreto Convent Schools are Catholic schools which were established by an Irish branch of Catholic nuns called the Loreto sisters. They belong to the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (IBVM) which was founded in 1609 by an English woman called Mary Ward (www.loreto.ie). She aspired to create a religious order for women who would be engaged “with the world without constraints of the traditional cloister nor an established rule placing them under the governance of men” (www.loreto.org.au). In the early 17th century, Mary Ward had the aim of opening schools for young girls as she strongly believed that women should be offered the opportunity of having access to education. She also envisaged that women would play a significant role in society: “I hope to God it will be seen that women in time to come will do much” (Mary Ward Pamphlet undated).

In the early 1820’s, Frances Ball, later known as Mother Teresa Ball, who was educated in one of the IBVM schools in York, decided to set up the first IBVM house in Ireland which she called the ‘Loreto House’ after a village in Italy. The sisters became known as the

Loreto sisters, but their official title remains IBVM. In early 1841 some of the sisters started the Loreto's Missionary involvement by being sent to India. In 1845, the first Loreto sisters arrived in Mauritius and eventually, in 1878, the sisters settled in South Africa and founded the first Loreto Convent School in Skinner Street in Pretoria. For the past 126 years, despite considerable socio-political and economic turmoil, the school still has pursued the original goal of its founder, that is to provide education for girls. The major change that the school underwent was in 1980 when it welcomed "learners of all races" (Milne & Kay 2003:7). In 1986, they began to receive Education Department subsidies but these were severely cut in 1996 when they became an independent institution. In 1987 another significant milestone in the school's history was reached when the South African province of the Loreto sisters decided to hand the management of the schools over to the laity (*Ibid.*). However, the sisters were

...committed to maintaining these schools, ensuring that school councils, principals and staffs have access to the spirituality of Mary Ward, with support in the development of educational policies which unite the network of schools... (www.loreto.org.au)

The first lay principal was appointed in 1989. The principal is accountable to the School Governing Board which has 12 board members of which there are two Loreto sisters. In this context, since its foundation, the Loreto Convent School of Pretoria has aimed at achieving the educational goals of the Catholic Church as well as playing an important role in the "New South Africa" (Milne & Kay 2003: 9). It was stated in 1991 at the National Catholic Schools' Congress held in Durban that

...the Catholic school creates an environment of healing and reconciliation in the present situation of turmoil. In this atmosphere, the Catholic school maintains a vision that upholds Catholic teaching by teachers committed to their ministry and who are prepared to serve...the Catholic school should be seen to be a community serving humanity (*Ibid.*)

I purposefully selected the school's female leaders as respondents for the interviews which I planned to carry out at the school. They were the school's principal, the High School Head of Department and the High School Head Girl.

1.6 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

Chapter two is the theoretical structure underpinning my study developed through a review of literature related to the development of the concepts of organisational culture, educational leadership and female leadership.

Chapter three provides the methodological framework where I present and discuss the choice of my research paradigm, method and data gathering tools. I also address the issues of data analysis and research ethics.

The fourth chapter is the presentation of my data in the form of life histories of each participant and the cultural character of the school. These are drawn from interview data and observation notes.

Chapter five is the link between the data and the literature. Here I discuss the themes relating to the school's culture and leadership as well as the women leaders' experience of their leadership.

Lastly, chapter six presents a summary of my findings. I highlight and critically evaluate the significance of my study and make suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the aim of my research was to explore the relationship between leadership and organisational culture within a Catholic secondary school context. In order to flesh out the motivation behind the study, I begin by presenting a conceptual framework which focuses on the way leadership and organisational culture are related and even support one another.

The first section of the chapter presents developments in the theoretical and methodological approaches to educational management and leadership studies, which subsequently altered the perceptions of school organisations and the elements contributing to their effectiveness. The concept of organisational culture of a school is seldom brought up when it comes to the success of a school; researchers tend to focus more on theories related to the leader or his/her followers and their contribution to the effectiveness of school. The definition and importance of a school's organisational culture as well as its relationship with leadership is the focus of the second section.

In order to fully grasp the relationship between organisational culture and leadership, it is also important to look at the development in leadership theories. These developments have resulted in new, critical approaches to the study of leadership. Thus, the focus of the third section is the development in leadership theories, changes in leadership styles as well as emergence of post-modern theories, particularly the issue of gender in leadership.

2.1 “TOWARDS A HUMANE SCIENCE”

The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable man persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man - George Bernard Shaw.

Educational management and leadership thinking evolved with humankind's quest to progress and adapt to changes in society. This quest was characterised by the development of theories which were tested and often contested thus enriching our understanding of organisations, schools and the individual.

The aim of this section is to look at the evolution of management theories which underpin educational administration¹ and leadership studies. Since educational management theories stemmed from an industrial context, new and different approaches to research were needed in order to find original ways of studying school administration, schools as organisations and the individuals within them (Bush 2003: 14).

Educational management theories were adapted from the scientific management theory of organisations. As from the early 1900's, Taylor, Fayol and Weber structured scientific management theories with principles of efficiency such as close control and division of labour as in a bureaucracy (Hoy and Miskel 1996:10). Productivity and effectiveness were the key words during this industrialised era. The core idea was that appropriate hierarchical structures and bureaucracy were needed in order to enable managers to achieve organisational goals. The classical management theorists believed that “individuals could be programmed to be efficient machines” (Hoy and Miskel 1996: 9).

However, the Human Relations Movement, with Mary Parker Follett as pioneer, rejected this mechanistic and inhumane approach to organisations and management. They claimed that the human being's contribution within the organisation was purposefully ignored; thus, Human Relations theorists such as Elton Mayo through their research - particularly

¹ The word “administration” refers to management, rather than clerical administrative work. This is the American use of the word.

the Hawthorne experiment - showed the need to improve social, informal relationships in the workplace in order to increase productivity (Hoy and Miskel 1996:12).

Adopting a clinical, technician and positivistic approach to the study of school organisation and administration was no longer satisfying for new scholars, especially when it came to the study of schools. Schools have different structures and organisational goals; they come into life thanks to people, with people, for people. It is true to say that Weber's concepts of bureaucratic thinking provided schools with structures, a sense of power and control. However, schools are also organisations which are particularly subjective and unpredictable, spontaneous and colourful; in brief, so human.

In such conceptual crisis, Thomas B. Greenfield ignited the fire of critical studies in the field of educational administration by arguing that the positivist perspective which had been used to study school administration, led to the "exclusion of values... the exclusion of both the human and the humane, the exclusion of passion and conviction..." (Greenfield and Ribbins 1993: 164). He argued that for decades scientific theories had been more concerned with giving clear-cut, identical frameworks to all school managers and administrators, overlooking the specificities of the schools such as the different individuals, cultures and values within them. Furthermore, Greenfield attacked the way that for decades, organisations have been conceptualised and described in a dehumanising way. The individual with his/her values and beliefs which constitute the essence of his/her being had been denied:

Organizations are not written in the natural order of things. They are the consequences of human action...organizations are expressions of will, intention and value...they are manifestations of people doing what they want to do or what they think they must do (Greenfield & Ribbins 1993:103-104).

For him, schools should no longer be studied in an objective and empirical paradigm; he saw them as expressions of humans' creativity and ways of making meaning, and consequently, one must try to understand and interpret these creations. Greenfield also argued that schools were created by the personality of each individual within them: those who lead and run them and those who attend and believe in them. Thus, according to Greenfield, organisations should not be considered as rigid, scientific and unalterable but

instead as malleable and unpredictable as the individual's "will, intention and value..." (Greenfield & Ribbins 1993:103-104).

In the light of Greenfield's critique one understands that, firstly, researchers' approach to educational administration and leadership studies should be more interpretive and 'faithful' to the "human action and intention [which are] the stuff from which organisations are made..." (Greenfield and Ribbins as cited by Cahill 1994: 253). Secondly, school management and leadership should be attentive to the individuals' various expressions of self which are a fundamental part of the school organisation. However, understanding the individual as well as human relations is as important as acknowledging the vital role of an organisation's management structures.

Together with leadership, management was claimed by various scholars as the other essential requirement for the effectiveness of schools (Bush & Bell 2002: 3). They believed that it would be utopian to think that leadership alone could contribute to the success of a school:

The challenge of modern organisations requires the objective perspective of the manager as well as the flashes of brilliance of vision and commitment wise leadership provides (Bolman & Deal as cited by Bush & Bell 2002: 4).

Therefore, the challenge for new scholars was to find an appropriate methodology which would focus on organisational structures, managerial tasks and means of improving effectiveness as well as give credit to individuals within the organisations, acknowledging the significance of organisational culture and appropriate leadership in the field of the educational administration studies.

I use Greenfield's views on the importance of cultural and individuals' understandings of the school organisation as my theoretical and methodological framework since the foci of my study are organisational culture and female leadership. These concepts can only be understood and interpreted within the specificity of the organisational context and culture. Hence, in this chapter, I attempt to answer the following questions: "How are the person's

values and will be reflected within the school?” and “What are the new implications for school organisations and leadership within a cultural framework?”

In the next section, I explore the notion of how organisations are products of each individual’s creativity and expressions of self and how important individuals are in light of the shift in organisational thinking of schools as expressed by Greenfield. The rationale is that schools should be perceived less as organisations concerned with being productive, effective and in some cases, profitable, and more as the ensemble of the individual’s self, culture, values and beliefs come together in order to be one and create organisational culture.

Bush and Bell (2002: 27) asserted, “Culture has become increasingly important as a way of describing and understanding social and educational issues”. Hence, it is important to look at the significant contribution of individuals’ cultures within the school organisations and how the multiple cultures in a school combine to build the school’s unique organisational culture.

2.2 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

2.2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous section I argued that there has been a shift in the methodological approach to educational management and leadership studies brought about by a renewed emphasis on subjective experience and critical interpretive approaches. This new perspective has the potential to shed light on previously neglected themes and experiences of those involved in educational management. It also allows one to view school as organisations differently, focusing on the significant role that individuals play in the school.

The aim of this study was to highlight the importance of individuals, their norms, system of values and beliefs, and how the sharing of various cultures sets the foundation of what is known as organisational culture. I therefore present the concept of organisation culture in relationship to school culture according to the perspectives of various scholars namely Schein, Sergiovanni and Deal and Peterson who focus in their writing on the cultural

perspective of schools. I also describe the elements of organisational culture as seen in schools. Adopting a cultural approach to schools brings a new dimension to the way of perceiving them since, with such a collective sharing of cultures or subcultures, the school is considered a community rather than an organisation (Sergiovanni 2001: 74).

2.2.2 THE CONCEPT OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Greenfield and Sergiovanni share the idea that organisations are “nonnatural” or “artificial” as organisations have been conceptualised and created by humans’ imagination and are subject to “the whims of human predispositions and conventions...” (Sergiovanni & Corbally 1986: 7). In other words, organisations were not created by some divine power making them subject to universal laws. They are man-made as each individual brings his/her history, experience and meaning making, how he/she has been socially constructed and what he/she believes in - in a word, the individual’s culture within the organisation. In order to simplify my argument, I distinguish the concept of culture as it is commonly known in everyday life from the term ‘organisational culture’.

Dimmock and Walker (in Bush and Bell 2002:71) distinguished organisational culture from what they call ‘societal culture’. For them, organisational culture represents the rituals, symbols and heroes that are created within the organisation and which can be managed or changed. On the other hand, societal culture refers to the basic assumptions which are shared by groups of people in a society. Dimmock and Walker believed that societal culture is more anchored within a society and that it is “outside the sphere of influence of an individual leader” (*Ibid.*).

The term ‘culture’ in our society refers to the shared beliefs, customs, practices and social behaviour of a group of people. For instance, in a society, one can say that there are as many cultures as groups of people. However, the multiple cultures and subcultures can sometimes be connected or bound to each other as they might have different sets of values in common and this might contribute to a single, unifying culture. Similarly, in an organisation, people bring their societal culture, their beliefs, assumptions and ways of making meaning which are specific to them; there can be conflict of values (because of

differences) or in some cases, a combination of the individuals' values and the organisation's goals which then help in building the organisational culture. As a result, one can say that organisational culture is built from the participation and sharing of individuals' cultures which then give rise to cultures and subcultures in the school. The interaction of various subcultures enables the school to have its own specificities and ways of doing things which create the school's unique culture, known as the organisational culture.

2.2.3 DEFINITION OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Bush (2003: 156) introduced the notion of cultural models of schools in his revised version of *Theories of educational leadership and management* as he considered that societal and organisational cultures are becoming more and more significant in educational management and leadership studies. He believed that individuals bring their own personal culture to the organisation and "these individual perceptions coalesce into shared organizational meanings". Hence, for Bush (2003: 160), the organisational culture of a school is built when there is the fusion of individuals' sets of values, beliefs and norms with the organisation's goals so that both become "a single or dominant culture" in the organisation.

A school's organisational culture is defined by Deal and Peterson (1999:2) as a way for the school leaders to

...better understand their school's own unwritten rules and traditions, norms, and expectations that seem to permeate everything: the way people act, how they dress, what they talk about or avoid talking about, whether they seek out colleagues for help or not, and how teachers feel about their work and their students

They believed that students', teachers' and the principal's behaviour and attitudes are consciously or unconsciously guided by the "invisible, taken-for-granted flow of beliefs and assumptions" (Deal & Peterson 1999: 3-4) which prevail within a school. They also asserted that the cultural patterns or "way of doing things" in the school have been created

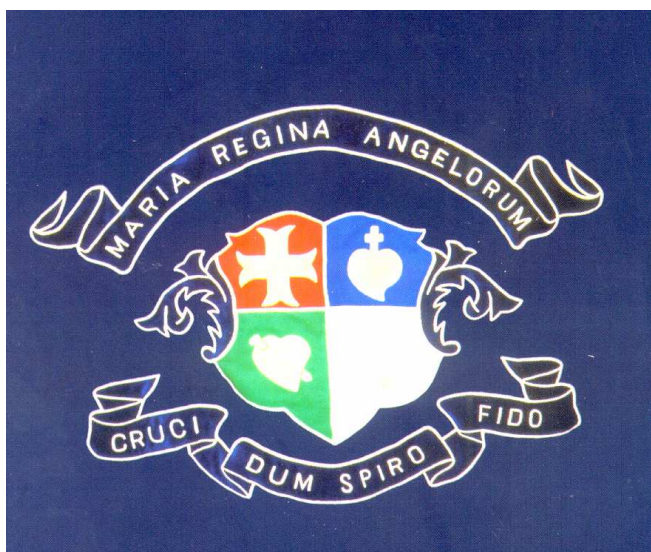
by previous or present stakeholders of the school and that they “have a powerful impact on performance, and shape the ways people think, act, and feel” (Deal & Peterson 1999:4).

The idea of culture shaping “the ways people think, act, and feel” (*Ibid.*) is shared by Schein (1992: 12) whose definition of culture is as follows:

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.

For Schein, this definition highlights the following issues: firstly, shared assumptions which are developed over time govern the way individuals will interact, think, feel and behave within the group (Schein 1992: 14). Secondly, it also shows that culture provides shared and accepted assumptions to a group of people who are committed to them as these shared assumptions have brought a certain cohesion and direction to the group and proved that they worked in the past. In a school context, a school’s culture usually stems from a shared history, within the school, which then developed into shared, “taken-for-granted” ways of doing things.

Schein also provided a detailed explanation of organisational culture which he divided into

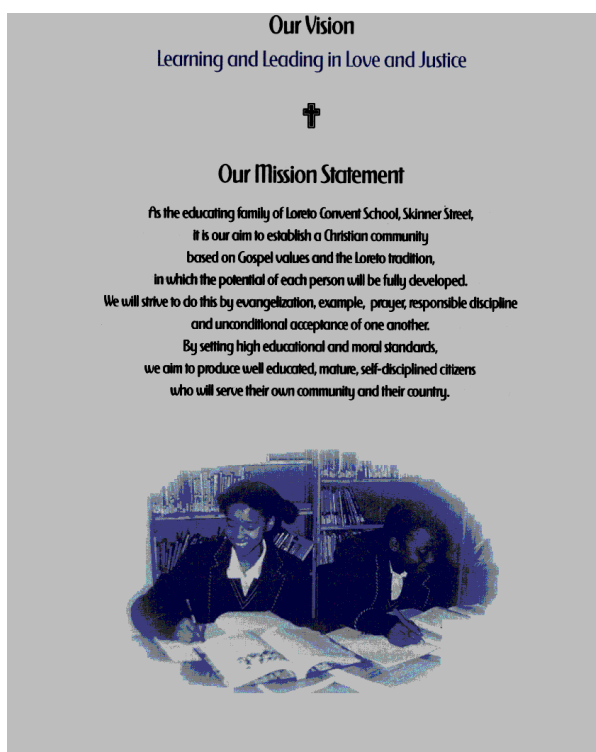


three levels. He explained that the term level refers to “the degree to which the phenomenon is visible to the observer” (Schein 1992: 16). The most visible and tangible aspect of the different levels of the organisational culture are the cultural artifacts. In a school setting, cultural artifacts would be rituals such as assemblies, staff and management meetings, ceremonies, school uniforms, emblems and

symbols, history of the school or stories and so on. For example, the picture on page 16 is the school’s emblem which can be seen on the uniforms and at the entrance of the school.

It symbolises the school's sense of belonging to the Loreto community, and all the Loreto schools of the world has the same emblem. However, by simply observing the cultural artifacts of a school, one cannot fully understand them as they are subject to multiple interpretations and meanings. Therefore Schein suggested that the observer should remain in the setting for a sustained period of time to better understand the underlying values and principles of the cultural artifacts (Schein 1992: 18).

The next level is the espoused values shared by the group within the organisation when members of the organisation have seen and acknowledged that these values have provided “a guide and a way of dealing with the uncertainty of intrinsically uncontrollable or difficult events” (Schein 1992: 20) or helped in achieving the targeted goals of the organisation. It is at that level that it is important to seek alignment between individuals' personal system of values and beliefs and the organisation's values and beliefs. Very often, values are developed when members or founders of the organisation suggests ways and means to tackle a problem or other issues. These suggestions come from their personal assumptions which will be put to the test of time and success (Schein 1992: 19). For instance, a school's code of conduct is produced from the assumptions of members of the staff, management and governing body of what should be the good and bad students' behaviour.



The proposed code of conduct might be amended in time according to its effectiveness in the school. Schein emphasized that there must be a kind of “social validation” (Schein 1992: 20) of the proposed values in order for them to be “espoused” by the group.

In the third level or what Janson (in Van der Westhuizen 2002:125) called the philosophical aspects, one finds the basic assumptions which are the essence of the organisational culture. Basic assumptions evolve from being the frequent references and solutions to the problems and gradually become the shared way of perceiving, doing

and expressing things. They can be the mission/vision statement, goals, ethos, values, beliefs, basic assumptions, and philosophy of the organisation. The picture on page 17 shows the Vision and Mission statements printed in the Yearbook of the Loreto Convent School of Pretoria. These can also be seen in the school's hall (picture in chapter 5 page 81) and the school's reception hall. Not only does it express the academic goal of the school but also the social and spiritual commitment of the school to fully develop the "potential of each individual" (mission statement). Underneath the statements, the picture of two smiling girls of African origin shows the school's will to promote multi-racial and cultural relationships as well as "unconditional acceptance of one another" (mission statement) which is a significant aspect in the South African context.

The assumptions unconsciously control the behaviour of members of the organisations who "will find behavior based on any other premise inconceivable" (Schein 1992: 22). Schein asserted that "to understand a group's culture, one must attempt to get at its shared basic assumptions and one must understand the learning process by which such basic assumptions come to be" (Schein 1992: 26).

These levels of organisational culture can be very striking in a school context, particularly to people outside the school; in fact, elements of the school culture will be the factors that parents will be looking out for in order to make the comparison between an effective school and a dysfunctional one. However, as Bates (as quoted by Janson in Van der Westhuizen 2002: 125) argued:

The dynamics of organisational culture are shaped by the exchange of thoughts and ideas between teachers, parents, learners and the Department of Education.

In other words organisational culture is not only moulded by the school management and the teachers but also by the parents.

In short, organisational culture is evident in visible signs within the organisation, but to understand the meaning and power of these signs one needs to explore the underlying values and beliefs as well as the basic assumptions of the group.

2.2.4 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND SCHOOLS AS COMMUNITIES

Sergiovanni shared Schein's views on symbols, signs and rituals, being artifacts of deeper meanings and values and considered the school culture as a metaphor which

helps direct attention to the symbols, behavioral regularities, ceremonies, and even myths that communicate to people the underlying values and beliefs that are shared by members of the organization (Sergiovanni 2001: 124).

However, the novelty of Sergiovanni's understanding of organisational culture is how "Underlying the cultural perspective is the concept of community and the importance of shared meanings and shared values" (Sergiovanni & Corbally 1986: 8). Over time, there is a process of "bonding" which takes place: Sergiovanni defined the term "bonding" as a process by which a group of people who identify themselves to their shared values and beliefs and are gradually attached to each other, almost like a family or a community: "Communities are collections of individuals who are bonded together by natural will and who are together bound to a set of shared ideas and ideals" (Sergiovanni 2001: 77). Thus, according to Sergiovanni, the fundamental notion of organisational culture is the underlying assumption of relationships among a group of people or which he called a community. He also considered schools as communities with their complex web of culture and subcultures which contribute to create an organisational culture, specific to the unique organisation:

Communities are organized around relationships...they create social structures that unify people and that bind them to a set of shared values and ideas...that provide the needed conditions for creating a sense of "we" from "I" (Sergiovanni 2001: 77).

The school is a good example of the web of relationships which are woven within the school community. Schools exist through people, are run by people and for people who, even if they have differences, share something in common. It is true to say that it is challenging to have an immediate "bonding" effect with a school's unique culture. For instance, one knows how difficult it is for a new teacher to adapt to or be accepted in a school. It is due to the school's unique culture: the way of doing things, the respect for the

rituals, symbols or setting (for example, the teachers' room) and the idea of "bending" the rules or traditions or may be bringing new ideas might be perceived by others as offensive or even too revolutionary. Hence Sergiovanni's reflection on organisational culture is that there can be shared values and meanings only if there is the building of a community within a school or what he calls the "cultural cement" that holds diverse groups together (Sergiovanni & Corbally 1986: 8). It is thanks to this community building that various individuals will think and act as one, which will then provide to the school with a sense of 'togetherness'.

2.2.5 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

The question that one can now pose is "How will the organisation's culture and community be maintained and who will do it?" There are two schools of thought: one group of theorists assert that it is the school leaders' role to create and maintain the organisational culture. The other school of thought is that it is the organisation's cultural

force which drives and shapes the leadership. Thus, the core of my argument in this section is to show how leadership and organisational culture are intertwined and how one concept influences the other.



Sr Monica unveiling the picture of Mary Ward — our foundress

This relationship is partly explained by Schein (1992:5) who claimed that there is an essential factor contributing to the creation and success of an organisational culture; it is the aspect of leadership. His main argument about the relationship between organisational culture and leadership is that "culture and leadership are two sides of the same coin..." and that the leader, as an individual, defines and shapes the organisational culture (Schein 1992:15). The

picture on page 20 is of the Loreto sisters' Provincial (the Head of the Loreto Sisters'

community in South Africa), Sister Monica, unveiling Mary Ward's portrait in the school's hall. The aim is to make students, staff and parents aware that it is thanks to Mary Ward that the history of Loreto education started. Deal and Peterson (1999:10) shared Schein's opinion since they considered that the main role of the leader is the "creation, encouragement, and refinement of the symbols and symbolic activity that give meaning to the organization". They believed that the leader should be the one who encourages the creation of the school culture and that the leader is responsible for preserving this school culture. Smith's (1995: 77) naturalistic study of teachers of diverse race and culture working in the same high school in South Africa showed that the founding principal was the key figure in the creation of the vision, mission and culture of the school and that "the teachers' social organization cannot be understood apart from the person and the role of the founding principal". His study highlights the leader's role in creating, shaping and maintaining the organisational culture: mission/vision statement, rituals and ceremonies, symbols such as emblems or uniforms are some of the visible cultural artifacts created by the principal or the senior management team in order to give to the school its unique character.

However, Dimmock and Walker (in Bush & Bell 2002: 71) see this culture-leadership relationship differently by claiming that not only do school leaders influence the school's culture but they are also influenced by it. Sergiovanni, sharing the same views, asserted that "Leadership acts are expressions of culture" and argued that the leader should be expressing the meanings and values of the organisational culture (Sergiovanni & Corbally 1986: 106). This can be seen through the leader's actions, attitude, approach to the school community, even the language used: "The real value of leadership rests with the meanings which actions import to others than in the actions themselves" (*Ibid.*). As I show in chapter five, the leaders in this study explain how the tradition and unique ethos of the Loreto Convent School of Pretoria has "rubbed off" on them (chapter 4 page 61). Sergiovanni's argument holds that cultural leadership occurs when the leader ensures that he/she reflects the school's culture and when "the meanings a leader communicates to others is more important than his or her specific leadership style" (Sergiovanni & Corbally 1986: 106). Hence, for Sergiovanni, the leader is influenced by the school's culture and embodies the ethos, values and beliefs of the school.

Moreover, Sergiovanni (2001: 100) also considered the school's culture as one of the forces helping "the principal to push the school forward toward effectiveness..." This cultural force provides a sense of identity, of uniqueness to the school which helps in building commitment and a sense of belonging among the staff, students and administration to the school. This communal working environment consequently instils motivation and hard work in the school which in turn, improves the school's effectiveness and performance (Senge 2000: 460).

The school leader thus becomes an active symbol of the school culture, which in turn influences his/her leadership. The school organisational culture also fosters effectiveness, excellence and motivation in the daily behaviour of the individuals within the school community.

In this section, I have shown how organisational culture and leadership are connected and how one concept influences the other, depending on one's perspective. In the next section I look at the evolution of leadership theories over the years. However, rather than presenting the theory for its own sake, I attempt to discuss it within the broad framework of organisational culture.

2.3 LEADERSHIP THEORIES

2.3.1 LOOKING AT LEADERSHIP THEORIES THROUGH ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE LENSES

In the preceding section, I discussed Schein and Sergiovanni's perspectives on the relationship between organisational culture and leadership. Schein believed that leadership creates and shapes the organisational culture whereas Sergiovanni asserted that it is the organisational culture which guides the leaders in the way he/she should lead the organisation. In order to understand the implications that such perspectives have for leadership, I believe that it would be important to look at the evolution of leadership theories within the framework of organisational culture. I attempt to answer questions such as "What has brought changes to leadership theories?", "Should organisational culture be a

factor worth considering when looking at an organisation's effectiveness?", and "What type of leader would Schein or Sergiovanni propose for an organisation or a school?"

In the early 1900's, the characteristics of the effective leader were made known through the 'trait theory'. It was believed that the leader was "born" with attributes related to values, skills, confidence and personality which are the characteristics that all leaders should have (Hoy & Miskel 1996: 378). However, over time, scholars found that there was no scientific evidence of any direct correlation between possessing these qualities and the success of an organisation.

Therefore, in the beginning of the 1940's, as a reaction to the trait theory, scholars developed situational theory which emphasized the context in which the leader leads. The main question they tried to answer was: "To what extent does the context influence leadership?" Situational factors such as the internal and external environment, the subordinates, the organisation, as well as the leader's role in the organisation (Hoy & Miskel 1996: 380) were seen as variable factors which could influence the leader's behaviour. At first glance, such a theory seems to be the ideal fit for the scholar concerned with organisational culture: situational theory takes into account the culture of an organisation which determines the leadership, a notion that finds support in contemporary thinking (Sergiovanni & Corbally 1986:106). Yet, what Sergiovanni proposed is that, for instance in a school context, the principal should "embody the culture of the school" in order to be the "symbolic leader" (Sergiovanni 2001: 105-106). He wanted the leader to be preoccupied by "being" and not "acting" the culture. The leader, through his/her language, attitude, approach to other individuals, becomes the essence or embodiment or spokesperson of the school culture. This concept of leadership is very different from the situational theory which overlooks the importance of the leader in leadership. Situational leadership disregards the contribution of the individual in the leadership process.

Behaviourist approaches constitute an attempt to synthesise 'person' and 'task' as scholars performed tests and created grids which aimed at looking at people's style of working and the leaders' behaviour towards the subordinates (Hoy & Miskel 1996: 382). Behaviourist theories showed that the leader was taken up by a "task-person" tension: finding the right

equilibrium between achieving the task or organisational goals and encouraging interpersonal skills as well as having consideration for the subordinates (Yukl 2002: 60).

Fiedler's contingency theory was inspired by the behaviourist approach; its aim was to find the best style of leadership to fit to the right situation. He devised a scale called the Least Preferred Co-worker (LPC) Scale which measured the leader's style: whether it is oriented towards task (a task-motivated leader) or human relations (relationships-oriented leader). For Fiedler, the situation or the working environment in which the leader is also a major factor: if the followers are unwilling and unmotivated to do the task, the leader will have to be more concerned with accomplishing the task and finding ways to motivate the group.

I consider Fiedler's contingency theory to suit the type of leadership that Schein proposed as there are many similarities between the two visions. Knowing the situation or an organisational culture is important for the leader as he/she will know what style of leadership to adopt. In the case of a school culture where students are motivated but there is a high rate of absenteeism among the staff or teachers rarely go in class in order to attend their personal businesses, a 'task-oriented leader' is needed so that the staff attend their classes and give of their best in order to achieve the organisational goals which is to be a learning community. As Schein (1992: 15) put it, the leader should look for the dysfunctional elements of the prevailing organisational culture in order to be able to shape or change the situation or culture.

Furthermore, since the LPC is also known to measure the "personality characteristic..." (Hoy & Miskel 1996: 387), I also believe that it is worth knowing the personality and the leadership style of a leader in selecting a leader. For instance, I believe that in a catholic school it is essential for the principal to be a catholic as he/she will be able to better understand and respect the key values and beliefs of the school. If changes are to be made, they will be performed by the leader in line with the catholic educational goals.

However, Fiedler's theory has some important limitations. For instance, the LPC scale is a problematic self-assessment tool. The leader has to evaluate his/her leadership style according to a limited choice of words provided by the scale. The understanding of one

word may differ from one person to another and is very subjective. Hence, this assessment tool is not as objective and rational as it claims to be. Furthermore, I believe that Fiedler's Contingency theory perpetuates the dichotomy between human relations and the need to achieve the task which does not provide a holistic picture of leadership. Thus, one can conclude that this theory is only a partial answer to our understanding of leadership in a cultural perspective.

The publication of Burns' seminal text, *Leadership*, in 1978 moved leadership thinking to a new level. Burns distinguished between 'transactional' and 'transformational' leadership. He argued that the 'leader-followers' relationship had been disregarded by the previous theories. According to Burns, trait, situational and behaviourist theories present leadership as a "bargaining" or "reward/exchange" relationship between the leader and the subordinates (Foster in Smyth 1989: 41). Burns believed that the essence of transformational leadership lies in the leader having a vision for the organisation and sharing it with the followers. The leader should also be a source of inspiration in order to empower and "convert followers into leaders and leaders into moral agents." (Burns in Greenfield 2004: 176). At first glance Burns' concept of transformational leadership does not seem very different from trait theory since it is the qualities of the leader that are again emphasised as the major factor. What was profoundly new and different was the vision of a 'moral' dimension to leadership. Burns argued that

...leaders engage with followers, but from higher levels of morality; in the enmeshing of goals and values both leaders and followers are raised to more principled levels of judgement (Foster in Smyth 1989: 41).

William Greenfield (2004: 175-176) further explored the moral aspect of leadership in the educational field by claiming that:

the transforming leader looks for personal motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower. The result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents.

This concept is shared by Sergiovanni (2001) as well as Deal and Peterson (1999) who considered the leader to have a moral, cultural and symbolic role in the school. According to Sergiovanni (2001: 105)

when principals are expressing symbolic aspects of leadership, they are typically working beneath the surface of events and activities; they are seeking to tap deeper meanings, deeper values.

Hence it is possible to argue that the evolution of leadership theory has been a series of movements ‘away from’ and ‘towards’ the concern for the individual. It started with the recognition of the individual in trait theory: in situational-behaviourist theories, the human being’s contribution was devalued. Burns’ transformational leadership gave back to leadership the importance of interpersonal relationships, of sharing and mutual commitment as well as a moral role to play within the organisation:

...the idea of moral leadership holds much promise for enabling school administrators to lead in a manner that can best help teachers develop and empower themselves to teach and lead in the context of external pressures to reform schools (Greenfield 2004: 174).

More contemporary thinking has given rise to critical or post-modern theories, such as feminist leadership theories. In the next section, I present the feminist critique of traditional leadership theories. This critical perspective vindicates the importance of the individual in the leadership theories but also acknowledges the leader as ‘gendered’.

2.4 FEMALE LEADERSHIP: THE ALTERNATIVE VOICE

2.4.1 INTRODUCTION

The question of gender in leadership is one of the most prominent critical considerations in the field of leadership and management. The original aim of critical theory was to challenge the mainstream, classical approach which had many conceptual gaps, particularly when it came to allowing marginal voices to be heard – for instance, those of female managers. In this section, my aim is firstly, to present a brief overview of the feminist critique of leadership and management theories, particularly in relation to educational leadership. Secondly, I provide an overview of research which has been carried out in female leadership and education, particularly on the African continent. Finally, I justify the need for my research which attempts to look at female leadership linked to organisational culture.

2.4.2 CONTESTING AN “ANDROCENTRIC” ORIENTED THEORY

The feminist critique considered the traditional leadership theories as being patriarchal or sexist. In her influential text, *Women in Educational Administration* (1989) Shakeshaft used the term “androcentric” to refer to “to the practice of viewing the world and shaping reality from [sic] a male lens” (Shakeshaft 1989: 150). She argued that leadership and management were explained and understood from white males’ perspectives: the theories were written for men, about men and by men. Schmuck shared her opinions:

Not only do most leadership theories deny the experience of women in school, theories of leadership are fraught with biases and unspoken assumptions about the role of gender in organizations. Most theory has focused only on males in organisations (Schmuck, as cited by Bush and Coleman 2000:29).

Shakeshaft provided a complete overview of the situation of women in educational management. She firstly noted women’s absence in administration which was followed by research done in order to identify the ways that women leaders manage and lead in

patriarchal structures as well as their experiences as subordinates. Further studies used a subjective approach in order to explore women's perceptions and experiences of administration and leadership (Shakeshaft 1989:13). In 1990, Rosener looked at the differences between the ways that women and men managed: the research focused on the differences in leadership style between men and women. While men would tend to use a "command and control" managing style, women's leadership style was seen as transformational or what she called "interactive" (Rosener 1990: 120). They usually have a caring and nurturing attitude; they emphasize human-relations and have abundant enthusiasm when relating to their work and colleagues. They are also seen as adopting a more participative and democratic leadership style compared to men (*Ibid.*). Thakathi & Lemmer (2002:195), in their case study set in South Africa, showed that the woman principal uses "personal symbolic strategies to establish her professionalism and leadership". For instance, she is aware that the way that she dresses has an impact on the school. She would carefully choose her clothes so that they reinforce her professionalism. She also makes sure that they are suitable to her status as a leader but also appropriate to her age. Hence, one sees that women try to find different leadership strategies which would enable them to succeed in a 'male-oriented' structure as I show in the next section.

2.4.3 "SOCIALIZATION MADE US FOLLOWERS"

One of the explanations provided by Rosener (1990: 124) of the difference in leadership style between men and women, is that they have been socialised differently. Historically and socially, society has imposed different sets of behaviours and roles on men and women. Since women have the "natural" gift of nurturing, caring and providing security, "teaching came to be defined as a female profession and administration as a male domain" (Smulyan 2000:15). The traditional educational management theories considered feminine traits as incompatible with leadership and management (Greyvenstein 2000:32). Thus, the female teachers pursued their career thinking that teaching was the only appropriate occupation for them and that they could not aspire to higher posts in the institutional structure. In a South African context, Mwingi (2000: 124) argued that for the female leaders, gender discrimination was facilitated by the following managerial structures:

Discriminatory employment policies where the promotion structures are unfair on women, limited openings for women in the traditionally male school head positions and a strong dominance of male socialization that is characteristic of the races found in South Africa. Generally speaking, men in South Africa continue to occupy the upper categories even where women have the same educational attainment

As Curry (2003:1-2) argued, socialization has made of women followers, and women have been “culturally embedded in beliefs that self-directedness and leadership were unacceptable for their gender”.

However, as the gender critique has gained momentum, so-called ‘feminine’ traits are increasingly considered an asset rather than a liability. As Shakeshaft (1989: 197) put it:

Relationships with others are central to all actions of women administrators. Women spend more time with people, communicate more, care more about individual differences, are concerned more with teachers and marginal students, and motivate more. Not surprisingly, staffs of women administrators rate women higher, are more productive, and have higher morale.

2.4.4 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND FEMALE LEADERSHIP

In the previous section, I have shown that the societal culture promoted the inferiority of women and that such kind of discrimination was also reflected in the hierarchical structures and even in the organisational culture. In 1996, Mitchell & Correa (in Greyvenstein 2000: 31) identified as one of the strategies which should be used to redress gender imbalances in education management in South Africa the development of organisational cultures which encourage women to have access to leadership positions. In 2001, the situation had not changed much as Mathipa & Tsoka (2001: 330) recommended in their studies on the possible barriers to the advancement of women in leadership positions in education, that the attitudes of the gatekeepers should be changed “to be friendly and positively disposed towards the upward mobility of women in leadership positions”. In 2003, in her strategies to create an environment conducive to women in educational management positions, Mabovula (2003: 74) proposed that it was by actions,

behaviour and attitudes of staff that an organisational culture could be developed, thereby helping management structures to bring about these sorts of changes in their institutions.

Hence one can see that the discriminatory societal values have permeated organisational structures and cultures. The change in perceptions is very slow and still remains a daily challenge that female leaders have to face. My interest in the Loreto Convent School of Pretoria is aligned with the main purpose of the feminist critique movement, succinctly expressed by Blackmore (as quoted by Grace in Crawford, Kydd & Riches 1997: 68):

Feminists demand not just equality, but that they become the subjects and objects of an alternative, autonomous discourse which chooses its own measures and criteria

2.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I presented an overview of educational leadership theories from a cultural perspective. Thanks to an interpretive approach, these theories have developed in a way that highlighted the importance of the person in school organisations.

I have showed that the individual (the school leader/teacher, student or parent) shares his/her personal values and beliefs in the school. In this way, the school's stakeholders participate in the creation of a shared school culture. The school culture is the accepted, taken-for granted assumptions and norms that the members of the school share and espouse. Over time, this process transforms the members of the school organisation into members of school community whose aim is to build a learning organisation.

A cultural approach to leadership goes beyond the traditional perspective of leadership as being only concerned with the best leadership style or behaviour. It is concerned with showing that factors such as school culture, socialisation or socio-economic issues should be considered when exploring leadership. Moreover, from such a perspective, true leadership is about recognising the leader as an individual with his/her personal background, gender as well as multiple roles that he/she has in society.

Hence, in this chapter, I have presented the theoretical and methodological framework of my study where the concepts of organisational culture and female leadership are the main foci. In the next chapter, I provide a detailed outline of the methodology used for my research.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The more ways we look at a problem, the more voices we listen to and actually *hear*, the more eyes beyond our own we use to *see with*, the greater the depth of *understanding* - *Christopher Hodgkinson*.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is concerned with the choice of my research paradigm and the specific characteristics that such an approach offers to my study. I also describe and explain the method that I use in order to try to understand the phenomenon under investigation better. I provide a detailed explanation of the choice of my data gathering tools, highlighting their advantages and disadvantages which have had an impact on my study. In this respect, I also discuss the ethical issues at the time of my research process. Lastly, I provide a description of how I went about the analysis of my data and justify the way of presenting and discussing the data. Finally I offer a critique of my methodology by looking at potential limitations.

3.2 THE RESEARCH PARADIGM

3.2.1 WHY A QUALITATIVE APPROACH FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH?

As discussed in chapter one and two, the primary goal of my research was to explore the relationship between organisational culture and leadership. I investigated the question of whether a school's organisational culture influences leadership or whether it is the school leader who influences the organisational culture (chapter 2: 22). Secondly, I looked at the school's female leaders' perceptions of leadership. Thus my challenge was to find the theoretical and methodological frameworks which would enable me to look at "the human and humane" (Greenfield and Ribbins 1993: 164) in school administration and leadership.

Research in school administration and leadership has been controlled by scholars who were chiefly concerned with providing and teaching administrative skills, leadership styles and behaviours; it was what Greenfield called a “scientific administration” (Greenfield and Ribbins as cited by Cahill 1994: 252). However, as early as the mid 1970’s Greenfield and other scholars began to argue that the scientific hegemony should come to an end.

In her study of female school principals’ perceptions of leadership, Mwingi (2000: 38) stated:

Research in this field can no longer afford to be entirely quantitative reducing experiences, meanings and viewpoints to impersonal statistical figures because people are in constant interaction with the world they live in and from their engagements conceive attitudes and viewpoints and hold values and beliefs.

In this perspective, as an alternative to positivist and quantitative approaches, a qualitative approach is appropriate in educational research as, according to Maxwell (1996), it offers the following strengths which provide a suitable framework for reaching my research goals:

- Understanding the participants’ ways of making meanings of their experiences and events as well as “how their understandings influence their behaviour” (Maxwell 1996: 17).
- Understanding the particular context within which the participants act, and the influence that this context has on their actions” (*Ibid.*).

3.2.2 THE INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK

The epistemological orientation of this study is interpretive which enables the researcher to “understand reality and others by interacting with them and listening to what they tell us” (Terre Blanche & Kelly 1999: 123). Schwandt (in Denzin & Lincoln 1994:118) defined the interpretive framework as being “the concern for the life world...for understanding meaning, for grasping the actor’s definition of a situation” and argued that

in order to understand the world of meaning, the interpretivist must interpret it. Therefore, the key interest in the interpretive paradigm is understanding through interpretation. In the same way, for Morrison (in Coleman & Briggs 2003: 18), the interpretive paradigm is an appropriate approach in educational research as “...all educational research needs to be grounded in people’s experience...for interpretivists, the core task is to view research participants as research subjects and to explore the ‘meanings’ of events and phenomena from the subjects’ perspectives”. In the interpretive orientation, the researcher is the principal ‘instrument’ for collecting and analysing data.

As a result of my using the interpretive approach, my participants (three female leaders in the Loreto Convent School of Pretoria) were able to express their ‘reality’ in terms of their perceptions of leadership in the school context or the school’s unique organisational culture. Furthermore, I believe that the participants, as female leaders, could also provide their experience of their leadership which leads to exploring new aspects of the female leadership phenomenon. However, as Cohen *et al.* (2000: 27) argued, one of the dangers of the interpretive approaches is that “... they become hermetically sealed from the world outside the participants’ theatre of activity - they put artificial boundaries around subjects’ behaviour”. In my case, I am fully aware of the context (which is mainly the organisational culture) of the case study as it is one of the focal points of my study. I situate the participants’ perceptions in the school’s context or values and beliefs, and to some extent the participants’ family or educational background which are clearly some of the factors which have influenced the leaders.

3.3 THE CASE STUDY METHOD

The term ‘method’ in research refers to the techniques or procedures used in order to gather data (Cohen *et al.* 2000:44). Stake (1995: xi) defined the case study as “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances”. Cohen *et al.* (2000:182) asserted: “Case studies strive to portray ‘what it is like’ to be in a particular situation, to catch the close-up reality and ‘thick descriptions’ of participants”. Merriam’s (2001:19) characterisation of a case study is particularly helpful:

While case studies can be quantitative and can test theory, in education they are more likely to be qualitative... A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved... Case studies are distinguished from other types of qualitative research in that they are intensive descriptions and analyses of a single unit or bounded system such as an individual, a program, event, group, intervention or community.

The key points here – the qualitative nature of case studies, the need to gain in-depth understanding, and the focus on a single group – are particularly appropriate to my case study.

Yin (2003:5-6) suggested that there are three types of case study methods: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. Similarly, Stake (1995:3-4) identified three categories of case study: intrinsic, instrumental and collective. I chose the exploratory case study for the reason mentioned above but this case study is also an interpretive one because of my intention of “analysing, interpreting, or theorizing about the phenomenon” (Merriam 2001: 38).

If the case study method, which is “anchored in real-life situations”, offers the possibility of “investigating complex social units” and “illuminates meanings that expand its readers’ experiences” (Merriam 2001:41-42), I am aware that my study is focused on a specific case which is the Loreto Convent School of Pretoria and that I focus on a small sample of three female leaders. Based on my research goals, I believe that the case study method would provide the best way to know more about the female principals’ experiences as Smulyan (2000: 42) affirmed: “Case studies fill a gap in a body of literature that until recently has provided a limited understanding of the lived experience of women educational leaders”.

3.4 THE SAMPLE

According to Durrheim (in Terre Blanche & Durrheim 1999: 44), sampling is about deciding which settings, events, people and behaviours to observe, interview or record. In order to be able to make such decisions, the researcher needs to establish some criteria according to his/her research goals as well as the specificities of the study.

I chose the school based on the following criteria:

- Having studied and taught in a Loreto Convent School in Mauritius, I have personally experienced the particular organisational culture that characterises these schools.
- Not having the possibility of doing my research in Mauritius, I conveniently looked for one of the Loreto Schools in South Africa, and selected the oldest one which is in Pretoria.
- The school is (and always has been) led by female leaders and thus the case suited my goal of capturing female leaders' perceptions of their leadership.

Hence, on the basis of the above criteria, my selection of the school was both convenience and purposeful sampling and reflect Merriam's (2001: 61) guideline: "The criteria you establish for purposeful sampling directly reflect the purpose of the study and guide in the identification of information-rich cases". Arksey & Knight (1999: 56) gave a word of advice about sampling whereby the sampling of respondents should be done with great care as it could affect the information that will be collected and thus might influence the researcher's understanding and interpretation. In this respect, I purposefully selected the school's female leaders who were respectively the school's principal, the High school Head of Department and the High school head girl, since they had experienced the school's organisational culture and also because they were female leaders in the school.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

The choice of the tools for data gathering depends on one's research goals. I gave great thought to determining which tool would enable me to obtain the best information in order to answer my research questions. Since my main goal was to obtain the unique perceptions of each female leader about her leadership and about the school's organisational culture, my primary data gathering tool was the interview. I also relied on secondary methods of data gathering tools namely observation and document analysis as well as a short questionnaire (Appendix B – page 108) which was used in order to obtain a profile of the respondents.

3.5.1 INTERVIEWS

As mentioned above, my aim was to obtain the female leaders' perceptions and their understanding of their roles. Hence, the best way of capturing the lived experiences, of exploring "people's more personal, private and special understandings" (Arksey & Knight 1999:4) was to use interviews. Patton highlighted the potential of the interview as a data-gathering instrument:

We cannot observe feelings, thoughts and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer...the purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective (Patton as quoted by Merriam 2001: 72).

I used semi-structured interviews as I wanted to obtain my participants' views on the school's culture, what it meant for them and how it influenced them or not in their leadership. I was aware of van der Mescht's (2002: 47) cautionary advice to researchers who appear to be interpretive in their approach but in reality have strong personal agendas:

Questions [may be] too strongly located within a preconceived theoretical framework, allowing little space in which respondents might elaborate and through language, metaphor, anecdote and symbol begin to give meaning to their reality.

Thus, I had to ensure that my participants had the opportunity to express themselves as freely as possible in terms of what they felt was important; at the same time I also needed to be free to probe and explore responses in order to allow the emergence of new ideas on the topic. The interview schedule thus featured exploratory and open-ended questions related to organisational culture such as “What are the main values and beliefs which are promoted in the everyday life of the school?”, “What is the Loreto tradition?”, “Would you say that the Loreto tradition influences the way you lead or is it the other way? How is that?” I also asked about their own experience of leadership as well as the promotion of leadership in the school in questions such as: “How would you describe yourself as a leader?”, “Has there been anyone who has influenced you in the way that you lead?”, and “How does the school promote leadership?”

The interviews were tape-recorded so as to allow me to focus on my participants’ words and follow up on any ideas shared by the respondents. Before the actual interviews, I also informed my interviewees that it would be a conversational interview and that anonymity was guaranteed.

3.5.2 OBSERVATION

In order to gain a better understanding of the school’s culture - rituals, ceremonies, symbols, ways of doing things as well as the role and relationships of the female leader in such school setting - I decided to use observation as one of my data-gathering methods. According to Kumar (1996: 105), “Observation is a purposeful, systematic and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place”. I recorded the observations in the form of descriptions of situations and events, direct quotations as well as comments in a research journal. These data which captured behaviours and events as they were happening had the potential to enrich the data obtained from interviews and documents. Merriam (2001:96) asserted that during observation the participant observer obtains first-hand information and sees things as they are happening and thus, he/she does not rely only on what others say (the interviews). During my three week stay at the Loreto Convent School, I tried to blend into the school’s routines, sometimes helped out, and participated in the everyday life of the school; my main role, however, was that of “an information gatherer” (Merriam 2001: 101). Concerning the

reliability of this method, I was aware that as an observer of the school I may have affected what was being observed. As Merriam (2001:103) put it, “Participants who know they are being observed will tend to behave in socially accepted ways and present themselves in a favorable manner”. The obvious way of overcoming this potential limitation is remain at the site for a reasonably long time. In my case I remained in the school for three weeks which may not sound very long. However, I did sense that the school’s awareness of my presence was far less prominent during the second and third week of my stay.

3.5.3 DOCUMENTS

My last data collection strategy was document analysis. Documents refer to “a wide range of written, visual, and physical material relevant to the study at hand” (Merriam 2001: 112). In order to gain a richer understanding of the historical background of the school, the underlying values and beliefs, I referred to the school’s magazines and yearbooks (for articles and photos), the handbook of the teachers’ rules, the school rules and regulations as well as pamphlets which are usually handed out to prospective students. These pamphlets relate the history of the founder of the Loreto Sisters’ community and convey the educational aims of the Loreto Convent School. One key advantage that document analysis offers, compared to the other two methods, is that “they do not intrude upon or alter the setting in ways that the investigator might” (Merriam & Associates 2002:13) in cases of observation or interviews.

Now that I have explained my data-collecting tools, I deal with the analysis of data in the next section.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

Merriam *et al.* (2002:14) claim that analysis is “simultaneous with data collection as it allows the researcher to make adjustments along the way, even to the point of redirecting data collection...” It was indeed the case while I was collecting the data. I spent nearly a week observing the school life before I engaged in the process of interviews. While

observing aspects of the school, several questions emerged and I felt that I should follow them up in my interviews with my participants. In the evenings, I would review my field notes and make any final comments particularly related to my study. As for my interviews, I transcribed the conversations verbatim, extracted the gist of the conversations and asked my participants to member-check my understanding of their meaning-making thereby ensuring validity. As I had three sources of data I synthesized them by using between-method triangulation which helped me primarily to enrich my findings but also as a means of strengthening validity and reliability. Arksey & Knight (1999:23) recommend triangulation since “cumulatively the weaknesses of one research method are offset by the strengths of the others”. Denzin offers a further advantage, arguing that triangulation is “employed to measure the same phenomenon, but from different angles” (Denzin as quoted by Arksey & Knight 1999: 23). Hence triangulation has contributed to making my findings both more robust and more ‘complete’.

Since “data analysis is essentially an inductive strategy” (Merriam *et al.* 2002: 14) I immersed myself in the data looking out for any meaningful words, phrases or metaphors. Through this process, I obtained the essence of the data concerning organisational culture and leadership. Since qualitative research is well known for providing thick descriptions which would enable the researcher and the reader to understand the participants’ unique experiences, I sensed that it would be richer and more meaningful to present my data in the form of life histories. Richardson (in Denzin and Lincoln 1994: 522) describes life histories as

a body of the text as though the quotations and document snippets are naturally there, genuine evidence for the case being there rather than selected, pruned, and spruced up for their textual appearance.

3.7 ETHICAL ISSUES

For research to be trustworthy, issues of reliability and validity are of key significance. As described above, I used strategies which would strengthen the reliability and validity of my findings; but the researcher’s mindfulness of research ethics is also important, if not decisive. Even though the school management agreed to allow me to interview the school’s head girl who is a minor, I felt that it was important to ask her parents’ consent

before carrying out the interview. A copy of the letter of agreement is attached as Appendix A (page 107). Anonymity was guaranteed to my interviewees and thus I distinguish among them by using initials only when presenting and discussing the data. The principal assured me that they would be happy if I used the school's full name – the Loreto Convent School of Pretoria.

3.8 THE STUDY'S LIMITATIONS

Positivist theorists claim that one of the most problematic aspects of the interpretive paradigm is that since “reality is multiple and each person's subjective experiences are real and should be taken seriously” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim 1999: 123), there can be no precise and well distinguished truth. They argue that this approach lacks objectivity. Hence, I attempted to address this issue by the process of triangulation as mentioned above. Moreover, one must understand that in the interpretive paradigm, each individual's experience brings “a holistic and richly expansive” (Merriam 2001: 9) picture of truth. It suited my research focus which is organisational culture and leadership from the experiences of individual women in school leadership. Each of these perceptions contributed to exploring and understanding the participants' contextual ‘truth’.

Since I am familiar with the Loreto institutions, I am aware that I had my own prior assumptions concerning the school's culture and ways of doing things. However, during my data collection and analysis, I tried to look at the information through unbiased lenses, letting the phenomena take their own shape and speak for themselves. Furthermore, since it is a case study, my research is limited by its “lack of representativeness” (Merriam 2001: 43) and thus cannot be used as a means to generalise about the phenomenon. Stake (as quoted in Lincoln & Guba 1985: 120) addressed the issue of generalisation by claiming that there were two types of generalisation in research: the law-like, logical one and the intuitive, naturalistic generalisation. In the case study, he asserted that a naturalistic generalisation adds understanding by reporting “the natural experience attained in ordinary personal involvements”. Thus, it means that the reader understands the phenomenon better by experiencing the richness and uniqueness of the case presented “in the form in which they usually experience it” (Lincoln & Guba 1985: 120), that is, with

rich descriptions which I present in the form of life histories. As Burrawoy (as quoted in Smulyan 2000:43) assert: “The importance of the single case lies in what it tells us about society as whole rather than about the population of similar cases”.

3.9 SUMMARY

In this chapter, I positioned my methodological orientation - the interpretive paradigm - which has its strengths and limitations. I also presented the method used - the case study - and its tools for collecting data. The data analysis and presentation have been detailed as well as the ethical issues and potential limitations of the research as a means of critiquing my study. In the next chapter, I present my data in life histories, with thick excerpts from my data in order to enable the reader to understand and interpret them.

CHAPTER 4

“COMPOSING MEANING”

...meaning has always implied a sense of wholeness. The whole may be, and usually is, made up of interconnected parts. And meaning for me, cannot be separated from context. Chopping reality- anyone's reality- into little bits and pieces does damage to meaning (Bellavita as quoted by Ely *et al.* 1997: 17).

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter, I provided the methodological framework for my research. The interpretive paradigm proved to be the best methodology which would enable me to ‘capture’ the perceptions of the female leaders of the Loreto Convent school of Pretoria on their experiences of leadership and the school's organisational culture.

In this chapter, I present and “*compose* (original) meaning from the data that lead (me) us to understand” (Ely *et al.* 1997: 20). After giving much thought to the way that I should present the data, I decided that I did not want to give a positivist and logical tone to data which were mainly collected through interviews and observation. My aim is to let the data ‘speak for themselves’ and to ‘speak to each other’ as they provided a humane perspective of female leadership and the context in which the leaders are leading, that is in the school's organisational culture. Thus, while portraying each of the female leaders, I introduce the themes and categories which have emerged in my data ‘immersion’.

The three female leaders who participated in this research are respectively the principal, the Head of department of the High School and the head girl of the Loreto Convent School of Pretoria. The female leaders' experiences of their appointment as leaders, and their leadership in the school are presented below. They also share their thoughts on the underlying values and beliefs of the school's organisational culture and its importance in the everyday life of the school. In their portrayals, my narrative voice is heard by means of my field notes taken while observing the school. They are used as a validity measure but also as a means of bringing “a sense of wholeness” (Bellavita as quoted by Ely *et al.* 1997: 17).

4.2 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.2.1 MRS D

Mrs D is 57 yrs old, married and is the mother of 5 children. She worked on a part-time basis in the Loreto Convent School in 1978 and permanently from 1983 to 1986. Then she followed her husband who was appointed to a position in another province. She returned to the school permanently as from 1992. She has been teaching French, English and religious education and occupied various posts of responsibilities such as religious education coordinator, Head of English and editor of the school's year book. She was appointed principal of the school, from Grade R to Grade 12 in 1996.

“Faith leader”

Being in a catholic school, Mrs D said that she feels that it is important for her to be what she calls a “faith leader”. She explained the term as being a leader who should live by the values that the school promotes. Thus, in her own life and her leadership, she tries to live by values such as justice, love, forgiveness and peace: “I really do try and pray that I be as Christ-like as I can, as loving as I can in this role...” This aspect of Mrs D was seen on the third day of my arrival at the school during one of the early morning staff meeting. Below is my field note relating the event:

After sharing a prayer, one the teachers, in an emotional atmosphere, thanked the staff for supporting her in bad times as well as Mrs D for having always believed in her. Mrs D thanked her and went towards her to give her a hug, saying: “You are a very special lady”- I saw an aspect of the principal as a different leader, very empathetic and supportive (Journal entry: 28 July 2004).

Moreover, faith has a fundamental place in her life and guides her in her choices; she related her experience when she was asked to apply for the principalship of the Loreto School:

I gave it much thought, I prayed about it, I consulted with a priest ... I discussed with my husband and we both went to see the priest ... and after all those exercises and really much prayer, I decided to apply and

whenever I did pray about it or meditate about it ...the answer I always got [sic] was, 'Don't be afraid, I'll be with you'. So I really felt assured, well perhaps God is guiding me into this...

Loreto tradition, values and Leadership

When asked about the values and beliefs of the Loreto School, Mrs D explained that the Loreto schools charisma was based on the values promoted by Mary Ward who was the founder of the Institute of the Blessed Mary congregation (IBVM). These values are love, truth, joy, freedom and justice and hence, every year, the school would develop a particular theme which would symbolise the “values that we particularly appreciate in the Loreto tradition and particularly the Loreto sisters...” Previous themes for the year were “God the father and the creator”, “Respect for the diversities of cultures” and “Honesty and Integrity”. For the 125th Anniversary of the school, they celebrated the theme of “Loyalty, community and commitment” and the 2004 theme was “Justice and peace and integrity of creation” These themes would be explained and represented by the staff and students by means of posters, creative writing and drawing competitions, prayers in assemblies or special masses. And so, Mrs D added that “we try and keep that theme before the eyes of the children throughout the year, we try to live by it and concentrate on it”. Themes, gospel values and reflective quotes are indeed striking when one walks along the school's corridors. I recorded some of these symbols and words which embodied the values and beliefs of the organisational culture in my journal:

In most of the corridors, from the pre-primary section to the high school one, laminated posters are hung on the walls: “Love understands and therefore waits”, “Love one another and God's earth”, words such as “Justice and peace”, “Integrity of creation”, “Don't tell me what I'm doing wrong, Tell me what I'm doing right”. Pictures of the Christ's passion as well as those of the Virgin Mary. Big posters about Determination, Destiny, Live your Dream. Quotes from the Bible, from famous people: “Remember no one can make you feel inferior without your consent”- Eleanor Roosevelt (Journal entry 26 July 2004).

She further declared that the school also lived out the ‘gospel values’ by having an outreach programme for AIDS families and children in Witbank where students would visit, collect clothing and blankets for the families and are reminded at assemblies that

they should always “reach out to the poor and the marginalised”. I recorded in my journal that pictures of such activities were stuck in the staff room. They were also shown to the Parent Teacher Association’s General Assembly meeting. Mrs D added that the school could still be faithful to the Loreto sisters’ aim of

[Helping the]...poor, not necessarily poor economically, perhaps poor in ability, emotionally impoverished ... children who come from families who are dysfunctional ... and the children manifest serious behavioural problems and learning problems...

Discussing the influence of the Loreto tradition and values on her leadership, Mrs D stated:

I’ve always been a faithful kind of person. I’ve always been a spiritual kind of person and I think to lead a school like this, it is important otherwise it would be any kind. It would be just an ordinary school but it’s not. But I think our faith really pioneered what we do here.

Therefore, it can be seen that the Loreto tradition is in line with the “being” of Mrs D; she acknowledges the fact that the Christian and the Loreto values have an important influence on the leadership and the whole school, from the students, to the staff and management. These values help in strengthening and guiding them to work with each other, with the children and parents, as well as assist them in dealing with the daily problems at school.

However, she added that she also contributed to the Loreto tradition and that it could be seen through several activities that she and the staff organise. She is greatly interested in staff development and began a series of workshops, training, personal studies, retreats and colloquiums aimed at contributing to the teachers’ self-enrichment as “it’s important to nurture the staff as well”. She also made sure that there are more relationships and partnerships with other catholic schools by having inter-catholic events and retreats for the students. Hence, she considers the organisational culture-leadership influence to come from “a bit of both” sides and finds it “comfortable working in a Loreto school ... and would find [it] very hard to go back and work in a Government school...”

Development of the individual in his/her uniqueness

The growth of the individual, students and staff, is at the heart of the Loreto values which are shared by Mrs D. Staff and students benefit from various workshops, spiritual retreats and camps aimed at developing the individual into a “stable, well- adjusted person”.

Teachers attended an emotional intelligence workshop which

...really helped the school to be a happier place because people have been able to express themselves in these workshops, to express how they feel, when some things are not right, to address...not to complain and grunt about [sic] but to try and do something about it...

Both students and teachers followed a course given by *Lifeline* in order to work on their relationships with others as well as means of self-development. Some students have even been trained to become peer counsellors. These self-enriching sessions helped in achieving personal growth and coping with life changes.

Mrs D also shared that through some celebrations and activities, the school promotes the cultural differences of all the individuals with their specific culture, language, gifts and talents: “they bring their own culture and their own springs and enrich the community”. For instance, students are taught in their arts and culture classes the “appreciation of each other’s culture and differences, enriching rather than threatening”. The school celebrates cultural day “where we are going to promote all the children coming in their cultural dress, with their own food and dance and music...” For instance in 2001, the school’s theme was “Respect for the diversities of cultures”. The Loreto School has always been for the promotion of inter-cultural and inter-racial sharing. This was particularly seen during the apartheid era where the Loreto sisters had been in trouble as they welcomed Black, Coloured and Indian children in their schools:

The 1980’s also saw Skinner Street opening its doors to learners of all races but at the same time trying not to antagonise the Apartheid government. There were occasions of conflicts as the municipal authorities would not allow any black girl to use the Pretoria City Hall (Loreto did not yet have its own hall) and would not allow them to participate in inter-schools sports. As a result Skinner Street’s sport became largely non-competitive (Milne & Kay 2003: 7).

The learning community

As it was seen in the previous section, the Loreto School promotes the values and beliefs of each individual in the school. This sharing is developed into a “learning community” as described by Mrs D where staff, students and the management team share their personal assumptions and values in order to develop the school community. This was experienced in the year 2000 when the school developed its vision statement which is defined by Mrs D as “something that you are striving towards”:

...we had a whole workshop on it, and we had to discuss with each other in small groups what values are important to us each one, what values are important to me and then, in the group what values could we then decide on, would be important to that little group and then the whole group together...we decided in the Loreto convent the values that we aspire to, that are important to us, are the values of justice and of love and we put that together: Learning and Leading in Justice and Love and particularly learning ‘coz’ [sic] we are a learning community...and we hope that we offer leadership in the field. We don’t want to be lagging behind...we want to be ahead in what we do, and always improving and always change to improve...

According to Mrs D, the learning community can also be created by having staff, students and parents doing activities together: for instance, the family day, inauguration mass and outings. The staff learns to know each other on special occasions such as retreats:

...we close the school and the staff go on retreat, where we have a day together... where we have mass and we have time for reflection and prayer...and then we have a picnic together and just socialize...so that’s a very special day...

However, the Loreto School should not be considered as a cocoon where the school limits itself to look at its own interests only but rather, it is open to the whole community of parents and nearby communities in need by organising outreach programmes.

“The natural inclination”

From the silent voice to “Having a voice”

Reflecting on her leadership approach and any previous leadership influences, Mrs D shared her thoughts by going back in time, to her childhood:

...I grew up with children should be seen and not heard and you are a good girl if you just keep quiet and be very submissive and even though I behaved that way, inside, I really rebelled against not having a voice and not being able to say what I think and that women in particular, just because they are women, are given certain roles, lesser roles. So, when I took on leadership here it was just, it came naturally, not to be authoritarian, not to simply lay down the laws...

In other words, in taking the leadership post, Mrs D reacted to the authoritarian and suppressive model of leadership in which she had been brought up. One notices that as a young girl she was not happy with the inferior position, the silenced voice that was imposed on women. This is why in her leadership approach, Mrs D focuses on having voices heard. Students can be heard through the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) and the teachers' opinions are gauged and reported in teachers' meetings. In the same way, the parents' voice is never ignored: newsletters are issued on a weekly basis and parents can issue comments and reflections. Even during the Parent Teachers Association plenary meeting, Mrs D would encourage the parents to ask questions or to give any comments which clearly showed that communication is the core of her leadership.

The idea of womanhood and expected roles in society which clearly has major influences on female leadership, are further expressed by Mrs D:

...I've also had 5 children so, I'm very much a mother-figure. I see myself as a mother and I really do try and understand people. If...if someone is not doing what they should do, I would try and find out why, why is someone unhappy, why they're not doing what they are asked to do and...and try and be understanding rather than just be harsh and unforgiving...

Thus, she feels that symbolising a "mother" image to the school will help the school to be happier and collegial; in fact, this metaphor focuses on the underlying idea of the school being a family and Mrs D as the mother-figure.

Participation and collaboration for “a happier school”

In accepting the principalship of the Loreto school, Mrs D thought: “I do have the qualities but I don’t have the experience” However, she accepted the responsibility of managing the whole school by adopting a participatory and collaborative style of management as revealed in her own words:

...when I took on leadership here it was just...it came naturally, not to be authoritarian, not to simply lay down the laws, tell people “This is what I command you to do, please do it!” but that together we decide what is best for the school, that we...we participate in change and get a consensus and because I feel very strongly that if people invest in something out of themselves and in what they are doing and decisions that they made it’s not just voiced out on them that they are part of the decision making...there’s...it leads to a happier school and I think more motivated staff...I am not a...an authoritarian kind of person. Right from the start, my natural inclination was to have a more participatory, collaborative type of management. So, I’ve slowly built up a team approach over the years.

Furthermore, she asserts that this leadership approach “leads to a happier school”. Decisions are taken by the senior management team composed of the junior primary, senior primary and high school Heads of department with their assistants. I attended one of the senior management meetings led by Mrs D where an atmosphere of “working together and deciding together” indeed prevailed. After the decision making, all the Heads of department discussed the issues with their sections so that “the feeling of the teachers to be [sic] gauged. So it’s forwards and backwards... and a lot of communication”.

The aspect of happiness and joy is a recurrent theme in Mrs D’s leadership style as she feels that each and every member of the staff is free and welcome to contribute in any way to the school’s culture, decisions and activities:

...I don’t see myself the authority on any subject...we all have talents, the strengths and weaknesses and so do I. And it gives me great joy to tap in [sic] on those talents and put them in a position in the school where they can use their gifts and their talents.

Promotion of leadership

Our charisma, our mission is the education of girls and to give them an opportunity to really develop their full potential and our girls when they leave here, they leave mostly as young ladies ready to go to university or tecknikon or into the working world and really feel skilled to face the challenge of work...

This excerpt from the conversation with Mrs D characterises her feeling concerning the achievement of the school's mission statement of the school. When looking back at the historical background of the IBVM congregation, one sees that Mary Ward promoted female leadership (chapter 1 page 6). On the very first day of my arrival in the school, I was struck by a fascinating poster which was hung in the corridors near the Grade 12 classes. As I have previously said, the Loreto School uses a lot of posters which informally educate and empower students. My journal entry (dated 26 July 2004) is as follows:

The poster on "I am proud of who I am" was attractive as it showed cartoons of girls in different situation:

Being a girl means loving family life and making decisions that affect their well-being.

Being a girl means having the right to say "no"- (Boyfriend situation).

Being a girl means my dreams about coming a career woman can come true. If I complete school, my life can be easier.

Being a girl means being able to make decisions at home, in the workplace and in my community.

Being a girl means being anything from a pilot to a president.

Being a girl entitles me to the right to be free from all forms of violence.

Finally, in bold:

I know that I need not sacrifice my ideals

Just because I am a girl.

I am proud of who I am.

I am proud to be a girl.

The posters showed that the school is aware of the inferior status of girls and women in society and that they want to inform the girls about their rights as well as empower them.

These posters showed the duties and responsibilities of women as well as what is expected of them from society. However, none of these expected roles prevent them from having and achieving their personal dreams. I felt that the school tries to be an empowering agent for girls by giving “girls a good education and preparing them to take their place in society”. In saying these words, Mrs D was proud to add that after several years, when the old girls would come back to visit at the school, “it’s wonderful seeing them how they develop...”

4.2.2 MRS T

Mrs T is 42 years old and is married. She has been in the Loreto School since 1994 and has been the Head of department of the High school for six years now. She is a mathematics teacher and has been teaching mostly Grade 12 as well as “bridging classes” between Grade 7 and Grade 8. She reflects on her beginnings at the Loreto School: “I was very, very frightened because of not being English-speaking and when I came here it was like they’ve heard about me and they’ve just accepted that I’m the right person and I came in here...”

“...We are a family”

The fact that Mrs T came from a mainly Afrikaans-speaking educational background helped her more than she would have thought. She used to think that her job was to teach mathematics only and then leave the class but gradually a special relationship was developed between her and the students of Grade 12:

I was very Afrikaans speaking...I came in here and I had to teach everything in English. I said to the Matriculants when we did work, I said to them: I know why these things are like this in Afrikaans- you girls have to teach me now what the terminology is in English. That’s really how I picked it up. Gradually becoming more involved in the school...that changed, you know, I got more involved with the girls. Once you go to things like Matrics dances, and being a class teacher, you get more involved with the girls...

Over time, Mrs T slowly espoused the invisible values and beliefs of the Loreto School as well as the school’s ethos. She also adopted “the shared way of perceiving, doing and

expressing things” (chapter 2 page 16) of the school. In fact, she found that thanks to the school culture, a new kind of relationship was being created between her students and her:

...to me the tradition of the school and...and the whole ethics about what we’re doing here, about we’re not just teaching, we are educating, we are uplifting, we are mothers, sisters, we are everything... to me, it’s making a very big difference in my life because at another school, I wouldn’t have had perhaps the opportunity...

This new form of relationship is quite similar to the type of relationship which would prevail in a family where they are mothers and sisters looking after or looking up to each other. In our conversation, Mrs T often referred to the “family-like” image of the school; in answering the question what makes the Loreto School different from other school, she answered:

For me, the fact that we are a family...whether it is the staff member or the learners... the caring and the loving and the reaching out for each other...and the nuns...you can just go to them and tell them you know this is what is happening in my life, would you please pray with me and for me...The same with the children: I’m not just teaching Maths... very often I will say “Sorry, I’m going to tell you this again but this is what happened to me” and they appreciate it...So the being there for each other...

In my journal entry, dated 29 July 2004, this is what I noted concerning the relationship between teachers and students as well as the importance of reaching out to others:

ON THE STAFF’S NOTICE BOARD: Each teacher or nun is allocated a student from matrics so that they can pray for them for the preparation of their exams.

Staff is asked to donate for Nick’s fund; each end of the month, the staff gives a contribution for Nick who is a young man (from another school) doing his matric and who is sponsored by the school for his studies.

Thus, for Mrs T, the basis of the Loreto’s underlying values and beliefs are the family values and relationships as well as the “being there for each other”. The Loreto School takes great pride in this family relationship by clearly stating it in their published mission statement (seen in chapter 2 page 17):

As the educating family of Loreto... it is our aim to establish a Christian community based on gospel values and the Loreto tradition, in which the potential of each person will be developed...

Community with a difference

Pursuing the discussion on the family-like relationships in the school and how these relationships are then transformed into a school community, Mrs T argued that it was not an easy task. Several factors work against the will to achieve a community made up of multiple cultures. For instance, most of the students live far from the school and they cannot fully participate in the school's activities because of lack of transport. Furthermore, the school management needs to deal with various problems of dysfunctional families, difficulties in reaching and communicating with the parents:

...in Afrikaans, you've got a saying that you must look after your own house, get your own affairs in order first before you can reach out to me...and with being more involved with the other side of the school besides the teaching, I am so aware of so many of our own girls who have problems and it seems like the everyday story about broken families or a financial problem or parents being divorced...

Mrs D also brought up this issue which she considered to be one of the future challenges that she and the whole school community will have to tackle and find solutions. This is the reason why Mrs T shared this reflection concerning the achievement of building a school community:

...in a way to build a community is sort of like, to me community is not in the sense that everybody else would understand. For me, community is looking after the people who are entrusted to me, my High school girls; to make sure that they have what they need and if there are any problems, that one can help to step in and help where you can. Very often, it is not taken the way it tended to be, because you're getting into someone's private affairs. Very often, unfortunately, this is what you've got to do, try and protect that child.

Leadership tension: Task v/s Ethos

In my journal entry (dated 28 July 2004), I noted: "I haven't learnt much today except that I find it quite difficult to approach Mrs T who is always busy- she seems to be quite straight forward and bold." This was the assumption that I had concerning Mrs T; the self-depiction of Mrs T is not far from my assumptions.

As a leader, Mrs T describes herself as somebody who is very strict and who likes “things to be done in a correct way”. She acknowledges to be “quick with my (her) mouth” and that sometimes, she had to apologise to say that she did not mean to hurt anyone.

...as a leader I would say, I’m always trying to be compassionate and to understand another person’s situation or whatever but there are limits. I cannot stand incompetent, incompetence ... if you are not competent, get someone else to do the job so it’s very difficult sometimes for me... I would rather do it myself than give it to someone else because unfortunately experience has taught to me. Maybe I’m not the best person to do the job but if I give it to someone else I have to do it in any case all over. I hate doing that because that’s wasting my time. I know that...that’s not right, I shouldn’t do that, one should give other people opportunities as well but as I’m saying I’ve been let down previously so, I’ll rather do it myself.

It occurred to me that Mrs T was quite a complex person. On one hand, she is taken up between this tension of being compassionate and on the other, her relentless fight of incompetence for the sake of achieving the task. No compromise is allowed when it comes to performing the task because “someone else can do the job”. However, she concedes that not trusting others is not the best way to lead.

When asked about the influence of the school’s ethos on her leadership, she recognized that she did not consciously refer to the school’s mission statement and ethos every time that she takes a decision but considers that her nature, her personality, her “being” is quite similar to the school’s ethos:

...now that you’re asking me now, I think maybe, I am first of all looking at the situation what we should do, the job should be done, what we should do and whatever but I think because of my nature and my...my heart and everything that I have, whatever decisions I am making... to do specific things is not very far from the ethos, you know although I am perhaps not aware of, you know...I’m not thinking: “Oh this is the ethos, this is the task, how can I manage the two of them...” I think that it is not very far...

Steel v/s heart metaphor

This complexity in leadership and personality is further seen in her self-portrayal and the way that her followers perceive her. Mrs T used a fascinating metaphor:

...I've got a very small heart, I am in tears very quickly if something touches me but on the outside I look like steel... I am very emotional, when something is not right with a specific child and I know the background and the circumstances, that would touch me tremendously and I'll go 10 miles to go and help them and other people don't necessarily know that...I heard another teacher saying the other day, it took her time to get to know me but now that she knows me, she knows that the outside is steel but the inside is a heart...

After three weeks spent in the school, I can say that this metaphor suits Mrs T. The high school students as well as the head girl (chapter 4 pages 60-61) have great respect for Mrs T, particularly when it comes to discipline matters. However, she also congratulates "her" girls and has a motherly approach towards them. She recognises the fact that people may perceive her as made of steel; for instance, she jokingly adds that her mother-in-law sometimes call her 'Sergeant Major' which shows that not only at school does she project this rigid picture but also in her personal life. However,

...my door is open, so very often, children that I don't even teach, come to me and say they've got a problem and all this and I would try to help them and often they come back and they'll say what I mean to them, where I see it as: "Oh! I didn't realise that it was such a big thing to you" But to me, I've touched someone's life where I didn't actually realise that...I've got that board there full of 'Thank you' notes and things which to me...that makes me worth being here...

A "fighting" mother

Earlier, I presented Mrs T as describing the family-like relationship in the school. As a female leader, it strikes me how Mrs T often uses words or expressions which one could associate with a fighting mother, just like a mother-lion would fight for her cubs:

...my children...and you will hear me referring to my children, my girls in high school...you mustn't touch. They are as dear to me as the girls in Waterskool or whatever...my grade 12 group of this year, I've had them since they are in grade 8, you don't touch them, they are mine and I will

fight for them, and I want the best for them... I hope that the girls see whatever I'm trying to do as to try to help them...

Compared to Mrs D, Mrs T is a different kind of mother who is ready to fight in order to get the best for her school. Consequently, this has some effects on her collaboration and relationships with other Head of departments of the school:

I get along extremely well with all of them. We are five in the management team; we don't always see eye-to-eye because we are actually three schools in one and every one wants their pound of flesh. So, if some things are going to happen, I want to see that my high school and my staff get the best...and am sure they want the same but then we always sort of compromise...

She added that if she had to manage a particular problem, she believed that communication is the only way to manage and solve conflicts. She also takes pride in her sense of humour: "...you need humour, you can't just...just be working, you need things to laugh about..." and her members of the staff have been used to it.

Model of leadership

Mrs T owes her fighting spirit to her mother who in some ways has been a model of female leadership for her:

...there are two people: my mother and Mrs D. My mother for sticking through everything with all the problems that she never gave up. She did what she wanted to do although there were very hard times, like she just went on...that you don't give up, no matter how hard circumstances are...and definitely Mrs D because she is such a good, honest person with character and everything...her whole way of living, her family, her children, her husband everything is very important to her...

She added that she would often share her life story with the high school students so that they knew that "we all at some stage of our life have difficult times. How you get through that, makes you a stronger person; that makes you rise above the others".

As mentioned, her other model of leadership is Mrs D for whom she expressed her deep respect and admiration. I noticed this aspect when I was at the school: she would never call the principal by her first name. She said that according to her background, even if Mrs

D and she shared a very informal relationship, it was very difficult for her to call someone who was older than she was by his/ her first name and it was her way of respecting Mrs D.

4.2.3 MISS J

This young lady of 17 years old came from a private primary school and started her secondary school years at the Loreto in 2000. She was appointed head of prefects and head girl of the school in 2003. She comes from a long tradition of brother and sisters who attended the Loreto School:

I don't think there was really a choice for me to come this school 'coz' [sic] both my older sisters and my brother came to this school - sort of tradition for me to come and my little sister is also in the school... I think because it's such a good school academically and the tradition with lots of rules...

Miss J shared her experiences as a young leader in the Loreto School: learning about leadership in the everyday life of the school and the difficulties and challenges. She also reflected on the school's culture and what she learnt, as a student, about the Loreto values and beliefs.

Learning leadership: Theory v/s practice

Miss J was chosen as the school's head girl after a long procedure; according to the school's tradition, the Grade 11's are assigned to one prefect in order to see what are the duties and responsibilities. The grades 9 upwards as well as the teachers vote for the girls who would be prefects for the following year.

...then they put the votes together then see who's got the highest, then from the highest they choose the prefects. Then from the prefects, the school votes again and the teachers vote again for the head girl and vice head girl.

Furthermore, prior to choosing the prefects, all the Grade 11's would go on leadership camps in order to learn about the approaches to leadership, the different types of leadership. The chosen prefects then go to what is called "Spirits of Adventure". She shared that "It's more of team work. They, they really try to get you to work in a team because you feel that if you really work in teams then each one is a leader so therefore, it's

bigger, better for the school". As I mentioned earlier, the school's culture promotes leadership by different means: students have some responsibilities and tasks to perform or sometimes they learn about entrepreneurship and leadership as I recorded in my journal (30 July 2004):

During break time, some students hire tables (R5 a big table and R2.50 half a table) in order to sell some sweets, cakes, any food and drinks on Fridays. They buy or prepare the food and sell them at a profit. In that way, they learn about marketing, selling and starting one's own business. While doing so, a teacher assesses them - quite related to leadership and organisational culture - this is what the school encourages.

However, Miss J acknowledged that all this training and sharing about leadership was not enough:

...After the camps and everything, we thought we were prepared for what was to come... really we weren't! Seriously we really weren't. It's good to have the theoretical part, people telling you it's this and that but when you are actually in that situation, you don't really think of the way they've told you... it's very difficult from just learning about it to actually sitting there and doing it.

She added that what is more needed are ways of resolving conflicts or what qualities should be used to get through to people and that there are different kinds of leaders:

...You can look at these different types of leaders and each one has different qualities but it's the way that you use these qualities in that situation that makes you a good or bad leader...like for me, I feel that I'm a leader that works, sort of with team. If I can have a team and I can lead them to do something then, I'll be successful but you get other type of leaders that could also just do it on their own. If you give them a task, they'll do it on their own, they wouldn't really need the help of other people or require the help of other people, so in that sense then, she's a good leader.

According to her, the main qualities of a leader are patience, fairness and knowing the rules. The last aspect was often mentioned by Miss J and I present the importance of rules in a separate section.

Leadership role: the Drama Queen

Miss J reflected on her leadership and described herself as leader in those terms:

...I'm a very patient person, that's helped me a lot and I'm also very fair and empathetic...I always try to put myself in that person's position, especially when they have a problem and think how would you feel if you were there, in that particular situation. So, may be I'm a bit too empathetic at times, because I'll be a bit lenient but I try my best to stick by the rules...

In her discussions of her leadership, she frequently refers to the different roles played by the individual and one of them is being a leader. She regrets that some students and sometimes friends do not understand that she has to play the role assigned to her:

...being a prefect is a role and everyone has a different role. I mean you play a different role at home, at school, with your friends. So, they should also understand that it's part of a certain role that you have to play...they should try and understand that this is who you are. Even though they might not see it everyday, or at home or at a party, it's who you are...

It occurred to me that before meeting Miss J, I had read the school's 2003 Year book and saw that she had one of the main roles in the school's play. The words and metaphors used by Miss J show that she is passionate about drama and that she takes her leadership as a role that she should play according to the school's rules and regulations:

...people don't understand that you have to change, part of you and it is may be not just change, it's maybe the qualities that are just brought out stronger in you. It's not a complete change, it's just that they are seeing another side of you that they have never seen before... sometimes I just have to scream: if you don't scream they just don't listen... I just raise my voice which sometimes people just look at me because before, I was a very quiet person. I'm a drama queen yeah [sic] but I wouldn't scream at the top of my voice just to get them to listen to me...

Source of inspiration

In discussing her leadership, Miss J mentioned several times the name of Mrs T, the High school's head of department who clearly influenced her leadership:

I think Mrs T...she can show you a true experience of it (leadership), especially for the new leaders, because from Mrs T you can see there are always problems, there are always going to be something that's going wrong. You have to work under pressure and when there is a crisis... you have to make sure that those decisions are the right ones... she shows that there's lots of people that's not gonna [sic] like you because of the things

that you have to do but because like you can't stop what you are doing just because of those people, you still have to carry on... she has been a role model...

However, Miss J added that she drew from herself to be a leader. Being ambitious, she tries to reach to her highest qualities which give her “the energy to go to the top...” Leadership made her become a stronger person who can handle more pressure, more responsibilities and made her “solid”.

Rules and values and leadership

Miss J considers that the Loreto values, beliefs and tradition are mainly about fairness, love, caring - in brief, “just to follow Jesus’ way... one of the things that is taught in the school is to be caring towards anyone, to love anyone who comes your way because in every person there’s a bit of God”. Moreover, she emphasized on the ‘family relationship’ prevailing in the school:

our teachers, they lead us every single day, they teach us mainly not just our theory work but they teach us about themselves and how they deal with the every day situations and I think that’s what I like about this school. There is a very close relationship between the students and the teachers

She is also proud of the discipline, the rules and regulations of the school which makes it very different from other schools. Concerning the influence of the Loreto tradition on her leadership, she feels very comfortable:

If it wasn’t for their (the school’s) tradition or even their rules, I don’t think that there can even be leaders because part of the values and traditions of the school is lots of qualities that the leadership has...if both weren’t there, then I don’t think that there would be a leader...I am a very realistic person and logical person, I like rules, I like the set of rules, so I think because Loreto has that, it’s sort of “rubbed off” on me...”

In our conversation, Miss J frequently referred to the school’s rules and added that her main duty was making sure that the rules are respected and kept. One can see that the expression “rubbed off on me” clearly shows that the school’s organisational culture influences the way that she leads.

4.3 CONCLUSION

In this section, I presented my data using the life stories approach as I wanted the data to express each female leader's unique experience and perceptions of leadership and organisational culture in their school. I also combined some information obtained from pamphlets, school magazines and handbooks as well as entries from my research journal which I kept during the three weeks spent at the Loreto Convent School of Pretoria.

From the above presentation of data, the following themes have emerged and these form the basis of my discussion of my main research findings in the following chapter:

- Organisational culture and leadership
- Female leadership
- The promotion of leadership
- Community building

CHAPTER 5

INTERPRETING AND DISCUSSING MEANINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter four I presented and ‘composed’ meanings from my collected data in order to better capture each of the participants’ unique experience of organisational culture and leadership in their school. My presentation of data also aimed at enabling the various forms of data to ‘speak’ for themselves and ‘speak’ freely to the reader. However, during this process, I recognise the fact that I had an active and ‘omnipotent’ role when composing the data as I had to analyse and categorise the data. Analysis is the “separating of material into its constituent elements... studying the nature of something or of its essential features and their relations” (Ely *et al.* 1997: 162). After the analysis, I categorised these elements into subheadings or what is known as ‘meanings units’ which can be a word, phrase, paragraph which “signal meaning to the researcher” (Ely *et al.* 1997: 162).

In this chapter, I interpret and discuss my analysed data in order to provide an in-depth understanding of the participants’ unique experience on organisational culture, leadership and more precisely female leadership. Thus, in order to clarify the discussion, I firstly give a brief recapitulation of my research questions and the line of argument of chapter two which are the premise of my research. Secondly, I discuss the meanings or themes which emerged after ‘reducing’ and ‘crystallising’ the data. In this process I have categorised the meanings into the following themes: organisational culture and leadership; female leadership; the promotion of leadership and community building.

5.1.1 REVIEW

In order to explore the influence of organisational culture in the Loreto Convent School of Pretoria as well as the female leaders' unique experiences of their leadership, I posed the following research questions:

- What is the role and/or influence of a school's organisational culture on leadership?
- What are the female leaders' perceptions of their leadership and its relationship with the organisational culture?
- How is leadership promoted in the Loreto Convent School of Pretoria?

The current literature on school leadership emphasises the importance of school culture which contributes to achieving a learning community (Senge cited by Gultig *et al.* 1999; Bush and Bell 2002). Theorists such as Schein (1992: 15) and Sergiovanni (2001:100), Deal and Peterson (1999: 10) claim that an organisation's unique culture indeed influences leadership, particularly in a school context. For Sergiovanni (2001:77), this relationship helps to bind a school into a community as well as enabling the leader to strengthen the school's values and beliefs by being the symbol of the school's culture. Schein (1992: 5), on the other hand, posits the leader shapes, manages and changes the organisation's culture in order to contribute to the organisation's success. My aim was to look at the organisational culture and leadership tension as mentioned in chapter 2.

Alongside the exploration of the school culture-leadership relationship, I explore the field of female leadership with a view to understanding women's perceptions of leadership in a strong organisational culture. However, my main aim is not to identify what type of leadership style or approach is needed in a school where organisational culture has such importance; instead I follow Greenfield by focussing on the leader and not on leadership (Greenfield as cited by Cahill 1994: 257). In the next section, I highlight the various themes which emerged through my data analysis; these themes shed light on the organisational culture-leadership relationship, further insights on female leadership and the role of the school culture in promoting leadership.

5.2 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

The theme of organisational culture comprises several issues which emerged during my data analysis. As I have shown in chapter four, the Loreto Convent School of Pretoria has a strong organisational culture in which staff, students, management and parents feel comfortable. The school is based on the Loreto and gospel values which shape their way of doing things (chapter 2 page 16). These underlying values are seen in the school through emblems, symbols, rituals and celebrations which provide the school with its uniqueness: my three participants acknowledge that the school is unlike any other school (chapter 4 pages 46 & 53).

Thus, in this section, I highlight the importance of the school's culture in the everyday running of the school but I also show that the leader participates in maintaining the culture. Furthermore, I posit that a 'different' kind of school needs a different approach to leadership or rather a different kind of leader in order to be in line with the school's unique organisational culture.

5.2.1 NURTURING THE TREE: CONTINUING THE LORETO VALUES AND TRADITION

The "education family" (as they call themselves in their mission statement) of the Loreto Convent School was founded 126 years ago, based on the Loreto tradition and gospel values. The parents who send their children to the school, the teaching and non-teaching staff and the students know that 'their' school aims at giving them the best in terms of Christian values (values which are shared by all the religions) as well as high academic standards. Values and tradition which have been set up by the Loreto sisters in 1873 are still carried on by the laity ever since 1989. The lay principals made sure that the Loreto Convent school of Pretoria would not lose any of those traditions, values and beliefs which were developed by the Loreto sisters during South African hard times.

Like a 126 years old mature tree, the school's organisational culture shares the same prestige and respect for the Loreto values and tradition. My findings show that the management, through Mrs D and Mrs T, the staff and the students (Miss J) are all aware that the Loreto School provides a different type of education (chapter 4 pages 53 & 61). As a result, through their leadership, whether they are consciously or unconsciously aware of it, the three participants aim

at nurturing the tree or the organisational culture that was planted by the Loreto sisters 126 years ago.

Various means have been used to sustain the organisational culture. The management team and the staff jointly developed a mission/vision statement in 2000; Mrs D introduced the idea of having a theme for the school year in order to maintain values which they particularly appreciated in the Loreto tradition (chapter 4 page 48); rituals such as prayers twice daily or the weekly special assemblies and the celebration of their heroines are some of the many ways of maintaining the school culture. Hardy (in Tomlinson *et al.* 1999: 41) considered, in her research on the uniqueness of Catholic school, that her main responsibility was to ensure that the school fulfills its mission. Furthermore, she shared that being the principal of a Catholic school meant to understand the unique contribution that the teaching staff and especially the headteacher make to the school in the area of faith development (Hardy in Tomlinson *et al.* 1999: 42-43).

In the same way, the school leaders in the Loreto Convent School of Pretoria encourage the culture-embedding mechanisms as suggested by Schein (1992: 231) which is about constantly shaping and sustaining the school culture. The leaders do so by making sure that the established traditions, norm and beliefs are respected and espoused by the others (chap 4 pages 45, 52 & 61). In that way, they contribute to the school's success. Deal and Peterson (1999: 115-116) provided to school leaders an outline of the pathways towards a successful school culture:

- Develop a student-centered mission and purpose that motivates the heads and hearts of staff, students and community
- Strengthen elements of the existing culture that are positive and supportive of core values
- Build on the established traditions and values, adding new, constructive ones to the existing combination
- Recruit, hire, and socialize staff who share the values of the culture and who will add new insights or skills to the culture
- Use the history (or build the history if the school is new) of the culture to fortify the core values and beliefs
- Sustain core norms, values, and beliefs in everything the school does.

These guidelines are vividly seen in the everyday life of the Loreto School. For instance, when Mrs T first came to the school, the caring and sharing values which she witnessed in the staff, management and students prompted her to realize that were more than educating but rather, they are uplifting the students (chapter 4 page 53). However, I believe that if changes are to be made as it would be the case in any effective learning organisation, the leaders would do those changes according to the school's tradition and underlying beliefs, that is, making sure that they are in line with the prevailing values.

In effect, the leaders play the role of “nurturer of values” or “entrepreneur of values” as recommended by Greenfield:

He (Greenfield) sees leaders as providing the ‘glue’ which unites a number of disparate individuals as a group...the leader transcends all other factors involved in organizations by metamorphosing group will, thoughts and intentions into his/her own, thus becoming the entrepreneur for the values to be observed by individuals in the organization (Cahill 1994: 258).

In the same vein, the Second Vatican Council's *aggiornamento* in Catholic education, through the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education urged all catholic schools to be places where the task is “to promote a sense of values, to attend to the formation of ethical and social awareness” and thereby to “foster strong and responsible individuals capable of making free and correct choices” (Cahill 1994: 252).

Therefore, in this context, one can say that the kind of leadership that is lived out by the school leaders is one of a leader who is the nurturer of values and who participates fully in the reinforcement of the school's shared basic assumptions.

5.2.2 PERSONAL FAITH LEADING THE WAY

Gallagher, a Catholic writer, believed that “our Catholic schools are, or should be, distinctive because their entire educational policy and approach are inspired by and flow from the vision of life which is enshrined in our faith tradition” (Gallagher as cited by Hardy in Tomlinson *et al.* 1999: 41).

I also consider that personal faith plays a significant role in the organisational culture-leadership connection. Since the gospel values are at the heart of the organisational culture, I found that the school’s leaders need to have a spiritual faith which would enable them to better understand the school’s culture as well as lead the school. In fact, Mrs D acknowledged this significant factor in her leadership (chapter 4 pages 46). Similarly, the head girl talks about the school culture which encourages you “to follow Jesus’ way” (chapter 4 page 61) which is the way of love, care and compassion and she tries to practice it in her leadership.

The idea of “following Jesus’ way”, of being as “Christ-like” as possible (chapter 4 page 44) resonates with Sergiovanni’s discussions of Greenleaf’s concept of Servant leadership (Sergiovanni in Fullan 2000: 269-286). He explained that the concept of Servant Leadership is closely related to Greenfield’s (2004) moral leadership which is based on Burns’ transformational leadership. Sergiovanni claimed that the school learning community, as a whole, aspires to reach for an ideal or a sense of purpose in order to “convert followers into leaders and leaders into moral agents” (Burns as quoted by Greenfield 2004: 176). However, in Servant leadership, it is not about becoming a leader to gain “power over people but power to serve” (Sergiovanni in Fullan 2000: 280):

Servant leadership is more easily provided if the leader understands that serving others is important but that the most important thing is to serve the values and ideas that help shape the school as covenantal community...

I believe that the idea of ‘servant leadership’ is appropriate to the context of the Loreto Convent School where the leaders aim at serving a moral purpose and working in line with the school’s values.

However, if it is true to say that values such as love, peace, justice, compassion and respect are promoted by the gospel and the Christian faith, they are also universally recognised human values which are accepted and conveyed by various other religions. This aspect of universality of values was described by Covey (1989: 33-34) as principles which he defined as follows:

Principles are like lighthouses. They are natural laws that cannot be broken. These principles are a part of almost every major enduring religion, as well as enduring social philosophies and ethical systems.

Thus, even if one is not a Christian, these values are at the heart of the school and are respected, espoused and practised in the everyday of the school. For instance, I have witnessed and experienced the daily prayers done every morning in the staff room before any announcement or before any teaching or decision-making. The students are also used to starting their day with the prayers. Then again, prayers and assemblies are not simply one of the various rituals of the school, they are more than that: they are transformed into sharing and thanking. It becomes almost like a family's special time which nourishes the soul and a time when all are gathered to thank the Lord. As Mrs D declared the whole school needs God's strength in order to work with the children and deal with the daily issues of school life:

I think we really do need God's strength to guide us through the day, to work with each other; to work with the children and work with the parents and all the problems that we get daily...

Thus, the school ethos which is based not only on gospel values but also on human values is an organisational culture which is "a negotiated product of the shared sentiments of the school participants" (Sergiovanni 2001: 108). Similarly, the Congregation for Catholic Education believes that "each member of the school community, albeit with differing degrees of awareness, adopts a common vision, a common outlook on life, based on adherence to a scale of value in which he believes" (Congregation for Catholic Education as cited by Cahill 1994: 257). This important aspect of "community" in catholic schools will be discussed later in a separate section. Hence, the school's culture is open to other communities, religions and cultures as claimed by Mrs D: "...they bring their own culture and their own springs and enrich the community".

In this perspective, the implications for leadership would be to say that faith “pioneers” (chapter 4 page 46) and drives the leaders’ actions, decisions and approach in the Loreto School. In other words, the leaders’ ‘being’, personal values and faith is close to the schools basic assumptions as expressed by Mrs T (chapter 4 page 56). The leader, who him/herself is an individual is at the heart of the leadership. Van der Mescht’s main finding in his phenomenological study of leaders in the Eastern Cape showed: “...leadership becomes an extension of who one is; one’s daily work is a manifestation of one’s self” (van der Mescht 1996: 162).

Furthermore, it is equally important for the leader to personify or embody the school culture as it prevents the school from being ‘fake’ or hiding its real image beneath various symbols and rituals. Watkins (in Smyth 1989: 29) asserts:

In the study of leadership in organizations a critical examination can attempt to discern whether myths, rituals and the symbolic order are being manipulated to attain legitimate a particular political position.

The leader should truly express the school’s culture in his/her personal life, in the language, attitude and behaviour as he/she is a symbol of that culture to the staff, students and even the school’s exterior environment (parents, community and society). In a catholic school, it is a significant point as Roche (in Begley 1999:268) declares:

When a school community perceives a significant degree of dissonance between what the school leaders say and what they do, the apparent hypocrisy often results in a credibility or authenticity crisis for the principal concerned...Such a situation has enormous implications for the development and maintenance of Catholic school cultures.

Similarly, Sergiovanni & Corbally (1986: 106) emphasized this aspect of the leader – he/she should be not be preoccupied with “acting” but rather “being” the leader who makes meanings and expresses the organisational values.

Hence, we see that the leader inspires him/herself from his/her 'being' in order to share and adapt with the prevailing culture which will in some ways influence the leadership. It reinforces the idea which I mentioned earlier (chapter 2 page 12) that "...organizations are not simple systems like machines or adaptive organisms; they are human systems manifesting complex patterns of cultural activity" (Morgan, Frost & Pondy as cited by Watkins in Smyth 1989:29).

5.2.3 TASK V/S ETHOS?

I have shown in the previous section that faith is a significant factor in the leadership of the Loreto Convent School of Pretoria. However, relying on faith or the school values only can prove to be quite difficult when one needs to face new South African and international educational policies such as development appraisal, school evaluation policies, quality assurance management and increased accountability. These educational demands show that there is a need for quality training, teaching and learning; a renewed interest in performing the task effectively and qualitatively in order to be up to date with the international standards in education. For instance, Mrs T clearly stated that she would rather do the job herself than having to deal with incompetence (chapter 4 page 55). This difficulty to delegate comes from the fact that she had been "let down" in the past. Tyala (2004: 66-67) gave other reasons why some principals have difficulties in delegating: since they are accountable to the authorities, whenever a problem comes up, "you have to account as an individual. It's not the whole SMT who accounts..." Furthermore, some principals feel embarrassed or even "guilty" whenever the delegated task has not been accomplished and they have to provide an explanation. Hence, achieving the task remains one of the top priorities of most school leaders, even if they do it through different ways.

Several studies done in a South African context showed that one of the factors which contribute to school improvement is for the school to have an effective culture of learning, delegating and accountability:

Quality improvement is culturally located in that improving quality becomes an overriding mission for the school. It is an essential part of the development strategy for the school and is something that is everyone's responsibility (Murgatroyd as quoted by De Bruyn in Van Schaik 2002: 297).

In such a competitive context, sometimes leaders are torn between achieving the task and staying faithful to the school's organisational values such as compassion and empathy. Mrs T gave a good example of such dilemmas (chapter 4 page 55). Mrs D also shared tensions that she often has to face:

I really do try and understand people...I really try and be just in my dealings with the staff. There have been times, very hard times when I've had to dismiss staff but I've done it in the most just way...or with the children who have been given a chance over and over again and just not improving and we have to call in the parents...

I believe that principals who are in a strong, organisational culture probably face such kinds of leadership tensions on a daily basis. On one hand, the need to support and live out the organisational values which promote love, forgiveness and compassion and on the other, the need to achieve the task and take strict measures such as dismissal.

However, I think that this tension can be resolved through the organisational culture but also with the leader's intention to make full use of the organisational culture. The aim of having collectively created shared assumptions, values, beliefs and norms is precisely to help the organisation (and the leader) during the process of decision making or in the daily running of the school. For instance, in the Loreto school, the mission statement clearly states "...by setting high educational and moral standards, we aim to produce well educated, mature, self-disciplined citizens who will serve their own community and their country" (Loreto Convent Schools Code of Conduct). Therefore, parents, students and staff are aware that in order to attain the "high educational standards" much effort is required, and that sometimes strict measures will be taken if one goes against the school's mission.

Therefore, if there are any tensions and conflicts, the leader or the management team should 'draw' from the culture and if need be, even transform the rules in order to resolve the tension is also part of the culture. The school's ethos being the foundation on which the school's culture has been built, provides a sense of "stability and order" (Sergiovanni & Corbally 1986: 9). However, I believe that any resolution of tension depends on the leader's "will, intention and value" (Greenfield & Ribbins 1993:104) working in line with the organisational culture .

5.2.4 SUMMARY

From my discussions of the leadership-organisational culture relationship, I now summarise the implications of the findings. Firstly, it has been argued by various researchers that a strong and positive organisational culture contributes greatly to effective learning and teaching within the school (Deal and Peterson 1999: 7). In the Loreto Convent School of Pretoria, the leaders foster and nurture the existing culture as they strongly believe that it contributes to achieving school improvement and effectiveness. Secondly, the school culture also provides a collegial and collaborative environment which is transformed into the school community or family spirit and thus, such an atmosphere brings more commitment and motivation (Deal and Peterson 1999: 8).

I also pointed out that having spiritual faith contributes to strengthening the school's culture which is based on Christian faith and Loreto Sisters' approach to education. In this perspective, the leaders' faith "serves as a compass setting to steer people in a common direction..." (Sergiovanni 200: 108).

Lastly, the leaders sometimes felt that they had difficulties in balancing the school's values of forgiveness, love and compassion on one side and achieving the task which requires them to be strict and firm in order to keep abreast with the competitive educational demands on the national and international level.

In the next section, I discuss the aspect of female leadership under which several points of discussions emerged.

5.3 FEMALE LEADERSHIP - “THE NATURAL INCLINATION”

The second focus of my study was to explore the field of female leadership. Greyvenstein (2000: 33) has pointed out that research on gender in educational management in South Africa is still at its early stages. I hope that through my study of the three female leaders, I help in contributing further insights on gender issues in educational leadership.

I discuss my findings in four sections: the role of socialisation which contributes to gaining a leadership identity; the ‘mother’ metaphor as explained by Enomoto (2000: 384) and as expressed by my female leaders; aspects of Rosener’s (1990) interactive leadership and finally leadership as drama.

5.3.1 SOCIALISATION AND LEADERSHIP IDENTITY

As shown in chapter four, my participants, most precisely the principal and the High school Head of Department, shared thoughts on their childhood and upbringing when reflecting on their leadership. Mrs D recollected that she was brought up in a Victorian way where “children should be seen and not heard...” and that girls should be submissive (chapter 4 pages 49). In the same way, Mrs T learned to respect those older than her by calling them by their surname even if they have a very close relationship (chapter 4 page 57-58).

Curry (2000) explored the aspects of identity construction as well as socialisation contributing to female leaders approach to leadership. She explored the “subjective experiences of constructing themselves as leaders” by asking questions about “relationship with and identification with parents; exposure to parenting styles; adult role models and mentoring; family, school, and peer norms regarding gender and social roles...” (Curry 2000: 29).

The above examples of the female leaders show that, like any individual, the leader is a ‘product’ of the construction of his/her identity which has been and is still created by the upbringing, family background as well as relationships with others or what we call socialisation. The way that he/she leads might have somehow been influenced by

socialisation; sometimes, leaders might purposefully lead in a way that is contrary to or as a reaction to the upbringing. The last point proves to be true in Mrs D's case: it was "natural" for her to be collaborative and encourage others to "voice out" their opinion as she was not happy with her authoritarian upbringing (chapter 2 pages 49).

Hence, when undertaking the responsibility as the school's principal, Mrs D drew from her past to reflect on the type of leadership that she had witnessed and experienced. She decided that she would not perpetuate her father's authoritarian or "Victorian" leadership as she remembered that she was unhappy with such kind of authority during that period. As a reaction to this approach, she decided that collaboration, communication and sharing of power would be the core of her leadership.

Women's 'natural' approach to participative style is indicated by Rosener's (1990: 124) study:

Many of the women I interviewed said the behavior and beliefs that underlie their leadership come naturally to them. I attribute this to two things: their socialization and the career paths they have chosen.

I believe that another aspect of socialisation which influences female leadership is the stereotypes attached to leader behaviour and image. History and mythology, socialisation as well as today's media and competitiveness have been providing us with caricatures and stereotypes of how the ideal leader should behave, or even look like, particularly in the business or political world. The leader is usually seen as powerful, flawless, emotionless, a made of steel type of man. These 'qualities' would be associated with men and not quite the image that society would relate to women. The idea of a woman being a leader is an everlasting challenge for South African female principals. According to Phendla (2004: 58), male and female staff as well as students still have difficulties in getting used to a woman leading a school.

Mrs T used the "steel" metaphor which is often associated with effectiveness and success in leadership. In the business language one would refer to "a man of steel" when talking of a strong and imposing businessman. Mrs T admitted that others tend to see her as "steel" whereas she believes that she is the "small heart" type (chapter 4 page 56). As a leader,

she is caught between the need to be “steel”: effective, strict and ‘in-control’ leader which Shakeshaft (1989: 199) would describe as ‘masculine’ characteristics and the “heart”: the compassionate, emotional and easily approachable leader which would be related to ‘feminine’ qualities.

This tension or dichotomy between ‘heart’ and ‘steel’ is probably one which has been created by socialisation in the sense that women need to reflect a ‘command and control’ image in order to show that they are effective as leaders (Coleman 2002: 134). Similarly, male leaders avoid having a cooperative and empathetic approach as these are ‘feminine’ characteristics or what Rosener calls ‘interactive’ leadership style. However, she cautions: “Linking interactive leadership directly to females is a mistake” (Rosener 1990: 125). In fact, Mrs T realises that in her personal life, she also reflects the ‘commanding’ characteristic as even her mother-in-law jokingly calls her “Sergeant Major”. As I show in the next section, it might be that it is part of Mrs T’s personality, her ‘fighting mother’ spirit which she uses both in her personal life and at school.

Therefore, from the above argument, it would be important that researchers in the field of educational management further explore the relationship between socialisation and the advancement of women in educational administration. Greyvenstein (2000: 33) stated: “Socialised stereotyping of traditional roles and the associated attitudes of both males and females are the major factors underlying the under-representation of women in educational management” and thus, the solution would be “...a return to fundamental philosophies pertaining to both the universality of mankind within the society, and the individuality of both men and women, each with their unique and complementary contribution to life”.

5.3.2 THE ‘MOTHER’ METAPHOR

Enomoto (2000) explored the concept of educational management as a gendered construction. She analysed the metaphor of the ‘leader as mother’ which is usually attached to female leaders in order to reinforce but also deconstruct the metaphor by highlighting how the metaphor is double-edged. She argued:

The mother metaphor specified a female leader...while the leader as mother highlighted a woman's work in child care, nurturing, and caring for others, the depiction of mother in a home environment implied that she was out of place if she was out of her home. The metaphor reinforced the inappropriate nature of mothering in management and leadership (Enomoto 2000: 392).

Mwingi's study (2000: 121) also showed that women principals drew on their experiences of motherhood: nurturing and caring were "the driving force behind their leadership".

In effect, the 'mother image' emerged as a strong feature in the leadership approach of Mrs D and Mrs T; interestingly enough, the 'mother' image is seen with a difference. Mrs D describes herself as the "mother-figure" in the school because of her understanding and caring attitude. One would not contest this fact when seeing her approach to both staff and students (chapter 4 pages 48 & 49). Mrs T herself declared that Mrs D was one of her role models because "...she is such a good, honest person with character and everything...her whole way of living, her family, her children, her husband everything is very important to her..." (chapter 4 page 57). As for Mrs T, in a different way, she is indeed a mother to her school but she is the "fighting mother". From what she has shared about her own mother, Mrs T seemed to have been inspired by her mother's leadership and motherhood qualities: she learned that one should always fight and be able to stick to what one believes despite the problems. This is why in her leadership of the High School, she is ready to fight for her "pound of flesh" in order for "her" staff and girls to get "the best".

In an African context, mothers have a significant importance: some tribes still follow matriarchal traditions; the expression 'mother-earth' signifies the respect that Africans have for this precious natural resource which provides food. The implications of the role of mothers or the 'mother image' in female leadership are that they are linked to role modelling (Van der Mescht 2004: 8) and very often, inspire the female leaders in the way they manage and lead the school. In their South African study of the possible barriers to the advancement of women administrators in the educational sector, Mathipa and Tsoka (2001: 330) declared that women in leadership positions

...could play a constructive part in the improvement of education largely because of their role as mothers. Women have become the guarantors of a

deeper humanity, carrying a sense of community, of belonging, of selflessness and care.

Moreover, because of socialisation and motherhood, many female educational leaders believe that adopting a nurturing, caring and family approach in schools brings security, comfort and happiness to the school.

Hence, I can say that Enomoto's deconstruction of the 'mother metaphor' does not really fit an African context where mothers have always been involved in economic life either as the unique breadwinners in the family or as head of families particularly when the husbands need to work in towns or in mines. Being "out of home" for the African woman means sustaining her family. In my case study, the principal and the Head of Department of High School fully assume the triple roles that they have to play in the school: women in management, teachers and mothers.

5.3.3 LEADING WITH ENTHUSIASM

...it gives me great joy to tap in on those talents and put them in a position in the school where they can use their gifts and their talents (chapter 4 page 50).

Mrs D's words describe her approach towards her staff and how in some ways, her joy would motivate everybody (chapter 4: *Ibid.*). Various leadership studies such as the Hawthorne experiment (Hoy & Miskel 1996: 12) have clearly shown that subordinates' motivation creates a better working environment conducive to production, collaborative management as well as create a sense of community (Angus in Smyth 1989: 69).

One of the characteristics of Rosener's interactive leadership (1990: 124) is enthusiasm and energy with which the female administrators lead their organisations:

The women leaders spoke of their enthusiasm for work and how they spread their enthusiasm around to make work a challenge that is exhilarating and fun.

As shown by Rosener, several women leaders (so does Mrs D) know and believe that motivation and employees' happiness is the best way to make them feel comfortable in their workplace, be committed to the organisation as well as take initiative for further development. As Mrs D stated, she knows that her management team and herself do not have the monopoly in finding solutions to problems or in bringing forward new ideas for the school's improvement (chapter 4 page 50). She has enough trust in her staff and knows she can count on her staff by enabling them to "...use their gifts and their talents". This "motivating", human relations-centred approach is the basis of Burns' transformational leadership which described the leader-followers relationship as built on trust, shared purpose of effectiveness for organisation, where "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (Burns as quoted by Angus in Smyth 1989: 69). This aspect of Mrs D confirms what several studies (Mwingi 2000; Rosener 1990) had found: most women leaders adopt a transformational approach or, according to Rosener, an interactive leadership style.

Thus, for many women leaders, leading with enthusiasm leads to the whole school's happiness and motivation which in turn, instils a spirit of commitment, loyalty and moral purpose (as discussed in chapter 2 pages 25-26). There is mutual trust which contributes to more delegation and participation from staff, leading to a sense of belonging, of family and community. However, there can be exceptions; for instance, Mrs T saying that she had difficulties in delegating as she had previously been "let down" by some people. But generally, enthusiasm and other aspects of interactive leadership "...reflect their (women's) belief that allowing employees to contribute and to feel powerful and important is a win-win situation- good for the employees and the organization" (Rosener 1990: 120).

5.3.4 LEADERSHIP ROLE

Hall (in Bush *et al.* 1999: 156) declared that new studies in educational management and leadership should seek to provide "an appropriate stage for giving gender not only a speaking part but also a central role in understanding and developing educational management". I believe that Hall's choice of words relating to the world of plays and

drama is an appropriate way for me to discuss leadership closely related to drama and role modelling.

As presented in chapter four (page 60), the head girl expressed her leadership by using several words related to drama and role-playing; she plays several roles: daughter, friend, sister, student and leader. All these roles are part of who she is and thanks to her leadership role, she discovered qualities which were hidden in her. Mrs T acknowledged that the staff and she are “mothers, sisters and everything” (chapter 4 page 53) to the students; hence, as staff and leader, they have multiple roles to play.

Starratt (1993: 114-117) approached leadership from a “drama-oriented” angle where he posited that drama is present in everyday life and in our social interactions. This idea is shared by Deal and Peterson (1999: 97) who assert: “If ‘all the world’s a stage,’ then aspects of the life of a school are fascinating whether they are comedy, tragedy, drama, or action”. The leader can be a director, actor, stage manager, critic as well as a script writer (Starratt 1993: 138-142).

For example, sometimes the leader is an actor. Starratt’s idea is also shared by Deal and Peterson (1999: 97) where the leader interacts with other actors (teachers/students or parents) and has a feel of what is going on in the community and in this way, he/she maintain the relationships. In a school context, from time to time, it is good for the principal to have lunch with the staff as his/her presence is appreciated by the staff but also, it is through casual conversations that one learns more about the staff.

The leader can also be a critic where he/she stops in order to reflect on the performance (of the students or the staff) and does a self-evaluation in order to know whether improvement and changes are needed. At times, the school leader is a stage manager where he/she is present in the detailed running of the school; for instance, Mrs T is responsible for the administrative and academic sides of the High school, she checks if the students’ fees are paid, reports have been done correctly and various small but significant aspects of the daily running of the school. Hence, the school leader has various roles to play on the “school stage”.

Furthermore, when interpreting the head girl's words, one sees that she identifies herself with her role; she knows that many students and friends do not understand that this role is truly who she is (chapter 4 page 60). At times, her words are confusing as she sometimes talks of “playing a role” and then strongly asserts that the role is who she is. However, this aspect is quite common for “dramatic” leaders. In van der Mescht's study, the leaders adopted different behaviours and styles which “have become so assimilated as to be part of who they are” (Van der Mescht 1996: 163).

According to Kauria (2003: 65) role modelling is also an important aspect of leadership as the followers learn important values and beliefs through the “being” of their leaders as well as identify themselves to the leaders. As discussed in chapter two (page 21), it is important for the leader to be genuine and true in his/her self as he/she is a symbol of the school's culture and directly or indirectly becomes a model for the whole school. Thus Kauria (2003: 65) concludes:

When leaders are role models, then in a way they convince their followers that they know what they are doing and they are thus confident and through that they generate hope and confidence in their followers. I think how a leader leads his/her life determines whether followers want to put their lives in his or her hands.



Sr Shirley unveiling the new name plaque of the school hall

Hence, role playing and role modelling are ways that leaders use in order to be effective in their leadership. In the case of the Loreto Convent School of Pretoria, the girls certainly look up at their teachers and leaders as role models for their future life in the world. Miss J declared that one of her role models of leadership was Mrs T

and through her, she has learned a lot about the challenges that leaders must face and ways to tackle them (chapter 4 pages 60-61). This picture shows Sister Shirley Kay unveiling the new name of the school's hall which was named after her. She was one of the former principals of the school who is still actively involved in the school by attending the daily staff meetings and schools activities. Therefore, by naming the new hall after one of the

principals and Loreto sister, the school acknowledges the importance of this female leader as a role model.

5.4 THE PROMOTION OF LEADERSHIP

In the preceding section I discussed the aspects of female leadership in relation to socialization, the significance of the “mother” metaphor, the interactive leadership style and the role of drama. In this section, I discuss how the leaders and organisational culture of the Loreto Convent School of Pretoria promote leadership, not only in the field of education but also leadership in society as a woman and an Ex-Loreto girl.

5.4.1 LEARNING LEADERSHIP: LEADING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

As mentioned in chapter four, it is the school’s ethos through the mission statement to “learn and lead in love and justice”. The promotion of leadership is seen in the everyday life of the school where the students can take up various posts of responsibilities such as prefects, members of RCL, class captains, media monitors or working in the tuck shop. Some of them have received training but there is still a gap between the training and everyday life as Miss J realised (chapter 4 page 59).

It is true to say that for the students, these are ways to be known in the school and enjoy some of the “power” but they are also aware that they have to be responsible and accountable to the teachers and the management for each action. It is a way for them to be prepared to face the challenges of work or further studies and be ready for life after school, in their community or in society (chapter 4 pages 51-52).

Moreover, the school aims at offering leadership in education as they do not want to lag behind (chapter 4 page 48). In effect, for several years, the Matric pass rate has been consistently 100%. However, the school also aims at leading at the social level by helping those who are economically and socially poor, those who are emotionally impoverished because of family problems, poverty and marginalization. Faithful to the Loreto tradition, the school offers leadership in the field of social justice by reaching out to the community

in order to help and uplift it (chapter 4 page 46). Current issues in educational management and administration focus on leadership for social justice. According to Shields (2004:110):

Educational leaders are expected to be transformative, to attend to social justice as well as academic achievement...To ensure that we create schools that are socially just, educators must overcome silences about such aspects as ethnicity and social class.

In a South African context, Phendla (2004:61) defines social justice as involving “social actors who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility towards and with others and to society as a whole”. Her study showed how three black female principals’ main aim was to restore social justice in their schools as they had been themselves oppressed because of their race, gender and status:

In general, organisational change and social justice are of paramount significance at this stage of South African history; in particular and most important, social justice is central to the lives of women and especially Black women who are defined through multiple burdens of oppression.

In this respect, I believe that the Loreto Convent School does not live in an ‘ivory tower’ where it is only concerned for its staff, students and parents but it is its wish to make the school part of Pretoria’s community in order to fight for social justice.

In a similar vein, for the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, it is the duty of all catholic schools to be at the service of the marginalised and the poor of the community and society:

...in spite of numerous obstacles, the Catholic school has continued to share responsibility for the social and cultural development of the different communities and peoples to which it belongs, participating in their joys and hopes, their sufferings and difficulties, their efforts to achieve genuine human and communitarian progress... (Laghi & Martins 1997 no page)

Hence, the students and staff of the Loreto School learn that leadership is not simply having power over others and fulfil one’s selfish interests or motives. It is leadership and

power which is used to reach out to others and serve those who are in need (chapter 2 page 68).

5.4.2 “...WOMEN IN TIME TO COME WILL DO MUCH”

Through the Loreto’s unique ethos, female students of the school are empowered to take their place in society and fulfil Mary Ward’s wish (chapter 1 page 6). The various posters and sayings which are seen in the corridors clearly encourage the girls to believe in themselves and reach out to their dreams in order to “take their place in society” (chapter 4 page 52). Despite the existing social barriers, society’s assigned roles for women and other external factors such as poverty and discrimination, each Loreto Girl feels empowered enough to face the world, whether for further studies, in their place of work or at the service of their country.

As I have presented in chapter four, bright coloured posters, spiritual and philosophical quotes which are hung in the school’s classes and corridors create an impact on the girls and lead them to truly believe that they can make a difference in the world, as one of the posters claimed:

I know that I need not sacrifice my ideals
Just because I am a girl.
I am proud of who I am.
I am proud to be a girl.

5.5 A SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY

5.5.1 THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY AS FAMILY

The last theme of my discussion is the Loreto Convent School’s concern to be a school community. As discussed in chapter two, more and more studies promote the idea that schools should no longer be considered as organisations but rather as communities (Sergiovanni 2001:77; Leithwood in Begley 1999:36; Cahill 1994:254). A spirit of community involves close relationships among individuals who are bound by the organisational culture which has been created thanks to the shared and espoused values

and beliefs. Different expressions are being used to express the communitarian spirit in the school context. Deal and Peterson (1999: 15-21) call it clan or tribes: “School cultures become like tribes and clans, with deep ties among people and with values and traditions that give meaning to everyday life”. Mrs T and Miss J talked of the family of the Loreto Convent School (chapter 4 page 53 & 61). Likewise, the Sacred Congregation of Catholic Education views the school as ‘an educational community’:

Attention is rightly given to the importance of the relations existing between all those who make up the educating community, which is constituted by the interaction and collaboration of its various components: students, parents, teachers, directors and non-teaching staff (Laghi & Martins 1997 no page).

Then again, it can be quite a difficult task to achieve ‘an educational community’ when having multiple cultures, religions and social backgrounds, especially in the South African context where the deep wounds of the apartheid past have just been healed. The principal and the High School’s Head of Department acknowledged that it is a daily challenge (chapter 4 pages 46, 53-54). The recognition and appraisal of South Africa’s multiple cultures are celebrated on special occasions or in the everyday classes. Social scourges such as poverty, divorce, drugs and alcoholism affect the life of the school community. This is why Mrs T believes that a lot still needs to be done in order to look “after the people who are entrusted to me” (chapter 4 page 54); as for Mrs D, she recognises the fact that the school is striving on a daily basis to help the small community of the Loreto School but she also wants the whole school to think of those who are in greater sufferings - this is why the school has Outreach programmes and other community services.

Thus, the communitarian and family aspect is the focal point of Catholic schools and clearly the Loreto Convent School’s ethos and individuals achieve this goal.

5.5.2 THE INDIVIDUAL WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

As discussed in the above section, the family-community characteristic is important for Catholic schools, namely for the Loreto Convent School. However, on another level, the Sacred Congregation for the Catholic Education also urges its schools to provide for the child, a suitable space to fully develop his/her potential:

The person of each individual human being, in his or her material and spiritual needs, is at the heart of Christ's teaching: this is why the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school (Pope John Paul II as quoted by Laghi & Martins 1997 no page).

In this respect, the Loreto Convent School promotes in every way the cultural, religious and language differences of its various students and staff. It might seem contradictory that the Church encourages a spirit of community as well as encourage the uniqueness of each person; in that perspective, the Church answers, “While respecting individual roles, the community dimension should be fostered, since it is one of the most enriching developments for the contemporary school” (Laghi & Martins 1997 no page).

By doing so, the school promotes the uniqueness of the subjective experience of each individual present within the school community. In that way, Catholic schools mirror Greenfield’s view of the importance of each individual within the school:

Since schools are made up of different people in different times and places, it is to be expected that images which reflect the experience of schooling must be many and varied (Greenfield and Ribbins 1993:19).

5.6 CONCLUSION

In this section I discussed the themes which emerged while doing my data analysis. The themes were the complex relationship of organisational culture and leadership, the aspect of female leadership according to my three participants' unique experience, the promotion of leadership in the school and finally the school as community. In the next chapter I conclude the thesis by highlighting the main aspects of my findings and putting forward a critique of my work. I also present some recommendations for further research in the field.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I present a summary of my findings. I highlight the main arguments and the strengths of my study. I also provide a critique of my study by assessing its limitations and provide some recommendations for further research in the field and also in terms of the methodology used.

6.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This section sheds light on the findings of my study on the relationship between organisational culture and leadership. I explored the relationship between these two concepts as well as investigated the role and importance of the organisational culture in school leadership. I also aimed at enriching our understanding of female school leaders from a cultural perspective.

It is posited that the leader shapes the organisational culture (Schein 1992: 5; Deal & Peterson 1999: 10). Yet, theorists also put forward the idea that each organisation's unique culture influences the leader in his/her daily decision-making and ways of interacting with others (Sergiovanni 2001: 100; Deal & Peterson 1999: 85). The leadership-organisational culture threads are so intertwined that it seemed important to study the relationship more closely; this study has also woven in another thread - the role of female leadership and its place in this complex rapport.

Hence, I chose to conduct my research in a Catholic secondary school in Pretoria which has the following characteristics: the school's culture has been created and maintained since 1873 and the school has always been led by female leaders – by nuns and lay principals.

My findings show that looking at educational leadership from a cultural perspective is a complex phenomenon as I have investigated a profoundly human field. There are also several subtle factors which should be considered: for instance, a school's historical and social context or the leader's personal background or gender. In the next section, I summarise my findings under three themes: the individual at the heart of the tension, the paradoxes and tensions in educational leadership, and seeking social justice in leadership.

6.2.1 THE INDIVIDUAL AT THE HEART OF THE TENSION

My findings showed that in the Loreto Convent School of Pretoria the leader is caught up in the leadership-organisational culture tension: the school's culture has a significant impact on the leadership but at the same time the leader participates in the creation and shaping of new elements of the organisational culture. In both cases, one sees the importance of the individual in that organisations are expressions of “will, intention and value” (Greenfield 1993:104) of the group of individuals within the organisation.

The school culture influences the leaders who are aware that the school is unique in its ethos, values and beliefs and its holistic way of approaching education. In this respect the leaders nurture and develop the school's basic values and beliefs which are reflected in the school's symbolic artifacts such as rituals, ceremonies and activities in which parents, staff and students are all involved. In doing so, the school organisation is transformed into a school community whose aim is both to achieve high academic standards and also to reach out to the marginalised of society. Furthermore, since the school's underlying values and beliefs are founded on Christian values, my findings show that the leaders' personal faith, which is in line with the school's values, drives the leadership. Hence, the school's

organisational culture, founded on its unique values and beliefs, influences the leaders in their decision-making and ways of interacting with others.

Yet it is also true that the leaders shape the school's culture; for instance in periods of educational or political transitions, the leaders carry out the necessary structural changes but they do so according to the Loreto values. The female leaders are also concerned with self-development and on-going teachers' development within their institutions. Being aware of the ever-changing and highly competitive educational field, the leaders focus on the teachers' and students' personal enrichment in order to establish an effective learning community. The leaders also preserve the Loreto tradition of promoting female leadership by offering a high standard of education to girls only in the High School so that they can achieve much and take the lead in society.

Hence the leadership-organisational culture tension reveals what Kauria (2003: 82-83), Mwingi (2000: 130), Van der Mescht (1996: 163) and other researchers have shown in their studies, that is, leadership is a profoundly human and humane phenomenon. The school's organisational culture would not have had much significance without the leader truly believing and espousing it. The leaders, with their personal values, embraced their role to such an extent that it became part of who they were. Authenticity in the leaders' personal and professional life makes them more credible and trustworthy in their leadership of the school. As discussed by Sergiovanni (in Sergiovanni & Corbally 1986: 106), my findings showed that the school leaders embodied the values and beliefs of the school and thus, became part of the school's cultural artifacts. Hence, the understanding of the relationship between the school's culture and its leadership starts by valuing the importance of the individual leader who is at the heart of the leadership.

In addition, the above finding is reinforced by my findings on female leadership: as women, the leaders draw on their identity as women and mothers in order to help them in their leadership. Since society and socialisation expect of women to be caring, motherly and approachable, in effect, the female leaders use these ascribed roles and behaviours in order to be "naturally" more participative and collaborative. My participants take up with great joy their multiple roles in the school as mothers, educators or administrators.

Thus, even if the focus of my study was to understand the relationship between organisational culture and leadership, my findings reveal that our understanding of these concepts cannot be complete without acknowledging the importance of the leader as an individual, with his/her personal background, the multiple identities that the individual takes in society, or one's gender. Similarly, Smulyan (2000: 203) asserts:

A dynamic understanding of school leadership must also include the person – her background, her training, her beliefs and values, and her ways of interacting with people and systems – in order to have a complete picture of the principalship

Recognising these factors in my understanding of leadership makes of the study of educational leadership “something unexpectedly human” (Greenfield & Ribbins 1993: 1).

6.2.2 DILEMMAS AND DUALITIES IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

I believe that my study has also shed light on some of the dualities in the study of educational leadership. In the previous chapter, I showed that the school leaders nurture and maintain the school's culture which in turn, helps them in their leadership and decision-making. However, these leaders recognised that they sometimes had to face dilemmas: sometimes they were in conflict with the organisational culture, but the final decision remains in the hand of the leader. The ethos-task conflict emerged as quite challenging for the leader but in the end the best interests of the students or of the school have to be observed.

A duality (and perhaps a paradox) that leaders, female leaders in particular, have to face is the fact that female leaders are expected by society to be caring and considerate. However, at the same time, “women administrators are expected to accept and adapt to male values, language, and norms of interaction in order to find a place in the system” (Smulyan 2000: 27). Hence, the female leaders are caught up in a paradox (chapter 5 pages 74-75) which makes their task even more difficult: How to be an effective, flawless and ‘in-control’ leader when the society also expects of one to be compassionate, ‘naturally’ motherly and

collaborative? The female leaders not only have to manage their dual roles of being leaders and mothers in society, but also need to find a balance between being ‘motherly’ and ‘steel’ in the workplace. This conflicting situation was noted by Greyvenstein (2000: 32) where she argued that “Where teaching is traditionally viewed as being complementary to a woman’s role of wife and mother, management is contradictory to this role...” Their task as leaders is even more challenging than the men’s as the leadership role requires them to manage and to nurture the school. As Phendla (2004: 52) argued, the South African female leaders are women who:

...are expected to be caring, be the mothers of other people's children and at the same time struggle with efficiency, responsibility and dealing with the numerous difficulties (bureaucratic and other) of managing a school. As a result women have to acquire strategies for holding these knives without being cut, and knowing how to navigate tensions within and across the personal, public and professional fields. Black women school leaders are compelled to learn how to navigate across the tension created by culture, language, and customary laws. Hence their source of domination is neither race nor gender, but a complex of many factors interlocking simultaneously to create their existence.

In her study of female principals, Smulyan (2000: 210) concluded that each woman found a way to negotiate “a balance among her personal style or background, social constructions of gender and administration, and the community context within which she works”.

Thus it is evident that in the field of educational leadership, conflicts, dualities and paradoxes are recurrent (particularly for female leaders) because school leadership is profoundly a human field. However, I believe that since schools are made up of people, for people and with people, the key to complex situations remains the individual.

6.2.3 SEEKING SOCIAL JUSTICE IN LEADERSHIP

As discussed in chapter five, the emerging theme in contemporary leadership discourse is social justice through leadership. Thanks to its ethos, the Loreto School aims at providing to its students a school community which is aware of the social inequalities, and participate in the fight to alleviate these social issues. Poverty, HIV/Aids, economic and

social discrimination are some of the sad realities that affect not only some of the Loreto students but also thousands of South Africans. Following the Loreto sisters' tradition of reaching out to the marginalised group of the society, the Loreto school community strives to serve a higher purpose: to offer leadership in the quest for social justice.

As shown in my literature review, leadership theories of the past 30 years have focussed on concepts such as 'transformational' leadership, 'servant' and 'moral' leadership. Each concept has its own characteristic but the underlying idea is to be inspired by human values in order to serve a moral purpose. Leader and followers aspire to attain an ideal moral order which leads to using their power in order to serve others. In this respect, I believe that future research on leadership will focus on finding means to promote socio-economic equality in order to achieve a higher purpose and improve society.

I consider that this new leadership concept acknowledges the transformational power of the leader and his/her followers to participate collectively in improving the society. Taking a leadership post no longer means that the school leader is responsible only for his/her school, with the students, parents and the governing body. It is also the duty of the leader and the school organisation that they achieve more than academic standards and that they show that they can contribute to social improvement and welfare. Similar to Phendla's (2004: 59) female leaders, the leaders in the Loreto Convent school of Pretoria are strongly committed to social justice which is driven by a "leadership that is based on caring, warmth, sympathy, fairness and firmness". Phendla (2004: 61) concludes that "social justice involves social actors [such as school communities] who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility towards and with others and to society as a whole".

6.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In the light of my findings, I would like to look at my study through a more critical lens. The research findings show a 'picture perfect' type of school that every leader would dream of leading: a cohesive staff and management, high academic standards of students, a successful organisational culture as well as support from and active participation of

parents. The school culture prevailing at the Loreto Convent School of Pretoria is an example of how positive organisational culture bolsters and feeds school effectiveness and improvement. However, the question that one can pose is “Could such supportive and caring culture be established anywhere in South Africa (for instance, in historically African schools), regardless of historical background or social circumstances?”

The success of the organisational culture of the Loreto Convent School of Pretoria can be attributed to the long and strong tradition that is 126 years old. As I mentioned in chapter five, the Loreto tradition was developed by the Loreto sisters who founded a deeply rooted ethos which offers a holistic approach to education. Furthermore, the sisters have created the communal/family aspect of the school where parents, staff and students support each other. Over time, the founded organisational culture proved to be effective. Hence, the lay principals who took up the leadership after the Loreto sisters had ‘no choice’ but to continue and improve on the existing high level of competence left by the sisters. In other words, the current success of a school culture’s success rests on its past, which paves the way to its future effectiveness.

I also acknowledge the fact that the Loreto School’s success should not be attributed only to the organisational culture. Apart from the deeply rooted tradition of excellence, some other significant factors should be taken into consideration. Firstly, The Loreto Convent School of Pretoria is an independent school which is financially autonomous and accountable to a School Governing Board (SGB) which has complete trust in the management. This financial autonomy enables the school to offer additional subjects, other than those prescribed by the Department of Education, as well as a greater range of extra-curricular activities. Secondly, since the SGB allows the school management to enjoy the freedom of decision-making, it is easier for management than if they had to wait for the approval of the Department of Education for any decisions taken. Another significant factor is the socio-economic background of the students: most of the students come from a middle-class background even if some of them come from very challenging households. Most of the parents can afford to pay the school fees which facilitate the task of running the school. However, as Mrs D said, one of the future challenges that the Loreto School will have to face is the ever-increasing costs of running a private institution. Furthermore, the parents are conscious of the importance of their children’s education and

thus they show their interest and motivation by actively participating in formal and informal activities of the school. Therefore, one needs to understand that a positive school culture is supported by financial autonomy and a supportive SGB and parents. In this respect I believe that the school culture prevailing in the Loreto School would not necessarily be easily ‘replicated’ in a historically African school as there are some major factors which would first need to be addressed.

One of these factors is that these schools’ history (which is a fundamental element in the creation of the school’s culture) is entrenched in its distressing past. The historically African schools are still marked by “decades of institutionalized racism and injustice” (Bush 2003: 164) where they used to lack financial, infrastructural and human resources which were mostly distributed to white schools. In 1992, the National Education Policy Investigation (as quoted by Bush 2003: 165) stated:

South African teachers, especially those in black education, have had to contend with severe difficulties in rendering professional service...because of the wretched physical conditions prevailing in their schools...a weakening of the social fabric in their communities, and the consequent disintegration of the culture of learning within their institutions.

Teachers’ and students’ strikes were some of the ‘weapons’ used to contest the discriminatory policies of the white government. This “hostile climate” was not conducive to a culture of learning (Bush 2003: 165). Hence, after independence, the Black schools had the greatest challenge of transforming the “hostile culture” into a “culture of learning”. It can be quite difficult to build a spirit of community, togetherness and dedication on such an under-privileged background. Some of the recurring problems of these schools are high absenteeism and frequent lateness among staff and students, lack of discipline, violence, dysfunctional management and low morale of teachers. These are symptoms of what Deal & Peterson (1999: 118-119) describe as a school’s “toxic” culture. Moreover, the external environment also suffers from socio-economic problems: unemployed parents are more preoccupied with finding food than supporting their children, while alcoholism and drug abuse cripple the community.

In order to fight against toxic cultures, I agree with Bush and Anderson's (in Bush 2003: 166) suggestion that "a genuine culture of learning will be... dependent on the quality of leadership in individual schools". I believe that in order to build positive school cultures in the historically African schools, the leader should become, what Phendla (2004: 55) called, a "creator of opportunities", that is he/she must find ways to motivate the staff, students and parents to participate in the creation of a new school culture. In addition, the leader should seek sponsors or patrons who would give financial or infrastructural aid if they see that the school is fighting against the odds in order to build a culture of learning (Phendla 2004: 61). Phendla's study is a good example of the leader's commitment and dedication to transform the remains of the apartheid legacy into an education which is concerned with "racial uplifting, increasing respect and self-esteem" (*Ibid.*)

The leader with the help of the management team should initiate the collective creation of a new, positive school culture with the help of staff, parents and students. It is not easy for any school to achieve a wholesome school culture overnight: it needs perseverance and trust from the school's stakeholders in the founders' beliefs and values which will then lead to the espousal of the school's culture. In her study of historically African schools that have strived to survive in post-apartheid period, Christie (2001: 48) highlighted the features which contributed to the success of these "resilient" schools. One of these features is the importance of the school leader and the staff in being committed to respect and participate in the educational vision of "teaching and learning as the central purpose of schooling". It also showed how "energetic and visionary individuals...enlivened their schools and engaged actively with their surrounding communities" (Christie 2001: 49).

Hence, historically African schools can benefit from the creation of a positive organisational culture, not only if it is built with the genuine participation of all the schools' stakeholders.

6. 4 POTENTIAL VALUE OF THE STUDY

The following points summarise the potential value of my study:

- As far as I know, there has not been any research in the South African educational context on the relationship between organisational culture and leadership. Thus I believe that I have shown the importance of acknowledging that school culture is a significant factor worth considering in the study of educational leadership. Promoting the creation of an effective school culture is one of the means of improving South African school administration and build motivation among the staff and students (Deal and Peterson 1999: 115-116).
- I also consider that my study has shed light on a new aspect of female leadership in terms of how a school's organisational culture participates in the promotion of female leadership.
- My study also shows that creating and nurturing shared values and beliefs is a challenging but rewarding process. It enables the school to be transformed into an effective learning community.
- Finally, I believe that the study opens the door for further research on leadership for social justice. I consider that the Loreto School is an example of how many other schools can help in addressing social inequalities in the South African context. This new leadership concept has the aim of reaching out to the community or other neighbouring schools and is good way of showing the South African youth that they have the capacity of being change agents and that they can make a difference in their school, community or in the society.

6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Since I used the case study method, I focused on a particular school, working with a small sample of only three participants. This method proved to be more of an advantage than a limitation since I was able to obtain the participants' unique experiences. As Kaufman (as quoted in Smulyan 2000: 43) explains:

By viewing social change through the lens of individual experience, we are able to move away from infinite generalizations and abstractions and into the realm of individual constructions of meaning. Through the examination of...individual's lives, we gain access both to multi-faceted meanings of the self-within-the culture and to a richer, more detailed portrait of the culture which contributes to and is constituted by those meanings

At a practical level, I realise that three weeks is quite a short span of time to explore the complex richness of a school's organisational culture. But since my main goal was to obtain the female leaders' perceptions of the school culture, I consider that three weeks were enough to carry out the interviews, observe some of the school's rituals, ceremonies, symbols and events as well as the leaders' interactions with the staff, other school leaders and the parents.

Furthermore, it is possible that a phenomenological approach to my research study would have better suited my aim of capturing the leaders' "taken-for-granted" assumptions (Cohen *et al.* 2000: 23) about the school's culture and their leadership. However, adopting such a method would perhaps have privileged subjective understandings to such an extent that other data sources – such as observation – may not have found a place in my findings.

6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

After reflecting on my discussions of data, I make the following recommendations:

- Any school organisations should and can develop an organisational culture which is conducive to the creation of an effective learning community by having simple but meaningful symbols, rituals and ceremonies as well as establishing the school's mission statement. These artifacts should be based on the core values and beliefs which have been collectively created by school's stakeholders. However, infrastructural and professional support as well collaboration from the community are needed for the creation of a successful organisational culture.
- School organisations are more successfully led when the leaders are not afraid to show their humanity: to show that they are genuine and humane in their interactions with students, staff and parents, that they have their strengths and flaws. In this way, the followers have more trust in and respect for their leader.
- Female school leaders should find opportunities to meet so that they can share their difficulties and feel that they are supported and not alone in their task. In fact, in an African context, such meetings are not unusual as there are so many female meetings such as Stokvels which make women feel empowered. This can be done either regionally or according to the similarities that the different schools have.

6.7 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

I believe that there is a great need for follow up research of the field of school culture as it can promote understanding of unique school situations as well as provide a background for any changes or school improvement programmes.

The suggestions that I would make for further research in this field are:

- To explore the perceptions of the teachers, students and parents concerning the school's organisational culture in order to know if they really espouse the underlying values of the school and how they contribute to the school's culture.
- A critical investigation of organisational culture as a barrier to female leadership in school settings.
- A phenomenological study of the influence of personal values on school leaders.
- A study of organisational culture in previously African schools which would enable these schools to assess their strengths and weaknesses as a platform on which to collectively create a positive school culture.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF AGREEMENT FOR CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

Dear Mrs J,

I am a student at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, following the course of Masters in Educational Leadership and Management.

I have been authorised by Mrs D to study the Loreto Convent School of Pretoria in order to complete a thesis whose topic is Organisational Culture and female leadership. One of my requirements is to conduct interviews with some of the female leaders of the school. Therefore, I would greatly appreciate if I could conduct an interview with your daughter, Miss J since she is 2004 Head Girl.

I undertake that anonymity and confidentiality will be guaranteed.

Thanking you in anticipation,

Miss Lily-Claire Jean-Louis
Student at Rhodes University.

Mrs D.
Principal of Loreto Convent School

Having read the above, I agree that my daughter will be interviewed by Miss Lily-Claire Jean-Louis for the purpose of a study of Loreto Convent School of Pretoria.

Name of Learner:

Name and Signature of Parent:

APPENDIX B

FEMALE LEADERS' PROFILE LORETO CONVENT OF PRETORIA

NAME:

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MARITAL STATUS:

AGE:

PRESENT POST OF RESPONSIBILITY:

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EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND:

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PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND:

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YEAR OF APPOINTMENT TO PRESENT POST:

DID YOU OCCUPY ANY OTHER POST OF RESPONSIBILITY BEFORE?

(Deputy principal/Senior teacher/Head of department/Post of pastoral
responsibility/RCL/other...).

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Thank you