

## Chapter 5: Framework for dealing with moral values in contemporary organizations

The philosophical insights developed in the course of this dissertation will remain abstract ideas if not related to the specific context of contemporary organizations. It has been established that our view of diversity in pluralist environments has to be reframed in terms of the reality of distributed selves and moral *bricoleurs*. Individuals draw on a wide variety of value sources in their moral decision-making. Acknowledging this reality makes the untenability of traditional modernist approaches to ethics apparent. Twentieth century philosophy, physics and information technology offer some alternative perspectives and the prospect of a more suitable approach. But how do these insights translate to contemporary organizational practice? A contextual framework needs to be developed that addresses the most pressing needs of contemporary organizations. This chapter will attempt to do just that.

A useful moral framework needs to reflect contemporary organizational trends. To understand the current context, it is imperative to explore some of the changes occurring in contemporary organizations. Some refer to these changes as part of the demise of the modern organization and the rise of the postmodern. Because of the difficulties of defining the modern and the postmodern in any precise way, it seems wise to refrain from labeling contemporary organizations "postmodern". Yet the considerable body of literature developed around the theme of "Postmodernism and Organizations" will prove helpful in understanding the changes and challenges facing contemporary organizations. Various changes in the environment within which organizations operate, changes in technology, as well as various economic and political realities impact on the way organizations are structured and operate. The suggested framework aims at addressing these contemporary challenges. Interestingly enough, the framework can also be aligned with the theoretical insights developed in the current business ethics debate. The suggested framework is therefore supported by both contextual realities and theoretical trends. Three South African case studies will be used as illustration of both contemporary trends operative in the South African business environment and the applicability of the suggested framework

to its unique challenges. Finally, practical suggestions for dealing with this specific case will be put forward.

## **5.1. Conclusions on the contemporary organizational context of business ethics**

Organizations' view of corporate identity as well as the identity of individuals and groups, has changed the way they are structured and operate. A number of paradigm shifts have taken place in terms of individual and corporate identity with important implications for the way moral values are dealt with in the workplace. This section will indicate how this dissertation views individual and organizational identity.

### **5.1.1. Individual identity:**

- **Identity configurations:**

The modernist concept of the integrated self, with the ego acting as master of the household, seeking to integrate the competing demands it faces, made sense in terms of the modern ideals of unified wholeness, progression, and the theories of governance and authority within the Western world. With these ideals disintegrating at the end of the 20th century, different ideas of identity have started to develop. This dissertation supports the posthumanist, poststructuralist alternative, namely the subject who is multidimensional and without center or hierarchical integration. The poststructuralist notion of the self conceives of a continuity and interdependence of self and other. When making a distinction between the self and the other, one has to acknowledge the fact that the self is inhabited by what is and what it is not. Therefore this distinction is to be understood as heuristic and paradoxical (Willmott 1998:99).

One of the implications of the multidimensional self is that the particular way in which the individual formulates his/her identity is not predictable. Power, as Foucault explains, is more than just the repressive force that distorts what and how we know. Power produces the way we know ourselves. Power here constitutes us as self-aware subjects, able to know and act on ourselves and on each other (Brewis 1998:63). But because power is fragmented in its

operations, the variety of discourses present in the individual's identity configuration leads to a continual 're-articulation' of individual identity (Brewis 1998:63). In order to understand our decisions and actions, one therefore has to unravel the complex character of our relationships with ourselves, the effect of our exposure to various discourses and our resistance to them.

This would imply giving up on the search for timeless, universal truths, since one comes to see truth as a discursive construction, or a particular way of being which is no more or less "true" than any other. Does this mean that any judgment on what is morally right or wrong becomes impossible? No, Foucault would argue that ethics is precisely that process by which the individual becomes conscious of the processes of self-formation at work in him/herself, as well as in other people. Ethics becomes a process of self-policing and self-conscious self-analysis rather than the process of conforming to abstract ethical codes (Brewis 1998:65). The moral character of this self-conscious activity lies precisely in the fact that we are willing to put ourselves at risk, question our own prejudices, and break through the isolation and obsession with self-interest that could so easily result from the fragmented world we inherited from the world of modern specialization.

- **Distributed selves in dialogue**

Two distinct forms of postmodern strategies emerge from amongst the host of writings labeled "postmodern". Whereas some forms of postmodernism emphasizes fragmentation and the incommensurability of distinct life-forms and groups, other postmodernists argue that every self and every group is not a distinctly identifiable unity, but rather an eclectic configuration of very specific and contextual characteristics. The former ends in fragmentation, while the latter tries to deal with difference in and amongst people in creative ways.

Falzon (1998:91) argues that postmodern strategies should go beyond fragmentation. Postmodernism is often thought of as a strategy which treats differences in a relativistic way by emphasizing fragmented, incommensurable world-views, each with their own unitary

and all-embracing form of thought and action. Such a viewpoint sustains the metaphysical notion of unity, since it assumes that certain structures display certain essences of ideas and theories, which exist separately from other isolated structures. This view betrays an important aspect of the postmodern movement, which defies abstract, universal structures. This version of postmodernism that Falzon (1998:93) calls the postmodernism of fragmentation, is also strongly reminiscent of the liberal position, one of the positions that other forms of postmodernism aims to surpass. The liberal position tolerates difference and diversity by essentializing the identity of groups and keeping that identity intact. This constitutes a failure to acknowledge our existence in dialogical relations with others and therefore arrest the ongoing dialogical interaction of competing interpretations that organize and reorganize one another. Kirsten (1988) refers to this strategy as a "postmodernism of reaction", which displays certain neoconservatist tendencies.

Postmodernism is often accused of deconstructing and thereby undermining human attempts to make the world comprehensible and livable, without replacing it with another strategy for coping with the realities of the human condition. How does one, for instance, deal with the problem of moral dissensus in pluralistic societies in a viable, postmodern way? I would like to suggest an intersubjective strategy of **unapologetic dialogue**. "Unapologetic" must be understood in two ways: it involves witnessing to one's own religious, cultural, political (etc.) values without excuse, but it is also unapologetic in the sense it is not an exercise in apologetics. One should not be pitting all one's emotional and rational powers against another set of values or beliefs. Religions and cultures should no longer be seen as competing value-systems, but rather as ways in which a pluralistic society can be infused with mutually enriching perspectives on morality. As Streng (1993:97) argues: *"...once we allow conceptions of selfhood, and procedures for self-consciously identifying authentic selfhood, other than those given in our immediate cultural context, we can appreciate alternative modes of actualizing an authentic self."*

Falzon (1998:96) distinguishes the dialogical position advocated by Foucault from a postmodernism of fragmentation. A postmodernism of fragmentation precludes organized, unified movements of resistance and only permits purely local struggles. The dialogical

position does not necessarily deny that there is a need to question the notion of a global, 'revolutionary' movement of liberation. We do not need to give up the idea of concerted, unified forms of struggle. In resistance there is also the possibility of unity and solidarity. But these should always remain contingent alliances, unions of forces that have been created, forged, and negotiated through the process of dialogue. The ethical and critical task would be not to reject all order but to avoid producing or contributing to forms of domination (Falzon 1998:96).

Unapologetic dialogue tries to promote this form of intersubjectivity, but distances itself from the communitarian ideal of consensualist common values. The way in which the Communitarians find a consensus and then proclaim it the essence of the specific group runs the risk of arresting the constant process of redefinition, criticism, change, and creativity that must always remain part of the dialogue. These dangers stem from an attempt to find some ahistorical, acontextual, objective and non-negotiable set of criteria for unifying people.

Jacobson (1995:357) indicates the need to decenter rationality and to dislocate modernity by a non-traditional understanding of cross-cultural (and in my opinion, cross-sexual, cross-political, cross-religious etc.) interaction. Maria Lugones's concept of "world-traveling" provides a possible starting point. World traveling implies an alternative view of both individual subjectivity and intersubjectivity. The plurality of worlds in a multi-cultural society leads to a plurality of identities that persons animate in various worlds. This may then lead to the dissolution of a completely coherent self-narrative (or identity) into an ambiguous and internally multiplicitous set of narratives (or identities). This multiplicity and ambiguity opens new moral possibilities by allowing for resistance to otherwise reified categories and structures of domination within and among worlds (Jacobsen 1995:358). What is being deconstructed within Lugone's argument is the existence of coherent, integrated and isolated selves that became reified in terms of traditional categories and politically laden value judgments. She doesn't argue for the absence of a sense of identity, but for a more distributed, flexible and negotiable version of identity. We should thus engage in a process of self-awareness and the realization of the self-transcending "other".

- **Power relations:**

Power-relations were forever changed with the realization that no single grand narrative provides a comprehensive and coherent explanation of social reality. This represented the internal erosion of the legitimacy principle of knowledge. The process of delegitimization was ironically fuelled by the demand of legitimization itself, since more and more language games entered the race to provide the perfect legitimization, in the end only proving the futility of all pursuits of final knowledge. The social subject itself seems to dissolve in the dissemination of language games. The social bond is linguistic, but is not woven with a single thread. Rather it is a fabric formed by the intersection of an indeterminate number of language games (Lyotard 1984:3).

The question that becomes a pressing concern is whether the loss of the grand narrative dooms us to relativity and nihilism. Does the deconstruction of the power of the grand narrative render us powerless in the flux of varying language games? It depends on one's view of power. If power is seen as the ability to dominate, repress and unify contradictions within a seamless whole, we have indeed become powerless. But power is not intrinsically repressive. Rorty (1994:63) indicates the similarities in the positive view of power in the work of both Foucault and Dewey. Foucault's vision of discourse as a network of power-relations and Dewey's vision of it as instrumental, as one element in the arsenal of tools people use for gratifying, synthesizing and harmonizing their desires, indicate that power can be a positive force in working out the praxis of living together in an ever shrinking world.

Hassard (1993:15) indicates that one of the implications of Derrida's theory is that it replaces the grand isolation of the modern subject with the notion of agency as a system of relations between strata. Instead of being self-directing, the subject now becomes the convenient location for the flow of various discourses. Because the agent of propositions and actions is seen as a de-centered subject, who is not the center of the universe and whose decisions and actions are not the sole determinant of events, the role and function of



for instance a manager can be interpreted in a very different way. The words of managers are like authorless texts; once they have been set in motion, the manager ceases to control its exact meaning. Relational theory suggests that managers' "rationality" becomes the product of collective action. Power is a matter of "social interdependence" and is affected through the coordination of actions around specified definitions.

The implication of the relationship between power and knowledge is that power exists as a condition rather than a property. Knowledge is constituted as an outcome of the systemic articulations of language grounded in social practice. Power is therefore implicit in all aspects of organizational discourse, structuring the rules and the procedures that determine different forms of knowledge. Therefore it is involved in the delimitation of what can and what cannot be said, the definition of distinct fields and the emergence of various "subject positions" which distributes and hierarchizes the field of unequal relations. Discourses emerge as regulated systems of statements that have both ideational content and implications for social practice. Organizational culture therefore functions as discourses that establish certain internal and external boundaries (Linstead 1999:63). These functions can be abused in order to exclude certain voices from the organizational discourse. Yet from a postmodern perspective this will be a return to grand narratives that will eventually stifle organizational growth. Rather, discourses should be seen as something that can be reproduced, can be resisted and is subject to change and negotiation. Care must be taken to create the conditions that enable the continual reproduction of organizational forms as ongoing discourses, in order to facilitate growth and adaptability to changing environments.

The problem is that many professionals who have been raised in a western, capitalist culture are still functioning within the impoverished moral culture of the "rational moral agent". Parks' (1993:190) study of moral attitudes of 90 MBA-students indicated that they could only take into consideration the individual, the individual corporation and the individual nation. They do not as readily recognize the social-ecological-political fabric within and upon which individual organisms and organizations must dwell and depend. They cannot recognize the dynamic relationships among sectors of society that constitute the rich

interdependence that they are subject to and that they will shape. It is very important that the interdependency of various groups on one another should be recognized, especially in the pluralistic organizational environment of South African companies. The impact of the company on various other systems is also of extreme importance for the reconstruction of South African society.

What Parks (1993:178) suggests is that we encourage the replacement of individualism with more communal, interdependent convictions. She argues that this becomes possible when we broaden the imagination of people in the working environment. Virtue is predicated on purpose, image and imagination. People should be brought to realize the scope of their power in a profoundly interdependent world. To enlarge the moral imagination, we should offer people an initiation into complexity and ambiguity, we should create situations in which the individual is confronted with the "Other", and where previous clear-cut guidelines are deconstructed. This process becomes possible within a pluralistic working environment such as is found in South African organizations.

- **Motivation:**

Modern motivational theories relied on the objective rationality of scientific knowledge, but skepticism about the neutrality of objective science soon brought these theories into disrepute. What is of particular significance in postmodernism is that it has replaced belief in the one and only rational explanation with a belief in the subjectivity of rational explanation (Carter & Jackson 1993:87). Expectancy theory is considered the closest that modern motivational theories have come to a "postmodernist" approach. Most modern theories on motivation attempt to motivate people by increasingly sophisticated incentives, without addressing the underlying problem of low motivations (as managers perceived it). Expectancy Theory broke with this tradition by emphasizing the key factor of individual understanding/ perception. Motivation was a function of the individual's desire for a particular outcome, and the perception of how likely it is that a particular course of action would lead to that outcome. Job satisfaction and job performance should be regarded as joint functions of individual differences in motives and cognized or actual properties of



work roles (Carter & Jackson 1993:92). Treating workers as homogeneous groups whose needs are assessed from a managerial perspective becomes impossible within this approach.

### 5.1.2. Organizational identity

As Hassard (1999:21) indicates, the postmodern plot thickens when it becomes clear that there are multiple meanings for the everyday terms used in organizational power networks. These terms are polysemous since they have been used in many contexts and thus bear 'the trace', as Derrida will call it, of many other terms in the network of significations of which it is part. Organizations as a symbolic product are written and can therefore be regarded as texts. Yet these texts have no integrated originary author. Rather, the text is formed by the overcrossing of other traces, other meanings, and other texts. The text has an intertextuality, a multiplicity of meaning which is inherent, rather than a result of a variety of interpretations. Organizations are partly constituted by the subjectivity of all those involved in their production and functioning. In turn they seek to constitute the subjectivity of those involved with it. Both the authors and readers of the text of the organization, both the creators and consumers are bound together in, and are constituted by, the continual process of the emergence of meaning (Linstead 1999:60).

Letiche (1998:143) describes Lipovetsky's analysis of the shifts in consciousness pertaining to ethics in the new highly individualized era. During high modernism, a so-called "first degree of perception" prevailed. Everyone saw, and acknowledged, more or less the same things. There was some shared reality under the control of various political, cultural, and economic elites or centers. But as modernism advanced, and the variation of individual perception became recognized, people evolved into the second degree of perception. Perceptualism, the story as a text chosen by the speaker, developed. Currently we are dealing with the third degree of perception, which allows for the individual to make use of his/her text as a means to express him/herself. According to Lipovetsky the ethical universe of the postmodern world is characteristic of the third degree of perception. The contemporary, postmodernist self functions as a self-sufficient source of ethical action. According to Lipovetsky, just as the principle of chaos reveals how a myriad of seemingly

atomized elements really possess order, individualist postmodern society possesses an ethical logic and identity.

During the modernist era, ethics was the sacrifice of the self to the collective good. In the postmodern era, the pursuit of the self, and not the abnegation of the self, is the route to ethical action. Therefore, Letiche (1998:146) makes the interesting observation that postmodern organizations try to be pleasurable, they are places of learning, challenge, creativity, and achievement. Identity-formation takes place as negotiated processes of interaction. The self will seek responsibility and opportunity for self-realization. Whereas modern employers focused on being rule-driven and compliance orientated, the postmodern employer needs commitment and creativity. To succeed, they will have to recognize and engage the employees' self. It is however much easier for employers to initiate ethical audits and codes of conduct than to address the self in the workplace. It is much safer to lay down the law and punish transgressions and to insist that employees "fit in" with "the way we do things around here" rather than to facilitate the type of dialogue that opens up the proverbial Pandora's box of difference and dissensus. Yet, in the increasingly decentralized context of global, multinational organizations, and virtual work environments, the lack of physical proximity and supervision and unprecedented new moral challenges, make individual discretion and independent moral thinking essential. Top-down ethical rhetoric, as part and parcel of "corporate communication" enacts a mere simulacrum of the self and can only serve to uphold artificial power relations and manipulative mechanisms to improve short term results. The alternative is for managers to learn new negotiating skills, wherein they really take on the challenge of seeking moral congruence and self-development within a more flexible and creative organization (Letiche 1998:147).

Postmodern organizational identity has a very specific character because of its recognition and protection of Otherness. The seemingly negative experience of Otherness can play a significant role in the creation of meaning within the organization. Interaction with the Other becomes the principle which structures meaning. The existence of another in the organization brings it to the continual realization that it is not complete. The fundamental, intractable compulsion of social life to reconcile this difference, to fill its own lack and

desire for recognition drives the organization towards continual reassessment and creative adaptations. Difference is therefore not dealt with by insisting on sameness, rather the Other functions to subvert restrictive rational arrangements.

Postmodern organizational theory emphasizes the paradoxical nature of organization. Not only does it hold together a range of unique individuals with a variety of skills, competencies and backgrounds, but it also links a number of diverse functions with one another whilst interacting with a constantly changing environment. Traditional organizational theory values "shared meaning", because it views the organization as a definitive cultural form that should embody the consensus. Postmodern organization theory stresses the fact that shared meaning is in reality impossible, and always incomplete. Shared meaning is nothing more than the deferral of difference. When organizational culture is viewed in this way, one should expect it to be paradoxical. In fact, strong cultures may be an indication of strong internal division.

Viewing *organizational culture* from a postmodern perspective is particularly interesting in terms of one of the main issues in this dissertation, namely the question of how one goes about linking unique individuals to organizational structures which function as collective without undermining individual freedom and particularities. Both culture and organization can be regarded as mediating terms between the determination of generalities and the agency of individuals. Describing culture means accounting for both the instabilities of social order and the rules of disorder (Parker 2000:4). For a long time, "culturalism" was regarded as the answer to management's prayers, since it allows them to solve the organization's problems by manipulating the beliefs, rituals and language of their employees. However, it has since become clear that a simplistic view that sees organizational culture as something that is "manageable" and that seamlessly ties the whole organization together as a homogeneous social bond, is untenable. Parker (2000:1) suggest that organizational cultures should be seen as "fragmented unities" in which members sometimes identify themselves in terms of the collective and at other times as divided individuals. Organizations are "fragmented unities", or patterned collectives with distinctive cultures

which each derives from elements such as its particular histories, geographies, and key actors.

An enquiry into the origins and development of the terms "organization" and "culture" reveal that they were initially used as verbs, and not as nouns. To use "organization" solely as a noun is to ignore the fact that it is first and foremost a verb and therefore a practical accomplishment (Parker 2000:50). Nowadays culture is usually used in reference to a state of affairs or an entity, but its medieval meaning was that of a process, i.e. the tending of natural growth, or cultivation. When one looks at culture from this perspective, it becomes clear that it is responsible for structuring the memories, identities and analogies of those who participate in it. These memories, analogies and identities indeed only really make sense within such a framework. Culture provides a skeleton of assumptions and a historical context. In the process of structuring the world in this way, one makes use of language, which as the poststructuralist argue so convincingly, have an endless array of possible meanings depending on the context. What's more, language can be used in a wide variety of ways. Regional, occupational, ethnic and other divisions give rise to particular local lexicons, turns of phrase and grammatical constructions. These are subsets of the overall language and are usually referred to as 'dialects'. Organizational cultures both resemble and deviate from the general context, and are therefore both similar and unique. Every organization responds to the generalizable 'structural pressures' of the broader society, such as the economy and culture, but at the same time each organization mediates and reproduces these pressures in a local manner (Parker 2000:92). Organizations are institutions that structure industrial societies and individual experience, but they are also themselves structured by industrial society and individual experience. This suggests multiple crosscutting dialects and hence many possible interpretations of the "cultures of" the organization. Members define their particular organizational culture when they describe it in their vernacular dialect. The interpretive strategies that members and analysts employ to classify sameness and difference therefore become of paramount importance to describing organizational culture. Yet, it has to be acknowledged that the actors within the organizational environment are heterogeneous and that it therefore becomes essential to situate any description within a historical context. Culture, structure, and power are described by Parker (2000: 94) as

contested relations, not material things. This however does not mean that they cannot "do" things to achieve various projects or that they do not represent strong forces within the organization.

Parker's (2000:188) analysis of the fragmented character of organizational cultures, point out that various types of divisions within the organization can cause a seemingly homogeneous culture to display huge internal disputes. Parker identifies three variables that may cause these divisions. They are spatial or functional divisions, referring to geographic and/or departmental divides ('them over there, us over here'); generational, that is age and/ or historical divides ('them from that time, us from this time'); occupational/ professional divides ('them who do that, us who do this'). Parker (2000: 108) illustrates how managers and doctors working within the same hospital have different perceptions on what the organization stands for and how it should operate. This was due not only to their occupational differences, but also the introduction of new information technology that the doctors failed to see the need for within the context of their daily functions. Behind the "team" rhetoric that was constantly emphasized in the organizational culture, Parker (2000:117) found clear differences, even antagonism. In the case of a manufacturing company, the divisions were mainly along departmental, geographical, and historical lines. Whereas the upper management had cozy, homely offices, the factory managers' offices were impersonal and functional. In addition, the upper management was relatively "new" to the company, whereas the old-timers down in the factory had been part of the company "family" all along. When considering this, one begins to appreciate the fact that the company's "family" rhetoric was no more than a nostalgia for "the way things used to be", and that it did not accurately reflect the reality of a fragmented company culture (Parker 2000:154).

When discussing diversity in an organizational setting, one tends to think in terms of ethnic, gender or religious plurality as the main issues. However when speaking to the managers of South African businesses, it soon becomes clear that when they use the terms "us and them" it is often in reference to other variables, such as differences in training and education, professional background, perceived status, the spatial organization of the



workplace, as well as geographical factors. All these differences should be accounted for when considering value-systems in the organization.

Alvesson (1998:115) makes a similar point in when he warns that a single prominent metaphor such as a "family" or a "team" cannot adequately describe organizational culture. Such references usually represent an over-simplification of the social reality. He argues that metaphors provide no more than a broad and imprecise impression of a phenomenon, so that many "hidden" metaphors are needed to support the main metaphor by giving it meaning and direction. Alvesson (1998:118) refers to first-level metaphors which function as general designators of the company cultures, and second-level metaphors, which structures the understanding of the metaphors. This interplay between various metaphors represents a distinct advantage because of metaphors' ability to stimulate creativity and new insights. Two different organizations using the metaphor "game" in describing their organizational culture may have very different second-level metaphors. For instance, in a hierarchical organization the game-metaphor can be supported by metaphors such as "competition sports", with each player assigned a certain "position", "playing by the rules". In another organization, the metaphor may be supported by "creatively play", being a "free child losing oneself in the game", having "fun" etc. These two cultures will clearly be very different, even though they may use the same first-level metaphor. Alvesson (1998:124) calls this metaphorical drifting. In a postmodern organization, this needn't be a problem, since the use of second level metaphors allows an organization to creatively reassess and redefine their culture in changing circumstances by adding new second-level metaphors. It enables newcomers and visionaries to provide inputs into the organization and thereby stimulate growth. Employees become aware of the fact that they can creatively interact with their institution. This stimulates them to reassess and redefine what the organization really stands for and where it is going.

## **5.2. Framework for dealing with moral issues in the workplace:**

Many criticisms are leveled against the use of 20th century continental philosophy in the field of ethics. One of the most common accusations is that it is so disillusioned with the



rational powers of the transcendental subject, that it ends up deconstructing all possible suggestions substituting it with any concrete proposals of its own.

It is therefore important to provide at least a framework, or agenda, for dealing with moral issues in pluralistic organizations. The framework should allow the instilling of values and creation of guidelines for moral decision-making in the workplace to take place. This should be done without suppressing the individual's moral values and background, or allowing the organization to disintegrate because of a lack of shared moral values and practices.

#### **5.2.1. A holistic view of the relationship between bodiliness, nature, technology, language, and moral values is necessary.**

Thinkers such as Merleau-Ponty, and contemporary writers such as Lakoff and Johnson emphasize that morality and moral judgments are not the product of transcendental rationality but rather have to do with the embodied nature of human beings. It is about survival, and serves the purposes of both organizations and individuals.

Related to this is the fact that our perceptions of the world is not something we can divide into tidy categories such as facts and values, public and private, professional and personal. Our perceptions of the world can more accurately be described as "universal flesh", or as a network of relationships. Things commonly thought to be "objective" realities, may in fact be just further dimensions of variation. This has some bearing on our view of language as a relational network. Words indicate the differences between signifiers, and are not "pictures" of reality as the earlier Wittgenstein had us believe. Rather, words are part of language-games by which we define and redefine meaning in the ongoing play of signifiers.

Differences that may have determined the categories by which we divided our world and ourselves in the past are now acknowledged as interfaces. The ethical, political, social and economical are interfaces of the same reality rather than separate spheres governed by separate rules. In dealing with moral values we must therefore conceive and realize complex structures that can function holistically.

**5.2.2. Moral values should neither be dealt with as totalizing structures that repress difference, nor as oppositional differences that exclude commonality:**

The relational character of moral values implies that people define "the good" as a result of complex interactions. Positive/negative feedback, evaluation and re-evaluation and effective relationships all play a role in an individual's conception of what is morally good.

Instead of referring to a subject's "core" or assuming a "centered self", this dissertation came to the conclusion that most people display distributed selves. Most people operate according to a relational subjectivity, in which their relationships with others and their interaction within certain context allows them to "change gear" or to shift their emphases in terms of what constitutes their identity in any given situation. It would therefore be meaningless to refer to a subject's core or assume a centered self. The web of values that the individual draws on in different circumstances cannot be pre-determined. This may be the case when an employer disbars personal or religious values from the workplace. An individual's selection of significant values remains quite unpredictable and random.

Moral discourse is the process by which people define and redefine the "good" in terms of the nature and purpose of their individual and collective pursuits. These moral values form webs of relations by which individuals are aligned to the collective, but from which they can also distance themselves as they develop new insights. The concept of "Mitsein" designates the interaction with others that determines one's moral values and disposition. This process assumes and relies on an ongoing dialogue as to what values are held in common by the collective and what constitutes "moral free space" within which the individual can hold private norms and beliefs. It allows the individual some latitude for dissociation whilst acknowledging the possibility that there should be sufficient consensus. In some cases, the individual may however have to sever his or her ties with the collective.

### 5.2.3. Truth is seen as a function of networks of relations and guidelines for moral behavior are temporary in nature:

Moral discourse in pluralistic environments can only function effectively within certain parameters. Many philosophers have searched for moral minimums and universal values, but this dissertation does not support this approach as main paradigm for practicing ethics in organizational contexts. However, it has to be acknowledged that broad principles provide a framework within which a pragmatist has room to maneuver, and, without which, the process of renegotiating substantive values would be impossible. The following substantive parameters support the version of pragmatism suggested by this dissertation.

- **Temporary meaning**

A pragmatic approach to moral issues in the workplace has to allow for the fact that every context, situation, and person is unique and that there is therefore no one solution to any ethical dilemma. When it comes to solving moral dilemmas, many approaches, principles policies, structures and guidelines rub shoulders in the workplace. Therefore, no single principles should enjoy absolute priority or exclusive consideration. When dealing with an ethical dilemma, guidelines should be used as precisely that - something to guide people in their moral decision-making, and not in a prescriptive or deterministic way. Advice should be sought, various perspectives should be considered, contextual variables should be taken into account. On-going discussion is the key to developing moral skill. Dissent on moral issues should be welcomed as part of the creation of a strong moral discourse and differences should be discussed. Doubts and uncertainty must not be viewed as moral weakness, but rather as moral seriousness and commitment.

- **Remaining connected:**

Individuals must see themselves as part of an ever-changing, ever-evolving web of relations with which to associate. These webs function according to the following precepts: 1) It relies on the principle of freedom of association: The individual must choose to be part of the web of relations based on certain shared conceptions of the good. 2) It must allow for moral free space. The individual must be allowed to be different from the collective in

certain respects without being judged or rejected because of it. The individual must be acknowledged as "distributed self" who is more than that which he/she shares with the collective and should be appreciated as such. 3) Diversity must be appreciated and acknowledged as strength, since it is only through difference that intersubjective interaction succeeds in correcting self-interested behavior and unbridled quests for power.

#### **5.2.4. The individual subject must be exposed to others in order to avoid relativistic or self-interested, egoistic behavior.**

One of the main threats to moral behavior is the isolated individual, or the so-called self-maximizing individual of late-modernism. These individuals have internalized the division between various life-worlds advocated during the peak of the modernist era to such an extent that moral considerations are limited to the private sphere and any interaction with and responsibility towards others are excluded. When combined with a form of pragmatism that allows a measure of moral relativism, this radical individualism may lead to a dangerous form of subjectivity. Moral relativism can only be tolerated in a context in which individual subjectivity is continually decentered through interaction with Others. Both the ideas of Levinas and Caputo are relevant here. Levinas describes what he calls "the face of the Other" that calls one to responsibility. He also alludes to the powers a transcendental force (God) who breaks through my subjectivist closure through the face of the Other. Caputo refrains from appealing to God or any transcendental force, but acknowledges an obligation that bounds one, overtakes one, when one is confronted with the Other. It seems then, that intersubjectivity, whether through dialogue or the presence of the Other in some other form, is the only way to avoid subjectivist closure.

#### **5.2.5. The importance of dialogue:**

Some procedural guidelines stemming from the insights of philosophical approaches to business ethics, can provide the broad framework within which a more pragmatic approach can safely be adopted. The importance of engaging into dialogue on moral issues in the workplace relies on the following precepts: Every stakeholder involved with business practices has a conception of the good. The organization cannot function morally if these

conceptions of the good are not explained by every party, discussed, negotiated and renegotiated for each specific context. The dialogue must therefore be open to ALL involved parties. Furthermore, all involved must communicate openly, honestly, and freely. The existence of unequal power relations (the impossibility of Habermas' ideal speech situation) must be acknowledged and addressed in ways appropriate to the issue and context.

### **5.3. Support from current trends in business ethics:**

It is interesting to note that elements within the suggested framework are reflected in and supported by many of the current trends in the business ethics field. These are some of the important issues in the debate:

#### **5.3.1. A more holistic perspective:**

Frederick (1995:243) argues convincingly that economics and nature are but two sides of the same coin. Economizing behavior originated within natural evolutionary processes and continues to serve an anti-entropic, life-supporting function for humankind. The technology of economizing is in fact what makes that outcome possible. In his new normative synthesis he attempts to marry the normative approaches of business ethicists with the natural business values that he sees operative in the business environment. Frederick's theory therefore confirms the embodied character of values on various levels of the organization. He argues for instance that a manager's values are embodied in his or her perception, attitudes, and behavior, which in turn expresses the forces - both natural and cultural - involved in the formation and operationalization of values (Frederick 1995: 110). Value commitments express symbolic human meanings that are used to bring order and significance into human transactions. Because of the inclusive nature of people's value commitments, their individual life histories play a role in their decisions and actions and causes X-factor values which cannot always be accurately assessed or predicted (Frederick 1995:100). X-factor values refer to the variation that exists between individuals in spite of

the sameness imposed on the managerial scene by personal, organizational, and societal filters (Frederick 1995:121).

Frederick's holistic approach goes even (1995:56) further than the micro-ethical level (level of individual values, decisions and conduct) in that he links the basic nature of business operations to nature and the physical world. The three original values of what Frederick (1995:56) depicts as value-cluster 1, i.e. economizing, growth and systemic integrity, are rooted in the nature of the physical world and in the operation of its natural laws. It therefore has a vital and indispensable role in the continuation of life. He also identifies further value clusters. Power-aggrandizing values include hierarchical (rank-order) organization, managerial decision-power, power-system equilibrium and power aggrandizement. Ecologizing values include linkage, diversity, homeostatic succession and community. Technological values include instrumental pragmatics, cooperative-coordinative relations, technical expertise, public openness and participatory leveling.

Frederick (1995: 275) maintains that ethical business behavior has no single meaning; it is a thoroughly relative phenomenon. It is relative to nature's economizing and ecologizing processes, to varying socio-cultural conventions, to a company's culture and ethical climate, to a firm's commitment to power aggrandizement, to the practitioners' personal values, and to stakeholder participation. It does however have some substantive moral meaning, which may arise from any of the sources that Frederick distinguishes in his analysis of the various value clusters. Nature, culture, society, organizations, individuals, and stakeholders all contribute multiple ethical meanings that Frederick (1995:275) aptly calls the "ethics stewpot". It therefore becomes impossible to address moral issues in the workplace without a thoroughly holistic and pragmatic approach.

Gustafson (2000:442) also argues for ethical holism. He points out that because it is extremely difficult to predict an employee's ethical behavior, it is important to appoint people who see their work ethics to be an extension of their personal ethics. Gustafson (2000:442) believes that one has more reason to trust employees if their behavior is rooted in a deeper personal belief structure, since this belief structure forms the basis of a



person's character. Because employers are concerned about ethical consistency, rooted, holistic ethics that can be applied both at home and at work seem to make a lot of sense.

The problem with Gustafson's argument is that it assumes a centered self that will act consistently in terms of core beliefs. Personal beliefs are indeed important and should be allowed to play a role in the workplace, but not because it will guarantee consistent behavior in all circumstances. These beliefs broaden the "web of beliefs", on which the individual can draw when in need of guidance. In doing so, the individual may selectively emphasize various parts of the web of beliefs under different circumstances. There can therefore be no guarantee for completely consistent moral behavior.

Gustafson's (2000:446) holistic theory however makes a lot of sense in its recognition of the fact that the principles included in a person's holistic world view do not function abstractly, disenfranchised from the rest of the person's life. Rather, this world-view is epistemic in nature - it is what we know cognitively - but it also has habits of response associated by what are sensible. In a study done by Brytting & Trollestad (2000:62) on managerial thinking about values-based management, all interviewees agreed with the idea that working life is becoming more personal. They however expressed varying opinions on why this might be the case. They differed with regard to the possible motives behind increased interest in values in organizational and managerial thinking. Although some attributed it to social-deterministic dynamics, many others offered a so-called voluntaristic standpoint, which regards this personalization as the result of individuals' active choices based on values.

### **5.3.2. Moral frameworks as non-totalizing structures:**

There have been exhaustive debates on how moral values should be managed in the workplace. There are those who believe that ethics, like job performance, quality and safety standards should be managed by strict compliance procedures and exhaustive monitoring systems. Others have argued that the unprecedented challenges of information technology, the decentralization of the workplace and the increased emphasis on flat organizational structures and the empowerment of employees have made this impossible. Weaver & Trevino

(1999:316) conducted a study to assess the relative benefits of compliance, versus values-based ethics programs. They cite evidence which would indicate that programs emphasizing values, counseling, and responsible conduct are likely to have more desirable and long-lasting impacts than programs founded on rule-compliance. A broader survey of Fortune 1000 firms found that the compliance orientation of many American companies is the result of executives' awareness of the United State Sentencing Commission's Guidelines and the penalties to be paid if strict procedures, structures and programs are not in place to force compliance.

Weaver & Trevino (1999:318) concluded that values and compliance orientations need not be mutually exclusive. For example, a strong values-based ethics program can coexist with a number of rules and disciplinary mechanisms. On its own, compliance approaches do little to generate moral imagination or commitment, and they may lead to a kind of minimalist "don't get caught " motivation. Behavioral monitoring suggests distrust of employees, and creates the impression that rules are imposed "top-down" on employees, rather than by creating values through identification and internalization processes (Weaver & Trevino 1999:323). The upside of compliance-based programs is that they may generate behavioral conformity and provide newcomers with a clear picture of "how things are done around here".

Values-based programs have the advantage of focusing on shared values, which makes the employee feel valued and respected and which in return creates a sense of obligation to the organization's goals. Values-based programs encourage the employee's ethical role identity and create a greater perception of organizational support that in turn can influence the employee's social exchange relationship with the organization. Values-based programs increase the employee's awareness of and concern for, ethical issues. This increases ethical advice seeking, and a willingness to blow the whistle on unethical behavior. The message of trust and reliance on the discretion of employees increases the commitment that individuals feel towards the organization. Open communication about ethics also results in the improvement of moral decision-making skills in the organization (Weaver & Trevino 1999:322).

The question remains however how one succeeds in marrying a strong moral values approach to business goals and practices. In his analysis of the value-clusters that function within the business environment, Frederick (1995:205) places a strong emphasis on technological values that link the two anti-entropic processes of economizing and ecologizing. Because technological values are compatible to both economizing and ecologizing, it can serve as mediator when either of the two threatens the other. The economizing goal values, i.e. productivity, growth and organizational integrity are enhanced by the application of technological values such as pragmatic methods, technical expertise, cooperative-coordinative workplace relations, attitudes of honesty-trust-openness, and the full participation of technically qualified personnel. Technical expertise also function to reveal the ecological risks of runaway economizing and assists in creating safe solutions to these problems. Criticisms against Frederick's approach such as that of Danley (2000:116) accuse him of having too many independent explanatory variables, which renders his theory incomprehensible. Yet it is precisely in his ability to view the interactions and relationships between different values and processes within the workplace that the strength of Frederick's approach lies. Frederick's theory acknowledges the fact that moral values in the workplace operate within a complex system in which the network of relationships often makes it difficult to determine simple cause and effect relationships.

Frederick is criticized by Danley (2000:118) for using technological values as evaluative standard to mediate conflicts between the other value clusters. Frederick (1995:206) asserts that technological values resonate with other, better-known ethical principles and value orientations that are widely respected and consistent with established societal institutions and practices. For instance, most business ethics theories place a high priority on honesty, truthfulness, and openness and insist on full and open participation of all those who hold a stake in corporate actions. Dialogue, empowerment, cooperation and community building also seem to be important values in business ethics literature. These are all values on which complex technological innovation and the complex systems of information technology are based. Frederick therefore appears to be correct in forging an alliance between business ethics and technology. This alliance does not only make theoretical sense, but also has interesting practical possibilities in terms of value creation. This is not to say

that technological innovation cannot create severe ethical problems of its own, or to deny that it confronts business ethics with unprecedented challenges. This however may be even more reason to use the values on which technology is based to the best possible advantage for promoting moral values.

### 5.3.3. Temporary meaning:

Collier & Esteban (1999:178) describe contemporary organizations as open, dynamic systems in the sense that its patterns of interaction with the environment are constantly changing. Secondly, they are complex systems, groups of agents whose interactions, although rule-governed, have unpredictable outcomes. Despite this, the organizations does not disintegrate into total disorder and randomness. It avoids dispersion through purposefulness, that is, by its ability to align itself internally while simultaneously responding to challenges from the environment. It is the *connectedness* of the organization that assures that the inner coherence of its members around a developing common purpose is maintained.

There are different views on how this common purpose should be maintained within the volatile business environment. Some argue that maintaining a set of common values defined by the creators of the organization provides stability. Employees, partners, clients and suppliers who can identify with these values are brought on board, but the values are never renegotiated. Others, such as Collier & Esteban (1999:180) argue that in the participative organization, governance is no longer the responsibility of a few top managers who "steer the boat". Governance becomes a quality of the boat itself and the shared responsibility of all in it. Collier & Esteban (1999:180) argue that it is only through being responsive, adaptive and by continually learning that organizations "settle" in a rapidly changing environment in the same way that a boat settles and becomes stable in a raging storm. Adaptability requires continuous differentiation. However, to avoid complete dispersion as a result of this differentiation, a corresponding process of integration is necessary.

This process allows individual employees to contribute to the natural evolution of those values that keep the organizational boat afloat, whilst at the same time harnessing these

individual efforts for a common purpose. In order to create non-totalizing structures, individuality, freedom, and discretion must be allowed, whilst at the same time, keeping the organization's purpose, its collective goods, in view. According to Collier & Esteban (1999:183) decision-making in participative organizations is likely to be characterized less by consensus and more by the constructive management of value dilemmas. Value differences should be allowed because they create a "virtuous learning circle". According to Collier & Esteban this requires a sensitive, altruistic and charismatic leadership which can nurture and integrate a diverse and flexible organization by supporting the process of dialogue and working for the emergence of shared values while at the same time listening to diverse view-points and affirming their potential contribution.

Problems arise when values-based management is seen as a tool for ensuring conformity of behavior and consistency in a volatile business environment, as managers often do when they establish clear-cut consensus in terms of existing organizational values. Brytting & Trollestad (2000:61) reports that a manager explained the need for values-based management as follows: "*Since, due to new organizational structures, we can no longer control our employees the same way as before, we must find new ways. To create common values can be a pedagogical tool which may increase loyalty with the top level of the organization*". In fact, most interviewees in the Brytting & Trollestad (2000:62) study argued that their organizations and management has instrumental motives behind the widespread talk about values in working life.

Some respondents to the Brytting & Trollestad's (2000:62) study however argued that employees increasingly demand interesting and meaningful work with the possibility of personal development, participation and independence. In organizations where the majority of employees display these needs, instrumental abuse of values to create conformity and to serve management goals will not have the desired effect. Yet, it remains difficult to convince managers that the agreement on values in the organization is merely a postponed dissent, and that the long-term goal of gaining employees' loyalty through granting them autonomy, freedom and trust is worth the initial risk of involving all employees in a truly participative discussion. The "consensus" developing through this kind of dialogue may well



be only a very contextual, temporary solution, but it creates long-term benefits in terms of loyalty, trust and co-operation. This type of temporary consensus allows for new and innovative problem-solving and moral decision-making.

Vidaver-Cohen's (1997: 3) study of the moral imagination has shown that it becomes impossible for employees to develop the necessary moral decision-making skills to deal with unprecedented challenges if the institutional context of business-decision-making is not changed to accommodate challenges to the status quo. Moral imagination requires breaking out of the organizational problem-solving scripts and exploring a wide range of possibilities, including, most critically, new possible conceptual schemes. This cannot be left up to the individual's own moral values and conceptual skills, or the company's existing practices and procedures. An institutional re-orientation with regard to moral problem solving needs to take place. Vidaver-Cohen (1997:4) indicates two critical aspects in this process, namely that "challenging existing decision-making norms" and "considering the social or moral implications of managerial actions" must become institutionalized ways to approach organizational problem solving.

Vidaver-Cohen's study (1997:11) addresses both the context and the process components of the current American business environment. Globalization and the increased multi-cultural composition of work forces have left organizational value-systems in a state of transition. The organizational structures of many companies are moving towards eliminating excess managerial layers, promoting participation and empowerment and decentralizing decision-making. Technological developments also favor an approach that allows for individual discretion and creativity. The development of institutional parameters that support moral imagination in decision-makings may however be hindered by status conscious managers in less turbulent industries who limit the input of their employees and does not allow them to voice their concerns in a way that may influence business decisions (Vidaver-Cohen 1997:15).

#### **5.3.4. Being exposed to the Other:**

The truly participative organization exercises its freedom and creativity in reference to a communication framework that connects organizational "purposing" and individual



responsiveness. The ethical dimension of that communication framework is found in the fact that each individual is required to exercise moral judgment in decision-making. The individual decision however does not remain isolated from the rest of the organization. All voices must be heard in a participative environment. Because there is no acontextual, ahistorical overriding set of moral principles that tells the individual what to do, communities of discernment must be created within the organization. Within this community, freedom and creativity are exercised in a quest for what is just in a context where conflicting values exist.

Freedom as basis for participation within organizations is never merely arbitrary or self-justifying, but rather continually challenged by its tendency to reflect its origins. Collier & Esteban (1999:183) explains: "*Freedom does not constitute the 'world'; it allows participation in a world which is already given, and for which we are responsible.*" Responsibility defines our freedom, so that in order to understand our freedom we must seek the source of our responsibility. Levinas argues that the source of our responsibility is found in alterity, the "otherness" of the Other. Without the "other", the "self" would not exist. In organizations, responsibility is defined by roles and functions. That is - responsibility for initiatives and achievements and a greater or lesser responsibility for shared outcomes. But according to Collier & Esteban, participative organizations are also grounded in a more profound foundational responsibility. This responsibility is the deep commitment of each member to the good of the 'other', whose very existence defines his or her own self and with whom she or he shares a commitment to the overall task. According to Collier and Esteban (1999:184) the recognition of and respect for "otherness" is the ethical glue which strengthens integration and participation and in this way supports communities of commitment.

It could be argued that exposing the individual to the opinions, beliefs and needs of others could be critical to the development of that person's moral decision-making skills. Foucault's explanation of the "critical ontology of the self" makes it clear that the development of the self is in fact "kick started" by deliberate participation in "limit experiences". This involves putting our beliefs and values at risk at the table of dissent in

order to demonstrate to ourselves how our potential has been limited by the internalization of particular discursive practices (Brewis 1998:65). This initiates a process of self-formation in the individual's moral identity, instead of conformation to abstract ethical codes, which are external to the self. In this way, self-policing and self-motivation is made possible. Foucault describes this strategy of internalized values as "lived morality"

### 5.3.5. Dialogue:

Dialogue presupposes the acceptance of both the notions that it is important to be exposed to and open towards the Other, as well as the recognition that all meaning is temporary and revisable. This is because of the fact that dialogue is an intense interaction between individuals, in which new meaning is created or at least new insights into previous meanings are stimulated. Dialogue may however easily be undermined by various contextual realities. Habermas has for instance been severely criticized for his assumption that something like the ideal speech situation is at all plausible. In organizational settings one seldom reaches a situation in which all participants have equal access and freedom to participate in the conversation with their superiors. Hierarchies and power relationships also make a non-coercive environment hard to attain.

A study done by Ryan (2000:80) indicates how micro-political strategies within organizations, such as information control, flexibility and stagecraft, can influence genuine participation in dialogue and other participative strategies within organizations. Information control is concerned with the ways in which information (whether it is being given or received) is manipulated by the individual in order to bring about a required outcome. Flexibility refers to actions individuals take to maintain their freedom of action and keep their options open. Stagecraft involves various forms of impression management, and includes role-playing, which is deliberately undertaken for political purposes. All three these factors create a gap between the rhetoric of participation and its experienced reality. While senior managers may assert their support for the essential elements of participation, such as sharing information, their acquired political skills in terms of manipulating support prior to the conversation etc., may affect or inhibit true participation in the dialogue (Ryan 2000:85). Furthermore, true participative decision-making tends to make the behavior of

decision-makers less predictable, and the decision itself less clear, and may run counter to cultural values. Ryan (2000:85) warns that what is pragmatism and flexibility in one culture, may seem like a lack of commitment or principle in another. Thirdly, the pre-existing cultural milieu may present individuals with risks they perceive can only be dealt with by role-playing. This leads to the distortion of information being provided to others.

Because of all these factors, Ryan (2000:86) indicates the importance of recognizing the fact that information is not a matter of pre-existing facts to be found and interpreted through social interaction. Information creation is itself part of the process. Ryan (2000:86) found that 67% of managers employing participative strategies within their organizations thought that decision-making required the reconciliation of the claims of competing groups, but did not recognize that information is being created by the process itself. A true challenge to existing problems or the expression of honest opinions can only be realized if participants have the necessary skills and other political resources for making such a challenge, and where appropriate social processes are in place. Another aspect that increases the perception that true participation in organizational environments is only a matter of rhetoric, is the fact that 40% of the participants in Ryan's (2000:87) study admitted that formal meetings within their organizations merely endorsed decisions that were made elsewhere. Participative decision-making is aimed at broadening the spectrum of knowledge, and giving expression to the fact that alternative views on reality can give greater depth to the organizational knowledge base if allowed to be brought into play.

Many arguments against engaging in dialogue as part of values-based management have been made. One of the main arguments is that of a lack of time. Commitment and understanding about the organization's values is aimed at long-term gains and demands considerable time and energy over an extended period of time. Another problem is that of a fear of change. Many managers perceive open discussion about values as a considerable risk, undermining their sense of security and control (Brytting & Trollestad 2000:67). Other managers argue that dialogue is acceptable as long as it serves the purpose of making it clear to employees what the organization expects of them. In fact, Brytting and Trollestad (2000:65) report that top management defines what is commendable and what should be part of employees'

value system. A manager is reported to have explained it as follows: *"It is all about spelling out the goal, and then we communicate it downwards. We develop, dismiss, and recruit staff according to our values. Those who cannot join in have to find something else."* Clearly this approach sees dialogue not as part of the process of the development and definition of values, but as a way of ensuring compliance with top management's values.

Brytting & Trollestad (2000:65) did however find other managerial approaches to values-based management in their survey. Some of these assume that the process of dialogue is aimed at getting employees to buy into values already defined by top-management. In such cases, the group may discuss top management vision and break it down into sub-parts adjusted for each area of operation. Others seem to aim at a more communicative strategy where employees actually have the opportunity to influence and work out a common vision. One manager who believes in this kind of approach described it in the following terms: *"Openness is important to us, and that everybody is involved; to have a real dialogue with everybody and let them influence the organization's result."*

Collier & Esteban (1999:183) support this notion in their study of the survival of contemporary business organizations in volatile environments through participatory values-based management. They make it clear that this approach can only succeed in organizations where moral argumentation takes place in a climate of openness, where the freedom to express views is paralleled by the obligation to hear those of others, and where difference demands creative empathy, insights and intuition.

#### **5.4. Conclusion:**

This chapter indicated that developments within contemporary organizations necessitate a very contextualized approach to dealing with moral issues in the workplace. This approach needs to acknowledge the way in which individuals' distributed identities interact with power relations and other complex variables within the organization. Furthermore, a holistic view of organizational identity and culture as ever-changing, dynamic processes sets the scene for developing a framework for dealing with moral issues in the workplace. The framework



developed in this chapter addresses these realities by incorporating the following elements: a holistic perspective on how moral values operate in the workplace; an emphasis on non-totalizing value-systems; a view of truth as a function of networks of relations; the importance of confronting the individual with the Other; and a strategy of unapologetic dialogue. These elements also seem to reflect current trends in the broader business ethics debate. It is the conviction of this dissertation that this framework will enable organizations to respect and utilize individual diversity, whilst at the same time maintaining unity and cooperation. The practical implications of this framework for dealing with moral difference in concrete organizations, will be discussed in Chapter 6.

## Chapter 6: Case study discussion

The question often raised at the end of a dissertation is "So what?" Do the insights developed here present us with a better way of understanding our context and does it provide useful strategies for dealing with our unique challenges? This chapter is not at all an attempt to verify the insights developed in this dissertation. It is merely an attempt to reflect on contemporary South African organizations from the vantage point of the perspectives developed in this dissertation, and to make some preliminary suggestions on how the framework set out in Chapter 5 may shed some new light on the functioning of these organizations.

Due to the nature and scope of this dissertation, it was not possible to do an in-depth empirical study of the organizations involved. The analysis was in each instance based on a single conversation with a leading manager of each of the three organizations. It therefore represents a very incomplete impression of the way in which these managers facilitate unity amongst a work force that presents a number of diverse value systems. While this analysis may therefore not be comprehensive, it is an attempt to translate the theoretical views of this dissertation to practical insights about concrete situations. The choice of the organizations was based on the fact that they were thought to deal with different issues and present a variety of perspectives. The first is a secular business organization with a diverse composition led by a Christian manager. The second is an urban missionary organization that operates from a Christian confessional basis, but includes people from various denominations, cultures and languages. The third is a Dutch Reformed congregation, which operates under the auspices of a specific denomination, but includes various forms of spiritualities, ages, genders, as well as theological views. In addition, this congregation is also moving in the direction of becoming multi-cultural and multi-lingual. These organizations will be discussed in terms of: a) the extent to which they display contemporary organizational trends, and b) The way they deal with moral values in the workplace and how it corresponds or differs from the Chapter 5's framework for dealing with moral issues.



## 6.1. Case study 1: MBD

### 6.1.1. Background on MBD:

At the outset, it is important to establish how MBD views its vital elements (core values). Information from the MBD-web site is very instructive in this regard.

*As in life, so in law, vital elements must coexist and thrive to ensure continuing processes of sustenance and growth.*

Sensitive to this understanding, we at Munnik Basson and Da Gama (MBD) Incorporated orchestrate our own vital elements to deliver specialised legal services to the corporate world. Services that are masterminded to ensure our clients receive peace of mind and assurance of quality and commitment. Services have to be delivered with focus, discipline and precision to ensure dependable, value-for-money results.

In daring to be different from the legal pack, we always strive to go the extra mile. Our ethos of consummate professionalism is driven exclusively by the merits of the legal system and the specialised and often demanding requirements of our growing client base. While respecting and upholding the time-honoured traditions of the legal profession, we believe excellence in legal services today must also be driven by an ethos of innovation and a vision of the wider horizons.

Today's burgeoning global culture and our mounting quest to exploit new technologies, pioneer new business methodologies and seek to enhance the human condition are accelerating processes of change. Challenges are increasing in scope and complexity, thereby compelling us all to find smarter ways of doing things. We at MBD Incorporated believe we are a dependable, caring and innovative company of lawyers for discerning clients who also believe in the merits of going the extra mile.

Vital elements...blending and orchestrating the vital characteristics of freshness and alertness and knowledge, integrity, honesty and stability, inspiration, enthusiasm and motivation, and empathy, adaptability and supportiveness to ensure service excellence and sound growth for mutual prosperity.

## VITAL ELEMENTS

### *Thriving together for mutual prosperity*

At MBD Incorporated the fusion of vital elements is the imaginative and responsible orchestration of important values, skills and resources to provide our clients with tangible benefits in the form of expert knowledge, stable and dependable systems and energised people. Our offices and infrastructure provide refuge in a world of challenge, complexity and change - a sense of assurance that client needs and expectations will be met while we thrive and grow together in mutual prosperity.

In our culture at MBD water signifies our freshness, adaptability, empathy, support and care in our willingness and ability to support people, express positive emotion, solve problems and network across different yet connected interests, disciplines, needs and cultures to the benefit of our valued clients. We are the healing, cleansing waters to sustain our clients and provide beneficial solutions. Adaptable and fluid, we go with the flow.

In the distinctive culture of MBD air symbolises our vitality, freshness, alertness and knowledge in our willingness and ability to communicate, share, intellectualise, ideate and manage information to the benefit of our valued clients. We would like to believe that these qualities come as a breath of fresh air to our clients.

At MBD the element of fire is manifest in our culture of inspiration, vitality, enthusiasm and the energy to transform or transmute, as well as the passion in our willingness and ability to drive, energise and adapt our business to the benefit of our valued clients. We are a light of inspiration and a powerful force for tangible and beneficial change. Our fire warms, heals and illuminates.

At MBD we strive to nurture and manage a strong foundation of goodness and stability in our willingness and ability to build a fertile basis for growth and expansion without losing

sight of the need to maintain integrity, honesty and simplicity in all our client transactions. We are down-to-earth because we are honest, stable, unpretentious, giving and supportive.

#### 6.1.2. Verbatim of discussion with MBD's CEO: Frans Basson (translated from Afrikaans)

MBD's Chief Executive Officer, Frans Basson, places a high priority on ethical business practices and talks openly and enthusiastically about his company's practices in this regard.

*Your company has a very diverse composition. How do you deal with the diversity of cultures, religions and languages when dealing with moral issues in the workplace?*

We tell our people that they are all like chests of drawers. You have a personal drawer and a business drawer. If you open both draws, the chest of drawers will fall over. You have to open one drawer at a time. If you walk in here, you open the business drawer and you close the personal drawer. In your business drawer is your business values, norms and principles. We cannot afford to accommodate all the personal values of people belonging from diverse cultures - that will never work. The in-business culture is devoted to the new South Africa, but is also committed to quality. Initially we were using the Christian values of honesty, integrity etc as our base, but since we have grown bigger, we have translated these values to principles. We have identified these principles in order to give our people guidance. Therefore we hand them each this key ring that is also a compass, to bring home the fact that these principles should guide their conduct.

We break down segregation through uniformity. All our staff wears uniforms. They are different but the same. Each one has his/her own task, with a specific job description. In order to ensure that this job gets done, we have a non-conformance procedure. Yet we don't ask the question: *Who did it?* We rather ask: *"What went wrong?"* We manage our value-systems in a different way. We do not use the non-conformance procedure, rather we engage in dialogue with all the affected parties, in order to manage the values by finding out the thoughts about ethics that lie behind it.

*It seems as if you don't attempt to force values down people's throats through compliance?*

No, we rather enter into conversation with the person, through coaching, we try to find out what people were thinking. We indicate our values as symbols. You can look at our web site [www.mbd.co.za](http://www.mbd.co.za). to see how we indicate our value-systems.

*You make a very clear distinction between the personal drawer and the business drawer.*

*Does it ever happen that the one spill over into the other?*

Yes, it does happen, but then we remind them, remember you must close that draw. We help them to do it. The moment you try to manage values on a personal level, it will fail. This is a very important point.

*Do you allow a person to draw on his/ her own cultural or religious background when making decisions?*

Yes, we even expose them to religious views by for instance showing the Jesus-film. We furthermore have a strong relationship with Campus Crusade for Christ. We used them to present a course on motivation, which was excellent.

We use the Tree of Knowledge as metaphor: this tree grows only if all the values are used. Work can provide the environment for the tree to grow in, but the person grows by him/herself. We use the principles of self-policing, self-management, self-motivation, but we give people the framework within which they can move freely. If somebody goes outside this framework, we investigate. From a business point of view, a procedural perspective, we use our non-conformance procedure to deal with the person. We ask: "What went wrong?" It could be that the framework was not properly defined, and then we correct that.

Moral aspects cannot be defined in the same, precise way. People must develop insight into these aspects, and use a lot of discretion. Here we use dialogue to bring the person towards seeing that his behaviour was out of line with what we as business expected from him.

*What do you think is the importance of leading by example?*

Yes, I do. Let me give you an example. When I started this business I left my previous employer who at that stage owed me a lot of money. Two employees decided they are

coming with me, even if I cannot pay them salaries straight away. They stole R 3 000 worth of stationary and brought it with them to my business, saying that we should take all we can because they owe us so much more. I didn't want to report the theft and have them prosecuted, but I deducted this amount from the money owed to me by the previous business.

*How did you deal with the employees?*

I explained to them that too strong loyalty can lead to dishonesty and that this is unacceptable and that I had to correct their mistake.

*What types of ethical issues do you encounter in your business?*

Mostly we need honesty, uprightness, and trust. Unconditionally. Some cultures condone certain lies. Here the principle of the drawers is applied again - its different at work than at home. Evaluate it according to the company's principles.

*How do you go about your value-creation process?*

We do it in a variety of ways. We do it on weekends away, but it is also an integral part of our circle meetings once a month. During these meetings, we try to develop a sense of the potential ethical problems that can crop up in the course of our work. For instance, in one of the circle meetings that was going on when we walked through the offices right now, they were discussing the access we have to the client's main frame and the ethical issues of dishonesty, etc that can crop up in these situations. Even closing a file involves many ethical decisions. We try to limit the temptations by having good systems and procedures in place. Bad systems are sometimes the cause of many ethical problems. We rectify the problem by addressing it in the business procedure.

*Would you say you are more rule-based than principled-based? When dealing with moral issues you seem to work more principles-based, whereas in terms of business practice you focus strongly on compliance?*

Yes, on the business side we tend to focus strongly on our non-conformance program and therefore on compliance. Yet we overlay compliance with a principles-based approach. We



deal with the two aspects separately when a problem crop up, but in practice the two go together. Moral issues that we identify when we do the non-conformance procedure are sent to HR. The person gets called in, and we conduct a conversation with the person in order to determine how the person thought.

*Does everyone always understand moral values the same, for instance, is there consensus about the meaning of honesty?*

No, let me give you a simple example. A line-manager did not communicate properly that Telkom's turnaround times had been changed due to retrenchments. Where they previously worked according to a 20-day turnaround, fewer staff meant that they were now on a 30 day turnaround. Our people were promising clients that their calls would be returned within 20 days, whereas we were actually only able to get back to them within 30 days. The clients complained that they were being lied to, or that they were misled. Whereas in fact it was a communication problem and our people did not intend to lie. Here ethics actually has to do with procedure. Proper procedure and ethics go hand in hand.

*Where is the emphasis in the company: rule-based systems or value-based systems?*

It's both really. There has to be compliance, there has to be certain rules, but we overlay ethical issues with procedure. The difference comes in how you manage the two: You manage your compliance through your non-conformance procedure, in line with your values and principles.

*Does your vision and mission keep people from diverse backgrounds together?*

Yes, we address moral issues by song and dance, we interpret it this way, very symbolic, very visual. People must buy into it, they must understand it. The only way to do this is through repetition, to make it visual and to make it fun, it must be understandable.

*People do not seem intimidated when you as CEO walk in. Why is this?*

Conformity is created through the similar uniforms that everyone is wearing. Everyone from myself to the person who sorts the mail wears it. You will notice that everyone feels on the same level.

*Do you think the African feeling of ubuntu has anything to do with this? Do you make something of African communal values?*

No, our principles originally came from the Christian values that were translated to pure business principles. Our vision is not to become yet another African Company. We want to compete internationally, we want to deliver quality service. That is why we benchmark internationally against ISO standards. We drive the ISO standards home through our compliance-system. HR and line-management drives ethics. If there is a problem, ISO drives our investigation, asking, "What went wrong?"

*You operate internationally. Did becoming a multinational company cause problems?*

It can cause problems, But once again: Sound Business Practices is the key. Every month we produce full financial statements for the whole board of directors. There is complete transparency, we look at profits and losses and we consistently benchmark against ISO standards.

*When I listen to you speaking, it seems as if quality and effectiveness is very important values to you. Do you think these values have a moral content?*

Quality and effectiveness matters to us. It is managed in a different way, but it is an integral part of our moral principles. I always say: "It's a sin to sell your client an inferior service. IT'S A SIN." Service matters morally. You manage the two aspects differently, but they form an integral unity.

*You see a lack of quality as a moral transgression?*

Yes, you touch the core of your clients being and his personal space. Bad service becomes a personal, morality issue. Moral judgments are made about your company. You cannot separate business and morality. The one, who separates the two, does not understand business. He does not understand his client. We deliver a highly specialized service that is non-tangible. Therefore the value we place on moral judgments must be so much higher. Our client cannot evaluate the quality of our service directly. We are the experts. They just don't have that knowledge and expertise.

*They must therefore trust you completely?*

Yes, and if we ask our client to describe MBD in a few words, and we have asked them this, you will consistently find the same answer: honesty, integrity and quality. We ask our clients, we do studies on our clients and ask them how they experience our quality, our integrity. We determined nine quality determinants, by which we test what is important to our clients. We measure perceived value, versus expected value, etc.

*Do you attempt to match your client's culture by having an employee from the same culture deal with him/her?*

It's about language. If you come across a person to whom you must speak on his level and you do not speak the language, you transfer the call to someone who does speak his language. Most employees speak 3-4 languages, James, whom you've met, speak all 11 national languages. Furthermore, we attempt to treat each person with dignity. Our style is to talk morality to people who owe money. "You know you owe the money, you have to pay it. It is in your interest to pay. We want to help you, how much can you afford?" or "You can't buy things and not pay for it. It's not right." We coach them. This person will rather pay us than our competitors who threaten them. We use morality to get our results.

*In the company itself, are there no issues about race?*

No, not at all, we've never had it. We make people understand we are all equal. That is why problems never become a race-issue. We look at it differently. I speak of the happys and the non-happys. Non-happy people's issues are addressed. It never gets degraded to a race-issue. We ask: "Why are you not happy?"

*How do you keep these communication channels open?*

Many times it comes down to communication skills. We try to develop understanding for each unique person by using the Mayer's Briggs analysis. You must respect your colleague. You must understand that he is different, but precisely this difference makes the team stronger.

*So you see diversity as strength?*

Yes, we have identified diversity as strength. Precisely because we are so many different cultures, we as team are formidable. We can speak all the languages, we can communicate with people, we can relate to them.

Our attitude is, if our grass is not green, you can do a few things. You can pull all of it out, by getting rid of people. You can throw fertilizer to treat the symptoms, or you can actually look at the roots to see if there isn't a worm or something there. Our approach is: get to the roots of the issue. Don't generalize, don't just use fertilizer. Get to the bottom of it. They know that this is our approach, to identify the issue. The only way to do this, is by getting all the "afflicted"/ affected parties together around a table. You will not believe how quickly the issue is identified. Many times the problem is that people cannot verbalize their problems. Sometimes they verbalize it wrong, and the wrong issue is being addressed. You can't hear all the separate stories, you must get all the involved parties together and you only mediate. Then you can listen to them and say: "You are all saying the same thing, you are just saying it in a different way." Dialogue is very important. We use it a lot. Because of the fact that we use so many different languages, one thing can mean a variety of things. In African languages, they use a lot of symbolic language. They will for instance say something that literally translates: I have a frog in my throat, which means they are sad.

*So someone must mediate these languages?*

Yes, you must remember that people are expressing their emotions in English, which is more often than not their first language. Someone listening to this person easily receives the wrong message. We use the transmitter-receiver principle to deal with communication. We explain to our people that it is the responsibility of the transmitter to make sure that the right message comes across. He must make sure you understand, he cannot just take it for granted.

Do you know what our other issue is here? We work with people who have anything from a St. 3-6 qualification and people who have three to four college or university degrees. The

level of intelligence, and training is totally diverse. So we work with diverse languages, cultures and levels of training.

*How do you avoid hierarchies?*

When each person does his/ her presentation annually, we acknowledge how important each person's unique contribution is. If the person sorting the post does not do his job properly, we have huge problems. So we acknowledge the chain of value, or the value-chain. We are all a chain and we are only as strong as our weakest link.

*And how good is communication between people of diverse levels of training?*

At the moment it is going well, because people are aware of it. It wasn't always good, its something we constantly have to work on. We have four external consultants - I like to get consultants to focus on specific issues. These consultants watched our staff presentations and said that they cannot believe some of these people have only St 3 to 6 training - it is incredible. It is a process where people uplift each other. I give you this video of our staff show. You'll think it is a professional show, and only the two soloists were professionals. It's nice for the staff to feel how it is to work with professionals. For instance one of our staff, Judith Mabika, you cannot believe how she sings - Whitney Houston can't compare. It's so motivating for them to be in this kind of show.

This year we are doing a video on the things we do as company in the community. For example, we are involved with the Endangered Wildlife Trust. We are marketing this perfume-series of which all the proceeds go to the Endangered Wildlife Trust. These programs are all part of our company's Social Responsibility Program. Do you know how business ethics fits into this? It's a good business transaction, because it conserves our nature, and for every four new tourists, a job is created. Its job creation on all levels, from the vendor selling his handmade beadwork, to the tour bus operator. We create so much wealth through this kind of project. We believe in the life-cycle, you can look at it on our website, it clearly indicates our values.

*Stability is also one of your values. How does it work in this fast changing business environment?*

In a business world that changes constantly, the company must continue to function, and display stability. An unstable organization cannot change, cause they don't know where they are.

### **6.1.3. Analysis of how MBD displays contemporary organizational trends**

#### **1) Organizational structure:**

MBD provides a service that requires that their clients trust them unconditionally. They often have access to their client's entire mainframe, as well as the authority and discretion to close files on the client's behalf. Even though they are responsible for collecting debt on behalf of their clients, their service is in a sense based on delivering certain intangible goods. They work with valuable information, and enter into negotiations on their clients' behalf. The potential for abuse associated with these types of services and access to important information exposes them to the same moral dilemmas many other contemporary companies face.

Although the type of services MBD provides requires a high degree of discretion, sensitivity and responsibility from its employees the company displays a very traditional organizational structure. The entire staff works together in one wing of a large office-building in Randburg, Johannesburg. Everyone therefore works in very close proximity to his or her colleagues. Supervisors exercise direct control over everyone in the call-center, since they can access any person's computer monitor directly. This is due to the fact that they often have to intervene when one of their team members has to deal with a difficult call. Everyone in the company wear stylish uniforms, which creates conformity in an otherwise very diverse environment.

MDB has a very low staff turnover rate, partly because the majority of their staff hold only minimal academic qualifications, but are highly skilled in terms of their current profession. Employees seem to be very happy working for MDB, and staff rarely leaves the



company, even though MBD's competitors headhunt aggressively among its staff. The only exception is the attorneys who do not seem to be so intimately aligned to the rest of the close-knit company. They have their own private offices and do not wear uniforms.

Many contemporary organizations display a high degree of fluidity, flatness, and trust. In some respects MBD is also characterized by flatness and trust. It has a very flat organizational structure and the CEO is very open and approachable. The interaction amongst the staff and between the CEO and his employees is informal and intimate. This may be partly due to the fact that MBD is a relatively small company of only 225 people, 80% of which are Black. Yet it is important to note that with regard to its business operations, organizational layout and turnover-rate, MBD displays much less fluidity and flux than other contemporary organizations.

## **2) Individual Identity:**

Considering the fact that 13 languages are spoken at MBD, one would expect cultural diversity to play a very important role in the identity-configurations of its staff. The position of its CEO with regard to diversity and difference is however somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, MBD has identified diversity as an asset in terms of their business operation. According to the CEO, it is precisely diversity that makes them formidable as team. Yet certain of the company's managerial assumptions tend to limit the extent to which it appreciates and utilizes its employees' rich diversity. These assumptions are reflected in the CEO's use of the drawer-metaphor. According to this metaphor, one closes one's personal drawer and open your business drawer, when one arrives at the office in the morning. The CEO was convinced that allowing personal values to infiltrate the business sphere would "never work" in a culturally diverse setting. Yet the company acknowledges personal integrity (the unity of all the aspects of a person's self) when it promotes self-policing and self-motivation through the screening of Christian films, and its use of Christian based motivation sessions. The CEO also readily admits that his own Christian values formed the basis of the company's values.

The view that the personal drawer should remain closed at all times is characteristic of the modernist paradigm. The result is a paradoxical combination of the more "postmodern" self-policing and self-motivational approach, based on integrated personal, religious and cultural values, with a more modern, compartmentalized view of the self. Letiche's distinction between "first, second and third degree perception" may be helpful in understanding this situation. First degree perception refers to a situation where all people naturally see things the same. In a diverse setting such as MBD this would of course be unlikely. "Second degree perception", or "perceptionalism" implies that the story is a text chosen by the speaker. In other words, a subject chooses which drawer to open when. "Third degree perception" allows an individual the freedom to make use of any text to express him/herself. The ethical universe of the postmodern self is one in which the self functions as self-sufficient source of ethical action.

MBD's compliance approach seems to assume that procedures and rules function as frameworks within which employees are expected to police and motivate themselves. Their non-conformance procedure measures an employee's performance against his or her job description and the general expectations that the company has of all its employees. Yet their principles-based approach calls for a much more dialogical approach, which acknowledges different interpretations and the importance of individual understanding and buy-in. They proactively engage in symbolic value-creation through song and dance, visual stimuli and creative interaction. Reactively, they allow employees to explain how they think about ethics, when an ethical problem crops up. Dialogue becomes the vehicle for determining intersubjective meaning. It seems then that the value-side of the business can accommodate the distributed self of the postmodern identity configuration, whereas the compliance-side measures the extent to which employees conform to the company role expectations. These expectations do not tolerate deviation on personal grounds.

### **3) Organizational culture**

MBD's attitude towards individual identity may seem ambivalent, but ambivalence is typical of the postmodern condition. One of the biggest challenges for postmodern organizational

theory is to reconcile business organizations' need for teamwork, loyalty, stability and trust amongst employees with the flat organizational structures, ever changing circumstances, and decentralized chains of authority that have come to characterize the contemporary business environment. It tries to provide unity and stability amidst diversity and flux, by providing rules and procedures that do not stifle individual responsibility, creativity and motivation.

MBD seems to realize that it cannot deal with the type of information its employees have access to by merely relying on structures and procedures. The company addresses what it can through the implementation of sound procedures, but when something falls through the cracks, it relies on its principles to guide employees. It therefore runs a parallel process of dialogue, which in the words of its CEO, it "overlays" with its compliance measures. This principles-based approach infuses the process with religious values, symbolic references, and visual elements. The company's procedures seem to acknowledge the fact that the meaning of words defer. The words that describe the company's principles may therefore mean different things to different people. MBD tries to compensate for the limitations of language by placing the onus on the transmitter, or speaker, to make his or her message clear. This may not always succeed. That is why it may sometimes be necessary to get everyone involved around a table to establish the meaning of words intersubjectively.

Even though MBD certainly displays some of the characteristics of the more "postmodern" orientation towards diversity and value-systems, it certainly does not embrace the "fragmented unity" that Parker (2000) describes as typically postmodern. The company tries to establish unity through conformity. Clothing, perfume and shared symbolic experiences, such as making the company video, are employed in this effort. It drives this conformity home by barring the personal sphere from the business sphere, leaving only the unity that their common business values supposedly represent. This seems to make a lot of practical sense, but the unruly rule of contemporary organizations is not so easily repressed. For instance, it was very noticeable that the company's attorneys do not wear the corporate uniform, and that their offices look and feel different than the rest of the company. This may be indicative of the presence of some important differences in a company that

otherwise projects itself as a seamless unit. Such differences are sometimes caused by different levels of training, the different functions that people fulfil in a company, or even by personality differences. These differences also extend to employees' moral reasoning. They testify to the fact that people as *moral bricoleurs* draw on many value-systems for guidance in their daily work activities. Variables such as religion and personal problems influence people's interpretation and handling of moral dilemmas in the workplace. MBD once had a case where one of its employees had personal problems, which troubled him to such an extent that he became a disruptive influence at work. The very accessible CEO sat him down at a table with his colleagues to resolve the situation. Ultimately however, the company had no choice but to seek counselling for the employee in order to get him to become a productive part of the team again. Can one's personal drawer really be closed at work? Can a CEO who originally based his entire business practice on his own Christian values uphold such a distinction? Can MBD's "tree of knowledge" metaphor, with its emphasis on the holistic interconnectedness of values, business practice and society, ultimately be reconciled with such a strict division of life-worlds?

#### 4) Conclusion:

MBD is a company that certainly understands its business. It seems to be a company that people are happy to work for and clients are happy to deal with. It would be meaningless to classify MBD as either a modern or a postmodern organization. MBD employs a unique combination of approaches, which reflect the eclecticism that characterizes contemporary organizations. Postmodernism is no more than a self-reflexive and self-critical view of modernity, and MBD's combination of approaches therefore represents a pragmatic way of compensating for the limitations of clear-cut modernist systems and procedures.

The interconnected world of information technology and the decentralization that accompanies it have left employees with an unprecedented degree of freedom and discretion. At the same time, however, workers are struggling to come to terms with an increasingly complex and volatile 21st century business environment. A values-based approach that allows employees to define, redefine and express their own identities, value-systems and commitments will reduce the risk of random, self-interested behavior. Many

companies feel uncomfortable with a world governed by "unruly rules" that requires constant renegotiation and redefinition. Sometimes it seems as though our ingenuity for creating systems and procedures has finally caught up with us. We have created systems so complex that we have undermined our own capacity to carefully monitor and control them. In this context it is important that we help our employees to develop moral reasoning skills that will enable them to deal with the unexpected.

#### **6.1.4. Analysis of MBD's approach to moral values in the workplace in terms of the suggested framework**

##### **1) Holistic perspective:**

One's first impression is that MBD adopted a very dualistic view of life. Its CEO insists on separating of the working environment from the personal lives of its employees. This is made particularly clear by the CEO's insistence that life is comparable to a set of drawers, of which you close the personal drawer when you enter the workplace. Yet it is clear that the CEO's personal Christian values had been very central to the development of MBD's principles, on which their business practice is based. Moral issues in MBD are addressed through dialogue between all the affected parties. In these discussions the company places a high priority on understanding how those involved think about ethics and how certain key terms are defined. These differences in terminology, use of language and symbolism and so forth are due to differences in culture and training, as well as personal variables such as intellect, personality and gender.

The CEO's commitment to self-motivation and self-policing is cited as the reason why he exposes his employees to the Jesus-film and motivational sessions led by Campus Crusade for Christ. He clearly assumes that religious input will improve his employees' motivation, integrity and discretion and lead to increased self-policing. His views in this regard could be interpreted as a preference for the type of ethical holism that Gustafson (2000:442) argues for. Because employers are concerned about consistency in their employees' conduct, a set of rooted, holistic ethical principles that are adhered to both at home and at work seem to make a lot of sense. McCracken & Shaw (1995:303) also stress the importance of



character in moral decision-making. They challenge the assumption that people engage in rational decision-making based on utilitarian notions and contractarian responsibilities. Instead, they argue that virtue also plays an important role in decision-making. These virtues can only be cultivated through moral practices such as those envisaged by Aristotle. This implies that deliberations about what constitutes "the good" should be incorporated in the company's normal business practice (McCracken & Shaw 1995:307). Strong personal values is definitely an important prerequisite for the type of self-policing and motivation that the CEO envisages for his company. However, it would be unrealistic to expect complete consistency in behavior, even from someone with strong personal values. The relationships and factors that influence moral decision-making in the workplace is simply too complex. It is therefore important that employees engage in discussions about what they perceive to be "the good" that they individually and collectively aspire to. This will not only allow character-building, but also promote an awareness of the network of relations, commitments and beliefs that come into play when people work together

## **2) Moral frameworks as non-totalizing structures**

MBD's approach to ethics and compliance can be assessed in terms of the differences between values-based management and compliance-based management explained by Weaver & Trevino. It becomes clear that MBD attempts to combine a values-based approach with a compliance-based approach. The compliance approach can be seen in their non-conformance procedure. This procedure is used to ensure compliance with job descriptions, deadlines and quality requirements. When it comes to ethical issues however, MBD prefers to engage in dialogue with their employees. This procedure is consistent with a more values-based approach. The goal of these discussions is to try and find out how the employee thinks about ethics and defines ethical values. An effort is made to align these ideas with the organization's ethical values. MBD has open communication channels through which moral issues can be addressed. Everyone involved in the ethical dilemma at hand is allowed and indeed encouraged to participate in these discussions. In this way an atmosphere of self-motivation and trust is created. Sometimes ethical problems are attributed to procedural



problems, and when this is the case the problem is addressed by adjusting and modifying systems and procedures.

A further important aspect of MBD's ethics program is the creation of a common organizational value-system through visual, symbolic and ritual practices. Employees use song and dance to help create a sense of unity and conformity. Their work uniforms also contribute to a sense of equality and conformity. This strong emphasis on conformity tends towards a totalizing structure aimed at dissolving of differences. In MBD, this may however be seen as an advantage, since its staff displays such a diverse composition. There may however be dangers involved in forcing conformity through measures such as the wearing of uniforms. Some individuals or groups in the organization may feel uncomfortable with this emphasis on conformity. For instance, the attorneys do not comply with the wearing uniforms. There may also be more individualistic employees who feel that wearing uniforms intrudes on their freedom and individuality. This hypothesis can of course only be confirmed through an extensive empirical study of all employees, which falls beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Generally speaking, MBD seems to have been successful in integrating employees from diverse cultural, linguistic and educational backgrounds in a way that allows them to function effectively as a group. This may be due to the high degree of engagement of its employees in communal activities that interpret the company's corporate identity. From the data gathered during one visit to MBD it is impossible to determine whether this unity in fact suppresses differences. It is however doubtful that the company culture is the seamless whole it appears to be on the surface. But it is important to note that the symbolic interaction around values that this company's employees engage in, have bound individuals to the group in ways significant enough to allow close cooperation in the pursuit of corporate goals.

### **3) Temporary meaning:**

MBD's description of the vital elements of its business culture reflects the priority it places on interaction with its environment. Yet it is doubtful whether MBD is in fact an

open, dynamic system in the sense that its patterns of interaction with the environment are constantly changing, in the way Collier & Esteban (1999:178) describes. MBD does not display a high degree of complex interactions, and therefore its groups of agents tend to display rule-governed and often predictable outcomes. It therefore does not seem to run the risk of disintegrating into a state of total disorder and unpredictable randomness. Because a great percentage of its employees work in call-centers, where traditional organizational structures and supervisory relationships persist, there is seldom a danger of individuals losing focus on the main goals and purposes of the organization. The *connectedness* of the organization assures the coherence of its members with regard to their common purpose. This sense of connectedness is strengthened by symbolic elements that support conformity, equality and stability. These include the wearing of uniforms and key rings, which reflect the organization's guiding principles printed on compass. The compass, indicating "True North" symbolizes the ethical principles that should direct employee behavior.

In MBD has retained the Christian values of its CEO as a set of common values that provides stability and purpose to the organization, even though they have since been translated into broader, more inclusive business principles. Even though symbolic interaction, song, and dance ensure the buy-in of employees into this value-system, it is not clear to what extent they have been allowed to participate in its formation, adaptation and re-evaluation as the organization developed. MBD therefore does not seem to be a participative organization in the sense envisaged by Collier & Esteban. Collier & Esteban (1999:180) argue that in the participative organization, governance is no longer the responsibility of a few top managers who "steer the boat". Governance becomes a quality of the boat itself and the shared responsibility of all in it. They argue that adaptability requires continuous differentiation, which is brought about by in-depth discussion and the renegotiation of values. One may argue that MBD's efforts to keep all its employees on board in terms of its current values have succeeded in its context, which is a relatively traditional organizational set-up and traditional lines of command. Their dialogue about ethics mostly occurs in a situation where something has gone wrong. In such instances, the employees are allowed to explain how they thought about ethics only to enable the

organization to more effectively coach them as to what is expected of them. In this respect MBD confirms Vidaver-Cohen's (1997:15) observation that "managers in less turbulent industries may be relatively content with the status quo.."

MBD's employees probably enjoy less individuality, freedom, and discretion than would be the case in a company with a non-totalizing structure. According to Collier & Esteban (1999:183) decision-making in participative organizations with non-totalizing structures, is likely to be characterized less by consensus and more by the constructive management of value dilemmas. Having said that, it has to be acknowledged that each organization has unique needs. In companies such as MBD a stronger emphasis on conformity, consensus and unity may actually be preferred. MBD's organizational culture would however probably benefit from a more holistic discussion of values in which all employees can define and redefine the organizational principles from the whole of their network of beliefs and values. This implies commitment to a process of dialogue and cooperation in developing shared values, while at the same time listening to diverse viewpoints and affirming their potential contribution.

#### **4) Being exposed to and open towards the "Other":**

One of the strategies that MBD employs in dealing with ethical problems in the workplace is to get everyone involved around a table to try and understand their perception of the problem and their processes of moral reasoning and decision-making. This is an excellent example of the deferring character of words and meanings in a corporate context. Having different meanings voiced in the presence of all involved, is an excellent deconstructive strategy. Not only does it lead to greater insight into the Other, but also into the self. The self only exists in relation to others. In confrontation with the Other whose meaning is different from mine, it becomes possible to develop a sense of responsibility for the Other which is not possible in isolation.

Unfortunately MBD uses these discussions exclusively as a vehicle for aligning its employees with a set of predetermined expectations. The meaning of MBD's values as determined by top management is not placed on the table as an open-ended interpretation to be re-

evaluated by those participating in the discussion. Instead it is set up as the measure to which all other interpretations must conform.

Another important limitation of MBD's approach is that it does not necessarily succeed in developing what Foucault would refer to as "moral selves" within the organization. Only when the self is rendered vulnerable by conversation with equal others, does it become aware of the limitations of its own understanding. When the individual interacts with the meaning(s) and truth(s) of others, he or she develops a moral self with internalized moral guidelines.

#### 5) Dialogue:

As mentioned before, dialogue about values at MBD often occurs in the context of an enquiry into something that has gone wrong within the organization. It is doubtful whether true equality or freedom of expression is really possible in these kinds of situations, since employees usually feel threatened by the prospect of investigation. One should however view this in the light of the purpose of these discussions with employees. They are aimed at establishing how an employee thought about the ethical problem at hand, not to serve as a way of assessing changes in the company values. What is commendable though, is the open-door approach of its CEO towards everyone in the company. He is very accessible, and welcomes discussions with his employees. Whether these interactions have any real impact in terms of allowing diverse perspectives to influence the organization and its goals, is another question however.

The company does however make good use of its moral metaphors. The powerful "tree of life" metaphor runs through many of MBD's business operations like a golden thread. Discussion in a non-threatening, empowered environment may however benefit employees by allowing them to verbalize their different understandings of the metaphor. Doing so would deepen and strengthen the first-order metaphor as employees interpret it in terms of the second-order metaphors living in their hearts and minds. The metaphor's natural emphasis on growth suggests that the company's principles should also be allowed to grow over time. This has resulted in a number of principles being added to the company's original principles. The CEO insists that additional principles will be adopted if and when they become

important to the company. The buy-in from employees in the MBD "tree of life" metaphor seems to be very strong on the symbolic level, which is a very powerful force within the African culture.

#### **6.1.5. Practical suggestions in the MBD context:**

One important disclaimer in making these suggestions is that it is aimed at a very specific company context and is not intended to provide a standard, or even a best practice example of what should be done in terms of moral discourse in the workplace. It is merely a contextual response to what MBD already has in place and how it may be improved.

##### **1) A holistic approach**

MBD goes to a lot of trouble to expose its employees to influences that may enhance their personal value systems. The Christian values that provide the basis for MBD's business principles, are reinforced by Christian motivational sessions and spiritual events. Yet MBD is not exclusively Christian, and this allows people from all faiths and cultures the freedom to associate with MBD. It is important that this inclusive, non-discriminatory culture be confirmed by interreligious events. Employees need to be given the opportunity to confess how their personal values, be they religious or not, influence their world-view, motivation and moral decision-making. Events that include other forms of spirituality not only create a non-discriminatory environment, but also promotes understanding amongst colleagues on moral issues. Interaction that confronts one with the truly "Other" places the self in a new perspective. As Foucault pointed out, the process of discovering and renegotiating the self in relation to the "Other" aids the construction of moral selves.

There is however an inconsistency in MBD's approach to values. The CEO's use of the "drawers" metaphor seems to contradict the company's adoption of the holistic "the tree of life" metaphor. Self-motivation and self-policing only really become possible in an environment where the individual is allowed to draw on all elements of his or her personal value-system for guidance when making moral decisions. Excluding these personal references may in fact deprive employees of important moral convictions, and foster

confusion. Although employers will always expect a certain degree of consistency and predictability with regard to their employees' behavior, it cannot be guaranteed by insisting on an artificial distinction between public and private. This approach in fact belies many of the other, more holistic metaphors that MBD employs. Interestingly enough, in seeking professional counseling for one of its troubled employees at company expense, MBD seems to recognize the fact that employees' personal problems can have an impact on their moral behavior at work. They dealt with this individual with the empathy, support and adaptability that their tree of life metaphor requires. The "tree of life" metaphor seems to be an accurate enough reflection of the company's guiding principles and values. In light of this it may have to consider abandoning its "drawer" metaphor completely in favor of a more holistic approach. As a Christian manager, MBD's CEO may find that a holistic way of dealing with the whole range of personal value-systems may in fact support elements of his business that he has always considered important, such a motivation, caring for this workforce and attending to the whole range of their needs. This approach will also witness to his own Christian belief and the way in which it informs and directs the way he deals with his employees.

## **2) A non-totalizing moral structure:**

"The tree of life" is an excellent first-order metaphor since it provides a lot of scope for the company to adapt and change through the development of appropriate second-order metaphors. The company's principles keep expanding and changing as time goes by, which indicates a value-system that is alive and well. It is important to get employees involved in the reinterpretation of the first-order metaphor. One way of doing so is to get them to participate in an ongoing dialogue, as will be discussed later in this section. There are however many other ways of uniting employees in a non-totalizing way. For instance, most, if not all MBD's employees work on computers and stare at screens daily. Competitions could be run for the best ethics slogan. They can then be used as computer screensavers to get employees thinking about what the tree of life metaphor really means and what aspects of it they associate with most. An Intranet chatroom could be established where ethical questions can be posted and employees can anonymously reply. In this way the company's



electronic connectedness can be utilized to stimulate discussions and create an atmosphere of moral sensitivity and awareness.

Self-motivation and -policing imply that employees be given the opportunity not only to associate, but also to dissociate from the company's consensus with regard to certain issues. They must be given the freedom to develop, express and defend their own moral perspectives amongst their colleagues. This may seem dangerous, and may even lead to a measure of dissent, but it could also strengthen employees' sense of empowerment and loyalty towards the organization. Short video-clips depicting the type of ethical dilemmas a MBD employee typically has to deal with could be shot to get employees' feedback on how they handle such situations. This could be accommodated within existing HR training projects, or incorporated in the company's team-building exercises. Differences in interpretation must be allowed and even encouraged, since the goal is not necessarily to give employees a timeless rule for all similar situations, but rather to develop their moral decision-making skills.

### 3) Temporary meaning:

Allowing company values to expand and develop over time is a prerequisite for growth and ultimately also for survival. A company that does not grow dies. But MBD's CEO is also correct in saying that: *"An unstable organization cannot change, because they don't know where they are."* Change and volatility should be balanced with sufficient stability if a company is going to transform itself successfully over time. Retaining first-order metaphors whilst encouraging employees to come up with as many new second-order metaphors is a good way to manage growth responsibly. MBD's second order metaphors currently include water, fire, wind and earth. Their meanings should always be left open to creative reinterpretation. Its ever deferring and differing meaning should be acknowledged. Simple team-building games can encourage creative thinking. For instance, a group of employees must each come up with a new interpretation of the organization's second-order metaphors. One employee starts by revealing his or her particular take on the subject. The second has to remember his or her colleague's interpretation and think of another. The third in line

must memorize both the preceding interpretations and add a third and so on. The first person to forget one of his or her colleagues' suggestions must sing a song, tell a joke or perform some other suitably punitive measure. It obviously works best in a relaxed environment free from time and work pressures. These exercises gets the message across that management encourages creative thinking about values, and that new ideas will be taken seriously.

#### **4) Keeping connected**

Electronic aids such as Intranet chat-rooms can be employed to create a non-discriminatory environment where people can interact about moral issues. But in an African culture where symbolism is very important and symbolic interaction sometimes speak louder than words, MBD's use of song and dance is very effective. These efforts should be encouraged and expanded. Employees could for instance be asked to write new words for the MBD song that is sung and recorded at the year's end function and a prize could be awarded for the best entry. Symbols could be developed to portray MBD's principles, whether they be drawings, hand gestures or sounds. Using a gesture that indicates dependability, such as two fists placed on top of one another as a greeting in the morning, may help strengthen the bonds between employees from diverse cultures. This type of symbolism often speaks louder than words.

By keeping employees connected in this way the company avoids forcing individuals into a straightjacket of company rules and procedures, and instead encourages loyalty to a number of basic values that tie everyone, regardless of culture, language, gender or position within the organization together. However, allowing employees the freedom to voluntarily associate with the company's values, has the implication that they should also be allowed to dissociate from them under certain circumstances. For instance, employees should feel free to dissociate from spiritual activities or motivational sessions based on religion.

## 5) Dialogue

On-going dialogue is a key component of a healthy moral business culture. It is also an extremely difficult process to manage effectively, especially in pluralistic working environments. The limitations of language, inequalities in training, intellect, and position within the organization effectively eliminate the possibility of completely free and open communication.

It has been argued that virtual reality allows people to interact without reference to their race, religion, culture, gender or status and therefore provide an environment in which all are equal and free to express their opinions. Yet, a holistic approach to moral values that allows culture, religion and power relations to influence the way moral language is constructed and moral decisions are made, precludes such impersonal solutions. In fact, face-to-face interaction with the other is important in the formation of the moral self. To eliminate prejudice and facilitate meaningful discourse, one has to establish certain parameters. Here, the long tradition of justice and rights, criticized for its contextless assumptions, could in fact be rehabilitated to provide some parameters for the contextual reality of dialogue. The rules, or at least its application, may however have to be adjusted for each specific context. In the context of MBD, dialogue could be structured in the following way:

- All interested parties are welcomed. No one is invited to the exclusion of another. For instance, people of other religions who choose to work at MBD must be allowed to contribute their views and inform their arguments from their own faith perspective.
- All voices must be heard, not in order of importance, position, gender or status, but in the order that hands are raised.
- All topics can be addressed, nothing is excluded from the agenda, although all agenda points must be posted before the meeting.
- Mutual respect, empathy and trust as well as the confidentiality of what is discussed must be ensured prior to the start of the conversation.

- All participants to the dialogue must be able to speak in their first language if they are uncomfortable in English, and a translator must be available. Drawings, metaphors, and symbols should be accepted as alternative ways of communicating.
- Dissent should be explored and not discouraged. It should be seen as a positive and necessary part of the dialogue.
- Consensus can be sought but not forced. If consensus is reached, it should be regarded as no more than a temporary point of unity that allows cooperation, but may be revised as and when necessary.

## 6.2. Case study 2: Pretoria Community Ministries (PCM)

### 6.2.1. Background on PCM:

The following was taken from PC's marketing material:

*We see whole, restored and empowered communities, where people flourish in God's presence*

*The challenge of the city:*

Inner city communities are often transitional and/or struggling communities, facing disinvestments and decay. The effects of urbanization, racial and cultural transition and diversity, socio-economic contrasts, and the battle between different powers and the powerless, all concentrate in inner city communities.

The challenge for the church is to establish an incarnational presence, demonstrating God's love and justice in practical ways, reversing global trends of inner city decay, and erecting bold signs of God's shalom (wholeness) in the city.

### 6.2.2. Verbatim of discussion with manager Stephan de Beer (translated from Afrikaans)

*Your organization is very diverse. How do you manage the diversity of cultures, religions, and languages that are represented amongst your staff?*

Let me use the example of the race issue to illustrate our approach. We consciously try to work with race as a reality that we have to deal with. At our retreats, we sometimes ask blacks and whites to meet separately, in order for them to discover where they come from. They have to identify their own prejudices. We therefore acknowledge diversity and difference. But we also emphasize that people have to walk the road together. For instance, in our Women's Housing project a white and a black woman may have to live in close proximity of each other. They experience conflict, but often the conflict relates to human issues rather than race issues. We try to show them that the issues they face are quite normal and often have nothing to do with race.

Another element of our approach to diversity is to identify certain common goals that transcend race, for instance, the issue of homelessness. We bring people to realize that they complement each other and that you can do more when you look at the issue from the vantage point of various traditions. Yet we still encourage our staff, who comes from 7 or 8 different denominations, to worship in their own congregations. We believe that even though we may worship in different ways, we can still work towards our common cause together.

*How much do you allow personal values to play a role in the workplace? Some businesses prefer to have people leave their personal values at home when they come to work? How do you see this within your organization?*

We believe differently, because one has to acknowledge that theology is never value-free. Everything that you have experienced in life comes with you to work. Therefore each person brings a lot of baggage with him. But we believe that the brokenness and suffering that lie in people's backgrounds make them even more effective. It can become a source of healing to others. We take a critical look at how communities are constructed and take background

seriously. Yet we still deal with people who find it hard to marry the business aspects of our organization with the ethics and theology that they see as part of their calling. For instance, some people find it hard to marry the business realities of our housing project with ethics. They think that if you get involved in that kind of business you have to betray your Christian values in some sense.

*How do you create and sustain unity in diversity?*

As I explained, we look towards bigger causes that transcend difference. But we do not have a structured program to create unity. One of the important things that we do every week is to spend 3-4 hours on a Friday morning on a devotional session and staff meeting, where we as staff come together and interact. Then we have our two retreats per year, one in November that is longer than the other. On these occasions we play, eat, and truly meet each other. We believe that if you journey together for long enough, the masks will drop. Some may criticize us for talking too much, because besides our staff meeting on Fridays the project teams also have separate sessions.

*Do you have strong rules in your organization? How do you maintain certain standards and values?*

We have had to develop better policies after we experienced a few crises a while back. We had waited 8 years before implementing strict policies. But our growth and diversity made it necessary. We realized that in order to deal with conflict situations effectively, we needed strict policies. We started out with a values-driven approach based on our foundational values. At the moment we have two sets of values. The first set is what we call our foundational values, which form the theological and philosophical base of all our operations. Our second set of values is our operational values, which were developed with the assistance of an external facilitator/ evaluator. The evaluation process helped us find a value behind all of our everyday operations. For instance, we pay people very small salaries. We decided that it would be our policy to keep salaries at that level as long as people are willing to work for those amounts. Our operational values deal with all the business aspects of our organization, such as the relationship between the Board and Management etc.



*Do you have a strategic plan, with a mission and vision? How do your values relate to this strategy?*

Our vision is to help create whole, restored and empowered communities, and therefore our vision is directly related to a certain ethical ideal. Both sets of values serve this purpose. We ask ourselves: How do we see the community from this theological and ethical perspective that underlies everything that we do? Obviously we often see the community differently from those in the private sector or in the city council, because of our theological and ethical vision. We are committed to the preferential option for the poor. This colors our involvement in the private sector. And our way of working seems to vary acceptable to even Dutch Reformed churches, who like to see that the gospel has certain practical implications. People quickly come to agree that political-economic realities cannot be divorced from the gospel.

*How do you keep the communication channels open?*

As I explained before, for a long time we had no set procedures or policies. It was done very ad hoc. But now, some basic policies allow us to deal with conflict much more effectively. It's basic things, some of which are already explained in the Bible. You know the principle that if you have a problem, speak to the person himself first, then get one more person involved, etc. Or practical things like that you have to deal with a conflict within 24 hours after it happened. So what we did was to start to manage communication.

*How does communication function when there isn't necessarily conflict, but when people are interacting positively?*

We do this in various ways, one example is to have people comment on each other's projects. We put up paper on the wall and ask everyone to state positive and negative aspects of a specific project. A lot of creative things pop out. For instance, someone in the housing project will look at the women's project and because this person is looking from a distance, he may have a totally different and valuable perspective.

*How does leadership work in your organization?*

We have a very flat organizational structure. We go to trouble to appoint black people in leadership positions, but we never put up faces just for show. We base our choices on merit and potential, and we expect from people to grow and develop.

Our organization operates according to the reversed triangle - bottom up, rather than top - down. Individuals on the bottom of the organization develop all the project proposals. It reaches the Board only after the people who are going to be implementing it decided on it. It is however important to make sure that everyone in the organization takes advantage of the opportunity to make suggestions.

*What type of ethical issues do you encounter?*

Well, one ethical issue pertains to the use of condoms among the prostitutes we deal with. The debate is still going on. We did hand out condoms as part of our work, but some people are not really comfortable with this. Abortion is another issue. We have no written policy about it, but we operate according to the principle that you must present all the available options to the person, but encourage her to look for other alternatives to abortion. There is however no way of really monitoring whether individuals really present all the options, or whether they actually just try to talk the person into seeking alternatives to abortion. Since I am also prone to the view that alternatives to abortion should be sought, I don't really feel strongly about monitoring this too strictly.

*Do you encounter business related ethical problems, such as the abuse of company property, theft etc?*

No, hardly ever. We have had two persons guilty of these offences before, but they are gone now. Since we have developed stricter policies and disciplinary procedures, this does not occur. We also have to make sure that we are in line with the labor law. This has enabled us to deal with such situations more effectively. One example is the case where one of our employees' boyfriend, a policeman, would come to our offices and play games on our company computer when he is supposed to be on patrol. Not only is he not doing his job, but he is also using our company property improperly and wasting our employee's time. We have now started a formal process of written warnings. Furthermore, the person responsible for

training in our organization is working with the employee to see whether they can work out issues of motivation, understanding of her job description, etc.

*Do people always understand ethical issues in the same way? Or are there some misunderstandings?*

Because of the diversity of our staff (also with regard to literacy) reaching the same understanding about issues takes a very long time. Within our organization we have a high measure of consensus, but still you have no way of knowing whether this consensus is actually internalized in exactly the same way.

Here it is important to take the prophetic role of the church into consideration. Conflict or disagreement is not always negative. Sometimes people agree on certain things in principle, but have to disagree on other things. In our inner city partnerships, we uphold a critical-solidarity. We agree on some things, but criticize other aspects. It is of course easier to deal with conflict and disagreement with external parties, such as our inner city partners. It is much harder to deal with it inside your own organization.

*How strongly does "ubuntu" function in your organization?*

It was interesting to look at the theology of the street festival that we recently had. Ubuntu featured very strongly. It was especially the black, illiterate staff members who brought this to our attention. They related perspectives on the "feast of the clown" (which was our theme) that can be understood from an "ubuntu" perspective. Yet, this feeling of community can also be understood from the perspective of Acts 2 or Genesis 1 / 2. The Christian community and the broader Berea and Salvokop community share certain of these values. We can for instance cooperate and share a sense of community with the atheist who runs a coffee bar, even though we disagree on certain matters.

*What about religious differences?*

Within our organization we are relatively homogeneous in the sense that we all belong to the Christian faith. But in our work in Marabastad we have developed a long relationship with the Muslims in the area. The important thing is a long-term presence during which people journey together and serve together. We have realized that if you approach Muslims as

people who want to reach similar goals, instead of wanting to convert and correct them, cooperation becomes possible. We have for instance backed the Muslims in their land claims. We stood next to them and helped them. Yet, we disagreed with them on the squatter issue. Of course, this interreligious process is one of constant renegotiations, in which we have to send constant reminders of what we stand for. They try to co-opt you, because you are working together. It is important to stand your ground and make clear where you disagree from them.

*Is language an important issue?*

Yes, definitely. We use English as medium, yet it is a fact that some people are more comfortable expressing their views in English than others. Some especially experience difficulty in expressing themselves in English within large groups. Therefore we often try to keep the discussion groups small. They are also encouraged to speak their own language and have someone translate, but it seems as if that makes them feel inferior.

*Is it a priority of your staff to learn more native languages?*

Some of our staff, like our counselor Wilma, finds it very important to understand the language in order to be able to do her work properly, and therefore made attempts to learn the language. For the rest of us it is easier to rely on translator, because they are so readily available in our work context. But it still constitutes a problem. For instance, one incident in which one of my staff members and I misunderstood each other illustrates this problem very well. He was briefing me on the plans for the street festival, and when I questioned him on certain aspects, he called me an "outsider". I interpreted this as an insult, but he later explained that he meant only that I was not involved in the planning process, not that I was considered an outsider. We realized that he was translating from his native language and probably used the wrong English word.

*Do differences in literacy and education constitute a problem in your operations?*

Yes, it certainly is a big issue. We have the whole spectrum - from primary school level to graduates - on our staff. We have now appointed a specific member of staff who deals with training. In deciding what training is needed, we look at the needs of the staff members.

Some need basic English, other have greater needs for Biblical studies. We have two people doing the Nehemia Bible courses. One woman, Brenda, who is the center of our operations in Marabastad, has improved immensely in the course of only one year. Wilma has been doing a Masters in Narrative Therapy, and one of our people did a training course in Housing Management. Our training person has also been on a Human Resource Management course, and he briefs us on certain HR issues such as job descriptions, staff induction etc. on a regular basis. In this way we see to it that the training that staff receive is fed back into our operations. Because we have a very limited budget, we have to make sure that the training we pay for benefits the organization.

We are very aware of how inequalities in education constitute a barrier for people to contribute to the organization. We do not always succeed in remaining aware of the power relationships constituted by these inequalities, but we do attempt to remind our staff, especially the men, of the importance of everyone's contribution. We consciously address the issue of power inequality by making our project leaders aware of this and getting them to empower their people.

*Why do you consider diversity strength?*

In the first place, it is strength in terms of our context. We operate in an inner city environment, in which a diversity of people live and work. In order to interact with our context with integrity, we have to reflect the composition of this community in our staff. We help each other to interpret our context. Sometimes, we gain access to communities because of our staff. Brenda, the women working in Marabastad has been there for 13 years. It is through her that we gain the right to be there and work there. The diversity of our staff gives us certain legitimacy in the community. One can also not forget that we as Christians have the underlying goal of communicating reconciliation and love. Our staff composition drives home what works cannot convey.

### 6.2.3. Analysis of PCM's reflection of organizational trends:

#### 1) Individual identity:

PCM empowers individuals who experience their lives as broken to contribute to the healing of others by exploring and utilizing their own brokenness. The lead article of their newsletter reads: "Wounded Healers in Broken Cities". They relate to the often unexpected and unlikely choices that Jesus made when selecting the leaders of his church. Despite this their vision is expressed as follows: "We see whole, restored and empowered communities where people flourish in God's presence". The metaphors of "brokenness" and "restoration" are not only used by individuals in the narration of their life stories, but it is very much part of the physical reality that PCM addresses in its housing and community restoration projects. The ideal of wholeness hints at ideals of integrated selves, and that of progression so typical of Western, modernist theories of identity and authority. The strategy within modern society was that of "educating" and "uplifting" those who live lives that do not correspond to Western ideals. Authority was seen as the privilege and responsibility of the "enlightened", educated few. PCM's ministry however witnesses to a different reality - one that is making a huge difference in Pretoria's inner cities. The leaders of the organization's projects are often those marked by a distinct sense of brokenness, who are willing to serve in and through their own brokenness. The fallacy of the "perfect minister", or the "faultless preacher" is powerfully broken down in this community of service.

In terms of gender, the fact that women may be perceived as inferior because of entrenched patriarchal attitudes in some cultures, is addressed in meetings and during informal contact. But the most valuable ways in which entrenched gender roles are challenged are reflected in the work women do in PCM. Brenda Masilela, who has lived in Marabastad for 14 years, forms the center of PCM's operations there. This is an excellent example of grass-roots leadership and the empowerment of women to act as leaders and symbols of hope within their own communities.



The power relationships that influence the PCM workplace, such as literacy, language, gender roles are acknowledged and people within the organization are reminded of the importance of everyone's contribution. Project leaders are constantly reminded of the influence of inequalities and are encouraged to empower their people.

## 2) Organizational identity:

When listening to Stephan de Beer narrating PCM's development, one is struck by the typically postmodern way in which its identity has been and is continually being constituted. Linstead (1993:60) described it as the process by which organizations are partly constituted by the subjectivity of all those involved in it. Both the authors and the readers of the text of the organization, both the creators and the consumers are bound together in, and are constituted by, the continual process of the emergence of meaning. Quite often in the conversation with Stephan de Beer, he explained that for a long time they had no set procedures or policies - it evolved as the need for it arose. PCM seems to be an organization that is in fact the product of its products.

A further "postmodern" characteristic evident in PCM's way of work is its recognition and protection of "otherness". The organization incorporates and values Christians from various denominational backgrounds, cultures and races as valuable assets and important contributors. In addition, it is also willing to cooperate and "meet" with the "Other", i.e. the Muslim and the atheist to work together towards common goals.

The diversity of the PCM organizational environment is not only displayed in its diverse staff composition, it is also evident in the diverse range of functions it performs through its various ministries. The "shared meaning", or goal, which is (in my view ironically) described as "whole, restored communities" is in fact realized through difference, partial successes, limited interventions and broken individuals.

Leadership in this organization is bottom-up, as is witnessed in everything from the way in which names are listed in the newsletter, to the way in which participative decision-making

is exercised. In this respect, PCM displays the "relational" nature of leadership in postmodern organizations. This kind of leadership is characterized by collaboration, stewardship, trust and care (Collier & Esteban 200:208).

Does PCM have a "strong organizational culture"? Yes and no. When considered along the modernist lines of sameness, seamless unity, consistency and predictability, the answer is no. But the strong sense of "ubuntu" in the company suggests that it does in fact have a strong and unique organizational culture. The organization's sense of community is so strong that it is capable of sharing certain experiences with people such as the atheist who runs the coffee bar. The organization does have a strong sense of common purpose. Its common purpose gives direction, whilst allowing considerable freedom and creativity. This makes it possible to accommodate differences between individuals on certain issues. The notions of "organization" and "culture" displayed within PCM are understood as verbs, rather than as nouns. Culture as verb means the structuring of the memories, identities and analogies of those who participate in the organization. The "organization" is the practical accomplishment of certain common goals, rather than a fixed entity.

Does PCM have a "fragmented" character in the postmodern organizational sense of the word? Yes and no. Yes, because it succeeded in allowing for difference and Otherness in its operations and in its organizational structures. No, because it does have a core set of foundationalist values that it considers non-negotiable. It can accommodate race, gender, and denominational differences, but because of its Christian witness, it cannot compromise certain foundational values in dealing with people from other religions. PCM is a fragmented unity, but a unity nonetheless - and a strong one at that.

#### **6.2.4. Analysis of PCM's handling of moral issues:**

##### **1) Holistic perspective**

PCM practices holistic ministry in the true sense of the word. Its wide range of ministries and projects target the multiple facets of urban life. Through its street ministry and work

in Marabastad, women and girls in need are referred to the Lerato House project. The women rehabilitated at the Potter's House can go to the Center for Legal Advice for help in re-establishing their lives, and can find housing through Yeast City Housing. These projects translate the message of God's love into practice by addressing the needs of the entire person.

PCM's view of its staff as broken and suffering individuals who commit themselves to the service of others, indicates that its holistic perspective extends to the way in which all aspects of the individual's identity come into play at work. The organization pays attention to the way in which communities are constructed and how they grapple with contextual realities. However, because of the spiritual nature of the organization, it does run the risk of upholding the dualistic distinction between the holy and profane. This is evident in the fact that some people find it hard to marry the business side of the housing project with their Christian principles. The organization's goals in fact contradict this dualism, since it is very much concerned with making the Christian gospel a reality by improving people's everyday lives.

## **2) Non-totalizing moral values**

PCM seems to take the relational character of moral values seriously - it acknowledges the way race, culture and denominational background can influence presuppositions and assumptions. The organization even allows its employees to explore these differences in their own cultural groups. However, PCM staff also seems to be able to transcend these differences not only in reference to their shared Christian faith, but also through awareness of the fact that many conflicts are in fact the result of basic human frustrations and contextual realities. Because of this, no one culture or even one faith can completely encompass an individual's identity. The reality is that people often overlap in terms of their faith, humanity or group alliance. These commonalities are explored to the benefit of the goals that the organization wants to achieve. The danger would be to assume that all differences among employees can be ignored or fused on the meta-level of religion. The organization seems to have avoided this pitfall, since it acknowledges differences, even

potentially sensitive differences such as race, and deals with it openly. Because it sees diversity as a valuable resource, it resists attempts to create artificial unity at any cost.

### **3) Truth as a network of relations, and the temporary nature of guidelines**

The organization's view of truth becomes explicit in the distinction it draws between foundational and operational values. The organization's foundational values seem to call for a very strong consensus about the philosophical and theological base of all operations. The operational values, the "the way we do things around here" have been developed from existing practices, and deal with the "business aspects" of the organization. The distinction between foundational and operational values indicates that certain values are perceived as more permanent and even "more true" than others. This is a common characteristic of institutionalized religion, and can easily cause exclusion and discrimination against other views of the truth and people with other forms of religious experience or knowledge. The organization's foundationalist values do intend to exclude certain people from membership. In terms of their functioning however, the organization is willing to cooperate and share with the "Other". The question remains whether they will allow the Other to enter their midst as a permanent member of their team, in order to be exposed to otherness on a more personal level.

PCM's Christian value-system forms a strong common motivation that holds a very diverse range of operations and a very diverse team of workers together. It does not seem to be a stifling unity. It allows people to contribute in their own terms, acknowledging who they are and where they come from. PCM encourages its members to continue worshipping in their own congregations. The organization's diversity or difference is therefore not undermined or discouraged by its insistence on a number of shared values or goals.

#### 4) Exposure of the self to the "Other"

The organization pays a lot of attention to "meeting one another" - not only by allowing for extensive discussions during its weekly meetings, but also through retreats where staff members are encouraged to interact socially and spiritually.

PCM's staff also works closely with the "Other" on projects, such as in the case of the Muslims in Marabastad. They often get to know these people as human beings with similar goals and needs, even though they are from a different religious or cultural background. However, during the course of their cooperation, PCM's staff continually reminds the "Other" who they are and what they stand for. Clearly the "common ground" established for the sake of practical cooperation shouldn't be misconstrued as comprehensive unity. PCM considers it impossible to abolish the religious principles between differentiates them from other religious groupings in the area. This is an indication of the non-negotiable character of the identity and witness that PCM expresses in their foundational values. In terms of organizational functioning, this can have a positive effect, by uniting the diverse members of PCM under a clearly defined set of shared values and goals. It allows an extremely diverse group of people to interact with an equally diverse environment, and yet maintain a sense of organizational integrity and purpose.

#### 5) Dialogue

Creating opportunities for dialogue is clearly an important priority within the organization. A lot of time is spent on weekly staff meetings, project team meetings and devotional sessions (3-4 hours), as well as on the biannual retreats. It is also clear that the opinions of everyone within the organization are considered valuable, and opportunities are created to reflect on one another's projects. Inequalities in terms of knowledge or status are acknowledged and addressed. There seems to be an appreciation of the fact that someone who is not directly involved in a specific project may be able to contribute fresh and valuable perspectives to that project. Each person brings a unique set of perceptions, skills and expertise to the organization and therefore there is no such thing as an "uninformed" or "ignorant" opinion. Every person contributes what he/ she can and that contribution is considered valuable.

PCM has learnt through experience that proper systems and procedures can be helpful in dealing more efficiently with work related conflict or problems. It is interesting to note, however, that these systems evolved spontaneously from the practical needs and natural growth of the organization, instead of being unilaterally implemented by management in a top-down fashion. Dialogue also informs and supports the disciplinary systems and procedures that were adopted. For instance, counselors use dialogue to detect motivational problems or misunderstandings with regard to expectations and job descriptions that may arise from such a multi-cultural context.

#### **6.2.5. Suggestions in the PCM context:**

##### **1) Holistic view:**

PCM's diverse range of projects fosters an awareness of how the Christian faith relates to all the various aspects of people's lives. However, PCM may even go one better if they were to undermine the dualism between holy and profane that seems to persist within the organization. For instance, the perception amongst certain staff members that building projects are profane, secular activities that could even threaten one's faith, is indicative of the fact that they still find it difficult to reconcile their Christian values with real-life realities such as business. In terms of a more holistic approach to organizational culture, it is important to indicate the interface and interdependence between good ethical values and good business. If these people can be brought to see their Christian ethical values as a powerful resource from which to draw guidance in their everyday business dealings, rather than something that causes unavoidable trade-offs, they may be encouraged to integrate their values with all aspects of their lives.

##### **2) Non-totalizing values:**

PCM's unity is to be found in all their members' common confession of Christ as their Lord and Saviour. This unity however allows for a great measure of diversity of spirituality, theology and moral views. Yet it should be noted that a certain individual staff member's interpretation of a certain issue might be allowed to prevail because the organization does



not create sufficient opportunities for such interpretations to be challenged or discussed. For instance, because the interviewee's view on abortion is that every possible alternative to abortion should be sought, he prefers to maintain the status quo of not really discussing how his staff feels and thinks about the issue. These may be unacknowledged or repressed forms of dissensus that may ultimately cause conflict, or at the very least uncertainty about how such cases should be dealt with. Other views on abortion may in this case function as "subjugated knowledges" that are never heard because the organizational status quo functions as a totalizing structure. Within Christian organizations, the fear of being accused of being unChristian or unfaithful to Christ may be very intimidating and may even cause people to refrain from stating their true opinions, doubts and fears. In Christian organizations open and frank discussions about moral values should be deliberately encouraged, and people should be assured of their right to their own interpretation of Scripture and their own contextualized opinion.

### **3) Truth as a network:**

The distinction that is made between foundational and operational values indicates that a certain priority is placed on foundationalist truths. It may be valuable to look at how the foundational values and the operational values influence each other and in fact constitute a whole network of truth within which it is impossible to separate the two from each other clearly. The structures, policies and procedures that is created by operational values influence the way in which foundationalist values are realized in practice. In the same way, foundational values, such as being servants of Christ who wants to restore inner city communities, influence the way in which salaries, job descriptions and other business aspects are defined and decided. PCM seems to acknowledge the latter, since they are aware of how their Christian mission and vision sets them apart from others who have strict business interests in the inner city. They do not however seem to realize how structural business realities, operational policies and functional considerations also infuse their foundational values in turn. The way in which truth is interpreted in practice is often the result of power interests, contextual realities, and real-life contingencies. Truth is not something that should be seen as something that exists in a vacuum, or on a transcendental plane beyond contextual influence.

#### 4) Meeting the "Other"

The reality of "Otherness", with regard to aspects such as culture, race and spirituality are generally acknowledged within PCM. However there remains the danger that religion can be used to transcend difference within the organization. Therefore, even though religion can contribute towards unity amidst diversity, it does have a number of inherent dangers that have to be guarded against. The greatest danger lies in assuming that a common faith creates a seamless unity. Even though staff members may have a common religious confession, they may have different ideas about what being a Christian means, they may interpret Scripture differently, or have unique moral views. The fact that people share a common faith does not necessarily mean that they have exactly the same views about abortion, or that they have a common work ethic. These differences that exist within the common denominator should be addressed and discussed. Furthermore, the discussions should also not be aimed at bringing all employees towards the same views, but rather to expose different interpretations and their implications for the organization.

#### 5) Dialogue:

The interviewee acknowledged how language can hinder dialogue within the organization. People feel inferior if they have to use a translator, and one cannot escape the fact that translated words are already interpreted once before the audience hears it. The problem of language is not an easy one to solve. Should all employees be forced to learn each other's languages? This is a long-term, costly and time-consuming process. An intermediate mechanism is to get people to informally explain to each other the contextualized, full meaning of words in their own languages, by referring to different meanings of these same word, explaining metaphors, and sharing narratives whenever possible. Of course, translation will still be necessary, but at least the broader context of words, symbolic references and narrative structures may be revealed. If people are allowed to explain how certain moral or religious terms are understood in their own languages they may just understand one another's views on certain issues better.

Inequalities in terms of education and gender bring definite power interests into play within the organization. Dialogue between people should sometimes be structured in such a way that it deliberately addresses these power interests. For instance, giving the least educated, female participant the first opportunity to speak may sound like a forced, unnatural move that might even make the individual uncomfortable, but it subtly conveys the message that all views are important. The opportunity to speak first can also be rotated on a weekly basis.

### 6.3. The case of a macro urban Dutch Reformed congregation

#### 6.3.1. Background:

Identifying particulars are being withheld to protect the individual and the congregation involved. It is however helpful to list the congregation's core values as indicated in their marketing material (translated):

**Mission:**

We are sent to live and work with God in the recreation of His world.

**Vision:**

We are a contemporary community church that, in Christ, serves the broader community (with a focus on Gauteng and Southern Africa)

**We believe:**

- In Jesus Christ, our only hope
- We live only through God's grace
- The Bible is the Word of God and source of all life

#### 6.3.2. Verbatim of interview with the congregation's leading minister (translated from Afrikaans)

*What type of diversity do you find in a big macro congregation such as yours? Do you find, for instance, that there are different kinds of spiritualities? What about age, does that have an influence on diversity with regard to spirituality? How do you deal with it?*

A first remark, that is probably relevant to all the questions you are about to ask, is that we are currently involved in a serious process of transformation, which makes it difficult for me to decide whether to answer you from the frame of mind and the goals towards which we are aspiring, or from the realities of our current situation.

The first aspect with regard to which one experiences diversity is spirituality, and here quite a radical diversity is present. Because the area within which we operate has quite a few charismatic churches, we are experiencing a rather big shift towards the more charismatic faith experience. At the same time, however, a recent census in our area indicated that the only church that is growing in the area is the Roman Catholic congregation. We don't really know what to make of it, because statistics can be misleading. But we started opening our church very early on a Wednesday-morning and invited people to come there to read the Bible, or pray. There is always someone present on these occasions who will serve you Holy Communion, if you feel the need for it. It seems to work. This may be a confirmation of the fact that there is a need for a more meditative spiritual experience. I have no doubt that there is a wide range of spiritualities within our church. That is why people do not want to concern themselves too much with dogmatic ideas when it comes to the church.

*What about the existence of a so-called "Reformed identity"? How do you interpret it?*

It is not an issue for us at all. Even among our older members who have more traditional expectations of the church, the issue is no longer that of Reformed identity. The issue is culture and sentiment - which is tragic. I haven't encountered an issue about Reformed identity with a single member of the church. In fact, they will make jokes about it if you try to steer the conversation in that direction. To them it is an issue for the ministers.

*And do the ministers still have a desire to deal with it? Do you find this kind of sentiment amongst your colleagues?*

Yes, you do find it, but then the question remains - what is meant by "Reformed"?

*And how do you deal with it? How do you keep people together? What provides unity?*

Our basic approach is to vigorously promote communication. Every member is invited to attend discussion-forums. Some members are sent letters up to four times if they do not respond to the first. At these forums we try to talk things through - we consider it important. We got rid of the old geographical divisions and now have cell groups that associate freely. We tell members: we are interested in the journey they are undertaking with God. God undertakes a unique journey with each and every person. We ask: where are you in your relationship with God? We want to guide you to find out who you are, and to find your place within the church and the broader community, so that you can integrate your understanding of the gospel with your life outside of the church. That is our challenge.

We also have a strong "member guidance process". We invite people to attend some seminars. Amongst ourselves we as ministers of this congregation drafted a document that we call (for the moment) our "vision-experience". We want to determine where God is working in our community. The secret is to find out where God is working and to join Him there. The purpose is to give people the idea of a kingdom perspective and to help them find a place in the congregation. We also have a whole range of other courses: discover your gifts, networking, equipment-seminars etc. It forms a whole process, and it is completely voluntary. In this respect we differ from the charismatic churches, which do not allow you to become a member unless you attend a series of seminars. We want to help everyone to discover his or her unique personality, place and role by using Mayers-Briggs etc. In this way we attempt to accommodate everyone, even though they are all very different.

As part of our new building project, we are going to have a little chapel that will be part of a walkway with various facilities. On Sundays there will be a 8:00 service with the normal traditional Dutch Reformed liturgy, a 9:30 family service, and Sunday evenings' service will be totally charismatic. While the 9:30 service is going on, there will also be an Anglican style English service in the chapel. We will try to keep the chapel open 24-hours a day so that people can come and pray, confess, or celebrate Communion. In this way we try to accommodate various kinds of spirituality.

*What about theological views with regard to Scripture? One often finds that what is taught at theological seminaries does not necessarily correspond to the normal church member's Scriptural views. This sometimes leads to problems. Some still want to uphold mechanical inspiration theories, while others use the historical critical method. How do you deal with this?*

You know, in the end we try to create space for everyone to be what they want to be. That means that you do not allow just anyone to preach on a Sunday evening - that specific crowd just don't understand some ministers. The crowd that attends the Sunday evening service understands nothing but fundamentalist language. It is a language game in the end, we are back at Wittgenstein, I guess. But it's a case of using the language that people understand, and if you are enough of a postmodernist, you won't have a problem with that I suspect. Of course it also depends on who plays a role at what stage. One does try to "educate" people in accordance with your own view of scripture and explain how you understand these things. There are a lot of diverse views on these issues. Diversity is no longer really an issue for me, because it is quite simply a fact of life around here. This is especially true with regard to people views about life, values, and their spirituality - it's just unbelievable.

*But do you find that people still expect unambiguous truths, and do you provide it when they ask for it? Do you not find it irreconcilable with your own views on Scripture, postmodernism and your concept of truth? If one truth does not exclude another, what do you tell someone who wants to know whether Jonah was really in the fish's belly, for example?*

I would reply like Ferdinand Deist once did: "Yes, Jonah was in the fish, the story tells you so." No, I don't think it is ever an uncritical thing, as if you wouldn't try to build in a measure of self-criticism in the course of the conversation. In the end though, everyone needs something to live by. People understand in terms of their own frames of reference, and we try and accommodate it. I think some of your older people are being influenced by the total change in the country. They find it very difficult to accept that the church is also changing and that it can no longer function as a last resort for Afrikaans speaking people.



These people want black and white answers and get upset when the church does not pronounce Christina or Sakkie Spannenberg wrong.

*So your church wouldn't do that, you wouldn't take a specific stand?*

What I do, is to write a Focus feature in the weekly church newsletter where I try and respond to what has been going on in the press during the week. All I do is to ask questions, to try and draw people out. It is about giving guidelines to help them think about the issues and not necessarily about providing conclusive answers.

*Do your members accept this? Have you managed to overcome these expectations?*

I haven't encountered any problems yet.

*How do you respond to the youth when they ask all kinds of questions about sex?*

I have to tell you, our youth does not ask these questions. I don't know why, but there seems to be only one concern left for these young people, and that is materialism.

*If you became aware of two young people who are definitely living and sleeping together, what would you do about it?*

I wouldn't do anything about it.

*What about the admonition of the church? Does it still function?*

No, not as it used to be understood. I think that some form of admonition still functions but not as people commonly understand it.

*But you as church no longer play that role?*

No, recently a well-known rugby player moved into our community and became involved with the church. He immediately reported to the church. On the form that he filled in during the service, he indicated that he and his girlfriend lived together even though they weren't married. They were both Christians, however, and wanted to become involved in the church. What am I supposed to say, if I don't even know what to think about it myself.

*What about the great homosexual debate that is currently raging in the church today?*

*What would you do if one of your ministers or one of the members of the church council suddenly admits to being gay?*

If that were to happen I think we would have a lot of trouble, because we have a strong fundamentalist group - not just older people, but also a group of young fundamentalist people who attend church in the evening. They are a young yuppie group, a typical modernist phenomenon, as you know. I really don't know what we will do, I don't even want to think about it. However, I doubt we would act in a way that would satisfy a fundamentalist understanding of these things. It is not our style. Our style is to accommodate, so we would probably accommodate this as well. We would deal with it in a very pastoral way. Our congregation has a decidedly pastoral sensitivity, so we would probably opt for a pastoral approach to it, rather than a dogmatic one.

*What about missionary activity and evangelism? Is Jesus still the only Savior in your conception and can it therefore be preached to people of other faiths?*

Yes, we do something along the lines described in this pamphlet, which state that we believe. (He points to one of their pamphlets)

*So that is your core values?*

Yes, that is probably what we understand as our Reformed identity. Those are our core values - we stop at that. It can of course mean different things to different people.

There are many people who are very excited about the fact that for the next five years we will be focusing on our immediate community. However, that will not affect our support for Action Belgium or Action Russia, which are typical missionary efforts. The Belgium guys come back every year to make us aware of the fact that there are supposedly no Christians in Belgium. In their view only evangelical churches are truly Christian. The Roman Catholics are not considered Christian at all. Should you disagree with them, they would probably question your faith as well. One has to try and accommodate them - that is our style. What I would personally do if I was in another set-up, I'm not sure, because one becomes so much

a part of the story and culture of your congregation that you come to accept the way it works. It is no longer a personal dilemma for me.

*Do you not find that it is a problem to admit that your religious truths exclude other truths on a certain level, and still argue against exclusive moral truths? Given your exclusive religious commitments, you must find it difficult to plead for openness about ethical issues. Is it not true that people want to apply truth consistently, and since they regard their religion as the only truth, they also expect it to provide them with black and white truths about other things. How do you deal with people's need for unambiguous answers about the truth - say for example about gay people?*

I find that it helps to speak to people in my personal capacity. To say - this is my point of view: stated loud and clear. If someone comes to me and asks me: "You are my minister, now tell me about gays", my answer probably wouldn't satisfy him, but our congregation's culture is one of accommodation, and he would understand that I can also accommodate his point of view.

A good example is a certain guy who organizes camping weekends for men, the so-called "promise-keeping" movement, you know. They tell the guys over the weekend that they are supposed to be kings and priests in their households. It boils down to a type of "submissiveness-theology". When they try it at home, their wives soon call me to ask: "Can this be right?". They ask me whether the Bible teaches that if one's husband arrives at home in the evening and demands sex, you are obliged to comply. This is a good example: The presenter comes to see me and I tell him that I am uncomfortable with certain things, but that he is entitled to his own views. We can talk about it, and about the Bible as well. I will write about it my Focus feature though, and state in no uncertain terms what my own views are and how I interpret the Scriptures. However, we are not going to force anyone to comply with our views. That guy will know, we are not going to stop him from organizing his camping weekends.

*But don't you find that innocent people go on these camps with the idea that they are "good Christian camps"?* [Interjection: Who says that they are not good Christian camps? (laugh)]

*But could such ideas not be mistaken for the church's official truth?*

The fact of the matter is that the church used to teach people along similar lines in the past. It does not reflect my personal opinions though.

*But is there at least some kind of a corrective somewhere, is there a critical voice, to make people aware of the fact that there is not just one acceptable version of the "good Christian view"?*

Yes, one does that, for instance in a conversation with a person I would tell them that I disagree with them, or I would write about it in my Focus feature. We will not stop a guy like that, however. There will be no centralized control or censure. We cannot tell someone that he cannot have his camping weekends, because we are worried about his teachings, where would you draw those types of lines?

*But the question is, do you draw lines in your sermons?*

Yes, you do, because that is you speaking.

*[Interjection: While you are standing on a pulpit which proclaims: "Thus speaks God?"]*

No, I am past that.

*But don't you think there is that kind of expectation? For instance, the case of the guy who was exorcising demons in your congregation. That was during one of your services, and he was acting as preacher during a liturgical service.*

The way we deal with it is - we allow it if there are people who want it. Within the ministerial team, there was total dissensus about it. Yet it also depends, since my involvement here, that guy has not been a part of our annual program. You play an individual role, you say what you believe, and you leave your mark, but that does not mean that you will not accommodate those who favor a different approach or other points of view. That kind of approach has always been a part of our culture. Someone who tries to exercise control or power, will never succeed here.

*That brings me to the question of your leadership structure. How does it work in your organization?*

It is unique but simple. Membership-empowerment is incredibly important. We try and empower the congregational council as far as we can with regard to policy and strategy so that they are ultimately the ones who decide these issues. We do not use the old system of dividing our members geographically with representatives for each area. The result is that you get people on the congregation council whose personalities, passions and gifts lie in this area. They are people who know about strategy and policy. We have seven of these. We have to comply with the official demands of the church, so these seven serve as seven elders. Then we also have six deacons (I will explain where they fit in later). That group of thirteen and I, without the other ministers, meets every Monday evening. This body has the status of an official church council.

Every quarter six ministry forums are held - one for every ministry. People are invited, not obliged, to attend these forums. We try to make people's attendance at these forums indispensable by discussing important issues such as their operating budgets. However, because people are not forced to attend, these bodies do not take on a life of their own. These are occasions where the congregation council communicates with the ministries and where they in turn have the opportunity to contribute to the bigger picture. The leaders of the six ministries are also the deacons who serve on the congregation council.

We have also decided it is impossible to have six ministers who all do everything. We have therefore started to specialize. One of us is the leader minister who has the mandate to change the job descriptions of all the others on a daily basis if he deems it necessary. He empowers each of the others in their own area of expertise.

*How do you manage to comply with the official church requirements regarding the functions that every minister has to exercise?*

We all do house-visitation. In the course of your work you cannot but visit people's houses and that is deemed sufficient?

*So you simply interpret it differently?*

Yes, there are no official interpretations of the church requirements, the church simply expects you to do house-visitation. If someone were to say to me that what I did was not house-visitation, then that would be his interpretation - probably based on how things used to work. So we work around these things.

*How is your relationship with the synod and the broader church structures in the country?*

*Do they hassle you about your interpretations or do they allow you a lot of freedom?*

At the moment, things are not too bad. There are of course some of our colleagues who question what we do at our annual meetings. Our congregation is sometimes considered a threat - it is a large congregation and it draws people to it. We also have an expert on church law who is very narrow-minded. At a recent breakfast, however, our colleagues in the area were very positive. There is sort of a feeling that our congregation should be allowed to experiment, so that the others can learn from our mistakes. We do make a lot of mistakes - that is inevitable.

*And how do you deal with these mistakes?*

The guys who are involved are strategically minded and they are not too concerned about our reformed character. Their main concern is to manage the whole thing properly. They make sure that things run smoothly. Monitoring and evaluation processes are part of this. These guys are used to making mistakes, and they don't mind it. Because it is an open community that is prepared to make mistakes, in fact, a community that rejects those who pretend to be faultless, we do not have a problem.

### **6.3.3. Analysis of how this congregation reflects certain organizational trends:**

#### **1) Individual Identity:**

The diverse composition of the congregation results in a multifaceted view of individual identity within the organization. Whereas the minister involved in the interview certainly displays a poststructuralist "distributed self" within which he can accommodate



fundamentalist thinking and sophisticated knowledge of philosophy and theology, without considering these aspects mutually exclusive. The poststructuralist notion of the self involves a continuity and interdependence of self and other. Therefore, it can even be argued that the minister's more "postmodern" views were manifested more clearly in the interview because of the fact that the interviewer herself displayed certain preferences for a postmodern way of thinking about organizations. This does not mean that he is acting without "integrity" as a modernist assessment of the situation would surely conclude. Instead, a totally different view of "identity" that allows for unpredictability, is manifested here. The minister also displayed a very contextualized sense of self, since he admitted that he was unsure what his position about certain issues would be if he was not involved in that congregation. He is aware of the fact that he is both the subject and object of the story that he is co-authoring with his fellow church members.

It is however doubtful whether all of the members of this congregation have the same sense of "distributed selves". The minister in fact acknowledged that there are certain young, fundamentalist members who will find it impossible to entertain the notion, for instance, that the church should accommodate homosexual people. There is a very real possibility that these extremely different assumptions may lead to conflict. Fundamentalists are not usually well disposed towards the value of accommodation. Despite this, the minister repeatedly described the congregation as very accommodating. The question then remains: can a postmodernist approach accommodate even fundamentalism? Isn't postmodernism precisely a critical voice against the metanarratives that fundamentalism creates and the discrimination and exclusion it supports? This question can be partly addressed by looking at the organizational identity of the congregation.

## **2) Organizational identity:**

The congregation's view of its own identity is determined to a large extent by its emphasis on accommodation. Because it wants to create space for a variety of individuals and groups, it cannot base its identity on certain dogmatic distinctions. It calls itself a community church, and the way in which it determines its actions is by looking at the various ways in

which the community presents opportunities for Christians to make a contribution. The identity of the church and its identifiable actions in the world is therefore not based on certain dogmatic prescription about what the Church of Christ should be. Instead it is determined by the congregation's contextual reality. The contextual reality of this congregation is one of spiritual, theological, racial, educational and material diversity. The premise that the congregation accepted is that every individual within this diverse congregation has a certain role to play. Playing a role within the congregation cannot be restricted to those who hold certain theological or spiritual views. The inclusive stance of the congregation can only function if diversity is valued as an important resource.

This approach acknowledges that no simple grand narrative provides a comprehensive and coherent explanation of reality. The minister mentioned Wittgenstein and the use of language games in "playing" with the various versions of truth and knowledge. The social bond within this organization is certainly not woven by a single thread, rather, it is a fabric formed by the intersection of an indeterminate number of language games. This complexity does not necessarily result in nihilism and flux within which people are rendered powerless. As the minister indicated, power in the sense of dominating and controlling is considered untenable, whereas power in the sense of empowering, setting free and risking unpredictability is seen as a productive force.

The congregation seems to refrain from giving people clear-cut rules, instead it assists them in arriving at their own solutions. There is no top-down rhetoric, but rather a process of challenging individuals to find their own place in their own terms, and to defend their own views on an issue. The congregation is even willing to take risks in the process. The exorcism and the "promise-keeping" movements within the congregation are not forbidden, even though a critical conversation about these activities continues within the congregation. The congregation consistently (ironically a very modernist characteristic) allows all kinds of spiritualities and theological viewpoints to find its place within the organization. This congregation definitely displays the postmodern trait of recognition and protection of Otherness.

A further characteristic of postmodern organizations is that they are able to hold together a diverse range of unique individuals and functions, while interacting with an ever-changing environment. The process of transformation that the congregation is currently involved in should not be considered as temporary. The goal should not be to arrive at some permanent state of affairs. The distinction made at the outset of the interview between the congregation's present reality and the frame of mind determining the future would be meaningless in a truly postmodern organization. In fact, the culture displayed in the transformation period is "culture" in the true sense of the word, because culture is a process, it is the tending of natural growth, or cultivation. This process should never stall in some final form. An organizational culture that is contested, responsive and ever changing will enable this congregation to deal with the diversities and contextual challenges that it faces.

#### **6.3.4. Analysis of how the congregation deals with moral issues:**

##### **1) A holistic perspective**

The congregation's view of the relationship between religious activities and people's everyday lives indicate a strong holistic approach. Not only do they want to assist people in integrating their faith experience with the rest of their lives, they also want to use people's occupational strengths, such as their knowledge and expertise, in the church and empower them to determine the church's direction and activities.

The new building project is also an indication of the congregation's commitment to a holistic ministry. The new facilities want to present church members with the opportunity to worship, socialize, gain knowledge and skills, and serve the community through the existence of a one-stop community center that houses a big worship-center, a small 24-hour chapel, a bookshop, coffee shop, conference facilities, job creation resources, a day-care center, and a kitchen for feeding the hungry.

The whole idea of a "community church" also reflects the congregation's commitment to responding to a community's needs and interests, instead of dogmatically insisting that the congregation adhere to the prescribed functions of the church. No church function or project is therefore imposed top-down on the church community. The absence of religious symbols on the congregation's pamphlets and marketing material is indicative of their efforts to undermine the dichotomy between secular and religious spheres. This is further proof of the fact that their approach is a holistic one.

**2) Moral values are neither totalizing structures that repress difference, nor oppositional differences excluding commonality**

The way the congregation deals with moral issues such as premarital sex and homosexuality indicates the way in which they approach difference and dissensus in their organization. They do not provide people with unambiguous moral directives based on some unshakable dogmatic conception of the truth. Yet they do not allow opposing viewpoints to undermine the sense of community that exists within the congregation completely. Instead of endorsing one view, which may exclude another, they assist their members in thinking through issues. They do this by helping people ask meaningful questions about issues and by discussing ways of interpreting Scriptural perspectives on the issue. The goal of this process however is still not to reach consensus.

The values that are used to create unity and commonality within the congregation are very minimalist. They stress the central position of Christ, the fact that we all live by God's grace, and the Bible as Word of God and source of life - nothing more, nothing less. These core values do not however rule out different interpretations of how the congregation should go about doing its work in the community. It avoids supporting only one interpretation of Scripture on certain moral issues. It wants to create unity, but a unity with plenty of room for diversity.

Minimalist core values should not be misunderstood as an effort to create at least some semblance of complete consensus in the congregation. Far from ruling out certain

interpretations through the endorsement of these core values, these generalized core values are an acknowledgement of the fact that values are always subject to interpretation. People have to decide for themselves what it means to say that Jesus Christ is your only hope, or what it means to live by God's grace. They have to find their own way to use the Bible as a source of true life. From the way in which these core values are actualized in practice, it becomes clear that these core values truly leave a lot of room for different interpretations. Does the fact that the Bible is seen as the source of true life support a fundamentalist view of the mechanical inspiration, or could it also reflect a more historical critical interpretation of Scripture? In this case, it is clear that the congregation didn't chose one over and against the other, but rather created room for both. It is accepted that there will never be a complete consensus on how these core values should be interpreted.

### **3) Truth is seen as the function of a network of relations and guidelines are temporary in nature**

The organization's way of dealing with truth displays the postmodern characteristics of multifaceted truths that are the function of a network of relations and guidelines. These relations and guidelines are responses to the specific context of the congregation. This includes the accommodating style that has always been a hallmark of this congregation. It also reflects the urban environment and the diverse composition of the people and interests it serves. No single principle can therefore enjoy absolute priority or exclusive consideration. When a specific moral dilemma arises, various perspectives are considered and contextual variables are taken into account. In the light of this, it is quite understandable that the minister was unsure about how they would deal with a homosexual minister. It is in fact impossible to predict, because their pastoral approach will take the specific person, the context and a lot of other variables into account before deciding how to deal with the situation at hand.

Individual opinions and perspectives are part of an ever-changing, ever-evolving web of relations with which they freely associate. There is a minimalist set of core values that the

individual associates with in order to be part of the organization, but there is also a lot of moral free space. The individual is allowed his or her own interpretation of these truths and can decide how to live accordingly. The congregation stands for a few basic things, and these are the only criteria for membership. No-one will be denied membership on the grounds of his or her specific spiritual preferences, theological perspectives or personal morality.

Dissent is not something the congregation shies away from. Instead, dissent is openly acknowledged in discussions and also in the weekly printed material that deals with contemporary issues. Because no one version of the truth can be endorsed, the congregation sometimes have to "risk" giving people freedom to organize their own events, where they teach and practice their own version of the truth. These "risks" are however part of the process of developing and practicing the truth. It is also not a linear developmental process that will come to a conclusion and present a "complete truth" or even a better-defined truth. Instead, it is an unpredictable process that will have its ebbs and flows and where progression is not the goal or the criterion.

The acknowledgement of various perspectives on the truth, and the acknowledgement of diverse opinions, can easily be misunderstood as part of a "truth-building" process. In this misconception, all the different perspectives and opinions are seen as the many pieces of a puzzle that we have only to piece together in order to get the completed picture. The metaphor of the blind men and the elephant is often used to illustrate this view. It is alleged that if a number of blind men should all touch various parts of an elephant and then compile all their different experiences, they will eventually be able to get a pretty good idea of how an elephant must look. A postmodern view of truth cannot support this theory, because it acknowledges the fact that some versions of the truth may in fact contradict others, and that all the pieces do not fit neatly into each other to form a comprehensive picture. A postmodern view of truth is one that accepts the fact that completeness, non-contradiction, and all the other ideals of a correspondence-theory of truth should be abandoned. Truth is not one, it is many, and it will not be without ambivalence and contradictions.



The congregation seems to operate according to this view of truth, yet it maintains an exclusivistic Christian character. The postmodern flux apparently still includes certain non-negotiables. The congregation's missionary activities, and its insistence that Christ is their only hope, do not allow for the accommodation of religious truths. It also refuses to acknowledge any other religious book or document as a "source of life". Another question that one might raise in connection with the postmodern character of truth within the congregation is whether its members share the minister's views on the nature of truth. They clearly welcome the way in which he, and the church structure, are able to accommodate their view of truth. It is another matter however whether they are in fact also accommodating in their views of truth. The minister acknowledged this problem when he spoke about a certain mission group's dismissal of even Roman Catholics, and the fact that they will consider anyone who tells them otherwise unbelievers as well. The challenge to the congregation is to manage, in a truly postmodern way, contradictory elements: on the one hand, its accommodation of all perspectives, including fundamentalist conceptions of truth, and on the other hand, its handling of certain elements that may undermine their style of accommodation because of its own intolerance.

#### **4) Exposing the subject to Otherness**

Even though the congregation celebrates difference and emphasizes the accommodation of difference, it doesn't necessarily follow that people will be exposed to "Otherness" within the congregation. Because various forms of spirituality can be accommodated in different liturgical services, people can associate freely with those who experience their faith in the same way. Because of this, people may never really meet the "Other" face to face. When you add to this the fact that the ministers try to accommodate and adapt to their different audience's views of Scripture and the expectations that exist of that specific service, it becomes clear that the neoconservative tendencies, that Kirsten (1988) describes as a postmodernism of reaction may be allowed to persist. This form of postmodernism deals with plurality and difference by allowing smaller groups to isolate themselves within their own circle where their views and lifestyle go unchallenged and conflict is avoided. This

neoconservatism is in fact a kind of nostalgia for modernist closure and sameness. The minister is therefore correct in calling the young fundamentalist group who attend the evening services and who refuse to listen to anything but fundamentalist language, a "typical modernist" phenomenon.

There are however other opportunities and activities which allow individuals in the congregation to meet the other. There is an open discussion of issues in the weekly focus, where different and even contradictory understandings of the Scriptures are juxtaposed. The congregation allows them to coexist, without attempting to fuse them into a unified new dogma. The congregation's pastoral approach to moral issues, such as homosexuality, shows a sensitivity for the importance of the specific context of each dilemma, which steers clear of dogmatism.

## 5) Dialogue

This congregation values dialogue and allows everyone in the congregation to express their own views freely. They are allowed to teach, practice and witness to the truth as they perceive it. There does however seem to be a recognition of the fact that not all forums are ideal for dissent, discussion and the juxtaposition of opinions. As the minister put it: "everyone needs something to live by". For that reason he chooses to accommodate fundamentalist expectations in the evening service, instead of exposing them to someone who would confront them with a different scriptural approach and incomprehensible views.

The question remains however whether it isn't sometimes necessary to allow dialogue in these forums as well. Many young people's involvement with the church may be restricted to their attendance of the Sunday evening services. Is it the best approach to give them what they came for - a weekly tonic in their preferred flavor? This does of course not mean that they cannot be challenged in the type of language, or style, that they understand. It does however imply that other views and perspectives must be aired freely and without hesitance - even in these services. If this does not happen, a neoconservatist closure, isolation and discrimination is supported that makes certain elements in the congregation intolerant

towards difference and undermines the dialogue and openness that would otherwise be the hallmark of this congregation.

### **6.3.5. Suggestions with regard to the Dutch Reformed macro congregation:**

#### **1) Holistic perspective:**

The idea of a community church that allows its activities to be determined by the needs and interests of its members and the community in which it operates, is truly based on a holistic view of the integral relationship between faith and life. This congregation plans to feed people because hungry people can't hear the gospel, and they plan to open up their chapel all week, because they don't believe that religion is only a Sunday activity. The congregation should be encouraged to explore this holistic perspective even further. For instance, the congregation has a large component of young and upcoming (yuppie) church members. One of its marketing posters proclaims that it stand for: "Cool guys, hot faith". Wouldn't establishing a gym on the church grounds be a wonderful way to undermine the dichotomy between faith and the other activities that young people engage in? This would not only illustrate the holistic precept that bodily and spiritual health goes hand in hand, it would also draw the diversity of young people to one physical space where they could meet one another. If people could be encouraged to meet "the Other" in such a way, it may help to reverse the neoconservative tendency to mix only with those who share your spirituality and theological ideas by attending only those Sunday services specifically geared towards it.

#### **2) Non-totalizing moral structures and exposure to "Otherness":**

It can hardly be argued that this congregation does not allow enough "moral free space". It certainly accommodates a lot of diverse perspectives within its broad confessional basis. It is however interesting to note how the pressures that result from church members' expectations, can lead to certain totalizing characteristics developing around certain services or ministries. For instance, it is accepted that certain ministers should refrain from preaching in certain services, because he is unable to meet the audience's

fundamentalist expectations. Another example is the missionaries who are allowed to regard Roman Catholics as non-Christians. These people are never challenged for fear of having one's own faith questioned. These tendencies tend to restrict certain activities and services to people with specific views. This is typical of totalizing structures. Does the emphasis placed on accommodation not in effect undermine that very same value in certain contexts? One may regard this as just another "interesting postmodern ambivalence", but it could become a very real and very serious problem if it is not subjected to the self-critical scrutiny and self-awareness that characterizes the postmodern style.

How can this be achieved? One way would be to place the "Other" in the midst of these closed ranks. The idea is not to challenge them in a way that antagonizes them on a Sunday evening, but to expose them to different viewpoints in creative ways. For instance, people tend to form cell groups with those who think and believe like them. Wouldn't it be helpful to encourage people to visit another cell group who represent another age group or spirituality two or three times a year? Two cell-groups could also arrange to discuss a contemporary moral issue like homosexuality together. Certain evening services could also be designated discussion forums and people with opposing views could be invited to debate a certain issue. The minister could also invite people with various points of view to comment on a certain issue in the weekly "Focus" feature. In this way opposing views could be juxtaposed in writing.

### **3) Truth as a network of ideas:**

Part of the challenge of handling difference in a postmodern way is dealing with people's expectations of unambiguous truth. As the minister rightly remarked: "People need something to live by". It has to be acknowledged that meaningful truths need to be formulated in order to give people a sense of direction and purpose. The critical deconstruction of truths therefore becomes irresponsible if it isn't replaced by something else. Of course, this "something" has to be thought of as temporary, preliminary, or "the best we can do with the knowledge we have".

All our attempts at grasping the truth are well-intended temporary, preliminary efforts of making sense out of things in our specific context. People should be made aware of the fact that, even though their views about truth is subjective in nature, it can become a valuable resource for the church's work in the community. People can play a valuable role if they are empowered to do so. The work of Christ demands the inputs of all kinds of people with different kinds of perspectives.

#### 4) Dialogue:

Dialogue in a diverse congregation such as this one, is never easy to manage. Besides the fact that various theological perspectives, spiritual preferences and generational gaps influence the language games that come into play during dialogue, there are also hidden power interests, insecurities and fears that threaten the process. It may be argued that the best strategy is to ensure that those who enter a specific dialogue are representative of all groups of people, in order to ensure that all voices will be heard. However this may cause misunderstandings and may even lead to conflict because people would not have adequate access to the assumptions, knowledge and experience that would allow them to grasp the other person's point of view. People may end up talking past each other. If the minister tried to mediate in these situations, he or she would once again become the center of the dialogue, the "objective voice" that translates everyone's views.

A better strategy might be to focus on narratives that can expose a certain group of people to a totally new perspective in a non-threatening way. One might for instance relate a narrative about a homosexual Christian who struggles with his sexuality, or even invite such a person to tell his story himself. People should be encouraged to look into the face of the Other, instead of making up their minds on an abstract, theoretical level.

The problem with face-to-face encounters is that it may be intimidating for some people. Power relations such as age or education often cause certain people to dominate, while others feel unable or unworthy to contribute to the discussion. Face-to-face interaction may therefore be supplemented with other, less personal strategies that still allow people

to put their own views on the table. To stimulate dialogue, one could make use of the various options that information technology and the multi-media offer. People can form online chat rooms about certain issues. They can go and watch a movie together and discuss it amongst each other over the web. It may even be worthwhile to get two cell-groups who have different views on a movie to interact in an informal debate on the web. People can log on, follow the debate and state their views. People can even vote online about an issue and statistics are immediately updated and available. To facilitate this kind of interaction the congregation may have to make computers available in the community centre, so that participation is not restricted to the privileged few.

#### **6.4. Conclusion:**

This dissertation wanted to deal with the problem of accommodating unique individual moral perspectives, while at the same time maintaining unity within an organization. The three organizations discussed in this chapter show how contemporary South African organizations have tried to develop strategies for dealing with diversity in a way that allows for the maintenance of unity and order. Some organizations, such as MBD, make use of common core values that are symbolically supported by means of clothing, song and dance to maintain unity. In other cases, such as PCM, differences are transcended by a common goal or purpose, such as restoring the inner city in the name of Jesus Christ. The macro Dutch Reformed congregation opted for very general core values that allow individual members of the congregation the freedom to interpret and apply them in any way they see fit. Each of these strategies has benefits and disadvantages.

This dissertation provides perspectives that support and reinforce the beneficial aspects of the strategies that organizations employ to deal with diversity, and suggests solutions to some of the problems regularly encountered in the course of these efforts. Discussing and analyzing the way in which these three contemporary organizations deal with diversity have illustrated how the insights developed in this dissertation applies to the practical challenges of organizational life. It has however also created new perspectives and opened new avenues to be explored by further research. It confirmed the contention of this dissertation that



developing strategies for dealing with moral issues in the workplace should always be a very context-specific exercise. A further implication of this fact, is that the specific nature, goals, and culture of an organization will determine what strategies would be viable in that organization. For instance, an organization such as MBD, with its specific goals and needs, may strive for a more comprehensive consensus, than would the Dutch Reformed congregation. In the case of the Dutch Reformed congregation, decentralized activities and a variety of functions can accommodate diversity in a very "postmodern" way, an option that may not be available to a centralized organization such as MBD, or a smaller organization, such as PCM. Further research will be necessary in order to explore how various variables will influence the strategies chosen for dealing with moral values in the workplace. Another limitation of this study is the fact that the discussion of the three cases studies was limited to analyses of managers' views on their organizations. It may also be necessary to do more in-depth research on whether employees on all the levels of the organization view the organizational culture, its values and its functioning, in the way the managers do. This may provide interesting perspectives on whether all employees have ownership of the assumed consensus that operates, or the strategies that were decided on.

The findings of this dissertation have important implications for Christian managers dealing with moral values in the workplace. Christian managers in pluralistic working environments no longer have the option to draw solely on moral values originating from a single religious perspective. In fact, when one comes to realize how moral decision-making operates, it becomes clear that even Christian managers draw on a variety of diverse perspectives when making moral decisions. The unique character of each individual's moral configuration makes totalizing group distinctions impossible. There is no one "Christian perspective" that can guide managers who see their Christian religion as an important part of their identity in dealing with moral values in the workplace. Insight into the moral configuration of all individuals who operate as *moral bricoleurs* in the workplace can however assist managers in understanding the complexity of the process of moral decision-making. It can also sensitize Christian managers to the dangers of totalizing moral structures, and create openness for the Other. It can, and should strengthen managers' commitment to ongoing dialogue about moral issues in the workplace.

This dissertation argued that the balance between respect for individual moral views and organizational unity can be struck if the organization's need for meaningful truth and values is juxtaposed by an awareness of the temporary, context-specific nature of both individual and collective interpretations. This does not undermine the value and meaning of these truths in any way, but enables it to address the unique challenges of the South African context. People's need to associate and disassociate freely should be acknowledged, but at the same time, these groups should never be allowed to become totalizing structures that exclude contact with the Other. Various ways of supporting an ongoing dialogue about truth and values should be explored. The fact that South Africans continue to find it important and meaningful to discuss these issues indicates our commitment to the moral reconstruction of our South African society.

Conclusions to studies such as these can satisfy neither the expectations of the researcher, nor that of the reader. If a study on dealing with moral values in the workplace can be concluded in a paragraph or two, it would have failed. This dissertation would have served its purpose if it created an awareness of the contingent, context-specific nature of all moral deliberation, and the responsibility it places on all of us to continue laboring for a holistic, non-totalizing, revisable, dialogical moral culture in the workplace.