

In plain language, Earl de Blonville's Ph.d proposal says:

1. All modern standards and teaching of Leadership are outdated and unable to cope with Globalization.
2. I have special insight into leadership because I am an experienced and accomplished leader.
3. I will interview 6 individuals (world leaders) with great name recognition and interpret subjectively (autoethnography) what makes them leaders.
4. The results will reinforce my assertion that my view of "Postformal" leadership is correct.

The assertion that Earl de Blonville is an accomplished leader and therefore has the background and perspective to do this research is even footnoted (in a wonderful bit of tautology) when Earl refers to his own self-published book which extols his leadership vision.

While there is factual content here and doubtless much truth in the idea that leadership and management training in business has ossified and needs to adjust to the landscape of Globalization, the entire proposal is predicated on Earl actually be a genuine leader with extensive experience regarding the subject of leadership. A review of his CV shows that in fact he is an embellisher, an exaggerator and a creator (out of whole cloth) of his own qualifications.

Earl's qualifications, as he describes them here and in his CV are like the famous line from 'The Hunting of the Snark' by Lewis Carroll in which the leader, the Bellman declares: "What I tell you three times is true."

Of note is the highlighted section on page 11 of this document. Here, Earl's approach to interviewing people who are famous politicians and leaders using auto-ethnography is predicated on the assertion that Earl's own experience as a leader makes the interviews peer-to-peer conversations.

Mr. de Blonville is accomplished at projecting his own gravitas through the oldest trick in the book, name dropping, including never failing to mention the Prince of Wales, Lord Shackleton, Royal Geographical Society at any opportunity. On completion of his Ph.d he would have six more current, recognizable names to drop.

## **PhD Research Proposal**

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Supervisors:

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Thesis title:

“Postformal Leadership: Charting a New Course Through Seas of Uncertainty”

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Leadership, within the context of current organizational management, appears to be an exhausted model (Branson, 2009). But do we have a viable alternative suited for a world of global connectedness and democratized knowledge as it faces the challenges of a future of unprecedented complexity, generational culture change and impending climate crisis?

### **MY APPROACH**

My approach to leadership consolidates 25 years of direct field leadership experience on remote expeditions, including Australia’s first-ever Arctic expedition - with HRH The Prince of Wales as patron; directing the Tall Ships spectacle that not only officially opened Australia’s year of bicentenary celebrations but was the largest staged event in Victoria’s history; and 12 years of C-Suite executive leadership coaching and corporate leadership cultural development. Between those events, I also developed a multi-million dollar business startup in the UK, was founding President of the Mansfield Chamber of Commerce, Victoria where I led the transformation of the Mansfield regional economy through tourism and cultural development initiatives. So I will be drawing from a wide range of practical experience to inform my research, as well as referring to my book on extreme expedition leadership, ‘Seventh Journey’ (de Blonville, 2009).

My research will begin with a focus on the development of leadership within the corporate sector, as firstly they have claimed the term and secondly, through the business schools that serve them, have exerted an overwhelming global influence on the interpretation, definition and practice of leadership in recent years.

Furthermore, I will introduce the Skinnerian ‘radical behaviourism’ model, and attempt to demonstrate how based on this model, the globalization of corporate values has constrained great leadership – for millenia viewed as the sum of outstanding personal qualities – to a formulaic recipe-book of externalized behaviours that, packaged as training programs, are designed to process the greatest number of employees within the limits of a standard corporate training budget.

I will also discuss how this approach has failed and why, and argue that an entirely new approach to leadership is now required, indicating where I intend to focus my research in order to contribute to a new leadership philosophy.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **1. Military leadership**

At the end of WW2 Britain and Europe languished while America emerged with a huge military-industrial complex to become a global military and economic superpower. The US-driven Marshall Plan for economic aid to war-ravaged European countries provided not only significant markets for US goods but a basis for the emergence of US global technological, economic and cultural hegemony.

Prior to war's end, the structural basis for this development began in 1944, at Bretton Woods in New Hampshire, where America led a restructuring of international monetary arrangements by spearheading the creation of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank - institutions designed to ensure an open, capitalist international economy. Military tensions arising in 1947 from the Cold War and the creation in 1949 of US-led NATO provided an enlarged role for US military technology in defence of its emergent European client economies, further strengthening America's military-driven global economic influence.

America shows many of the key traits of a militarized order, including organizations based on hierarchy and top-down flows of authority, an economy that invests a preponderance of its society's wealth in weapons and war-making capacities and national security defined largely or exclusively in military terms. The US also has a multi-billion dollar entertainment industry that features and romanticizes war-related violence, while American leaders consistently construe the world as a hostile place where enemies abound, differences are coded as dangerous and people are prepared to solve problems with violence (Ferguson, 2009).

America's merging of militarism and global economic expansion, unprecedented in modern times, inevitably led to a steady influence of military aspirations, values, management styles and language spreading into the culture of its everyday business, education and politics (Winsor, 1996). Underpinning the expansion in size and complexity of management across many sectors of US business was the dominance of a top-down, centralized and hierarchical control model of military management (Manning, 2004). With it came a broad lexicon of military language, from 'safeguard' to 'scenarios', through 'campaign', 'discipline', 'organization', 'strong point', 'strategy' and 'tactics', which became normalised into executive conversation, marketing campaigns, business journals and particularly leadership training programs.

### **2. University Leadership**

US universities began offering modern style MBA degrees from 1940 (University of Chicago). These had evolved from earlier Masters degrees based on bookkeeping and

accountancy (Tuck School of Business opened its doors in 1900), developed to meet the needs of rapid industrialization. MBAs were essentially designed to develop management skills. Not until the early 1990's was leadership recognized as the great weakness in America's business future, and business schools responded urgently with radically redesigned programs focused on 'leadership' (Polito et al, 2002).

By the mid 2000s, rapid changes in management theory and the internet's democratization of information resulted in hierarchical organisational structures being flattened, requiring a shift from top-down military-style procedural management of employees to a new identity for 'leadership' that resulted in a proliferation of leadership 'training'. From this followed an accelerated development of what is now a multi-billion dollar global leadership training industry (Ready & Conger, 2003).

Meanwhile, the language used in the industry has not changed. For example, the word 'leadership' itself is no accident, but a continuation of the historic attachment to military linguistic tradition. Equally, with CEO's receiving such concentrated attention from the business press, it should be remembered that a Chief Executive Officer is in fact a Naval rank – one step below Captain and responsible for the daily operations of a warship.

But increasing doubt surrounds the value and effectiveness of MBA leadership programs. In their damning 2005 review of Business Schools, Professors Warren Bennis (Chair, Leadership Institute, University of Southern California) and James O'Toole (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005) conclude that business schools have lost their way and can no longer claim to serve the interests of the corporations that rely on them for graduates prepared for high leadership roles. The reasons offered for this conclusion is that, increasingly, senior academic staff have no actual business experience (many have never been inside a corporate building) and instead of being ranked on the success of their students, they are measured on the quantity of their individual research output.

In commenting on this report in 2011, Forbes Magazine chief leadership writer Drew Hansen updated the original findings by researching several business schools, concluding that MBAs and leadership programs are not aimed at improving the competence of their graduates or instill norms of ethical behavior, but principally at increasing graduate's salaries. He concluded by observing that leaders are created in the crucible of life, not in a classroom. Significantly for my research, Hansen echoes my own position, presented two years prior in the Prologue of my book *Seventh Journey*:

'The first thing I discovered (on this expedition) is that leadership cannot be taught. If it is being taught, it may just be management, rebadged at a higher price ... those who have the advantage of tough experience will understand the ineluctable truth: leadership is neither born nor taught; it is circumstance calling forth a champion' (de Blonville, 2009, p. xi).

### **3. Skinnerian Leadership**

It is my contention that, just as military field decisions must be acted on without question because of embedded hierarchical assumptions, business has embraced the

leadership training models offered to them by the higher authority of business schools. It is also my contention that the very word ‘training’, implying a skills-based, externalized and behaviorist approach to leadership development, reflects the extraordinary influence of Harvard Professor of Psychology B F Skinner who, in July 2002, was ranked by the American Psychological Association as the most influential psychologist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Sigmund Freud was third).<sup>1</sup> Skinner’s ‘radical behaviorism’ was based on a functional analysis of behaviour to produce ‘technologies of behaviour’ that ironically do not accept as behaviour private (or human) events such as thinking, perceptions and unobservable emotions. This harks back to the French Enlightenment and La Mettrie’s (1748) *L’Homme Machine* (Man a Machine) philosophy, now largely discredited. Skinner’s only grasp of humanity’s inner world was box-ticking observations of external habits and behavior.

Noam Chomsky famously remarked that Skinner was not a scientist as his methods were merely scientific, mimicking science without submitting to scientific method. The significance of Skinner’s pervasive influence might be measured today in the array of externalized, behaviourist formulaic training programs marketed by a global leadership industry, offered up as ‘leadership styles’, and the recent proliferation of quasi science and pop-psychology leadership and management books, such as *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (Covey, 2001), *The 15 Secrets to Leadership Success* (Biro, 1997) and online advice from Sir Richard Branson ‘The Five Secrets to Business Success’, listing at number four, ‘Be a Good Leader’. Clearly, leadership development has been atomized, trivialized and commodified and any academic attempt to draw together the myriad strings of definitions would be futile. It is my view that the mere proliferation of leadership definitions indicates that leadership no longer has a definition, indicating a generalized lack of understanding of the ‘being of leadership’ in its historic settings relative to human development.

#### **4. Foundations of Modern Leadership**

The hierarchical management structures of command and control that continue to guide business leadership, and the persistence of its evidence-based thinking, is supported by the dominant positivist scientific paradigm, based on a Newtonian, mechanistic, building-block worldview. Yet, almost a century ago, in science, this paradigm was already being replaced by Einstein’s (1920) Theory of Relativity and a quantum worldview of complexity, uncertainty and possibility.

Of course, ‘evidence-based’ not only represents the limits inherent in Skinnerian thinking, especially when applied to Newtonian positivism, but creates enormous risks regarding who, at the top of the corporate ladder, is selecting the evidence on which critical decisions are based.

The 2001 collapse of Enron was topped a year later by Worldcom as the biggest fraud in American corporate history (Scharff, 2005), which combined to badly unsettle the extant hubris within the business and political environments. Both failures have been publicly attributed, not to any intrinsic weakness of the businesses themselves, but to a failure of the personal values of their CEOs. This illustrates the risks inherent in the old military leadership model where such massive concentration of unquestioned

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<sup>1</sup> [www.apa.org/monitor/julaug02/eminent.aspx](http://www.apa.org/monitor/julaug02/eminent.aspx)

power vests in a single individual (Friedrich, 1960).

This appears to be an overlooked yet vitally important aspect of leadership. A new investigation, *The Network of Global Corporate Control* (Vitali et al, 2011) has revealed that, far from any normally expected diversity and spread of ownership, a small tightly-knit core of just 50 financial institutions controls the entire world's competition and financial viability, 24 of which are American and each of which is controlled or led by a single Chairman.

UNESCO's figures on corporate power facts and statistics reports that of the world's 100 largest economies, only 49 are countries.<sup>2</sup> The remaining 51 are corporations, each directed or ultimately led by a single individual.

Professor Bernard Lietaer, Newsweek's former 'World's Top Currency Trader' and member of the board of the Club of Rome recently wrote a report to the Club of Rome (Lietaer et al, 2012). He found that IMF figures over the past 40 years show that there have been 425 economic crises (banking, monetary, sovereign debt) that affected 75% of its members.<sup>3</sup> In addition, as much as \$32 trillion of personal wealth, more than twice the size of the US GDP, is currently hidden in tax havens and out of circulation, costing countries at least \$280 billion annually in lost taxation revenue. In most cases, the trusts that control this wealth are ultimately led by a small group or single individual inevitably with political and business affiliations and the financial muscle to leverage significant power in pursuit of their own agendas and interests..

It is amusing, if not chilling, to recall a prescient scene in Monty Python's 1983 film, *The Meaning of Life*, where a small group of business leaders sit around a vast boardroom table asking if there is anything left on earth that they don't yet own.

In contrast to the top-down militaristic model, the rise of new-era highly networked corporations, such as Facebook, Google and Apple, is underpinned by collaborative founding teams and characterized by unprecedented growth through collaboration, democratization of the business model and an entirely new approach to leadership. What the new business generation is displaying, not just in flagship companies but in the proliferation of creative design and tech start-ups, is dialogical reasoning, complexity, creativity, integration and higher purpose, which my research indicates are the values identified with postformal reasoning (Commons, 2002; Gidley, 2010; Kincheloe, 2006; Sinnot, 1998).

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This leads me to explore a new approach to leadership based on postformal qualities which arguably may be much more suited to the complexities and uncertainties of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in areas ranging from generational change to climate crisis.

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<sup>2</sup> UNESCO Teaching and Learning for a Sustainable Future website.

[http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme\\_c/popups/mod18t04s01.html](http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme_c/popups/mod18t04s01.html)

<sup>3</sup> Personal Communication with the author at a private meeting of members of the Club of Budapest, 12<sup>th</sup> June 2012, in Paris where Bernard Lietaer advised on leadership at the highest levels and on current economic stability, based on his recent report to the Club of Rome.

My research will focus on the following major questions and sub-questions:

1. What might the established body of research on postformal thinking offer leadership theory in complex and extremely uncertain times?
  - 1.1 How do we understand what postformal thinking is?
  - 1.2 What tentative set of postformal qualities will distinguish postformal leadership as a new leadership concept?
  - 1.3 What postformal leadership qualities emerge in interviews with former world leaders?
2. What relationships can be identified between the proposed set of postformal leadership qualities and the qualities that emerge in interviews with former world leaders?
3. To what extent can a theory of postformal leadership be developed to replace the current exhausted model and address the needs of emergent GenY leadership?

## **RATIONALE**

The rationale for my research questions can be found in three interlinked challenges to leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century:

### **1. Exhaustion of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Military-Industrial Leadership Model**

To understand why our current leadership model might be exhausted, it is useful to explore the roots of today's leadership model. We have already discussed how leadership as a concept within the dominant business paradigm traces its roots to post WW2 America (Talbot, 2003). Observing the general sense of paradigm change and the exhaustion of the modernist industrial model across many disciplines, fields of research and professional practices, it appears that 'big business' has been holding onto outmoded leadership practices.

In 1994, the late President of Czech Republic, Vaclav Havel said in Philadelphia: "I think there are good reasons for suggesting the modern age has ended. Today, many things indicate that we are going through a transitional period, when it seems that something is on the way out and something else is being painfully reborn. It is as if something were crumbling, decaying, and exhausting itself – while something else, still indistinct, were rising from the rubble" (cited in Scharmer, 2011).

Otto Scharmer (2011) leadership theorist of MIT and the UN Leaders Program, drew on Havel's remarks, saying:

"What [has] exhausted itself today is an old way of solving problems, of building institutions and societies. And what is seeking to emerge is a new way of regenerating our social fabric that in many places has fallen apart."

Scharmer refers to the ecological, social and spiritual crises, claiming that only a complete change in leadership can address these problems.

## **2. Generational Change**

The widespread demographic shift of an ageing population currently underway will have an enormous impact on leadership culture. Leo D'Angelo Fisher (2011) reports that:

“The inevitable creation of a leadership vacuum driven by the onset of executive baby boomers reaching retirement age will require a new approach to managing leadership succession and development.”

Recent social science research on the culture and characteristics of the generation that will inherit leadership responsibility suggests their values are in sharp contrast to the previous generation of leaders. McCrindle (2006) reports that changing times characterized by little job security, a highly competitive environment and very few employment guarantees, has forced a working style onto the next generation (often referred to as Gen Y or Millennials) that is both highly mobile and highly collaborative. This suggests that their natural leadership approach will not resemble the leadership patterns of the past.

## **3. Impact of Global Climate Crisis**

Significant weight needs to be given to impending climate factors set to change the world as we know it, and the ways in which leadership may be defined by it.

Expected sea changes, occurring as storm surges of increasing intensity driven by warming oceans, are forecast to cause massive loss of arable coastal land worldwide and the displacement of some 400 million littoral dwellers, the majority of whom will have limited migration possibilities (Clark & Weaver, 2008). Because the uncertainty of climate crisis is reportedly unquantifiable (Dessai & van der Sluijs 2007), that factor alone will call for a special type of leadership that is capable of communicating effectively with a distressed and displaced population in an environment where many of society's traditional structures may have been weakened or destroyed.

In summary, I propose that the time has arrived to ask what leadership should mean for future generations, how it might be understood and developed by them, and examine what new approaches are available and suitable to support them.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

My thesis will offer a critical review of the postformal reasoning discourse and its relationship to a proposed postformal conception of leadership. Although there is a substantial body of literature on postformal reasoning and an increasing awareness of its significance in approaching the complexities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is a large gap in the literature with respect to its application to leadership.

## 1. Postformal Reasoning

*“Postformal is the most widely used psychological term to denote higher developmental stages beyond Piaget’s formal operations (Piaget, 1955) ... Adult developmental psychologists ... identify numerous features of postformal reasoning—including complexity, construct awareness, contextualisation, creativity, dialectics, dialogue, holism, imagination, intuition, paradox, pluralism, reflexivity, spirituality, values and wisdom.”* (Gidley, 2010, p. 627)

The literature on postformal reasoning that underpins my proposed approach to leadership is well established by developmental psychologists working in the sub-fields of ego development, positive adult development and lifespan psychology (Cooke-Greuter 2000; Kohlberg, 1990; Commons, 2002).

The term postformal itself refers to the work of 20<sup>th</sup> century Swiss developmental psychologist Jean Piaget, whose linear notion of cognitive development ended with the fourth phase of ‘formal operations’, normally achieved in late adolescence. In the 1970s, adult developmental psychologists in the USA began researching the emergence of higher-level cognition and mature thinking that develop through the lifespan.

Educational psychologist, Jan Sinnott, one of the major researchers in this area, links this development with a broader paradigm shift, claiming that “new physics is one of the intellectual antecedents of postformal thought” (Sinnott, 1998, p 73).

The concept of postformal (or postformalism) is also a concept used by critical education theorists (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1993, 1999). Their use of postformal is also connected to the need for a major societal and paradigm shift and is strongly linked to critical theory. Kincheloe (2006) makes the claim that:

“Postformalists believe that the West is in dire need of a radical self-evaluation and self understanding. The scholarly project of postformalism, based on the creation of the highest level of intellectual insight possible, is an effort to identify and rectify the civilisation’s wrong turn.” (p. 20)

In a practical application of postformal reasoning, Australian researcher, Jennifer Gidley, is applying postformal reasoning to developing a postformal educational philosophy and recently presented a paper for the European Higher Education Ministers conference in April 2012 (Gidley, 2012).

## 2. Postformal Leadership

Numerous features reflect the existence of postformal reasoning abilities. It is my intention to choose the most applicable to the leadership arena, based on my own ethnographic reflections. These will include: complexity, creativity, dialogical thinking, holism/integration, imagination, intuition, paradox, reflexivity and higher purpose. This list will be reworked and refined as part of the iterative nature of grounded theory building.

Although there appears to be little available research that specifically addresses postformal leadership as such, in either the leadership or postformal literature, studies exist that identify a developmental approach to leadership that is aligned to a postformal perspective (Cook-Greuter, 2000; Senge, 2006; Torbert, 2004; Starr & Torbert, 2005).

My literature search to date has also uncovered research linking complexity to leadership, and integral theory to leadership, both pointing to the potential future emergence of postformal leadership.

Harung, Heato and Alexander (1995), suggest that development of consciousness is a fundamental causal variable underlying the complexity of behaviours and psychological qualities associated with leadership. They add that developing consciousness, as a technology, can lay the foundations for more widespread development of leadership. This approach of consciousness development, complexity and leadership can be further explored in relation to postformal leadership.

I have identified two studies that examine leadership from Wilber's integral theory perspective (1997). First, Pappas' (2010) integral study of renowned Primatologist Dr Jane Goodall, observes Goodall's post conventional maturity and higher purpose, pointing to qualities of postformal leadership in action.

Second, in her study on Nelson Mandela's leadership, O'Fallon (2011), using integral theory, noted that:

“Mandela came to leadership at an extremely late level of ego development and that, to a degree, he did not appear to lead in any recognizable manner. Instead he appeared to act as a catalyst”.

This study supports my concept of postformal leadership, as emerging from the leader's 'beingness' as opposed to the 'doingness'. The idea of “beingness” or presence in leadership is well developed by Senge and Scharmer et al (2005), who are clearly working from a developmental perspective on leadership.

My iterative literature search will continue to look for research that focuses on particular aspects of postformal reasoning related to leadership, such as creativity, dialogical thinking, imagination, intuition, paradox, reflexivity and higher purpose.

## **RESEARCH APPROACH**

For this research, I intend to position myself as follows:

### **1. Philosophical**

As my approach is integrative and humanistic, I situate myself broadly within Continental Philosophy, particularly German Idealism and Romanticism, and their derivatives: French Postmodernism and Post Structuralism, which are strongly aligned to Postformal Reasoning.

### **2. Theoretical**

There is no existing theoretical approach to leadership that takes into account Postformal Reasoning, so my theoretical approach will draw strongly from adult developmental psychology research (see below).

### **3. Methodological**

I will employ a complex methodological pluralism using different methods to tackle different parts of my study. These will include:

- Auto-Ethnographic insights will be interwoven throughout (see below)
- Grounded Theory will be used for the analysis of interview data (see below)
- Hermeneutics based on Heidegger's phenomenology will be employed to analyse and interpret the interview material in relation to the cluster of postformal qualities.

### **4. Pragmatic**

The field I want to influence is Leadership.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

My research can be situated in the post-positivist research tradition, which is in keeping with my research exploring postformal leadership for a post-industrial era. Post-positivist researcher, Darren Caulley (1992), stressed the significant role of the human as instrument in post-positivist research. In addition, by using Vygotsky's social constructivism (Crawford, 1996) I will be able to more fully contextualize my interviewees within their own social construct so as to better understand the roots of their world-view and practical experience of leadership.

### **1. Field Research using Semi-Structured Interviews**

I will be using the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews for the major component of my data gathering (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The principal component of my field research will be interviews with six former Heads of State (3 women and 3 men). The data will primarily consist of the written and transcribed recorded material arising from the interviews with the six former world leaders.

The purpose of the interviews is to establish whether they used various features of postformal thinking in their leadership practice, and to establish to what extent a theory of postformal leadership can be developed from an examination of their lives and work.

The participants in the research will be selected according to the "theoretical sampling" notion of grounded theory. Theoretical sampling refers to "sampling carried out so that emerging theoretical considerations guide the selection of cases and the research participants" (Bryman and Bell, 2007, p. 733).

The semi-structured interviews will be conducted face-to-face in the subject's own country, or their country of choice and include three phases.

1. An examination of family history and personal development through childhood, adolescence, formal education and professional life prior to taking office;

2. A reconstruction of the relevant historical challenges of the day, how they dealt with the key issues, style of leadership, the results achieved and world impact;
3. An exploration of the personal values that guided them, and finally, what values and characteristics they believe should be considered in selecting and developing a new generation of leaders facing radically uncertain futures.

To supplement the interviews, I will study the available historical records, such as biographies, journal articles and entries in contemporary histories. In this approach I, as the interviewer, will be part of the research methodology (see autoethnography below).

## **2. Autoethnography – Engaging with the Personal narrative**

Autoethnography has not been used widely in management and business research (Bryman & Bell, 2007). However, this study is about leadership per se, and thus my own reflective personal narrative as a leader is valid data for inclusion.

Of importance to the interview process will be my personal background of 40 years as a leader of high-risk expeditions in several countries (de Blonville, 2009) and deep experience as corporate leadership consultant and senior executive leadership coach. I believe that this high personal credibility factor and professional authority in the field of leadership should help place me on a comfortable footing with my interviewees.

## **ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

The data to be analysed and interpreted will come from the qualitative data gathered from the field interviews and my own ethnographic narrative (discussed above).

### **1. Grounded Theory – An Emergent, Iterative Analysis Framework**

I will use the well-established interpretive framework of grounded theory to guide the research process (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The central features of grounded theory can be summarized by Bryman and Bell (2007) as follows: “[grounded theory] is concerned with the creation of theory out of data *and* the approach is *iterative*, or *recursive*” (p. 585). Such an interpretive, constructivist approach to analysis assists in uncovering meaning in the data. My focus on meaning-making is an important feature of constructivist research (Guba and Lincoln, 1991). This is aligned with the central focus of my research: Exploring Postformal Leadership for Complex and Highly Uncertain Futures.

An important feature of grounded theory is that it relies on an emergent, circular research design rather than a strictly linear, sequential design. Consequently, the reviewing of literature takes place continually throughout the research, in an emergent manner. As Caulley (1992) observed:

“It should be noted that grounded theory and emergent design are important to one another. Because grounded theory emerges during the process of the study, the design or plan of the study cannot be planned in advance in any great detail.” (p. 22).

I intend to use a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) software, such as NVivo. This program includes purpose-built tools for classifying, sorting and arranging information, which will assist in the analysis and theory building. While the use of such software is not without its critics (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 604-605), providing the researcher is aware that it is simply a coding tool and does not do the interpretive thinking for you, it can assist with locating themes and thus can be valuable in the theory-building aspects of grounded theory.

## **2. Hermeneutics - Guiding the Interpretation**

Because my research is qualitative rather than empirical, an interpretive approach such as hermeneutics is an important additional method to supplement the grounded theory analysis. As the themes emerge iteratively from the interview data they will need to be interpreted with respect to their postformal qualities. For this stage of the research I will employ the phenomenological hermeneutics of Heidegger (1927/1962) in that I will be engaging very closely with the phenomena of the text itself, including the nuancing of the language. This approach will be used with both the interview data and as a way of reflecting ethnographically on my own text as found in *Seventh Journey* (de Blonville, 2009).

## **PROPOSED DISSERTATION OUTLINE**

The overall research project and dissertation will be structured to address the first major research question:

**“What might the research on postformal thinking offer to leadership theory for complex and extremely uncertain times?”**

Chapter 1. Introduction (introducing the research)

Part 1 – Conceptual Overview (will address research questions 1.1 and 1.2)

Chapter 2. This chapter will provide an overview of the historical, sociological and psychological background to the development of the dominant contemporary leadership approach principally within the business school framework, and examine why it is an exhausted model.

Chapter 3. This chapter will involve a critical review of the psychological, educational and other literature on postformal reasoning and offer a tentative framework for postformal leadership, based on the postformal reasoning literature and my own ethnographic reflections.

Part 2 – Research Approach, Design and Methodology

Chapter 4. Research Approach (explained briefly above)

Chapter 5. Research Methodology and Methods (explained briefly above)

Part 3 – Analysis, Interpretation and Discussion

The next two chapters will lead into the second major research question:

**“What is the relationship between the proposed set of postformal leadership qualities and the qualities that emerge in interviews with former world leaders?”**

Chapter 6. What postformal leadership qualities emerge in interviews with former world leaders? This chapter will also address sub-question 1.3.

Chapter 7. Exploring relationships between postformal leadership proposition and leadership approaches of world leaders. This chapter will address question 2.

Chapter 8. Ethnographic reflection on my own leadership in light of the findings. (Whether or not this this will be a separate chapter, or be woven throughout the dissertation, will emerge during the research)

This final chapter will address the third major question:

**“To what extent can a theory of postformal leadership be developed to replace the current exhausted model and address the needs of emergent Gen Y leadership?”**

Chapter 9. Evaluation, directions for future research and pointers towards a postformal leadership theory.

## **RESEARCH OUTPUTS**

I anticipate a range of educational outputs that might include:

1. At least one monograph.
2. Online videos (short versions) of interviews with the Heads of State.
3. Journal articles, conference presentations, papers, newspaper articles and guest lectures.

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