

The Testing and Validation of a Model for Leadership Maturity Based on Jung's Concept of Individuation

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to report on a study set up to investigate the link between a leader's level of psycho-social maturity, as understood in terms of the Jungian concept of "individuation", and effective leadership. The application of this concept to leadership has never been undertaken before. The main postulate of the study was that a leader who has progressed to higher levels of individuation will excel as a leader. Inversely, leaders with lower levels of individuation will have a higher chance of organisational derailment and burnout, manifestations of failed leadership. The study's objective was to empirically test and validate a proposed leadership psycho-social maturity model based on the concept of individuation (elsewhere reported) in terms of its ability to predict leadership (in)effectiveness. It was found that individuation stages with their accompanying attributes as manifestation of leadership psycho-social maturity indeed exist; this process unfolds in a circular, rather than linear, way - to be further explored in future research. Though an empirically significant relationship could not be found between the psycho-social maturity level of leaders and their chances of burnout and derailment, the relationship was in the postulated direction. This finding was ascribed to the high levels of individuation of the leaders studied. The major value of the study lies in the insight it provides into current/future challenges, issues and problems in organisations, e.g. how leaders handle ambivalence, dilemma's, paradox, empowerment, burnout and derailment, all characteristic of organisational life, in their endeavour to grow in psycho-social maturity. Additionally, women's individuation, and the incorporation of the "feminine principle" in organisations, needs serious attention.

Keywords: leadership, maturity, individuation, Jung

1. Introduction

Globally the demands on senior leaders of companies have changed dramatically over recent years. Economic hardships and unrelenting changes in the context are disrupting organisational dynamics and creating increased employee anxiety, decline in loyalty and mistrust in management. Macro-changes demand more than just new competencies and behaviour of leaders. The leaders of the future will have to be extraordinarily mature to cope with the demands placed upon them (Buzan, Dottino & Israel, 2007: 5; Daloz Parks, 2005; Gardner & Schermerhorn, 2004). The role of leaders has become very complex; they have to deal with extremely high ambiguity levels (Development Dimensions International, 2004; Plowman, Solansky, Beck, Baker, Kulkarni & Travis, 2007), while simultaneously being expected to give followers some degree of certainty and clarity. Future leaders need to inspire others to learn more about themselves (Smith Kuczmarski & Kuczmarski, 2007). Leaders whose influence extends beyond bottom-line results are needed. Leadership should strive to restore hope, optimism, resilience and meaningfulness (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004). Globalisation particularly forces leaders to lead in a seamless world. Leadership within organisations needs to be not only better, but fundamentally different from the past.

Incidences of derailment and burnout are increasing. Bennis and O'Toole (2000) coined the term "leadership churning" to describe the escalating turnover rate of CEOs and ascribed it mainly to the more demanding nature of the position and the inability of boards to select the right people to fill these positions. The concept of derailment and contributing factors are applicable across cultural borders (Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995). Whereas derailment refers to the external manifestation of failed leadership, burnout refers to the internal experiences of the person, when his/her energy runs out. Burnout is usually caused by being over-stressed for extended periods of time (Schuler, 1982; Sharit & Salvendy, 1982). The incidence of burnout among business leaders is at alarming levels (Ammondson, 2001; Buzan *et al.*, 2007: 5; Levinson, 1996). Derailment exemplifies and externalizes failed leadership on an individual level. The characteristics of the derailed leader are very similar to the characteristics of a less individuated person. These characteristics include: lack of empathy (Macaluso, 2003), over-ambition, over-independence or over-dependence, abrasiveness, defensiveness, arrogance, inability to adapt/develop, and volatility (Lombardo & McCauley, 1988).

Such changes with manifested consequences in derailment and burnout, demand more than just new competencies and behaviour of managers (Bowles, 1997; Daloz Parks, 2005; Hogan & Raskin, 1990; Kets de Vries, 2001). Successful managers of the future will have to understand their emotional, irrational sides, and those of others (Kets de Vries, 2006). They will need exceptional interpersonal skills (Kets de Vries, 2001) based on true appreciation of their own and other's unconscious processes (Crossan & Mazutis, 2007). They will have to live their values without becoming trapped in their prejudices, projections and unconscious belief patterns.

Organisational leaders have to face their internal worlds more. Most people have unresolved issues; because this "*baggage*" is usually unconscious (Kalsched, 1996; Pearson, 1986), its influence is often ignored in studies on leadership behaviour. However, it could influence leadership and interpersonal behaviour in adverse ways (Greenleaf, 1988; Jaworski, 1998), seeing that people often base their decisions on and act according to unconscious belief patterns (Jaworski, 1998; Kets de Vries, 2001; Pearson, 1986).

These belief patterns refer to what Jung called the archetype, anima/animus and the shadow (Jung, 1948; 1989; 1933/1990; Von Franz, 1998). Kets de Vries (2001; 2006) states that leaders must juggle not only the external forces impacting on their organisations, but also the undertow of their own characters. He believes the style and character of the CEO have a considerable impact on the company. Kets de Vries (2001) found that the strategy, structure and culture of an organisation might all be strongly influenced by the personality of its leader. Unless leaders really understand their personal histories and are aware of their unconscious belief patterns, they will be inauthentic and unable to truly empower others (Jacobson, 1993; Jacoby, 1999).

A key construct in psychosocial maturity is self-awareness. In Jungian literature, "awareness" is in essence a synonym for "individuation". Individuation refers to the process whereby the individual becomes conscious out of the original state of unconsciousness and becomes conscious of relationships (Jacoby, 1999). The astute leader is self-aware (Crossan & Mazutis, 2007) and attuned to the nature of his/her relationship with followers, making behavioural adjustments to maintain and improve interpersonal relationships (Church, 1998).

Despite the proliferation of research and writings on leadership, very little is yet understood about the psychology of leadership (Kets de Vries, 2001). The work of Greenleaf (1988) suggests a new way of looking at leadership. He emphasises personal characteristics of leaders. Jaworski (1998) and Wheatley (1999) built on this and described leadership development as a journey of personal growth. Both refer to Jung and their paradigms are compatible with a Jungian view. Bennis and Slater (1998) also took a more intrapersonal view and stated that leadership is character and the process of becoming a leader is much the same as becoming an integrated human being.

"Individuation" as a concept is well described and researched, but, possibly, because of its complexity, no instrument to measure individuation level could be found. Jung (1948) defines individuation as the process that forms and differentiates individuals; through which a person becomes a psychological individual: a unique, separate, indivisible unit/whole, with the unconscious becoming more integrated into the conscious. The person gains insight into his/her psychosocial dynamics, i.e. his/her strengths and weaknesses.

Because the factors causing burnout and derailment are linked to personality and unconscious forces, they are extremely hard to change. The usual "cookbook-style" efforts to develop leaders are clearly failing. Approaching leadership in organisations from a personal growth (or individuation) viewpoint, could add much to understanding the leadership crisis, derailment, burnout and the failure of leaders to learn and change.

2. Problem statement

The aim of the study was to investigate the link between individuation levels and effective leadership from a Jungian perspective. The main postulate informing the study was that a person who has progressed on the journey of individuation will excel as a leader. Secondly, this study aimed to show how chances of derailment and burnout as manifestations of failed leadership, may be reduced with increasing individuation levels.

The objective of this paper is to report on the empirical testing and validation of the proposed model of leadership individuation (du Toit, 2011).

3. Literature

Based on the literature review, a leadership individuation model was built. The three stages of individuation described by Stein (2006), which develop sequentially (Stein, 2006), was utilised: a person first builds self-confidence (the containing/nurturing stage) before facing the challenges of the world (the adapting/adjusting stage), finally reaching purpose, meaning and integration (the centring/integration stage). Stein (2006) however, state that these stages are metaphorical, symbolical depictions and are described as overlapping and inter-dependent. Personal growth towards maturity is not a neat, absolutely definable process, though stages and transitions between stages can be differentiated. Stein (2006) explained these stages as a conceptual model of growth towards maturity based on Jung's (1959/1968) original work on individuation. No previous attempts to empirically show that these stages exist and that a person develops sequentially through them could be traced.

Based on the three stages, 10 leadership attributes divided among the stages, were identified from literature (du Toit, 2011). These are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Attributes of individuated and unindividuated leaders

Stage 1: CONTAINMENT/Nurturing stage	
Individuated	Unindividuated
Attribute: Pre-leadership	
<i>Builds security as base for further development; challenges physical, psychological boundaries</i>	
Nurturing needs adequately met. High self-esteem. High self-confidence.	Strong nurturing needs. Low self-esteem. Low self-confidence.
Stage 2: AdaptinG/ADJUSTING stage	
<i>Faces challenges of the world</i>	
Individuated	Unindividuated
Attribute 1: Balancing self-sufficiency with group/team orientation	
<i>Independent, self-sufficient wanderer, forms ego-identity</i>	
Independent, self-sufficient. Self-directed, purposeful. At peace with life history.	Conforming, others-directed: safety of collective defines comfort-zone. Lacks purpose. Uncomfortable with life history.
Attribute 2: Balancing engagement, disengagement from self, others	
<i>Open to change; breaks archetypal patterns</i>	
Lets go of past. Remains objective: faces reality. Intermittently distances self from others, reflects on events.	Holds onto past. Subjective. Unable to take meta-perspective.
Attribute 3: Managing polarity: balancing self-empowerment, empowering of others	
<i>Allows others to individuate</i>	
Tolerates imperfection in self, others. Insight into own strengths, weaknesses. Growth-orientation towards self, others.	Overly anxious about achievement. Overly confident; hubris. Main concern not own/others' growth.
Attribute 4: Self-awareness, insight	
<i>Faces the shadow</i>	
Self-aware of inner world. Self-aware of core complexes and their power. Accepts uniqueness of others.	Gripped by unconscious, instinctual reactions. Many "blind spots": problems others are aware of but the leader not. Tends to judge people different from him/herself.
Stage 2: AdaptinG/ADJUSTING stage	
Attribute 5: Sense of deeper meaning, destiny	
<i>Incorporates archetypal images, creates collective meaning</i>	
Takes responsibility for own happiness, growth. Utilises learnings from past, lives fully in present while considering impact on future. Driven by deep sense of higher purpose, making contribution/difference; risen above	Views life as snapshot event. Reacts without considering broader implications, context. Could be stuck in past, living only for moment or overly anxious about future.

egocentric self-interest.	
Stage 3: CENTRING/Integrating stage	
<i>Becomes centred, whole, connected to transcended and immediate realities</i>	
Individuated	Unindividuated
Attribute 6: Maintains composure, mental clarity amidst complexity, chaos	
<i>Able to enter flow-state, accepts he/she is "good enough" leader</i>	
Comfortable with complexity, ambiguity. Comfortable with imperfection, fluidity, change. Comfortable with lack of structure.	Ambiguity triggers dependency needs, anxiety. Perfectionist tendencies. Needs clear structure.
Attribute 7: Embracing, managing ambivalence, paradox	
<i>Faces, balances own anima/animus</i>	
Balances dynamic opposites simultaneously: handles tension created by seemingly conflicting ideas. Balances forceful animus with reflective depth – thoughtful anima. Considers conscious and unconscious in inner dialogue.	Not in touch with inner wisdom. Uncomfortable with ambivalence, paradox. Clings to all-knowing persona.
Stage 3: CENTRING/Integrating stage	
Attribute 8: Living interrelated, interconnected	
<i>Aware of interconnectedness, synchronicity; expects small miracles; enters into true dialogue</i>	
Allows life to happen. Connected to transcendent world, practical realities. Ready to serve something beyond him/herself.	Tries to control everything. Feels alone, separated. Self-serving.
Attribute 9: Experiencing psychological integration, wholeness	
<i>Experiences personality unification</i>	
Aware of self, potentialities. Healthy dialogue between parts of self whilst parts maintain independence. Deep awareness of total self – known, unknown; good, bad; strengths, weaknesses; accepts self.	Feels fragmented, compartmentalised. Overly individualistic or becomes immersed in collective. Remains a stranger to him/herself.

Some of the main constructs of the study were already well conceptualised and researched. Burnout, its main indicators and its measurement with reliable and valid instruments are well established. Derailment is also well defined and its main constructs well described, making it relatively easy to devise a measuring instrument. Individuation, in contrast, has not been described in operational terms yet. The need exists to build and validate an instrument to measure the degree of individuation as expressed in leadership behaviour.

The expected relationships between the various constructs are depicted in figure 1.

According to Figure 1, a leader's success is not only determined by his/her competence, which is impacted on by level of maturity, measured here as individuation. The leader then performs in the organisation - the external world - or derails. In his/her internal world, he/she copes or burns out.

Postulates derived from the literature review

Postulate 1

The stages of individuation as described in the ten attributes exist as identifiable entities

Postulate 2

The individuation process develops stage-wise and sequentially

Postulate 3

Individuated leaders can be reliably and validly differentiated from less individuated leaders.

Postulate 4

The leader with higher personal maturity has less chance to derail or burn out than the less mature one.

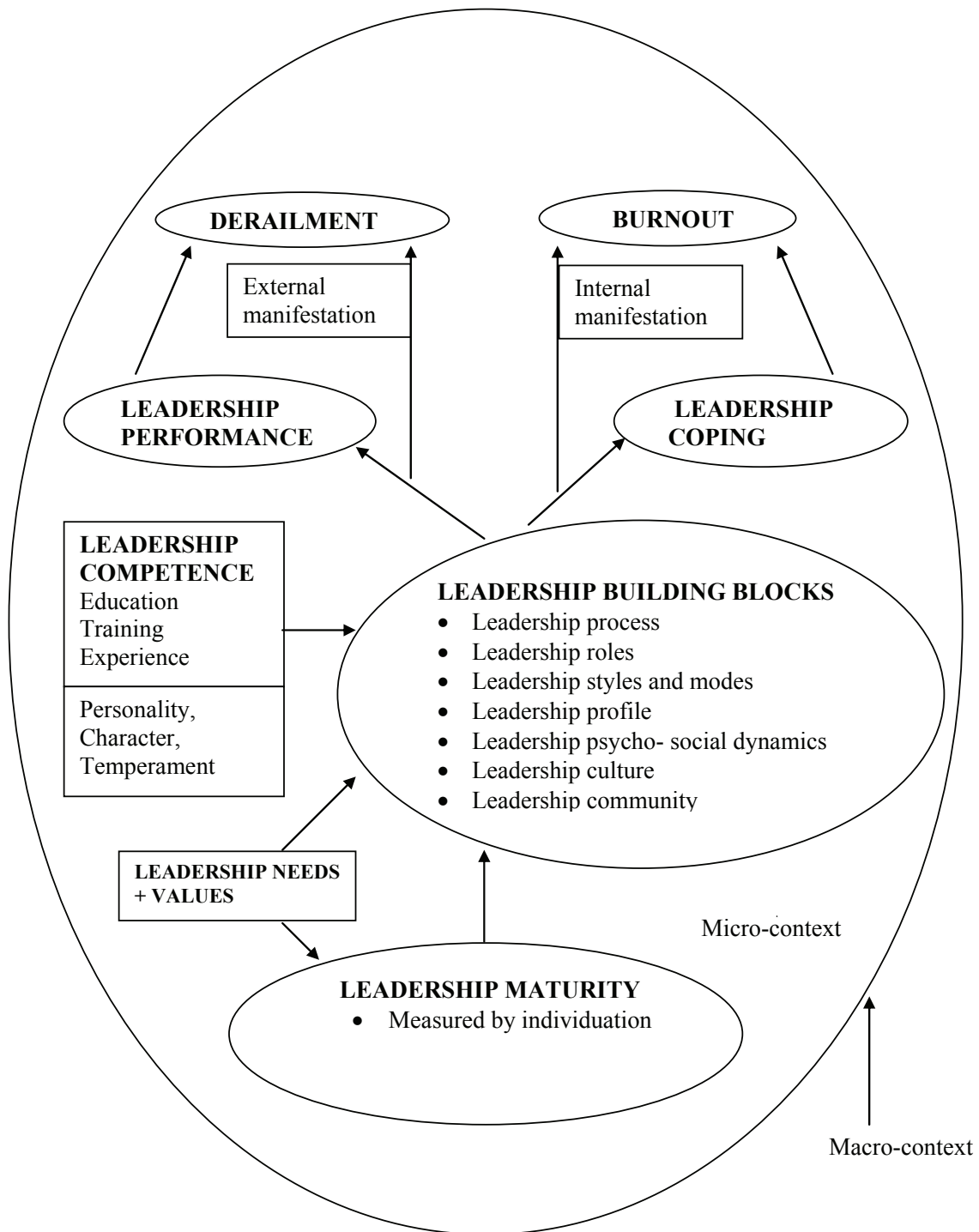


Figure 1: Leadership maturity model

4. Research design

4.1 Research approach

An interpretative paradigm was followed. The ontology was to interpret and understand the psychodynamic forces underpinning successful leadership in organisations.

4.2 Research process

Firstly, the research was theoretical: to conceptualise the link between individuation level and the success of leadership, and also between individuation level and the tendency of leaders to derail or suffer burnout. The insights gained were placed in the context of current organisational realities and the effect thereof on organisational success.

Secondly, the empirical part of the study was conducted to provide evidence for the conceptualisation. For testing of postulates in-depth, semi-structured interviews, drawings and questionnaires were used with a limited number of participants. The objective of this paper is to report on the empirical study and findings.

5. Population and sample

The purposive sampling method was used. A sample of 30 leaders and potential leaders was selected from 6 different organisations, all from different industries in South Africa.

6. Data gathering methodology

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the selected participants, who were asked to tell their leadership life stories and to make a symbolic representation of their leadership style and philosophies in the form of drawings. They also completed Maslach Burnout Inventories, which measures burnout, and a newly designed derailment questionnaire on themselves. The life stories and drawings were evaluated by independent Jung-oriented psychologists. For scoring the life stories, another newly designed instrument measuring individuation was used. Participants were asked to nominate eight persons who knew them well. These persons received electronic questionnaires on both derailment and individuation to complete on the participants.

A pilot study preceded the actual field study with the purpose of testing the data gathering methods. Slight changes were made to the methodology after the pilot study.

All participants were offered feedback on their results compared to those of the study group. The insights and confirmations obtained during feedback were incorporated into the findings.

The principle of triangulation was applied in an effort to ensure reliability and validity. Different data collection methods were thus utilised to measure the dependent variable, individuation, in the empirical study. These methods were: questionnaires, drawings and life stories. Previous attempts to either measure individuation, or to determine the attributes associated with the stages of individuation could not be found in literature.

The various methods used yielded two surprise findings: first, that drawings as a research technique gave a reliable measure of an individual's level of individuation. Second, that a person cannot accurately assess his/her own individuation level: the self-assessment individuation levels had lower validity and reliability than the other measures of individuation.

7. Data analysis

The data gathered were studied in-depth to gain some understanding of the psycho-dynamic factors impacting on the success of these participants. To uncover trends and correlations between the main variables of the study – individuation level, burnout and derailment - a non-parametric statistical analysis was done. Inter-rater reliability was calculated to ensure the reliability of the data interpretation.

8. Research findings and their implications

Overall, the key findings based on the empirical study were:

- Individuation stages with accompanying attributes do exist. Based on this, it can be concluded that we now have a validated leadership individuation model;
- The individuation process unfolds in a circular way;
- A focus on individuation could provide deepened insight into current issues and problems in organisations, e.g. how leaders handle ambivalence, paradox, empowerment, burnout and derailment;

- Women's individuation particularly needs serious attention. Apart from actual women, organisations also need to understand the "feminine principle". A new way of leading organisations is needed in the post-patriarchal era. The "feminine principle" could provide a way to integrate profit seeking with the personal growth of employees; and
- The leadership individuation model and instrument provide a possible approach to enhance leadership maturity.

In terms of the postulates the following findings were made and insights gained:

Postulate 1: The stages of individuation as described in the ten attributes exist as identifiable entities

This study endeavoured to apply the individuation stages to leadership and to show in the field study that these stages exist. That has been done successfully. Thus, postulate 1 was accepted. The unique contribution of this study was also to identify and describe the main leadership attributes and key behaviours associated with each of these attributes. The leadership individuation model proposed, and as built from the literature review, was confirmed and validated by the field study. Focusing on maturity could provide a holistic view of the leader. The proposed model provides a possible basis for a coherent, systematic and integrated perspective on the personal development and growth of leaders.

The major implication of this model for leaders is the different role it emphasises: that of the leader in allowing others to individuate. If this role becomes a core role of a leader, it brings the role of people-developer forward, which should go a long way to alleviate many current problems and issues, such as the shortage of competent leaders, leadership derailment and burnout.

Postulate 2: The individuation process develops stage wise and sequentially

This study built on the proposed three individuation stages developed sequentially (Stein, 2006). This study attempted to show empirically that these stages exist and that a person develops through these stages in a sequential order.

Though the results of the field study showed the existence of the three individuation stages, no evidence could be found to conclude that participants develop sequentially through these stages. It was found that participants scored markedly higher on Stage 2, Adapting/Adjusting, than the other two stages. Postulate 2 could thus not be proved.

In general, it appeared that attributes dealing with personal growth form part of the earlier stages of individuation whereas those dealing with other people are associated with later stages. This view is in line with the growth process proposed by Emotional Intelligence literature (Cooper & Sawaf, 1997; Goleman, 1996), which proposes that a person should first understand and deal with his/her emotions and then learn how to understand and deal with the emotions of others. This view also makes it plausible that more emphasis on developing the containment/nurturing stage is needed as prerequisite for further development to stage 3.

Though the field study could not prove individuation as a sequential process through the stages and attributes as described, enough evidence exist to confirm their existence. Though three stages are described, it is clear that individual growth can never be reduced to a simple linear process. Personal growth is more complex and rich. The stages and attributes exist and it is expected that future research will be able to prove that it does take place in a sequential order from stage 1, finally reaching stage 3. Future research should also investigate growth beyond stage 3.

One of the main implications of the findings regarding postulate 2 is that organisations should give more attention to the development of the attributes relating to Containment/Nurturing and Centring/Integration. The emphasis on Adapting/Adjusting should be balanced by this shifting focus.

The findings challenged the notion that individuation is age-bound (Jung, 1959/1968; Stein, 2006). They maintain that individuation only becomes important to a leader during the second half of life. In this study some of the persons with the highest individuation rating were younger than 30. This could mean that it is possible to accelerate the maturing process, which is important because of dire need

for mature leaders. The newly developed instrument measuring individuation could assist the maturing process by indicating aspects to develop.

Postulate 3: Individuated leaders can be reliably and validly differentiated from less individuated leaders

This postulate was partially accepted. The findings showed that the stages and attributes do exist (postulate 1) and that they probably develop in some sequence (postulate 2). To utilise the stages and attributes in the selection and development of leaders, they must be measured in individual leaders. No previous attempts to measure individuation could be traced in literature.

Further research is needed to determine the impact of cultural, racial and gender differences on the individual leader's individuation process. In practice, organisations need to devise programs to grow individuated leaders.

Postulate 4: The leader with higher personal maturity has less chance to derail or burn out than the less mature one

This postulate was partially and conditionally accepted. No significant relationships were found between individuation levels, propensity to derail and levels of burnout. All participants scored fairly high on individuation evaluations, with both derailment and burnout scores measuring low. Though no significant relationship could be found between individuation levels, a visual inspection showed that they were in the expected direction: a higher degree of individuation was associated with lower degrees of burnout and derailment.

9. Conclusion

This study attempted to link concepts from diverse fields to produce unique insights. The study of leadership is usually seen as belonging to the field of business schools whilst Jungian concepts are usually studied by Clinical Psychologists. It is believed that this Industrial Psychology study which attempted to straddle the fields showed some worthwhile insights and has made a meaningful contribution to our understanding of leadership.

Some implications are that current leadership development interventions should be expanded to deal with psychological maturing of leaders, with the focus on developing Stages 1 and 3 in particular. Furthermore, the growing emphasis on employee wellness should include the leader's role in creating healthier organisations.

Given the changing demands on leaders, organisations must be transformed to become more individuation friendly, thus nurturing more individuated leaders, a necessity for future organisational success. A revised approach to leadership selection and development to identify individuation levels is also needed, assisting organisations in addressing the challenges of the current leadership crisis of heightened incidents of burnout and derailment.

Looking at the type of organisations we have created, a totally new type of leadership is needed. This leadership should embrace the more "feminine" principles of the Nurturing/Containment and Centring/Integration stages. Organisations clearly need leaders who are integrative thinkers (Avolio, 2007; Maak & Pless, 2006; McKinsey Global Survey, 2009). Particularly the attributes associated with Centring/Integration are likely to become increasingly important.

The new leader will not only have to be extremely mature, but must also be able to allow others to individuate and become mature. Command-and-control leadership hence will probably have to disappear. The new organisation will depend more than ever on the maturity and integrity of employees. Balancing self-empowerment with empowering others (an attribute of Centring/Integration) was less well developed for participants. It can be argued that empowerment will probably grow in importance in organisations.

The psycho-dynamic approach to leadership could potentially address some of the major emerging leadership challenges. The application of the construct "individuation" to leadership increases the chance to remove blockages to the growth of individual leaders; thus decreasing the leader's propensity to burn out and derail. Increasing individuation leads to more abstract thinking which

enhances the leader's ability to handle complex issues and paradoxes typical of the emerging new world order.

From an individuation point of view the emphasis of future leadership development should clearly be on self-knowledge and self-understanding. These personal attributes form the basis of mature leadership. The immature leader is unlikely to be able to handle the ambiguousness, complexity and ethical dilemmas he/she will be faced with.

The question which inevitably arises: *can Jung's insights now, more than forty years after his death, contribute anything to our understanding of leadership in complex, global organisations embedded in an increasingly demanding context?* The answer is a very definite "yes". His concept "individuation", probably his main contribution, has been almost ignored. It is believed that individuation as a concept can in future greatly contribute to our understanding and development of leaders in organisations, especially in the new world of work that is emerging.

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