**Short-Term Informal Leadership Learning:
A Critical Realist Case Study**

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work, and has not been submitted by me for the award of a higher degree elsewhere. No sections of this thesis have been published, or submitted for a higher degree elsewhere. This thesis is not, in whole or in part, a result of joint research.

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ABSTRACT

Uzochukwu Jude UDEDIBIA, B.Phil., MCE, *Short-Term Informal Leadership Learning (STILL): A Critical Realist Case Study Research,* submitted to Lancaster University Management School for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Management Learning and Leadership, September 2019.

This thesis focuses on the short-term informal learning from the restructuring experience of twenty four senior leaders from three Canadian healthcare organizations who led restructuring in their organizations. This study investigated the leaders' learning through a critical realist case study research approach. It used Pawson and Tilley's (1997) *Context-Mechanisms-Outcomes (CMO)* framework to analyze their learning by describing the *context* of the learning, inferring *mechanisms* that can plausibly explain their learning, and describing the learning *outcomes* that these inferred mechanisms produced.

This research's departure point is the ongoing issue and debate about how formal leadership learning only contributes marginally to leadership emergence and development. In practice, organizations are complaining that they are not seeing acceptable returns in the heavy investments they have made in leadership development programs. On their own side, leadership scholars, having noticed this contribution gap, are calling for more research that may potentially contribute more to leadership learning. Therefore it is valuable to focus research on other sources - as processes or models - that have the potential to contribute more to leadership development. One such area for

investigation is understanding how leaders learn informally in the short-term given time pressures occasioned by fast-moving organizational change demands. While previous research identified that learning informally from the experience of activities that they are engaged with is a natural way for leaders to learn, focus on this had remained on the learning that occurs over a long period of time. As insufficient research attention has been given to this area of how short-term informal leadership learning can occur, this research undertook this research to contribute to knowledge in this underserved area of leadership development.

This research found that leaders can learn in the short-term and that a model that involves the processes of *attention grabbing*, *rapid reaction*, and *meaning making* can explain how the learning occurs.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

> "the 'deep' level of leadership reality has not been explored effectively thus far."
>
> (Kempster and Parry, 2011, p.110)
>
> "we…encourage research to be retroductive and [to] go beyond the restraints of empirical evidence associated with deductive and inductive approaches: to explore and suggest what might be the causal powers shaping leadership emergence." (Kempster and Parry, 2014, pp.86-87)

Taken together, the two quotes above from Kempster and Parry (2011; 2014), prominent scholars in critical realist leadership research, succinctly capture one of the main problems facing leadership research, which is that sufficient attention has not been given to understanding leadership through the exploration of the causal mechanisms underpinning leadership and at levels that are beyond the empirical. In their earlier view, Kempster and Parry (2011) observed and decried the dominance of positivist approaches in leadership research. And they adopted Fleetwood's (2004) term, *deep*, to characterize the need for leadership research to go beyond the empirical and explore phenomena up to the third domain of the critical realist ontology, the domain of the real. In their latest view (2014), they advantaged retroduction as the process for identifying and explaining causal mechanisms for leadership. Seeking explanations through causal mechanisms and the processes of abduction and retroduction are key contributions of critical realism to social science research. Answering the call for more research of this nature, this research presents a critical realist case study analysis of leadership by providing plausible

explanations for the learning by leaders from leading organizational restructuring. Leaders from three Canadian healthcare organizations that went through restructuring are the subjects of this research. And the focus is understanding their experience, context, and learning and offering plausible explanation of their learning through the critical realist approach. Semantically, as terms, leadership development and leadership learning (and a lot of extant literature uses leadership development) are both about learning. However, this research gives priority to *leadership* learning, the successor to *management* learning, in that leadership learning privileges learning through action and experience, learning through leadership activities, and the process of reflecting on one's own leadership and of observing other leaders. Viewed from this perspective and approached in this way, leadership learning implies to some extent, leadership experience, understood as the experience a leader has from leadership enactment as opposed to learning or being educated *about* leadership. This experience is part of a leader's context. So in investigating leader's learning from the experience of restructuring, Pawson and Tilley's (1997) *context-mechanisms-outcomes (CMO)* framework will be used to investigate and explain leaders' learning by looking at the trio of the *context* of the learning, the *mechanisms* that shaped the learning, and the learning *outcomes*. And given that it has not been addressed sufficiently in the literature, the specific area of leadership learning that this research focuses on is *informal leadership learning in the short-term*. In this first chapter, the rationale for the research, the research question, and the significance of the research and the layout of the thesis are presented.

1.1   The Research Question

The question addressed in the research is "how do leaders learn informally in the short-term through being engaged in a leadership activity?" Specifically, given the objective of rendering a critical realist explanation and at the level of real or deep, the research aims to answer:

What was the leader's restructuring context?

What did s/he learn (that is, the outcomes)?

What causal mechanism(s) underpinned the learning and how did these shape the

learning?

Each question is addressed briefly and separately below.

What was the leader's restructuring context?

Restructuring is a significant organizational activity and represents leaders' engagement with a real-life scenario. Understanding the leaders' context reveals leaders' experience, roles, agency, organizational and other contexts, and is foundational to explaining leaders' learning as well as for identifying causal mechanisms behind the learning.

"What did the leader learn from the restructuring experience (the outcomes)?"

When leaders conduct restructuring, they do so on behalf of their organizations and there are organizational expectations of them, a key one being the expectation to lead the restructuring successfully. This is at the level of *performance*. How about at the level

of learning – what do leaders learn from leading restructuring? Understanding leaders' learning explores one of the ways of conceiving leadership, that is, one of *leadership as learning*, and more narrowly for this research, as *learning from experience*, from *doing*. Though distinct, *learning* still has relations with *performance* one of which is from the point of view of its effects. Learning (or not learning) has the ability to impact a leader's performance, self-concept, identity, motivation, amongst others.

"What causal mechanisms underpin leaders' learning and how did these shape the learning?"

Accounts of restructuring given by leaders can explain their experience, part of their context, and their self-described learning at the empirical level. However, can this learning be understood at the level of causation? Are there other realities that could render an explanation in this regard? Understanding leaders' learning through causal mechanisms proposes an explanation, following the critical realist approach, that infers mechanisms by going beyond the data (and not summing up observable data as positivists will do nor just accepting them as socially given) to give a causal account that goes from the empirical to the real as part of critical realism's stratified ontology. Focusing and approaching the research in this way is important because it is thought that leaders learn mostly through experience instead of through formal leadership development courses and education (as we shall see in detail in the next chapter when the literature is reviewed). While formal leadership learning has been dominant in the leadership learning space as we will soon see in the next chapter, the fact that the literature says that formal leadership learning

does not contribute substantially to leaders' learning makes the case to find a more valuable process more strident. Ultimately, it is hoped that this research will be useful in in advancing the understanding of the process underlining leaders learning informally in the short-term from activities that they are engaged with such as organizational restructuring.

1.2   Purpose of Study

Though leadership has been conceived as formal and informal, amongst others, this research is focused on individual hierarchical leaders in organizations and is interested in exploring how they learn informally in the short-term. When it is said that these are hierarchical leaders, 'hierarchy' is used in the sense that the organizations these individuals are associated with put them in formal hierarchy which then has the effect of declaring them as leaders and following that, they are privileged with authorities to exercise as formal leaders. So, the first point of departure for this research is the practical, every day, observable, and empirical fact that formal, position-based leaders do exist in organizations. You can point to a president or a vice chancellor as a formal leader. Or the Chief Financial Officer. Or the Scientific Director of an oncology research initiative. All these women and/or men are formal leaders in their organizations. One example of an 'authority' that a formal leader has is being given a label (that is, position title) to denote the leadership status. Being called the 'Vice Chancellor' of Lancaster University, for example, indicates the position's organizationally defined authority, one that is more than the Deans' and the Lecturers'. Another example could be the organizationally granted

access to important organizational information ('authoritative communication', Barnard, 1966, as referenced by Tsoukas, 2000, p.33) that those who have not been declared position-based leaders (non-formal leaders) do not necessarily have or at least are not formally *entitled* to have, or have them at *a time* that is determined by the organization but not before the formal leaders.

So why do organizations create these leaders?

There are different ways leadership can be conceived and enacted but relevant to this research is the creation of leadership positions so that the leaders can enact formal, position-based leadership for the organization, leadership for our purpose being understood as "setting direction, creating alignment, and maintaining commitment" (Van Velsor & McCauley, 2003, p.18). Seen from this perspective, these leaders are in formal organizational leadership roles to *perform tasks* for the organization. How they perform these tasks can be informed by both the authorities they have been granted and who they are at any particular point in time as individuals. Part of the import of effectiveness include *learning* [defined here as "expansion of a person's capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes" (Van Velsor and McCauley, 2003, p. 2)] by these leaders. The work by McCall et al. (1988) tell us that learning by managers and leaders is essential to their job performance and "presumably to organizational effectiveness" (Brown & Posner, 2001, p.1). This, then, is the crucial sail away point for this research and that is exploring what formal leaders experience and learn from being involved in leadership activities. The purpose of this research, therefore, is to understand in-depth how leaders' learn informally in the short-term by identifying the causes behind the learning. Until what

causes something to happen and the processes of how they happen are understood, and understood reasonably sufficiently, our knowledge of the reality remains limited. This research aims to increase what can be known about leadership by exploring causes and processes behind leaders' learning from a significant organizational leadership activity and rendering causal explanations of the learning through mechanisms that will be inferred from leaders' accounts of their experience and learning, and from their organizational contexts.

1.3   Significance of Research: Theoretical and Practical Importance

The theoretical importance of the question arises from the fact that the debate orchestrated by the key leadership theories, as ways of explaining how leaders learn and develop, continues unsettled. On one side, cognitive theorists of leadership learning have advanced the understanding of the roles that formal education and courses can play in generating leadership capacity but in doing so seems not to pay as much attention to context, how leaders learn naturally, and what causes leaders to learn. In contrast to cognitive theories, the situated theorists emphasize context as both the arena for leadership enactment as well as the "spring" for leadership learning, and thus has brought the understanding of leadership development closest to the primary actor in leader development, the leader's own ability to learn-in-action and while leading. While this understanding is very significant, sufficient articulation has not been advanced to explain how leaders learn-in-context while leading and doing so in the short-term, and explaining it from a causation perspective. This research thus contributes to scholarship in leadership

by using critical realist case study research to further "applied or practical realism" (Bhaskar, 2014) through Pawson and Tilley's (1997) *context-mechanisms-outcomes (CMO)* framework in explaining the process of short-term informal leadership learning through causation. This explanation is rendered not just at the *empirical* level but up to the level of the *real: "*Real generative structures with causal powers and liabilities give rise, under specific conditions, to particular events which shape and condition experience, which events and experience, in turn, instantiate, reproduce and transform those structures" (Hales, 2007, p.149). Thus,

> This ontology informs an approach to developing theory that seeks explanation as its goal. Explanation is conceived in terms of revealing the mechanisms which connect things and events in causal sequences…and the continually reproduced and/or transformed outcome of human agency to be achieved. (Ackroyd and Fleetwood, 2000, p.15).

Furthermore, as argued by Bhaskar (2014), "if CR is to be 'serious', it must be applicable" (p.v.). Research that has applied critical realism to leadership learning and at the level of the real specifically are very few, the most notable being the works of Kempster (2006) and Kempster and Parry (2011; 2014). However, they applied grounded theory to critical realism in their exploration of managers' leadership learning in a range of contexts while this research applies case study research. The critical realist approach aligns well with the case study method as both focus on description, exploration, and explanation.

The practical importance of the research is the contribution it can potentially make in re-conceptualizing the design of leadership development programs that are run by organizations and expanding them to include opportunities for leaders to reflect upon, articulate, and share what they have learned and how they have learned from experience, especially as it is known in research that leaders learn naturally through what they do (Burgoyne and Hodgson, 1983) and tacit knowledge sometimes requires vehicles to allow them to be surfaced and shareable with others (Kikoski and Kikoski, 2004).

Additionally and more importantly, this research contributes to better leadership by enabling organizations and individual leaders to understand their experience and learning at the deeper level of causation. Furthermore and with specific reference to healthcare leadership in Canada, Canada operates its own version of a publicly funded health care system model, anchored nationally through the *Canada Health Act*, and delivered operationally through the provinces <u>and</u> with some funding from the Federal Government. Several challenges face the sustainability of the Canadian health care system. Leadership within the sector has been identified as one key area of potential improvement to the sector. As articulated by Dickson (2010):

"In recent years…there is a growing interest in the contribution the practice of good leadership can make to the unique challenges of the health sector in Canada. But what is this leadership? … Does it have to be as 'fuzzy' as some people think, or can it be defined so as to be improved, or grown? If so, can we give leadership enough shape and substance in the modern context such that efforts can be

mounted to improve the quality of health leadership in the country? (Dickson, 2010, p.1).

The success or failure of healthcare, especially publicly funded healthcare as it obtains in Canada, rests on the continuing ability of the leaders that run the healthcare organizations to learn and improve by applying their learning to current and subsequent activities they engage with. "The education of a leader is a complex thing…even the most naturally gifted still have a lot to learn" (Thomas, 2008, p. xii). Contextually, Canadian healthcare system is no longer as stellar as it used to be and needs all the leadership help it can get: "Canada has historically led the world in thinking about health… However, recent reports … indicate that Canada has been gradually drifting down … in terms of health system performance…. **with poor leadership a key ingredient to lack of success**." (Canadian Health Leadership Network, 2014 – emphasis mine). As an exploratory research, what emerges from the study can add to the knowledge that may contribute to Canada regaining lost ground in healthcare leadership, as how leaders learn in the short-term from fast-paced organizational changes is better understood. This lost ground is an issue that Canadian health leaders are focusing on through ramping up the need to look at what improved leadership can contribute to re-invigorating the Canadian healthcare:

A decade ago, leadership was not on the [Canadian] policy landscape. However with declining performance, leadership is now seen as an integral ingredient to move to our desired future. Better, stronger, more supportive health leadership is what is required to move Canada back atop the best performing health systems in the world. (Canadian Health Leadership Network, 2014)

This study intends to contribute to the shape and substance of "the practice of good leadership" in the Canadian health care sector through the explanation of how leaders learn informally in the short-term. In furtherance of this goal, this researcher had the opportunity in July 2018 to join two other Canadian health leaders as a panelist addressing the national conference of the College of Canadian Health Leaders in St John's, Newfoundland, Canada.

1.4   Delimitation

Hierarchical, Position-based Leadership

The interest of this study is on hierarchical, position-based leadership. In other words, the proposed study will be looking at people who are in formal organizational positions (whether appointed, promoted, recruited, 'told-to', 'asked-to', etc.). Though this study acknowledges that there are other concepts and practices such as shared leadership", "collective leadership", "situational leadership", "everyone can be a leader", amongst others, this study is focusing only on formal leadership positions that exists within a hierarchy as established by the organization.

Three Canadian Healthcare Organizations

Leaders studied in the research were from three Canadian provinces out of a total of ten provinces and three territories. This research therefore does not claim to have looked at the other seven provinces and three territories.

Leaders Who Led Restructuring Activities

In terms of numbers, leaders within the three organizations studied are numerically much more than the 24 that participated in the research. This research, through its eligibility criteria, only sought out leaders who *led or participated significantly* in the specific restructuring activities in the three healthcare organizations and were still employees the time data collection was done. Leaders who did not meet these criteria were regarded as out of scope for the research.

1.5   Researcher Background

Currently, the researcher is a specialist in Organization Design and leads a team that provide organization design and workforce planning services in Alberta Health Services, one of three organizations that was studied. In this role, the researcher plays a significant role in how restructuring happens within Alberta Health Services from the perspectives of providing training, consulting, advice, and hands-on project management support to organization-wide and cross-departmental organization (re)design initiatives. As well, the researcher is very interested in organizational, formal, leadership roles and the difference it can make to organizations. Based on this interest the researcher holds a master's degree specializing in leadership, development and workplace learning, and is a certified Human Resources professional in the Canadian jurisdiction. Connecting practice to scholarship, the researcher continues to teach as a part-time faculty at universities here in Alberta. The researcher's interest in the processes of leadership learning arises from professional practice about how leadership capacity is generated in organizations. Professionally, as a

human resources professional, the researcher has over the years worked with various organizational leaders as they tackled organizational problems and made attempts, mostly through formal leadership education programs, to enhance their leadership capabilities. Over time the researcher has observed anecdotally that, due to the types of offerings made available, these leaders are rarely given the opportunity to articulate what they learned "while doing" and what that learning means to them as individuals especially as there is consensus in the literature that leaders learn naturally from what they do. Also, within the structure of organizations, Human Resources (HR) is one corporate area that is typically saddled with the responsibility of establishing and running leadership development programs. As well, HR is one of the areas that is intimately involved in dealing with the effects or impacts of formal leadership, good and bad, for example: what metrics show if the leader is meeting performance expectations? How is the leader's behaviour towards staff? Who should be selected for the leadership succession pipeline? What type of support can be made available to the leader? Will this leader be fired? Having been in HR for some time, the researcher has grappled with the issues raised by these and similar questions. And from the day-to-day HR professional work has seen leaders both succeed and struggle (and sometimes fail) in their roles. The researcher has also worked with leaders who tried different interventions with varying degrees of success (hiring a coach and taking courses are examples) in the hopes that these will help them be more effective. In all these, the researcher's professional interest has always been for the leaders that he supports to succeed in their roles. However, these leaders have to learn how to succeed by themselves. One can support them. Others can coach them but

only they can learn for themselves. How do they do that? What's the best way to learn? What can they learn? This has been the researcher's area of interest as a practitioner. Through this study this interest has been extended by integrating the focus of the researcher's current role (restructuring and organization design) with leadership learning, asking principally 'how do leaders, given time-pressure, learn informally and in the short-term from leading significant organizational change such as a restructuring?' Combining this professional occupation with the researcher's long lasting personal interest in organizational, formal, leadership roles, the researcher comes to this research with a set of core beliefs that influence how he perceives leadership. These are:

1. No matter how formal leaders emerge, leaders can learn from what they do.

2. One's activities seem to be a treasure trove for learning. Experience, as has been classically stated, is the best teacher. Leaders learn naturally this way (Burgoyne & Stuart, 1977; Burgoyne and Hodgson, 1983).

3. Leaders can describe their leadership activities but it is not always easy for leaders to find a way to extract and articulate learnings from experience.

4. When learning has occurred, leaders may be unaware that learning has occurred. As well, how leaders learn and what caused the learning may not be clear.

So, why embark on this learning journey? It is this: what the researcher learns from the research informs his professional practice and his professional practice in turn furthers the curiosity to engage in further inquiry. In this way, it is heuristic for the researcher.

1.6   Description of Thesis Chapters

As just outlined, Chapter One has sought to introduce the research by presenting the research questions, the rationale for the research and why the research is important. Chapter two reviews the literature on leadership learning, learning by experience, and introduces a novel taxonomy that enables focus on short-term informal leadership learning. The research approach, methodology, context and process are presented and discussed in chapter three. The details of chapter three include sections on critical realism, case study research, and the processes that were undertaken for data collection, data summary, data presentation, discussion and analysis. Discourse on leaders' learning from their restructuring experience through Pawson and Tilley's (1997) context-mechanisms-outcomes framework is the focus of chapter four. In the chapter, the context of leaders' learning, the learning outcomes as well as the mechanisms that underpinned the learning following critical realist analysis through the processes of abduction and retroduction are presented and discussed. A typology and a process model for short-term informal leadership learning (STILL) are suggested in chapter five while suggestions for future research as well as implications of the research for theory and practice and researcher's personal learning are presented in the last chapter, chapter six.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.0   Chapter Introduction

This research explores how leaders learn informally in the short-term from the experience of activities they lead.

Research participants in this study are leaders who led restructuring in their respective organizations. While learning was not explicitly intended by both the leaders and their organization as an outcome of the restructuring, this research was undertaken to explore the process of the informal learning that occurred within the short timeframes that leaders were working under. This was done retrospectively. With this in mind, this literature review chapter will uncover perspectives in the literature around formal and informal learning as well as a description of the various ways that learning from experience occurs including the role of time-pressure as a factor in leaders' learning.

In the first section, a novel *Leadership Learning Matrix* is introduced as a taxonomy for leadership learning that enables focus on short-term informal leadership which is the identified gap in scholarship that this research is intending to fill. Following from the *Leadership Learning Matrix*, the two major views on leadership learning literature, formal and informal leadership learning, are reviewed. The intent for reviewing the leadership learning literature is to explain what is meant by leadership learning as understanding this is central to this research. The next section delves into the various ways that learning from experience manifest. This is important for two key reasons. First, learning from experience has multiple modalities the understanding of which increases the specificity with which learning from experience can be understood. Second, these foundational modalities

enable enhanced explanation of learning following the context-mechanism-outcomes framework, post facto, as they constitute the potential building blocks for an inferential causal mechanism theory-building. The next section introduces the time element to leadership leaning by reviewing informal leadership learning both in the long and short-terms. This is important because it is in relation to short-term learning that there is a gap in the literature that this research is intending to fill. And the final section focuses on informal leadership learning *in the short-term* bearing in mind the time-pressures arising from fast-paced organizational changes.

The immediate section below begins the literature review by looking at the two major perspectives in leadership learning.

2.1   The Leadership Learning Matrix and the Gap in the Literature

When commencing a review of the literature on leadership learning, it appeared that there are two major perspectives in leadership learning, namely, *formal* and *informal* leadership learning. However, on progressing and going deeper into the literature, it became apparent that these two major perspectives needed to be expanded to four by including one key additional dimension: *time*. Temporality or "tensed time" (Dawson, 2014, p.286) refers "to the way periods of time (for example, the ongoing present) connect and relate to other periods in a backward (past) and forward (future) direction" (Dawson, 2014, p.286). Time is therefore conceived of as being discrete chunks within a "temporal flow and movement…informed by memories of the past and anticipations of a future yet-to-come" (Dawson, 2014, p.286). This discretization of time ushers in

"temporal differences, i.e. differences in the rhythm and rate of change, as well as differences in the experience and impact of change (Dawson 2014 as cited by Arvidson, 2018, p. 900). Placed in this change *process* and *outcome* milieu which is what organizational restructuring essentially is, temporal flow becomes a defining characteristic regarding the speed/rate that change occurs (By, 2005). It has been argued that learning itself is a process of change (Huckzynski and Buchanan, 2010). Leadership learning is a plausible process and outcome of restructuring change. Factoring in time in the change-learning continuum therefore enables "some element of movement (temporality) in progressing from point T1 to point T2" (Dawson, 104, p.293). While change has been viewed from the polarities of episodic discontinuity and ceaseless continuity, the introduction of discretized time can enable "the notion of momentary acceleration that can result in 'bumpy incremental change' and 'bumpy continuous change' (By, 2005, p. 372; Grundy, 1993). The introduction of the element of time thus allows for circumscribing leaders' learning according to the time-period that the learning occurs as well as understanding how the leaders' learning process may be different based on time-pressure that is inherent to the time-period and by extension to the speed of change. It will be argued in subsequent chapters that time introduces an element of time-pressure that impacts the process of leaders' learning based on having to process change and learn within a brief period of time. In the literature, the criticality of time to learning has been emphasized by scholars such as Ludvigsen, Lund, Rasmussen and Saljo (2011) and Ludvigsen, Rasmussen, Krange, Moen and Middleton (2011). Thus, the rationale for adding the element of time is that while the role of time and temporality in learning has

been discussed broadly and in general terms (Bennett and Burke, 2018; Roth et al., 2008), it has not been thoroughly explored in terms of its relation to the *formal* and *informal* learning perspectives, with the main argument being that how leaders learn informally in the short-term, short-term being understood as discrete time-period characterized by momentary acceleration, hold potential to add to possible ways leaders can learn informally and within a brief time-period as they negotiate change processes such as those pertaining to restructuring change. Therefore, by adding the dimension of time to the two major perspectives, it is being argued that there are four dimensions of leadership learning arising from two major lenses. The first lens is that of *process*, that is, how leadership learning can occur. It is being suggested that it can occur *formally* or *informally*. The second lens is that of *time*, in the sense that it can occur over *short* or *long-* term. The two lenses of *process* and *time* thus create a four-dimensional matrix for leadership learning as follows: Long-Term *Formal* Leadership Learning, Long-Term *Informa*l Leadership Learning, *Short*-Term *Formal* Leadership Learning, and *Short-Term Informal leadership Learning* (STILL). Of these four dimensions, varying degrees of attention has been given to three, Long-Term Formal, Long-Term Informal and Short-Term Formal. *Short-Term Informal (STILL)* has received less attention, hence our focus on it in this research. This focus on STILL takes two forms. Firstly, the nature and characteristics of STILL is explored based on the little that is known from the literature. Secondly, going from what has been addressed in the literature, what is not known is explored with a view to further understanding its nature and processes in some

depth. This is intended to lead to the identification of the gap in the literature regarding

STILL. The *Leadership Learning Matrix* is shown in Figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1: Leadership Learning Matrix

PROCESS	**Formal**	Programmatic-Planned e.g. classroom training programs – well covered by the literature	Facilitated-Supportive e.g. coaching and mentoring – reasonably well covered by the literature
	Informal	Autonomous-Emancipatory e.g. situated curriculum & situated practice – core focus of this research	Naturalistic –Processual Naturalistic – some coverage in the literature but not the concern of this research
		Short-term	Long-term

TIME

To enable a robust and more complete exploration of the gap regarding STILL, the

literature on long-term formal, short-term formal, and long-term informal will be explored

with the aim of extracting elements within these three that are relevant to the enhanced

understanding of STILL being the focal area for this research's theoretical contribution. Because the interest of this research is not on the formal side of learning though understanding its relationship to informal learning is relevant, the two formal dimensions of the leadership learning matrix, namely, *Long-Term Formal* and *Short-Term Formal* will be discussed briefly without separation as "Learning Formally". However, informal leadership learning will be discoursed in depth as this helps delineate salient aspects that inform Short-Term Informal Leadership Learning (STILL), which is the research focus.

2.2   Leadership Learning – Two Major Perspectives

This research is focused on understanding how leaders learn *in the short-term* from activities they lead. This way of viewing leadership learning from what leaders do has been termed learning from experience (Burgoyne, 1995; Day, 2000). The second view of leadership learning focuses on teaching leaders about leadership or leaders engaging in formal leadership education themselves. While learning from experience is a subset of informal learning, formal learning refers to leaders engaging in planned and structured learning activities. The interest of this research is on learning from experience; this will become clear as we proceed with the literature review. But as learning formally is the other dominant perspective in leadership learning, understanding it and its relationships and difference with informal leadership learning completes the broad scholarly map of leadership learning while allowing the case to be made that not only do leaders learn mostly from their experience, how they do so in the short-term is key to unlocking learning especially in the typical hot action situations (Eraut, 1985; Beckett, 1996) that healthcare

leaders operate in, especially while restructuring (Edwards et al., 1999; Choi et a., 2011). Hot action (Eraut, 1985) references situations where the "pressure for action is immediate" (Eraut, 1985, p.128) and limited time and expectations mean that action must be taken based on brief assessment, reassessment and adaptation, essentially figuring out how to go on or learn-as-one-goes (Hager, 1998).

The section below explores these two perspectives in some detail, starting with formal leadership learning.

2.2.1   Learning Formally

Formal learning has been described as learning that is planned, organized, and structured (Choi and Jacobs, 2011), typically taking place in learning environments such as academic institutions (Donitsa-Schmidt and Zuzovsky, 2018) or "institutions of formal education" (Fox, 1997, p.729) and with the expectation of an observable outcome of learning such as a certificate (Vicere & Fulmer, 1998; Galanis et al. 2016). In general, formal learning references organized, planned and "intentionally constructed learning activities" (Garavan et al., 2002, p.61). Formal learning takes the pedagogical approach of *teaching* - "Learning from training is almost always formal, and mainly based on class-room based activities" (CIPD, 2007) and are typically "delivered by business schools, consultancies and corporate universities" (James and Denyer, 2009, p. 364). Applied to leaders, and for the purposes of this research, mostly defined as vertical leaders (Tafvelin et al., 2018, p.1) or leadership as organisational positions or roles (Hartley and Bennington, 2010; Hartley and Hinksman, 2003), formal leadership learning takes the

forms of training (in-house, external, or school-based), formal education such as enrolment into an academic program, and formal development activities such as job assignments, mentoring, coaching, and feedback (Day, 2001; Douglas and McCauley, 1999; McCauley and Douglas, 2004; Guthrie and King, 2003; Young & Dixon, 1996; Brotman, Liberi, & Wasylyshyn, 1998; Ohlott, 2003). The forms these formal leadership learning take include seminars and workshops (Cunningham and Hillier, 2013), leadership development programs (Day et al., 2014; Day, 2000), executive education (McAlearney and Sinioris, 2010; Boyatzis, Stubbs and Taylor, 2002), including cohort-based executive education (Thompson, 2016) and corporate universities (Sinclair, 2009).

One key feature of formal leadership learning is the role it plays for those already in leadership roles and those aspiring to leadership. For those already in leadership roles, especially at the beginning, formal leadership learning introduces them to topics and subjects within leadership. This becomes more important for leaders whose background and disciplinary focus, pre their leadership roles, typically do not include these topics. These leaders typically become leaders through the recognition of their technical excellence. An example relevant for us will be a surgeon who is appointed or selected as a medical leader, a defined leader position. While individual leaders' knowledge can be improved through exposure to the topic of leadership (Conger, 1992), organizations typically encourage and sponsor formal leadership learning for their own ultimate benefit (Becker and Bish, 2017; Marsick, Volpe, and Watkins, 1999). This partly explains why within organizations most training dollars go to leadership training (Ho, 2016; O'Leonard, 2014). In this sense, leadership training is dominant over other forms of organizational

learning as about $24 Billion USD is spent on it annually, worldwide (Ashkenas and Hausmann, 2016). For those aspiring to leadership roles, formal leadership learning can facilitate their access to leadership roles through recognition of their acquired formal education such as university degrees by the organizations or promotion into higher positions *because of* their formal learning. These aspiring leaders are usually trained in the *present* for succession planning purposes with the hope that they can or will apply their leadership learning in the future. Formal leadership development for succession planning purposes has an in-built flight risk (that is, leaders who are being trained today for succession planning purposes leaving their organization before they can apply their leadership learning). With the amounts of money being spent on formal leadership learning, leadership flight risk becomes a serious issue especially when seen from the capitalist view of seeking return on investments and assets. From this view, organizations will be perceived as losing their leadership assets if those they train eventually leave before the fruits of their training can benefit the organization. Beyond flight risk, a more serious concern is the potential obsolescence of formal leadership learning content and process as well as the possible 'doom' of repeating the learning activities over time to avoid or to mitigate the effect of 'changing times' (an illustrative example would be that a 25/35-year old high potential leadership trainee may not get into leadership proper for another 5 – 10 years). In this respect, Conger and Benjamin (1999) have observed that "many organizations teach and develop leadership skills that may be outdated by the time younger generations reach the senior ranks" (p. xvi). And this is not an easy problem to

mitigate as forecasting leadership's "tomorrow's attributes" (Conger and Benjamin, 1999 p. xvi) today is nearly impossible.

While formal leadership learning is prominent and embraced in practice as seen above by the amount of money spent on it, one key challenge has been how effective formal learning is and has been in generating leadership especially when compared to informal learning. On a practical and utility level, organizational leaders are raising this effectiveness question. An example came from the 2014 Human Capital Trends Survey of 2,532 business and HR leaders in 94 countries around the world. In the survey, only a small minority of business and HR leaders believed that their formal leadership learning programs are effective (Schwartz, Bersin, & Pelster, 2014) despite the huge amounts of money spent on it. From a research perspective, the Center for Creative Leadership, a well-regarded institution for leadership development for over 40 years, has proposed a model which argues that to be effective in the leadership learning space, formal leadership courses and training should only occupy 10 percent of the leadership learning space as their research has shown that challenging assignments and developmental relationships together should occupy 90 percent (Center for Creative Leadership, McCall et al., 1988; Lindsey et al., 1987). This minimal percentage seems to support the view that formal leadership learning does not contribute significantly as a factor that enables leaders to learn. Furthermore, from a *learning process* perspective, formal leadership has also been criticized for preserving the concept of leadership *education* with its high and sometimes exclusive emphasis on *formal education* and *educational institutions* and their offerings. For example, leaders "with different skills and experience levels are brought

together and given a standardized curriculum, where only minor concerns of individual development needs are addressed" (Andersson and Tengblad, 2016, p.30). This contrasts with the concept of leadership *learning* which is "weighted to the study of management-as-action-in-context … [and which emphasizes] the nature of learning as a complex set of relations among context, text, decontextualized, and recontextualized knowledge" (p. 743). Further, formal curriculum suggests a decontextualized set of knowledge that is pre-selected and that makes assumptions about what would be useful and/or applicable. Formal learning's curriculum is contrasted with informal learning's concept of situated curriculum which focuses on a leader's participation in practice or a community's activities as a path that enables their learning (Kempster and Stewart, 2010). This differentiation between situated curriculum and formal curriculum is pertinent to the understanding of how leadership learning occurs in the short-term. Formal leadership learning is thus perceived as decontextualizing learning - "Learners are separated from their day-to-day work to participate in lectures, discussions, and other instructional activities that are planned and structured"(Choi and Jacobs, p.241) - and problematizing the learning process as a process of acquisition in formal education contexts (Fox, 1997). This point has been argued forcefully by Baldwin and Danielson, (1998):

> "Truly worthwhile management development will not occur in the abstract, away from the challenges of managing the company, because those challenges provide the essential grist for change. Even the more experiential forms of classroom training, such as case studies or role playing, are unlikely by themselves to provide the level of reality needed for substantial development. In such hypothetical

activities, managers are not compelled to experience the frustration of failing at something they truly care about, the deep concern that others will suffer for their mistakes, the satisfaction of completion, or the overwhelming complexity of the decisions they must make." Baldwin and Danielson, (1998, p.3).

As summed up by Hackman & Wageman (2007), the key thrust of leadership development is that it is not about "what should be taught in leadership courses, *but how leaders can be helped to learn?*" (p. 46, my italics). To drive this point home , Cross (2007) has likened formal learning to riding a bus, as the route is preplanned and the same for everyone while informal learning is more like riding a bike in that the individual determines the route, pace, etc. (Cross, 2007; Berg and Chyung, 2008). Formal leadership learning "often claims to take participants from "A to B" as if all participants began at the same starting point and ended at the same (predictable) finish (Andersson 2012 quoted in Andersson and Tengblad, 2012, p.1). What one can take from the description of formal leadership learning is that by itself, it is marginal in fostering leadership. This is despite the fact that it is very visible through "training and development programmes" (Foster, Angus and Rahinel, 2008, p.507) and attracts a lot of money. Formal leadership has been criticized as being too cognitive and not substantially embedded or situated in the context of real leadership action. With this said, it needs to be acknowledged that formal learning has contributed to the visibility of learning – all learning – in organizations. As an illustration, the fact that huge amounts of money is spent on formal leadership learning means that learning will be an item within an organization's budget. And will feature alongside other budget lines such as marketing, equipment, payroll, and others. As

budgets are typically discussed and eventually approved at the highest organizational level, this means that though it is formal learning that typically makes up most if not all of all the learning/training budget, this discussion enables organizations to spend some time talking about learning. And the point being made here is that this is good for all learning, from a visibility point of view. In other words, short-term informal leadership learning could be impacted in a good way by this as formal learning has made it easier for organizations to listen to conversations about learning. By extension, this may further impact short-term learning as organizations may include learning as part of the expectations of leaders when they are engaged with leadership activities such as restructuring. Currently, *performance* expectations dominates this sphere almost exclusively. With formal leadership explained above, the next section will describe informal learning and learning from experience which is the focus of this research. As we shall see below, the consensus in the literature is that most leadership learning happens informally and through experience.

2.2.2   Informal Learning

The pre-eminent scholar of informal learning, Marsick and her collaborator, Volpe, has described informal learning as one that is "predominantly unstructured, experiential, and noninstitutional" (Marsick and Volpe, 1999, p. 4), with the learning taking place through individual's daily activities (Marsick and Watkins, 1990; Marsick, Volpe and Watkins, 1999; Marsick and Watkins, 2001; Marsick et al, 2018). Specifically and importantly, informal learning "does not include participation in formal training and

development programs" (Noe et al., 2013, p.328). Marsick and Volpe (1999) further delineated informal learning as integrated with work and daily routines; triggered by internal or external jolts; not highly conscious; haphazard and influenced by chance; requires reflection and action, and is linked to learning of others (p.5).

Being integrated with work and daily activities means that the learning is embedded and possible *as* individuals "face a challenge, problem or unanticipated need" (Marsick and Volpe, 1999, p.4). In this sense the learning cannot be structured in advance as "it arises spontaneously within the context of real work" (Marsick and Volpe, 1999, p.4) and does not occur in a formal classroom setting (Bear et al., 2008; Tannenbaum, Beard, McNall, and Salas, 2010) or a dedicated learning environment (McGivney, 1999). In this understanding, "learning grows out of everyday encounters while working…in a given context" (Marsick and Watkins, 2001, p.29). What this means is that learning is informal because it does not take place separate from individuals' work engagement as formal learning does. It happens *on* and *through* work.

Marsick and Volpe (1999) argued further that informal learning is triggered or catalyzed by "jolts". The value of these jolts to learning is in their ability to "heighten awareness, heightened awareness, in turn, typically leads to reassessing the situation, which may lead to new learning to inform action" (p.6). As such, through this reassessment process informal learning enables adaptation to changing situations (Noe et al., 2013). Learning in this sense becomes a process that starts with reassessment and if successful ends up with adaptation. In this regard, Eoyang (2018) has gone further to state that "learning is adaptation" (n.d.). By being integrated in work activities and

enabling adaptation, informal learning can provide "opportunities for high fidelity practice" (Noe et al., 2013, p.327) as "the emphasis is on the experiences of the learner-as-worker" (Hager, 1998, p.525), with learning and working interweaving. Informal learning thus situates the learner, learning, the learned, and the environment in one and the same place, not geographically but in the sense of simultaneity – "learning is not something that requires time out from being engaged in productive activity; learning is the heart of productive activity" (Zuboff, 1988, p.395). And when this learning happens in hot situations as described above, there is an element of rapidness and learning quickly. In essence, learning "can occur in a relatively short time span" (Reber, 1989, p.222).

The characteristic of informal learning not being highly conscious proposed by Marsick and Volpe (1999) has an earlier and prominent support in literature (Reber, 1989). Informal learning has been posited as implicit, meaning that learners are not consciously aware of having learned or "unaware of the extent of their learning" (Hager, 1998, p.525), "often unaware of the significance, range and depth of their informal learning" (Hager, 1998, p.533). The main argument of Reber (1977; 1980; 1989), a long-time prominent scholar of implicit learning, is that informal learning-as-implicit-learning is "acquired independently of conscious efforts to learn" (p.219), and that the learning process happens "largely outside of awareness" (p.233) as "the pickup of information takes place independently of consciousness or awareness of what is picked up" (p.231). In his view, learning unconsciously is "the defining feature of implicit learning" (1989, p.231) as "the factor of consciousness changes the very nature of the [learning] process" (Reber, 1976; Reber & Allen, 1978; Reber et al., 1980) as there is no "conscious...strategies to learn"

(1989, p.219). He concluded that the best way to describe informal learning process is "implicit, unconscious cognitive processes" (Reber, 1989, p.220). Not being conscious invites the question – how then is it recognized that learning has taken place? The process of retrospective recognition (Berg and Chyung, 2008; Schugurensky, 2000) has been proposed as the process through which what is learnt informally is crystallized. Retrospective recognition argues that learners "may not be aware that they have learned something in a particular experience until [for example] they have a conversation with a person who asks questions about their learnings, eliciting retrospective recognition". (Schugurensky, 2000, p. 5). This happens through a process of prompting, which can be an internal or external prompt (Schugurensky, 2000). As we shall see in the next chapter on Methodology, this is exactly the process that was used in this research to surface the learnings by healthcare leaders.

Continuing, Marsick and Volpe (1999) posited that informal learning is haphazard and influenced by chance. This speaks to the nature of informal learning as being unplanned and unstructured. Being haphazard and influenced by chance demonstrates that informal learning lacks a pre-planned decision to learn. Learning is thus viewed as incidental or "unintended by-product from other activities" (Choi and Jacobs, 2011, p.241). Compared to formal learning, intentionality or more precisely, lack of intentionality is "an important aspect of informal learning" (Cerasoli, 2018, p.205) as it helps delineate learning that occurs "unintentionally or incidentally" (ibid) from those that do so intentionally or deliberately. It also highlights the retrospectivity in surfacing this learning, *post facto*. While others have attempted to describe this as *accidental* learning

(de Guinea, 2016), it is better described as implicit, unconscious learning that is incidental to work activities. In other words, the goal was not to learn but learning still took place, though only recognized afterwards (Marsick and Volpe, 1999).

In their last characteristic of informal learning, Marsick and Volpe (1999) indicated that it is linked to learning of others (p.5). While they emphasized that "informal learning is enhanced when people's chances of meeting new people and ideas are increased (Marsick and Volpe, 1999, p.7), pointing to the potential role that both physical and social proximity can play in informal learning, they were otherwise vague in explaining what they meant by describing informal learning as "linked to the learning of others". Clarity came through a later work by Watkins, Marsick, Wofford and Ellinger (2018) where informal learning is explained as occurring "through interactions with others to address practical challenges" (p.22). They stated further that this learning can occur, among others, through observation and conversations, highlighting through this, the social dimensions of informal learning. For example, Berg and Chyung (2008) identified "talking with colleagues" (p.239) as a key informal learning activity in the research they undertook.

While huge amounts of money are spent in formal learning as stated above, Bear et al. (2008) estimates that up to seventy-five percent of all learning in organization occurs through informal learning. This does not mean to imply that it is easy to determine that informal learning has taken place as it typically requires a process to surface the tacitly-held learning. However, the conclusion in the literature is that most workplace learning including leadership learning happens informally. In this regard, it has been estimated that about 70% of all leadership learning is informal while formal learning is less than 10%

(Robinson & Wick, 1992; Wick, 1989). Since the "role played by training and other formal programs is relatively modest in comparison" (McCall, 2010, p. 127), it has been argued that "simply spending more money on leadership programs is unlikely to be enough. To deliver a superior return on investment (ROI), leadership spending must be far more focused on and targeted at what works" (Wakefield, Abbatiello, Agarwal, Pastakia, and van Berkel, 2016, p. 32). This focuses the search for what works on informal leadership learning. Learning informally has been described as a natural way for leaders to learn (Burgoyne and Stuart, 1977; Burgoyne & Hodgson, 1983; Conger, 2004; Kempster, 2006), with *natural* used here as the learning "which occurs through the milieu of contextual experience" (Kempster and Cope, 2010, p.6). Elucidating this naturalistic learning further, Brown and Posner (2001) have opined that: "When we observe a leader at work, what we may really be observing is a learning process – and an exceedingly complex learning process at that" (p.3). What Brown and Posner (2001) have captured with this statement is the consensus in the literature that leaders learn naturally from experience (Burgoyne & Stewart, 1977; Burgoyne & Hodgson, 1983; McCauley et al., 1994; McCauley, Ohlott, and Ruderman, 1999; Ohlott, 2004; Kempster, 2006; Arvey, Rotundo, Johnson, Zhang, & McGue, 2006; Arvey, Zhang, Krueger, & Avolio, 2007; DeRue & Wellman, 2009; McCall, 2010a; DeRue and Ashford,2014; McCauley and McCall, 2014). While there are differing opinions about *what* leaders learn from experience, *how* they learn it, *when* they learn, and over what *period of time*, a majority agree as has been captured by McCall (2010) that, "To the extent that leadership is learned, it is learned through experience." (McCall, 2010b, p. 3). Weiss (1990) further highlighted the central role of experience to learning

with his description of learning as "a relatively permanent change in knowledge or skill produced by experience" (Weiss, 1990, p. 172). Similarly, Burgoyne (1995) initially explained learning naturalistically from experience as learning "that is learned through the active interpretation of experience by the learner" (p.62). He finalized his explanation thus:

> LFE [learning from experience] will be taken to refer to that active sense-making process which addresses itself to all experience, external events impinging on the person, sensations of seemingly inner awareness and offered pre-structured knowledge, without the privileging (or de-privileging) of any of these or any other categories of the learners' experience. (Burgoyne, 1995, p.63)

What can be delineated from the above is that experience is a key source for learning, and the individual learner and their experience is central to this learning. Of course, the foundational postulate here is not only that "people can learn, grow, and change and that this learning and personal growth does enhance individual effectiveness" (Van Velsor and McCauley, 2004, p.3) but also that "people can learn and grow in ways that make them more effective in the various leadership roles and processes they take on (Van Velsor and McCauley, 2004, p.3). With this said, it is important to point out that the interest of this research is not focused on all types of leadership experiences (life experience, experience from volunteerism or service, amongst others, though it is acknowledged that they may influence learning). Rather the research is more narrowly focused on on-the-job work experiences as "there is a growing belief among scholars and practitioners alike that on-the-job work experience is the most effective way to develop

individual leadership skills" (DeRue and Wellman, 2009, p. 860). This focus on the individual development through experience on the job is important because it focuses on "the expansion of an individual's capacity to function effectively in his or her present or future job and work organization" (McCauley & Hezlett, 2001, p. 314) and can enable "learning from doing assignments, projects, tasks, or jobs that require KSAOs [Knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics] needed in leadership roles" (Hezlett, 2016, p.371). In this sense, our focus on leaders' experience with restructuring aligns with an on-the-job leadership assignment that has the capacity to enable individual leaders to naturally learn from their engagement with leading restructuring. It has been postulated in the literature that learning directly from the experience of what they are engaged with is the natural way that leaders learn (Burgoyne and Stuart, 1977; Burgoyne & Hodgson, 1983; Conger, 2004; Burgoyne, 2004; Kempster, 2006). On this, West et al. (2015) have additionally indicated that, "It remains true that experience in leadership is demonstrably the most valuable factor in enabling leaders to develop their skills" (p.3). And emphasized that "Focusing on how to enhance the learning from experience should be a priority" (West et al., 2015, p.3) towards looking at alternative approaches to leadership learning (Sinclair, 2007; Ford, 2015).

Having acknowledged that leadership learning do occur through experience, some issues that needs to be borne in mind include 1) assuming that by going through an experience that leaders learnt (they may not learn); 2) that when learning does occur that leaders are always aware that they have learnt (they may not be); 3) that what leaders learnt is known to others (others may not necessarily know this); and finally, 4) that what

caused the learning is known (causation may not be easily demonstrated) (Day, 2010). In this respect, Hezlett (2010) concludes that "Much has been learned about how leaders learn from their experience, but more knowledge is needed…. Without this knowledge, practitioners' ability to help organizations develop talent by methodically assigning experiences to leaders is limited" (p.56).

What the above brings to the fore is the question of how leaders learn from their experience. Several perspectives have been offered in the literature, with nuanced overtones as all of them are still categorized as learning from experience albeit with some differences. While some have posited that learning from experience is learning from action (Paul and Whittam, 2015), others have argued it is learning from observation (Greer, Dudek-Singer, and Gautreaux, 2006), from reflection (Ligon and Hunter), and from others (Kempster, 2009.). To explore these forms of informal learning in some detail below, given that informal learning is of particular interest in this research, they will be reviewed under the following sub-headings: Learning as action, Learning as reflection, Learning as Observation, and Learning from others by *Listening to Them*, *Hearing What Others Say About Them*, *Working alongside Them*, and *Learning from Others' Experience as an Apprentice*. This detailed exploration starts below with *Learning as Action*. What one needs to bear in mind is that all of these portray different ways that learning can occur informally.

Learning as action

Baker (2011) argued that "leadership is a verb" and "an action" that is *performed* within a leader's "sphere of influence" (p.19). While this notion of leadership as action may be contested (Vince, 2012; Illeris, 2007; Bowers, 2005; Collin, 2004) and some have suggested splitting it into cognitive action (Chenhall & Chermack, 2010) and behavioural action (Gherardi, 2001), it springs from an ontology of leadership that views the phenomenon of leadership as essentially and above all, about "what one does" (Yeo and Marqaurdt, 2015, p.99), in the sense that leaders *do* and leaders *act*. While it is acknowledged that action may take place without learning occurring such as in the formal learning context in a classroom, *learning as action*, as a way learning occurs informally, does highlight the centrality of action in the interplay between action, learning, and experience (Yeo and Gold 2011). In this respect, while some may regard Revan's statement that "'there can be no learning without action and no (sober and deliberate) action without learning' (Revans 1998, p.83)" as an extreme position, there is some merit in this view in the sense that action and learning, when learning occurs as a result of action, are deeply intertwined. Its relevance to this research is that to learn naturally from experience, action is a necessary ingredient in learning leadership: it is a precursor to observation and reflection, occurs simultaneously as experimentation, and is the springboard for the extraction of insight from experience. Thus, leadership learning as *action* emphasizes *learning by doing* (Paul and Whittam, 2015; Froehlich et al, 2015; Simpson & Bourner, 2007; Schon, 1983) and enables leaders to gain "practical intelligence in real-world pursuits" (Wagner and Sternberg, 1985, p.436) and "street smarts" (Wagner and Sternberg, 1985 in Paul and Whittam, 2015, p.200). As an ongoing process, leadership

learning as action takes the hands-on approach to learning where action enables leaders to be more intuitive in their leadership (Paul and Whittam, 2015). This is especially so when it comes to decision making where intuiting is essentially an experience-situated rapid response pattern recognition (Simon, 1987). The emphasis is on *experience*, based on *acting*. In other words, arguing from its opposite, leaders who do not "act" or "do" are less able to draw on intuition. Learning from action is also related to the notion of practice and practicing – "If you do something often enough, you get better at it" (Schank, 1995, p.2). While Schank (1995) emphasizes frequency of action, the fundamental point is the act of *doing* itself in that the "best way to learn how to do a job is to simply try doing the job" (Schank, 1995, p.2). Understood this way, learning as action references a leader's direct engagement with learning in a personal, first-person, non-vicarious way. This has been illustrated by Schank's (1995) narrative below, and the full quotation is presented so that the narrative can be intact and without gaps as he emphasize this direct, non-vicarious nature of action:

> if you want to know about food - eat. Someone telling you about how something tastes, in effect, giving you a vocabulary for describing tastes, is not of great value. The experiences that build up a knowledge base cannot be obtained vicariously. One must have experiences, not hear about them. The reasons for this are simple. Hearing about them means that the teller has crystallized his own experiences, shortened them, summarized them, and in effect has taken from them the material of indexing, the stuff from which we can build our own index. One cannot index on someone else's

experience largely because that experience, as transmitted, will omit many of the details that are the fodder for indexing. (Schank, 1995, p.4)

In essence learning from action maximizes experiences – "those situations and episodes that we spontaneously refer to as being 'real experience'" (Dewey, 1934, p. 205). And, as it involves interactions with others, it is seen as leadership as practice (Juntrasook, 2014). Leaders learn from the action of practicing leadership. "Leadership and leadership learning are arguably two sides of the same coin. One generates the other through practice" (Kempster, 2009, p.439). Learning is thus situated in practice through *action* which is the behavioral manifestation (Kolb, 1984) that challenges the underlying practice assumptions (Marquardt, Leonard, Freedman, & Hill, 2009; Raelin, 2006; Zuber-Skerritt, 2002; Pedler, 1996) by subjecting them to everyday realities among which will be problems and complex social relations (Yeo and Nation, 2010). The opposite, *inaction*, has been argued as having a constraining effect on learning (Vince, 2008). As concluded by Mintzberg (2004), "People must be actively engaged in their learning, which means it should relate to their personal experience" (p.28).

Learning as reflection

Besides *learning from action*, leaders can also *learn by reflection*, with reflection understood as 'not doing', 'not watching' but *cogitating* as in "thinking, reflecting, cogitating" (Stauffer, 2013, p.37). Unlike *action*, *reflection* occurs in the mind, "within the mental self" (Daudelin, 1996, p.39) and involves stepping back and pondering the meaning of experiences (Matsuo, 2016; Ashford and DeRue, 2012; Boud, 2006; Daudelin, 1996) and

"sorting through" (Daudelin, 1996, p.39) them to achieve an understanding of the experiences. Schon (1983; 1987) explained that these experiences can be understood further through reflecting-on-action and reflecting-in-action, where reflecting-in-action informs "what we are doing while we are doing it" (Schon, 1987, p.26) and "gives rise to "on-the-spot experiment" (ibid, p.28) while reflecting-on-action refers to "thinking back on what we have done in order to discover how our knowing-in-action may have contributed to an unexpected outcome" (Schön, 1983, p. 26). He argued (Schon, 1983) that it is reflection that turns experience into learning. In this sense, reflection "privileges the process of inquiry, leading to an understanding of experiences that may have been overlooked in practice" (Raelin, 2002, p.66). But reflection is not just about understanding what happened, but also why they happened (Ashford and DeRue, 2012). As such reflection has been described as having the capability to assess cause and effect of actions (Woerkom, 2003). From this perspective, reflection refers to "those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understanding and appreciations" (Boud et al., 1985, p.19). A parsing of Boud et al.'s description of reflection reveals three key elements about reflecting, namely, *returning to experience for exploration*, *attending to feelings*, and *re-evaluating the experience* (Hoyrup, 2004). "In returning to experience the individual stands back from the immediacy of the experience – by creating a distance to it – and reviews it with the leisure of not having to act on it in time, recalling what has taken place" (Holyrup, 2004, p.446). Attending to experience creates "a split between thinking and action" (p.446). In its own case, attending to feelings "calls attention to the emotional aspects of reflection"

(p.446) while "Re-evaluation involves re-examining experience in the light of the learner's intent, associating new knowledge with that which is already possessed, and integrating this new knowledge into the learner's conceptual framework. (Boud et al., 1985, p.27).

These three elements are achieved through the vehicle of questioning such as asking oneself - what happened? Why did it happen? How is this experience compared to others? What should be done now? (Daudelin, 1996). Questioning allows learning to emerge from reflecting on experience by distilling the experience and seeking insights, sometime through counterfactual "what if" questions (Ashford and DeRue, 2012). This enhances the clarification of the meaning of experiences thereby providing "a meaningful way for leaders to gain genuine understanding….Without reflection leaders may be convinced by past successes…and fail to consider other viewpoints" (Densten and Gray, 2001, p.119). Reflection thus extends the learning spheres for leadership by alternating between *action* and *reflection*, and seeking a balance between the two. This is the middle position that Revans (1982) has championed through his concept of action learning which requires conceptual and practical balance between *learning as action* and *learning from reflection*, explained as 'you do', then 'you reflect on the action', then the outcome of the reflection is put to use in future 'doing'. In a parlance, action learning has married 'doing' with 'cogitating'. As Ligon and Hunter (2010) points out, "experiences, in and of themselves, do not promote effective leadership as much as the meaning that individuals infer from such events; meaning that more directly shapes leaders' active analysis and future use of such prior experiences." (p.28). The reflective process enables this process of extracting meaning from experience. Having said this, *learning as reflection* is not

without its difficulties. Firstly, leaders do not have time for reflection as action is privileged above reflection (Ashford & DeRue, 2012; Daudelin, 1996) – "Study after study has shown that managers work at an unrelenting pace, that their activities are characterized by brevity, variety, and discontinuity, and that they are strongly oriented to action and dislike reflective activities" (Mintzberg, 1976, p.50). Secondly, even when the opportunity to reflect is available leaders sometimes struggle with how to engage in reflection. This is a part of the wider issue of most leaders not being able to extract meaning from experience on their own, without some form of enablers (Ligon & Hunter, 2010) – "there is much evidence to suggest that most leaders do not naturally extract meaning from those experiences on their own" (Ligon & Hunter, 2010, p.29). This has given rise to structured or guided reflection as one way to enable managers explicate lessons from experience (Shamir & Eliam, 2005; Ligon & Hunter, 2010). Thirdly, despite Schon's reflection-*in*-action proposition, reflection mostly happens after the fact, essentially, reflection-*on*-action. Since this is mostly after the experience and depending on the timing of the reflection, problems with memory and recall may crop up: leaders need to remember the experience well in order to reflect meaningfully on them. Still, learning through reflection, even when done retrospectively, is a key way that leaders learn informally.

Learning as Observation

While learning from *action* emphasizes *doing* and learning from *reflection* emphasizes *cogitating*, learning as *observation* is focused on learning by *watching* (Destre et al., 2008) or *seeing*. From the perspective of psychological scholarship, learning as

observation is considered "behaviour change that occurs through observation (Greer, Dudek-Singer, and Gautreaux, 2006, p.488) and the learning process behind it is central to the psychological analysis of behavior change (Fryling, Johnston and Hayes, 2011). The longstanding seminal works by Bandura (1962; 1963; 1965; 1986) and his collaborators (Bandura and Huston, 1961; Bandura, Ross, D., and Ross, S., 1961; Bandura, and McDonald, 1963; Bandura, Ross, D., and Ross, S., 1963); Bandura, Grusec, and Menlove, 1966; Bandura and Jeffrey, 1973) have solidified the understanding that learning does occur through observing others' behaviours and actions. The legacy of the works of Bandura and other social psychologists introduced the lexicon that circumscribe learning by observation today. These include the constructs of modeling (Bandura, 1986; Deguch, Fujita, and Sato, 1988; Stefanone, Lackaff, and Rosen, 2010), copying (Heyes, 2001), and imitation (Baer, Peterson, and Sherman, 1967; Tsouri and Greer, 2003; Ross and Greer, 2003). What these constructs have in common, and which differentiates *learning by observation* from *learning as action,* is the fact that here learning is done vicariously (Gibson, 2004) through observing *other's actions* and not directly through one's *own* experience. In this sense observational learning is based on the *experience of others* as the fundament, trigger, and outcome for one's own learning. This, for example, has had a long resonance in sports where learning by watching has been a key process for athletes to learn, *by watching other people perform*. Initially, learning by observation in sports was thought to only affect skills acquisition (Hancock, Rymal and Ste-Marie, 2011) and more narrowly, the acquisition of motor skills (Clark & Ste-Marie, 2007; Calvo-Merino et al., (2006). However further research demonstrated that athletes used observational learning

for not just skills but also for strategy and performance (Law & Hall, 2009a, 2009b; Wesch, Law, & Hall, 2007; Cumming et al., 2005). While the "skill function highlighted how athletes acquire the execution pattern of motor skills through observation (e.g., learning how to execute a free-throw in basketball), the strategy and performance functions respectively "referred to how athletes observe and learn to develop game strategies and motor routines (e.g., gaining an understanding of breakout plays in ice hockey)" and "how athletes learn to reach optimal arousal and mental states through observation (e.g., learning to focus one's attention in the batter's box in baseball)" (Hancock, Rymal and Ste-Marie, 2011, p.236). What this suggests additionally is that by observing the triad of *skills*, *strategy* and *performance* athletes learn from a repertoire that extends broadly to "what does and does not work" (Hodges and Franks, 2010, p. 800) which means that learners "recognize and learn from both positive and negative aspects" (Gibson, 2004, p.145). This is saying in other words that in observational learning one can observe what one does *not* put to action – "vicarious learning enables people to acquire complex sequences of behavior without executing the behavior" (Bledow et al. 2017, p.40). As such, learning by observation also yields *learning what not to do* through what was observed but rejected (Gibson, 2004; Merton, 1968) – that is, learners "actively form counter-norms that are intentionally different from the negative referent" (Gibson, 2004, p.146). And this is the crux of observational learning as the learner vicariously learns different things from what is observed. A good example would be observing a maneuver that led to an accident or injury. Here the learner's *strategy* and *performance* may lead away from what has been observed, that is, leading to learning that will not likely result in an accident. With this

said, it needs to be clarified that in observational learning, one learns from the *observed*

actions or behaviours and not necessarily from *other people*; the focus is on the "salience

and relevance" (Bledow, 2017, p.201) of observed actions or behaviours and "not

persons" (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p.655) per se. Learning from people will be addressed

separately in a section below as *learning from others* which is a different stream of

informal learning. This also highlights that the focus of the observation is in *what* one is

observing and not just from the media of the observation. In this regard, the classical

observing from a learner's immediate "social life" (Bandura, 1986, p.55) has been

differentiated from the mediated observation that could be technology-enabled, in

Bandura's expression, the "symbolic environment of mass media (Bandura, 2001, pp.

271)". Research evidence supports that observing others' behaviours on video, for

example, also enhances learning by observation (Charlop, et al., 2010; Charlop-Christy, Le,

& Freeman, 2000; Craig, Chi, & VanLehn, 2009; Geiger et al., 2010; Keen, Brannigan, &

Cuskelly, 2007; LeBlanc, 2010; Nikopoulos & Keenan, 2003; Sherer et al., 2001). This

differentiation becomes important and contested when observational learning is explored

in the context of leadership learning as leadership is seen as a proximate and social

process and informal leadership learning focuses on learning from one's own experience.

Therefore, learning vicariously through other people's experience as well as through

mediated enablers seem to suggest that learning through observation is possible from a

distance. From a leadership learning perspective, while there is a general support that

leaders can and do learn by observation (Kempster 2006; Kempster, 2009; Kempster &

Cope, 2010; Kempster and Parry, 2014; McCall, 1988), the dominant (and sometimes sole) emphasis has been on observing *other leaders* instead of observing *actions and events*.

Learning from others

While learning by *observation* is by *watching*, *learning from others* is understood as 'not cogitating', 'may be watching', 'may be action in terms of "mimicry", and "apprenticeship" (Kempster, 2006). Learning from *others*, as contrasted from learning as *action* or *observation*, focuses on *persons* as sources of learning. *Others* in this regard refers to other people, separate from oneself, and implies people who are close by (including virtually), accessible, knowledgeable, experienced, helpful or with whom one has a relationship. These *others* have been described as other leaders (Kempster and Cope, 2010) extra ordinary leaders who have overcome adversity (Thomas and Bennis, 2002), notable and significant others (Kempster, 2006; Kempster and Parry, 2009), successful people (as opposed to those who failed), and non-leaders (Amit et al., 2009). Learning from *others* could be by observing them as already discussed above, listening to them (Bledow, p.39) including from their stories (Sinclair, 2009), hearing from others about them or knowledge by hearsay (McDowell, 1994; 1998), working alongside them or learning from others' experience as an apprentice (Kempster, 2006).

Learning from Others by Listening to Them:

Learning *from others by listening* to them emphasizes the sense-making that leaders engage in as part of *hearing* what others are saying. This has expressed itself most vividly through the vehicle of leadership stories – "A general thesis in … literature is that

we store our life experiences, values and beliefs in the form of stories, not in detached lists of facts and figures" (Quong et al., 1999, p.442). While many have focused on the *telling* of the stories (Vaara and Tienari, 2011; Flory and Iglesias, 2010; Brown et al., 2009; Boje and Rhodes, 2006; Boje, 2006) which speaks to leadership enactment or "storytelling leadership" (Auvinen, Aaltio and Blomqvist, 2013) from a leadership learning perspective and can be an indicator that learning has occurred, the *hearing* and *listening* also underscore the learning. For example, leaders can learn communication skills by listening to other leaders (Fleming, 2001).

While listening can yield a lot of information regarding context, intuition and influence, learning from *others* through *listening* has the capacity to and may descend to *seduction* and *surrender* with their susceptibilities to hero worship, improperly masculinized leadership, and power imbalance in relations (Sinclair, 2009). In other words, *Learning from others through listening* can become "captivating and so powerful (supported as it is by an unspoken gendered regime) that followers who harbor reservations about it censor themselves and outlying dissenters are marginalized in the adoring glow" (Sinclair, 2009, p.277). In this regard, Quong et al. (1999), through their CII framework have opined that what is heard should be challenged because not everything that is heard is "necessarily correct" (p.448), with *challenging* being understood in this respect as not just accepting or applauding but critically probing and questioning.

Learning from Others by Hearing What Others Say About Them:

In addition to *learning from others by listening to them*, another way leaders can learn from others is by *hearing what others say about them*. Learning by *what others say* relies on hearsay or knowledge by hearsay (McDowell, 1994; 1998) and testimony or reported knowledge (Martini, 2017). This has been described as "acquiring knowledge by way of understanding what one is told" (McDowell, 1994, p.195). What *learning from others through what others say about them* underlines is that knowledge can be gained through the testimony of others (Fricker, 2006; Coady, 1992; Hardwig, 1991; Craig, 1990; Welbourne, 1986). Though this aspect of learning has been historically neglected, "Testimony is responsible, either directly or indirectly, for much of what we know, not only about the world around us but also about who we are" (Lackey, 2011. p.316). One characteristic of *learning from others through what others say about them* is the degree of distance and vicariousness between the learner, the source of learning and what is learnt. In terms of distance, the learner does not have direct access to the person from whom the learning is supposed to come from. Not directly and not virtually. It is "mediated not immediate" (McDowell, 1994, p.196). In terms of vicariousness, the learning is not based on the experience of the learner nor on the experience of the person who is sharing the experience which he or she didn't have himself or herself. It is not in the *experience* itself but in a chain of indirect transmission and communication (Coady, 1992) of another's experience as *told by someone else*. As well, the source of learning is not in the first person and is also neither the second. Rather it is "information gleaned from third parties" (Martini, 2017, p. 4083), given by the speaker to another person (Bakhurst 2013; McDowell 1998; Fricker 1996; Kadish and Davis 1989), "when one person

tells something to another, thereby intending and hoping to share her knowledge with her audience" (Fricker, 2006, p.552). What we can take from the above, especially in the turbulent time of restructuring, is that leaders may learn from what *others tell them about other people*, including other leaders. While susceptible to other issues such as veracity or "truthful communication" (Jobs, 2014, p.4), political agenda, and biased perception, learning from what one hears about others can enable leaders to understand and make sense of situations especially "in the absence of official information" (Jobs, 2014, p.4) when the "informational black market" (Kapferer, 1990, p.9) becomes helpful and productive as "a means of self-empowerment (Jobs, 2014, p.7) for learning purposes.

Learning from Others by Working alongside Them:

In addition to learning from others through *listening to them* and *hearing from others about them*, leaders can learn from others by *working alongside* them. This is the learning that happens through geographical proximity. While Boschma (2005) has presented four other forms of proximity in addition to geography, namely cognitive, organizational, social and institutional, it is argued here that geographic proximity, understood as "spatial or physical distance" (Boschma, 2005, p.59) is salient for learning: "Short distances literally bring people together, favour information contacts and facilitate the exchange of tacit knowledge. The larger the distance between agents, the less the intensity of these positive externalities, and the more difficult it becomes to transfer tacit" [knowledge] (Boschma, 2005, p.69). *Learning by working alongside others* through "Spatial co-location increases the likelihood of accidental encounters and reduces

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communication costs" (Hansen, 2015 p.1675) thereby increasing the likelihood of trustful relations and possibility of observation (Gossling, 2004; Morgan, 2004; Storper and Venables, 2004). When Polanyi (1966), the guru of tacit knowledge made his famous statement, "we can know more than we can tell" (p. 4), he was drawing attention to knowledge that is tacitly available and that can be tapped into. When working alongside others, this happens through osmosis of being physically close to the source of learning, which is a *combination* of learning from the observed, the unspoken, the unshared, body language and other miscellaneous cues from the proximate environment. Unlike *learning by listening* or *through what others say* which are susceptible to "communication difficulties and the inadequacies of language in expressing certain forms of knowledge and explanation" (Gertler, 2003, p.77), *learning by working alongside others* is the fulsome "informal take-up" (Howells, 2000, p.53) of learning that spans the continuum of observation, reflection, action, hearing, and testimony. It is learning that is situated in the environment where the learner and the source of learning are co-located.

Learning from Others' Experience as an Apprentice:

Whereas *learning from working alongside others* is focused on learning from anybody, *learning from others' experience as an apprentice*, another way leaders can learn from others, specifically highlights the source of learning as someone with greater experience than the learner. It involves situated learning that occurs "over a considerable period of time" (Kempster, 2006, p.19) where the learner, as the seeker of knowledge, and the more experienced individual are involved in a joint learning enterprise. A key

contribution of *learning from others through apprenticeship* is that it enables knowledge transfer including tacit knowledge and skilled know-how (Benner et al., 2010). It also tends to collapse the potential time lag and proximal distance between knowledge acquisition and knowledge use in particular situations (Eraut, 1994). Apprenticeship conjures the concepts of *master* and *the apprentice,* and learning in terms of apprenticing encourages more junior leaders to learn from more experienced leaders or notable people who influences the learning of others (Kempster, 2009; McCall et al., 1988), with others being described in this research as the sources of learning. While the literature on expertise and practice demonstrates that one can learn from masters, this way of learning is not unproblematic. First, the focus shifts away from events, activities, processes and the salient, to persons, notable people or masters, therefore, privileges other people as sources of learning and not the learner himself or herself. The learning is also vicarious to some degree. Further, it may gloss over power dynamics in the sense that notable people as indicated are mostly superiors. Organizational power and politics would suggest that enacted power and authority is hierarchical. The social learning process, therefore, may be unduly influenced by power plays and imbalance where the learner, as the lesser power holder, may be disadvantaged and may perfunctorily *go along* or *endure* the learning process instead of really participating. In this regard, the source of learning could be perceived as a threat, as a tolerable threat, minimally. It is also susceptible to the problem of others' perception of one's leadership – sometimes "followers need evidence to convince them to follow leaders" (Chen et al. 2017, p.487). Thus, this may minimize or fail to recognize the influence of psychological motivation and pre-existing personal

relationships between the apprentice and the master, especially superiors, and given that intrapersonal factors may lead the learner to tuning other people out because one does not like them, are in conflict with them, or thinks lowly of their opinions or personality (low regard for the leader), amongst others. As well, by implication, *learning from others' experience as an apprentice*, may pay insufficient attention to *non-masters or non-notable others* such as subordinates (who, though not in hierarchical leadership positions above their bosses, can exhibit salient leadership behaviours), consultants or external others who could be brought in to help leaders execute leadership functions (coaches, mentors, et cetera). Notability instead of otherness becomes the primary focus, and in its extreme, the only focus.

In summary, this section explained various ways that learning from experience can occur, namely: as action, reflection; observation, and from others. The other issue that arises from the further examination of learning informally from experience is no longer just how this informal learning takes place but over what period of time. There is the argument that leadership learning occurs over the long-term. The way to interpret this is that it takes a long time for leadership learning to occur. This happens to be a dominant view in literature and seems well understood (Heslin and Keating, 2017; Day et al., 2014; Cathcart, 2010; Hirst et al., 2004; Hill, 2003). Contrasting with this is the paucity of focus on exploring the questions of leaders learning in the short-term and how this learning occurs. This becomes especially important given that leaders do not have extensive amounts of time available to them for long time learning and pace of change is accelerating not decreasing. What is apparent from the review of the literature is that

there has not been much work done in this area previously, hence the need to investigate this as it could extend our understanding of the multiplicity of ways that leadership learning can occur by presenting new knowledge or perspectives on it. It is on this basis, therefore, that the question that this research is attempting to answer is – how does informal learning occur in the short-term? What is the nature of this short-term informal leadership learning? Attention is now turned to answering these questions next but first, leadership learning in the long-term is reviewed below in order to inform the deeper understanding of informal learning in the short-term, through contrasting and illumination of the unique attributes that characterize short-term informal leadership learning, the focus of this research. Following this study's proposal to explain leadership learning through the *leadership learning matrix* presented at the beginning of the chapter, the exploration of *leadership learning over the long-term* is undertaken first so that it is distinguished from informal leadership learning in the short-term, which will be addressed immediately after.

2.3   Informal Leadership Learning over the Long-Term

The current research focuses on the views that support that leadership, in the main, is learned and developed, and in this section explores the informal leadership learning over the long-term. That leaders develop *over time* (Riggio & Mumford, 2011) and that leadership development research is longitudinal (Day et al., 2014) are recurring and pervasive themes in the leadership literature. This *over* time and *longitudinal*

perspective have been expressed through three major approaches: *lifespan*, *career*, and *identity*.

Lifespan

In their view, "Leadership development is a longitudinal process involving possibly the entire lifespan" (Day et al., 2014, p. 79). Expanding, Brungardt (1996) opined that leadership development refers to "every form of growth or stage of development in the life cycle that promotes, encourages, and assists the expansion of knowledge and expertise required to optimize one's leadership potential and performance" (Brungardt, 1996, p. 83). The key focal phrases from these descriptions are lifespan, life cycle and stages of development. Lifespan approach, thus, starts with leadership traits (Bono and Judge, 2004; Judge et al., 2002; Lord, DeVader and Alliger, 1986), continues with "early precursors to adult leadership" (Riggio and Mumford, 2011, p.453), and progresses to "early leadership experiences" (Murphy and Johnson, 2011, p.460) and "leadership development trajectories over time" (ibid, p.455). The lifespan approach emphasizes that the development that impacts leadership traverses the human development life cycle and it is pertinent for the attention it pays to the "developmental psychology perspective" (Riggio and Mumford, 2011, p.454). The approach also prioritizes pre-adult antecedents to leadership development and emergence (Dragoni et al., 2011; Guerin et al., 2011), proposing that these start from early life, "from childhood through early adulthood" (Riggio and Mumford, 2011, p.453). In this sense, proponents of this approach are critical

of the over-emphasis on adult leadership development as could be seen in the works of

Hrivnak, Reichard, & Riggio, (2009), Murphy & Riggio, (2003), and Day (2000) as these and

similar tend to ignore "the developmental antecedents of leadership emergence during

childhood and adolescence" (Reichard et al., 2011, p.479). Salience for the lifespan

approach has been argued on the grounds that, firstly, development occurs more readily

in early ages because "behavior, personality, and skills are more malleable at a young age

than in adulthood" (Murphy and Johnson, 2011, p.460) and secondly, leader development

"is a self-reinforcing process" (ibid, p.460), with an example being self –efficacy which

tends to increase as one gains more of such experiences (Hannah, Avolio, Luthans, &

Harms, 2008). From a traits lens, the lifespan approach has explored the roles of

intelligence in leadership development (Bass and Bass, 2008) including emotional

intelligence (Goleman, 2006). From a personality and pre-cursor view, the *big five* traits

of extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness, agreeableness and

neuroticism have been highlighted as being predictive of leadership emergence (Judge et

al., 2002; Bono and Judge, 2004). Regarding early leadership experiences, it has been

argued that some leadership skills are more impactful when developed early (Avolio &

Vogelgesang, 2011; Gardner, 2011). From a development trajectory *over time* view,

research has validated that adult development processes positively correlate with more

effective trajectories of leader development though they also highlight individual

differences in development as people develop differently (Day and Sin, 2011; Day, 2011).

While the lifespan approach has been influential in highlighting the pre-adulthood

leadership development antecedents, it needs to be explained that organizations are

limited in their ability to influence the pre-adult development as this population of potential leaders are mostly not present in the workforce. Most employment jurisdictions allow mostly adults (and not minors), in the workplace. And these adults only join the workforce upon passing the stages that the lifespan approach emphasizes including the formal schooling component which in many cases is a compulsory legal requirement in several countries for individuals under the age of 18. And with the increasing enrolment into colleges and trade-apprenticeship programs, a majority of these young people do not enter the workforce before the age of 21, with many doing so around age 25, which though at the extreme end of young people's growth, is still within that youth growth phase. Therefore, despite their best wishes, even if they chose to, organizations are not in a good position to impact the pre-adult growing stages that are largely non-existent in their workforces. This leads further to the susceptibility of the lifespan approach to "speculating retrospectively about the role that traits might play in predicting later leadership" (Reichard et al., 2011, p.477), with prediction of leadership a tricky and contested phenomenon in leadership scholarship. With this said, however, organizations may benefit from pre-entry-into-work leadership development programs that seek the development of young people and young adults through school, civic, and community-based initiatives. These may influence both leadership identity, competence, and readiness amongst these young people. An additional problematic with the lifespan approach is that highlighting traits may lead to focusing on single traits – example, intelligence, to the exclusion of others - as opposed to the multiplicity of factors that undergird a phenomenon as complex as leadership. In summary, what has been learnt

about lifespan approach to informal leadership learning in the long-term that may inform the further understanding of informal learning in the short-term is that leaders may learn things earlier in life that may take on new significance later on as leaders enact their leadership through the short-term activities that surround contemporary organizational leadership. The lifespan approach also highlights "the developmental antecedents of leadership emergence" (Reichard et al., 2011, p.479). For learning in the short-term this means that there is a need to understand emergence, not just on the leadership side but also on the learning side because it is suspected that factors that undergird learning in the short-term are likely to be different from those for long-term.

Career

The careers approach to informal leadership learning is the "accumulation of work experience" that leaders garner "over the course of their careers" (Dragoni et al, 2011, p.829). This approach, unlike the lifespan view, approaches development from the view that the individuals are already in the workforce and presumed to be at the adult stage of development. With specific reference to learning, the careers approach highlight that leaders can develop leadership through *learning from practice,* from the experience they garner broadly from jobs they have held, occupational affiliations they have had, organizations and sectors they have worked in, and any hierarchical progression they may have had from lower level to higher level positions, *throughout their careers*. It is learning arising from the experience of sequentially held organizational, occupational, or professional roles (Louis, 1980). It needs to be noted that the emphasis here is not on

careers or work experience *per se*, but on the learning that springs from them as "there is more potential learning in work experience than we usually perceive" (Ramsay, 1979, p.141). In this respect, Mumford (1995) has argued that there is some inevitability to learning from career and work experience, especially given that some of this learning may be incidental and with the learner not being conscious that learning has taken place. This learning is "not artificial or isolated from the actual work situation. By definition, it is the consequence of the activity which occurs when staff carry out their normal work roles" (Cliff, 1992, p.2). It is in this sense that the 10,000 hours or 10 years of practice (Ericcson & Charness, 1994) that is proposed that moves individuals to higher level performance *in their careers*, becomes instructive. This introduces the *time from work experience* element to leaders' learning informally and implies that those at the beginning of their careers still have lots of learning and developing to do as their career progresses as they just don't have that much experience under the belt yet. For example and given that this research is embedded in the healthcare sector, "Explicit leadership roles are … unusual for early career doctors, since these roles tend to accompany progression into senior clinical positions" (Coltart et al., 2012, p.1848). However, this does not mean that leaders with many years of experience or at the apex of their careers, no longer learn or develop. It is argued that they still do, though what they learn and why may be different from that of their early careers. As Rao (2014) expressed:

> One leadership myth is that the learning curve is steepest in the early years, begins to flatten as one learns to be a good leader and levels out toward the end of one's leadership career. Good leaders, however, often report

that the learning curve is shaped the other way. In the early stages of their

careers, they learn what others already know. At the more advanced stages

they learn about what is currently unknown. That is far more challenging.

(2014, p.1)

The careers approach, therefore, prioritizes increased leadership development

and competence gained *over time*, from a "multitude of work activities" (Dragoni et al.,

2011, p.831). One advantage is that the careers approach is amenable to focusing

leadership learning to or amongst specific occupation groups or people whose actual or

intended leadership practice are similar in terms of its context and knowledge

requirements, for example, physician-leaders within the healthcare sector, who, due "to

their training and their role in patient care… have a unique understanding of medicine"

(Conbere et al., 2007. P.38) but not necessarily of leadership. The approach also

underscores incremental learning (Carroll et al., 2002) in the sense of progression in one's

knowledge and positive behavior. Caution is urged, though, as the careers approach does

not imply that learning through the approach is a linear progression from "incompetence

to competence" (Aas, 2017, p.282). In this respect "development involves an underlying

dynamic between gains and losses, which renders perfectly linear forms of development

as unlikely" (Miscenko et al., 2017, p.607). Therefore, learning or expansion (Engestrom

1987; Engestrom and Sannino, 2010) is possible at any career stage. Regarding its

connection to learning in the short-term, the careers approach illustrates that individuals

are always learning and can learn from a variety of sources such as from crucibles (Thomas

and Bennis, 2002) or mundane experiences (Shamir and Eilam, 2005), whether those are

short-lived events or longer term. From a *learning process* perspective, it highlights leader's ability to, for example, pick up skills, in an overall effort at enhancing their leadership. The speed and process of the pickup can be significant to when learning occurs. Though the careers approach tends to accumulation of experience over time, practically these experiences tend to cumulate in discrete chunks as serial episodes (Kempster and Stewart, 2010): from one job to the next, from a project to another project, from an encounter to another one, amongst others. Though part of a serial story (Czarniawska, 1997), what cumulates are typically bounded in discrete, short-term engagements. Additionally, the careers approach signposts that situatedness and context (careers are enacted within particular spheres and influences) as well as participation (though careers may bear individual signatures, they inherently manifest socially, with others that one works with) may be relevant to understanding learning in the short-term.

Identity

While *lifespan* emphasizes *stages of human development* and *careers* focuses on *work experiences*, the identity approach to leadership learning focuses on "intraindividual trajectories of leader identity over time (.i.e., leader identity change)" (Miscenko, Guenter, and Day, 2017, p.605). In this respect, *identity* is "a set of meanings applied to the self in a social role or situation defining what it means to be who one is" (Burke, 1991, p.837) while "*Identity change* involves changes in the meaning of the self: changes in what it means to be who one is as a member of a group, who one is in a role, or who one is as a person" (Burke, 2006, p.92). Applied to leaders, identity refers to the "subcomponent

of one's identity that relates to being a leader or how one thinks of oneself as a leader" (Day and Harrison, 2007, p.365). Scholars have recognized that identity plays a role in leaders' growth (Day and Dragoni, 2015; Day et al., 2009; Day & Harrison, 2007). Identity's importance in leadership learning is that it is suggested that it leads to change by motivating leaders to seek "developmental experiences and opportunities to practice relevant leadership behaviours" (Day et al., 2009 in Miscenko et al., 2017, p.607). In this sense, the leader identity approach to informal leadership development explores what motivates leaders to improve their leadership behaviours and to further enhance the skills and knowledge behind their leadership (Day et al., 2005) *over the long-term* as could be seen in Day and Sin's (2011) study on how leadership effectiveness changes over time. Some of these factors that undergird leader identity change are based on leader's self-narrative (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010) and the others on how leaders react to others' perception of them as leaders. Self-narrative is essentially a narrative or story about the self (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010). Leader identity development through self-narrative involves the processes of identity construction (Andersson, 2012), de-construction (Miscenko et al., 2017), and re-construction (Day et al., 2009; Gagnon and Collinson, 2014). While the construction phase which initiates identity formation and the reconstruction phase which modifies the identity (Yost et al. 1992) or changes the identity's strength (Gagnon and Collinson, 2014) are intuitive in terms of how the self-narrative identity processes flow, the identity de-construction stage is recognized as "an important stage in the overall leader identity change" process (Miscenko et al., 2017, p.617) as it involves "temporary disengagement from leadership roles and processes"

(ibid) and engagement with processes that include reflection on identity, with its potentialities to introduce doubt and identity conflicts. Research has shown that leaders struggle with this deconstruction or re-definition process (Nicholson and Carroll, 2013) in part because it is the stage that is constitutive of "provisional leader identities" in terms of "ongoing revisions of one's identity as a leader" (Miscenko, 2017, p.607). The process of reflecting and struggling during the deconstruction phases eventually resolves the identity conflicts and leads to a reconstructed leader identity.

The other way leaders' identity develops is through leaders' reaction to *others' perception* of them and their leadership. This way of leader identity development thus factors in the *view of others*, and is not just based on self–perception or self-narrative. One example of how this works has been presented by Luhrmann and Eberl (2007) from a followers' perspective (or those that the leader leads) which is salient in a role-based leadership discourse such as this research. Luhrmann and Eberl (2007) argued that this *interaction* of perceptions, that is, that of the leader herself and that of followers, occurs in four phases. Phase one is *identity negotiation* (when leaders draft an identity proposal in interacting with followers). Phase two is *identity balance* (when leader and follower identities are validated). Phase three is *task interaction* (when leaders and followers concentrate on the tasks and their identities remain unchanged). And the last phase is *identity conflict* (when identity balance is challenged and reconstruction is needed). While leader identity change has been presented above as being effectual in leader development, it is still a process of self-reported and self-perceived changes, whether on the part of the leader or of the other. Research shows that these can be problematic and

biased (Podsakoff, Mackenzie & Podsakoff, 2012 – see Mischenko). As well, when it comes to leadership, self-referential paradigms may be a bit simplistic and individualistic in the face of a socially complex phenomenon such as leadership (Trehan, 2007). Additionally, identity is susceptible to entrenching despite evidence – "a well-accepted finding in social-cognitive psychology is that established schemas are resistant to change even in the face of disconfirming evidence (George & Jones, 2001 in Luhrmann and Eberl, 2007, p.121). It is known in this regard that "People filter information to maintain their self views" (London, 2002, p.94)." The identity approach to informal leadership learning in the long-term emphasizes the *becoming* aspect of leadership, and highlights that informal learning in the short-term can occur through changes a leader makes to her way of being in a community. It also seems to suggest that the role time plays in short-term identity construction is likely that of quickening the pace of occurrence through mechanisms that may spur faster grasp of identity *changes*.

In summary, informal leadership learning through lifespan, career and identity approaches privileges leadership learning and development that occurs over time and longitudinally. Sometimes there is an assumption, among both scholars and leadership learning practitioners, that this is either the only way informal leadership learning occurs or the main way Scholars such as Day (2011) are unequivocal in their assumption that leadership learning is a long-term learning affair. As he opined "leader development is a dynamic and longitudinal process, which inherently involves the consideration of time. True longitudinal designs require a clear and coherent (i.e., sensible) metric for time" (p.568). While it is acknowledged that longitudinal may be interpreted as shorter periods

of time, the emphases in the literature and the use of terms similar to *over time* seems to suggest that longer periods of time are intended, not shorter. The dominance of this long-term view of informal leadership learning has created a gap in leadership learning scholarship in the sense that while how *Long-Term Informal Leadership Learning* occurs is understood in the literature, how informal leadership learning occurs in the short-term is not understood well. This is a gap that this research contributes to filling by exploring how leaders learn informally from experience, *in the short-term*. As there has not been significant focus in this area in research, attempt is made below to explore this short-term focus in the section below in order to conceptualize its nature, characteristics, and how it might occur. At this juncture, thinking back to the leadership learning matrix presented at the beginning of the chapter, it is argued that the quadrant in this matrix that needs the greatest focus to benefit both scholarship and practice is the *Short-Term Informal Leadership Learning (STILL)* which is the gap that this research is addressing.

2.4   Informal Leadership Learning in the Short-Term

Due to its practical nonexistence in the leadership learning literature describing it as such, *informal leadership learning in the short-term* will be partly described by comparing it to long-term informal leadership learning. This is explanation by differentiation and juxtaposition. The first element that seems to differentiate *short-term* leadership learning from *long i*s the element of *time*. Ordinary interpretation suggests that short-term occurs over less period of time than long-term and that time-pressure could affect how learning occurs in these circumstances of change. The second element that

describes short-term learning is the *process of learning*, that is, how short-term learning occurs. It is imagined that the process is likely to be different. These two elements are delved into in some details below.

Time and Time-Pressure

Despite the dominance of the longitudinal view in the literature regarding leadership learning occurring over the long-term, there has been a paucity in delineating what this time-period looks like. This has been recognized as a problem in longitudinal research generally (Mitchell & James, 2001) and leadership learning researchers have been urged "to give more careful attention to it" and provide "explicit framework that lays out when…developmental changes are thought to take place" (Day, 2011, p.568). While this is yet to materialize, some attempts have been made to show some indications of time. While Day and Sin (2011) think of long-term in terms of weeks (and they definitely excluded hours and days), others think of pre-adult years (Gottfried et al., 2011), adult years (Zheng and Muir, 2015), and adult lifespan (Day et al., 2009). There is no gainsaying that there is neither specificity nor consensus in these time ranges for understanding *long*-term. What, however, can be gleaned from these time propositions is that *long*-term is thought to follow the length of time that parallels the relevant trajectory of development: it references pre-adult development years for the childhood, adolescence and young adult developmental view of leadership development, human adult lifespan for the adult development view, and career-work experience years for the career and working life view.

While this is tentative, it may be deduced that *long-term* for informal leadership learning mostly seems to be understood in terms of several years or even "decades" (Day, 2011, p.568). By corollary, *short*-term may be proposed as that informal leadership learning that occurs over a number of hours, days, weeks, or months and may go on for up to a year but not for *several* years. While acknowledging that there is no further evidence to support this short-term time proposal, in the face of a dearth of such evidence, this logically proposed time gives this research a conceptual time frame for exploring informal leadership learning in the short-term. Minimally, it bounds the concept of short-term by insinuating that it is shorter than the fluid but longer time period for *long*-term. *Time* as an element of short-term informal learning thus provides a matching concept between leaders' reality and need to respond to things quickly and intelligently within a corresponding learning *period*. Learning quickly especially in "fast-changing environments" (Ashkenasy and Hausmann, 2016, p.3) such as the healthcare leadership context for example, becomes the approach to learning that makes sense for fast-paced leaders. Therefore, leadership learning needs to happen "faster…to keep up with pace of change" (Lawrence, 2013, p.8) as the immediacy of activities with short-term focus require resolution *now* rather than *later*. Some concepts presented in other paradigms that may resound with the time element of informal short-term learning include novelty (Van Velsor and McCauley, 2004); momentousness and memorability (Olivares, 2011); transitionality (Janson, 2008); turning-pointing through triggering events (Luthans and Avolio, 2003; Avolio and Gardner, 2005), and crucibles (Thomas and Bennis, 2002). All of

this signal *emergence* within a short time period – "ongoing practice through day-to-day leadership activities is where the crux of development really lies (Day et al., 2014, p.80). Temporality or tensed time as was referenced earlier in the chapter is important not just for the discrete time period (short-term) but also for the *time-pressure* element that it introduces to the dynamics of change and learning processes.

On Time-Pressure: As was seen near the beginning of the chapter (section 2.2), leaders rarely have time for learning as they are bombarded with lots of things to attend to given the reality of time famine (Perlow, 1999) which argued more than 20 years ago that "people feel there are never enough hours" (Amabile et al., 2002, p.1) to meet demands being placed on them at work, hence, time-pressure. And when organizational change processes such as restructuring is underway, time-pressure can become an important component on how a leader responds to the situation including how s/he learns, when learning occurs. Furthermore, in these situations of restructuring change, the expectations on leaders, from learning to performance, require speed (Barnett and Tichy, 2000). In other words, finding a way to learn in the short-term amidst time-pressure is pragmatically beneficial to leaders while undergoing significant organizational change as it enables them to be effective from a timeliness perspective. While *time* is understood within the construct of temporal flow, *time-pressure*, which is a component of this temporal flow especially in rapid-moving organizational change processes, references *felt* pressure arising from discreted time in specific situations such as organizational timelines for change processes. Following thus, time pressure has been defined "as either subjectively perceived … or the imposition of a deadline" (Amabile et al. 2002) and has

been identified as a challenge stressor - distinguished from hindrance stressor (Amabile et al., 2002) – that has positive effects on increased effort (Lepine, Podsakoff and Lepine, 2005; Prem et al. 2017). While time-pressure arising from timed-exams and related testing scenarios, for example, have been explored in term of its effect on task completion, quality of task et cetera, the relationship between time-pressure and *learning*, and specifically *informal learning*, by leaders while going through restructuring organizational change has not received robust exploration. This research is therefore focused on exploring time and time-pressure in the context of leaders learning informally from their restructuring experience. The specific interest is in understanding and delineating how this learning occurs given time-pressure and organizational change processes. It is believed that this exploration has the potential to uncover how leaders' informal learning process takes place while undergoing restructuring change. As *time* and *time-pressure* have been explored above, attention is now focused below on *learning process*, the combination of the two being the lens through which informal short-term leadership learning will be explained.

Learning Process

A first comment regarding the learning process behind learning informally in the short-term is not to assume that the learning has been intended. The literature indicates that short-term informal learning may happen without being intended – they "may not be intentional" (Day et al., 2014, p.80). Further, assuming that the leader is aware that they have learnt may also be erroneous. Leaders may be unaware of their learning. These imply some surfacing of informal short-term leadership learning, retrospectively. The

retrospectivity augurs well with leaders' being stretched for time. Surfacing the learning later may be in a better pragmatic alignment with the leaders' willingness to engage with and embrace a process that crystallizes their learning for them.

Continuing with the learning process, though it has not been described as such in the literature, *leadership learning in the short-term* has been presented in the literature as occurring through *crucibles* (Thomas and Bennis, 2002) and through *situated practice* (Gherardi, 2000; Gherardi, Nicolini, and Odella, 1998). While *crucibles* represent the *individual development paradigm*, *situated practice* is about the *relational paradigm* of leadership learning in the short-term. It is argued in this research that both the individual and the relational paradigms impact leaders' learning from experience in the short-term. The individual paradigm focuses on learners using their frames of references based on prior experience (Argyris, 1982) to form specific mental models that inform action (Senge, 1990) while the relational paradigm connects learners to their social context and its interactional dynamics (Yeo and Marquardt, 2015). In this sense, the two paradigms should be viewed in terms of a conjunction 'and' a mutually exclusive 'or', in the sense that they are two different and complementary ways that learning can take place in the short-term for leaders. Crucibles, representing the individual paradigm, and situated practice, representing the relational paradigm, are delved into in more details below.

Crucibles

As a term in leadership scholarship, *crucibles* is most closely associated with Thomas and Bennis (2002) as its two major proponents. According to them, crucibles are

"intense, often traumatic, always unplanned experiences" (Bennis and Thomas, 2002, p.40) that take the forms of reversal, suspension or the crucible of new territory (Thomas, 2008). It is discernible through a broad summary of their work (Bennis and Thomas, 2002a; Thomas and Bennis, 2002b; Thomas, 2008a; Thomas, 2008b; Thomas, 2009) that the sources of crucibles are in two very broad categories – *traumatic* and *inspirational*. The traumatic category takes the forms of *adversity* and *trying circumstances* while the inspirational refers to *positive but deeply challenging experiences* such as meeting great expectations (Bennis and Thomas, 2002a). Besides Bennis and Thomas (2002), other scholars have used other terms to mean essentially the same thing as Bennis and Thomas' crucibles – significant experiences (Toor and Ofori, 2006), trigger events or moments that matter (Avolio and Gibbons, 1988; Gardner et al., 2000; Luthans and Avolio, 2003) and momentous events (Olivares, 2011). From all these descriptions, crucibles is understood as a short-term event that can shape leadership learning. It has been argued that crucibles lead to "personal transformation" (Allio, 2003, p. 58) through for example, acquiring "skills required to overcome adversity and emerge stronger" (Bennis and Thomas, 2002, p.39). As Thomas (2008) explained:

> Crucibles are transformative events through which people learn powerful lessons about what it takes to be a leader: how to adapt, how to engage others, how to live (not just display) their integrity. And they learn a great deal about how they learn and how they can keep on learning" (Thomas, 2008, p. 209).

From this perspective, crucibles validate that learning is possible through short-term events – the crucible experiences or the trigger events (Gardner et al., 2005) – and that they "shape the leader" (Bennis and Thomas, 2002, p.39). In other words, crucibles are the sources that make learning possible. As proposed in the literature, crucibles can be interpreted as short-term difficulties and/or failures, "adversity" and "negative events" (Bennis and Thomas, 2002, p.39) or "short term successes" (Allio, 2003, p.59). Though positive crucibles are mentioned as a way that leaders can learn, the dominant focus has been on the potential of negative or adverse crucibles to be powerful in terms of their learning potential. How a crucible event is interpreted and what mental models and potential 'how to act in the future' that they create for the leader is the locus of the actual learning. In this sense, crucibles are events that trigger a learning process for the leader by, first "jolting" (from *jolt* as per Marsick and Volpe, 1999) her to pay attention, seek to understand what is happening or what just happened, search for the meaning of what happened through reflection and questioning, arriving at a different conclusion from the search for meaning (crucibles transform, therefore, the leader arrives at an altered state different from the pre-crucible state), and this new state becomes the new lens through which the leader now approaches events that are similar to the crucible or lessons or insights that were derived from it. The essence of crucibles, therefore, is not just to recognize, endure or experience, and survive, but to grow from them, from the perspective of forming a "new or an altered sense of identity" (Thomas and Bennis, 2002, p.45). That which creates a new or an altered identity tends to last, as it is not easily forgotten and is readily brought to bear as needed. Crucibles thus enable learning in the

present that changes how action is enacted in the future. The tucking away of lessons

learned from crucibles to be retrieved for future use is achieved through the adoption of

philosophical positions. Philosophical positions "are pragmatically justified perspectives"

(Boucher, 2014, p.2315) that are "particular orientations…justified in terms of the benefits

of adopting" them (Boucher, 2014, p.2319; Baumann 2011, p. 29) and are adopted

"because one believes that it is a sensible thing to do" (Chakravartty 2004, p. 175), given

the crucible experience they have been through and learnt from. These internally and

mentally held positions mediates the time the crucibles took place and the time-in-the-

future when action springs from what was learned during the crucible. It acts as a tucked

away mental holding tank that is released in the future when events requiring the

application of the lessons learned is triggered. However, Allio (2003) pointed out that

how, or the processes through which, crucibles transform leaders were not advanced by

Bennis and Thomas (2002). Allio (2003) did not advance one either. The gap which this

research seeks to fill is to attempt to explain the how or the learning process for short-

term informal leadership learning. Some of these may be applicable to how crucibles leads

to learning that transforms the leader. Short-term informal learning through situated

practice is discussed in some detail below.

Situated Practice

        Understanding situated practice requires looking closely at the terms *situated* and

practice. To begin to understand situatedness in terms of learning, it needs to be recalled

that one of the criticisms against formal learning is that it decontextualizes learning by

removing the learner from the real learning environment including *experience* and *context*. Positioned in an opposite direction, the concept of situatedness contextualizes learning by situating the "person-in-the world" (Lave and Wenger 1991, p. 52) and "*within* "real activity as such", that is in relation to the world" (Bourdieu, 1990, p.52). And it is the whole person that is situated (Jarvis, 1999) including not just skills and knowledge, but attitudes, values, beliefs and emotions (Bourdieu, 1990; Jarvis, 1999). On its side, *practice* refers to "a system of activities in which knowing is not separate from doing" (Gherardi, 2000, p.215) and learning is understood as both a participative and cognitive activity (Blackler, 1993), with the participative and the social dimensions emphasized (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Practice connotes *practicing* (the doing) and *practitioners* (the being and the becoming). Two dimensions of practice are relevant to the current research. One is that practice is dynamic and changes. "This means that in every practice situation, practitioners can presume on their practice for only a minimal period of time before it will change and new knowledge and skills will have to be learned" (Jarvis, 1999, 131). One way to understand Jarvis' point here is that dynamism and change is inherent to the concept of practice – "practitioners are always adapting their practice to suit changing conditions" (Jarvis, 1999, 131). The other way to interpret this is that changes are always occurring over short periods of time and practitioners need to pay attention to these practice changes, not only to understand them and their import but to learn the new ways of practicing that are emerging. Short-term learning through situated practice is therefore a way of doing and being in the world of practice, practicing, and among practitioners. The second dimension is that practice is deeply embedded in context. In this sense, context

derives "meaning or relevance through their relationship to forms of practice" (Dourish, 2004, p.26) which are enacted through situated actions (Suchmann, 1987). In this respect, "the central concern with context is with the questions, ''how and why, in the course of their interactions, do people achieve and maintain a mutual understanding of the context for their actions?''(Dourish, 2004, p.22). Practice thus "emphasizes the context-bound nature of learning (versus learning from material abstracted from context) in relationships between people. In this conception, there is an intimate connection" (Abma, 2007, p.33). In this sense *practice* as contextual interactions between people highlights the improvisational nature of human behaviour (Abowd et al., 2002) as well as the frequent negotiations that underlie social interactions (Dourish, 2004) and the historical structures that bear on them (Bourdieu, 1990), with these factors altogether giving rise to "spontaneous practice" (Jarvis, 1999, p.56). This means that *understanding* and *adapting* require learning in the short-term through the series of spontaneous interactions that undergird practice contextually. Leaders need to figure out how to learn within these short time windows of changing landscapes. Further exploration of situated practice shows it can be further understood through the concepts of situated learning (Krumsvik, 2009; Lave and Wenger, 1991), situated cognition (Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989; Merriam and Cafarella, 2006; 1999), situated action (as already mentioned above, Suchmann, 1987) and situated curriculum (Janke and Colbeck, 2008; Gherardi, Nicolini, and Odella, 1998; Kempster and Stewart, 2010). Situated learning supports that the contexts and activities in which individuals learn are fundamental to their learning (Pitsoe and Malia, 2013; Krumsvik, 2009; Greeno, Collins and Resnick, 1996; Yuan and McKelvey,

2004). It also "shifts attention from individual minds to connections among minds; and from the properties of individual persons or of their environments to the interactions between people, and between people and their environment (Yuan and McKelvey, 2004, p.68). As an expression of situated practice, situated learning highlights the presence and completeness of the totality of the factors that make learning from practice possible: the learner, the sources of learning and the environment of learning, acting in simultaneity to inform practice. Similarly, situated cognition and situation action, as expressions of situated learning, further deepen this understanding that "one cannot separate the learning process from the situation in which the learning is presented" (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999, p. 241) and that learning is an interplay between the social and the personal, *in community* (Wenger, 2000). Therefore, situated cognition and situated action subsist in communities of practice (Wenger and Snyder, 2000) as ways of learning, acting, and being. They also stress that "learning encompasses the interaction of learners and the social environments in which they function" (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999, p. 241). Advancing the understanding of situated practice further, situated curriculum (Gherardi, Nicolini, and Odella, 1998; Kempster and Stewart, 2010), contrasted with regular formal or teaching curriculum, is the "curriculum in a social context which is beyond the intended or formal curriculum" (Janke and Colbert, 2008, p.59) and contrasted with Wenger and Lave's (1991) learning curriculum, "while learning curriculum focuses on learning opportunities related to a specific occupation, the notion of situated curriculum emphasizes the fact that its content is closely related to the specific set of local material, economic, symbolic and social characteristics of the system of practices and work

activities (Gherardi et al. 1998, p. 280). Situated curriculum thus enables learning within a community through *full participation* (full understanding of the community typically by experienced members or "fully involved practitioners – Jarvis, 1999, p.52) and *progressive participation* (moving from a state of less than full understating towards more complete understanding, typically by novices). Kempster and Stewart (2010) have focused the role situated curriculum plays in leadership through the autoethnographic approach and their work has highlighted and introduced some of the practical sources of situated curriculum such as "structuring meeting agendas, ad hoc corridor discussions, tone and intimation of voice, calmness, dress attire and so forth" (p.9). While this is an important contribution to understanding the processes underlining situated practice, the exploration of the mechanisms that enable these remain unexplored and this stands as a gap in the literature. It is germane at this point to caution that the relationship between *practice* in situated practice and *community* in communities of practice could be mediated by power. In this respect, some assumptions about community such as "joint enterprise...relationship of mutuality ...shared repertoire of communal resources" (Wenger, 1998 as cited by Contu and Wilmont, 2003, p.287) are open to certain criticism. As argued by Contu and Willmont (2003), there is a "danger of assuming a consensus in communities of practice" (p.287) as this implies "coherence and consensus in its practices" and thereby "glosses over a fractured, dynamic process of formation and reproduction in which there are often schisms and precarious alignments" (p.287). Contu and Willmont (2003) opined further that "Lave and Wenger's usage of 'community' is complicit in the reproduction and legitimation of this hegemonic process" and urged

instead that situated learning should "emphasize the idea of practice rather than 'community'" (p.287) as Gherardi, 2000, Gherardi et al. (1998) and Brown and Duguid (2001) have done. In this way, to overcome this problem of hegemony in Lave and Wenger's (1991) and Wenger's (1998) notion of *community*, Contu and Willmont (2003) have argued for the adoption of Bourdieu's (1990) "concept of 'habitus' to convey an understanding of how members of 'communities' are differentiated and identified by how their perceptions, thoughts, and actions are developed and colored in distinctive ways" (p.287). In other words, situated practice does not need to have consensus as a condition of negotiating how practice unfolds. No emancipated community, in the broadest use of the term, ever does because dissent, different perspectives, and nuances are always present in such a community. With this said, it must be acknowledged that on a pragmatic basis, the term community, in *language*, tends to more readily highlight the social aspect of situated learning than *practice* and *habitus* does.

2.5   Chapter Summary

The views in the literature about leadership learning were reviewed in this chapter. As this process got underway it became clear that a supporting framework or scaffold was necessary to both organize the views in a meaningful way and to also highlight the focus of this research which is on understanding leadership learning in the short-term. To do this, *ab initio*, a Leadership Learning Matrix was proposed as a novel and intuitive taxonomy that enhances the description of and locus for leadership learning research. This was presented as an additional contribution of this research to scholarship

in terms of how to describe the different types of leadership learning so that deeper exploration can be more focused and differentiated. Through this leadership learning matrix, scholarship perspectives about formal learning and informal learning were discoursed. Formal learning was found to be both dominant and well explored in the literature. In terms of its contribution to leadership learning, formal learning helps to introduce leaders to the topic of leadership as well as playing a role in acquisition of specific knowledge and skills that can help leaders in being more effective in leadership. From an outcome perspective, it was suggested that when compared to informal learning, the real contribution that formal learning makes to the development of leadership is marginal. This is due to several factors including relying on the teaching pedagogy for a phenomenon as complex as leadership and learning being decontextualized from the real world activities that circumscribe leadership and provide rich sources for potential learning. The connection between the key shortcomings of formal learning and the interest of this research revolves around answering the questions, first, *if, despite its dominance in the literature, formal learning does not contribute a lot to leader's learning, how can we find out what has the potential to contribute more to leadership development? Second, if leaders operate in an environment that requires quick decision making and action, how can they learn from what they do, and how can they learn it quickly so that learning aligns with the pace of activities that define leaders' enactment?* Seeking answers to these questions brings to the fore some of what was learnt about informal learning. First, it was found that informal learning contributes much more to leader's learning than formal learning does. And also that informal learning occurs

through work and is not separated from leaders' daily activities. In this way informal learning tries to overcome the decontextualization of learning by recontextualizing it within a leader's practice. This is important for this research as leaders' learning will be explored through their experience of restructuring, their practice realm. In a sense learning, the learner, the learning environment and sources of learning are situated within the leaders' context and practice. It also came forth strongly in the literature that this type of learning, learning from experience either through *action*, *observation*, *reflection* or from *others*, are natural ways that leaders learn. As contrasted with formal learning, learning naturalistically opens leaders to learn in multiple ways: they can learn by watching, listening, testimony, reflection, amongst others. Through the literature it was understood that this learning tends to occur over time, through leaders' lifespan, careers or changes in their identity. But *over time* implied longer periods of time when interpreted temporally. This gave rise to the question, *can leaders' learn in a period that is shorter than the over time implications of learning in the long-term, especially as leaders' real world is defined by time-pressure and short-term focus and activities*? The thinking was that leaders may find it valuable if the pace of learning aligns with the pace of their activities. This then led to exploring the literature on short-term learning as the part of the leadership learning matrix needing the most attention. Because it is not as covered in the literature as formal learning and informal long-term are, understanding the nature and process of short-term learning became the focus of the further review of the literature. Short-term leadership learning is thus surmised to mean the learning that can occur due to time-pressure and within shorter periods of time that tends to manifest

either through crucibles or through situated practice. It was understood that there is the individual paradigm of short-term leadership learning which tends to occur through crucibles. There is also the relational paradigm that occurs through situated practice. However, how exactly these processes unfold have not been explored sufficiently in the literature. This is perceived as a gap. Therefore, in chapter five the nature and processes of short-term informal leadership learning will be explored in detail. Before getting there, the next chapter, chapter three, will address the research methodology and how the research was conducted. This will be followed by chapter four which will be the chapter that presents and discusses the research findings before proceeding to chapter five exploring the processes of informal short-term leadership learning.

Chapter Three: Research Approach, Methodology, Process and Context

3.0   Chapter Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the philosophical approach, the research method, the research process and the analytical procedures that were used in conducting the research, and how the findings will be presented. The first part of the chapter explains what critical realism is and why it was chosen as the philosophical approach in this study. It also discusses the context-mechanisms-outcomes framework and the rationale for using it for critical realist causal analysis for this research. The second part introduces the case study research and specifically discusses critical realist case study research and its contributions to current research. Thereafter, the next part of the chapter focuses on how the research was conducted and how the data was coded and analyzed. The final section then focuses on how the research findings will be presented.

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3.1   Philosophical Approach: Positioning of the Research

Research is always informed by philosophical principles and the assumptions we make about reality have philosophical positions behind them (Bhaskar, 1997). In social science research such as the current study, "assumptions are made about the nature of social reality and the way in which we can come to know this reality" (Blakie, 2010, p. 9). In Margaret Archer's (2000) view, "Every social theorist or investigator has a social ontology…because we can say nothing without making some assumptions about the nature of social reality examined" (P.464). And these assumptions are "typically implicit

and unexamined" (Ackroyd and Fleetwood, 2000, p.10). Because research process is not

always neat and tidy (Saunders, 2003), explicitly stating one's philosophical approach

contributes to enhanced clarity and enables the research audience to understand the

researcher's assumptions about the research, *ab initio*. To this end, critical realism, which

is explained and differentiated from social constructionism and positivism below is the

philosophical approach taken in this research, principally because it will help this research

to explore the "underlying causal influences on leadership learning" (Kempster, 2006, p.

18) in ways that neither social constructionism nor positivism can or does (Bhaskar, 1978;

Sayer, 1992; Alvesson, 2000; Archer, 2000, 2007; George & Bennett, 2005; Maxwell,

2004a, 2004b; Fleetwood, 2005) and it "seeks explanation as its goal" (Ackroyd and

Fleetwood, 2000, p.15): "The task of explanation in social science is to penetrate behind

the surface of experiences and perceptions and to account for what occurs in terms of an

understanding of connections at the level of structures" (Ackroyd and Fleetwood,

2000p.13). Critical realism allows this penetration of experiences through the vehicle of

causal explanations.

3.1.1   *Ontological Point of Departure*

In line with the critical realist approach, this study begins with ontology which is

the "philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality" (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and

Jackson, 2008, p.60). So, our first ontological assumption is that there is a leader, a person,

and a 'self that leads' who through her experience could become a "self that learns"

(Cunningham & Dawes, 1997, p.113). There is also the content of what is learnt by leaders,

the "continual stream of things that managers have to learn" (Vaill, 1999, p.119). And then there is the context (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Easton, 2010; Kempster and Parry, 2014; Bhaskar, 2014) for this learning. Therefore our assumptions are, following the critical realist philosophical approach that leaders, their learning, the context and outcomes of their learning, exist as real entities with causal powers, independent of our knowledge of them. Whereas ontology is at the level of existence and asks what exists, epistemology is about the knowledge of what exists. It asks how we can know what exists (Easton, 2000, p.6). While it rejects radical constructionism, critical realism accepts epistemological relativism (Maxwell, 2004, p.5; Sayer, 2000, p.16) "in the sense that while it retains a commitment to the socially constructed nature of the social world, it refuses to take the next, unwarranted step and conclude that the social world is *merely* socially constructed (Ackroyd and Fleetwood 2000, p. 12, original emphasis)". Therefore, if leaders do learn from experience, how do they learn, what causes the learning, what's the context of their learning, and what are the processes for the learning? These primer questions informed and shaped the research question: *how can short-term informal leadership learning be understood and explained through its context, causal mechanisms, and outcomes?* To explore this question and seek answers, the philosophical approach of critical realism and the Context-Mechanisms-Outcomes (CMO) framework by Pawson and Tilley (1997) are adopted in this study as explanatory tools that will guide and shape the inquiry into the nature and processes of short-term leadership learning. The rationale for approaching this through critical realism is that leadership learning is a complex phenomenon which has been dominated by non-critical and non-realist approaches that have not prioritised

causation through underlying mechanisms in explaining how leaders learn. A need exists

in leadership learning scholarship for more research that significantly focuses inquiry at

the causal levels for learning. And for using the CMO framework as an explanatory tool: it

is comprehensive and intuitive in terms of how it seeks explanation through the three key

pinpoints of the *context*, the *mechanisms*, and the *outcomes*. While others may focus on

one or two aspects of the trio (for example, on context alone or context and mechanisms

but not outcomes), the CMO framework prioritizes all three and presents them in a

sequence that makes explanation easier, more intuitive and more complete. In other

words, if it is said that something is an outcome, the question that follows is 'what

produced the outcome?' which is itself followed by 'under what circumstances was this

outcome produced?' Since critical realism and the Pawson and Tilley's CMO are the means

through which this exploration is done, both will be reviewed below. After that, how the

research was conducted will be discussed.

3.1.2   Critical Realism – What Is It?

Critical realism is "a form of critical philosophy" (Cruickshank, 2002, p. 61) that

prioritizes ontology by holding the view that the "way the world is should guide the way

knowledge of it can be obtained" (Fleetwood, n.d.) and that "ontology must be

distinguished from epistemology, and that we must avoid the 'epistemic fallacy' of

confusing the nature of reality with our knowledge of reality" (Fairclough, 2006, p. 922).

Seeing the world from an ontological view, critical realism refers to "a critical application

of realism which produces a stratified understanding of the world, dividing the real from

the actual or empirical, and the structures and mechanisms, which produce events or phenomena, from the events themselves" (Jeffries, 2011, p. 2) and eminently uses "causal language to describe the world" (Easton, 2010, p.11). Though Roy Bhaskar (1975, 1987, 1989, 2011) is a pre-eminent scholar of critical realism, others in this tradition include Sayer (1992, 2000), Archer (1995, 2000, 2007), Berth Danermark (2002), Maxwell, (2004), and in organization and management studies, Fleetwood (2000; 2004; 2005) and Ackroyd and Fleetwood (2000), Fairclough (2006), and Burgoyne (2000) while in leadership learning, Kempster (2006), Kempster and Stewart (2010), Kempster and Cope (2010), and Kempster and Parry (2011; 2014). Pawson and Tilley (1997) have also been prominent in the critical realist space due largely to their *Context-Mechanisms-Outcome (CMO)* framework. Given the number of critical realism scholars that contemporarily come out of Britain (pretty much everyone mentioned above excepting Danermark), contemporary critical realism has been seen by some as primarily a British tradition (Alvesson, 2000; Smith, 2013). And critical realism is prominent in the works coming out of the University of Lancaster (Fleetwood, Ackroyd, Sayer, Kempster, Fairclough, Burgoyne, Easton, Steele) – as it could be termed, the Lancaster school of critical realism – emphasizing the pre-eminence of critical realism in the Lancaster-led scholarship tradition. Regarding critical realism as a philosophical approach, Easton (2010), part of the Lancaster school of critical realism, is of the view that critical realism is better than other approaches because, amongst others, "it is a well thought through and relatively coherent perspective on the world" (p.128). The necessity for the brief illustration of the British and Lancastrian influence over critical realism, especially given Easton's reference to "perspective on the

world", is to point out that it is a philosophical approach coming from a particular context, worldview, cultural values and history, with their potential implications for interpretation, meaning, language, and hegemony.

3.1.3   Key Tenets of Critical Realism (CR)

The basic tenet of critical realism is that that the world or reality exists independent of our knowledge of it (Bhaskar, 1975; Sayer, 1992; Maxwell, 2004). This follows Bhaskar's (1975) differentiation between "transitive" and "intransitive" dimensions of knowledge. In the transitive dimension "the object [of knowledge] is the material cause or antecedently established knowledge which is used to generate the new knowledge" while in the intransitive dimension, "the object is the real structure or mechanism that exists and acts quite independently of men and the conditions which allow men access to it" (Bhaskar, 1957, p.17). Following Bhaskar's lead regarding the dimensions of knowledge, critical realists hold that the objects of knowledge are within the intransitive dimension. "The intransitive is equated with ontology and a real world of objects with their own causal powers and structures" (Nairn, 2011, p.7). This differentiates critical realism from empiricism "which identifies the real with the empirical, that is with what we can experience, as if the world just happened to correspond to the range of our senses and to be identical to what we experience" (Sayer, 2000, pp. 2-3).

Stratified ontology, explained through the *real*, the *actual* and the *empirical* is the other key foundation of critical realism. Being a key figure in critical realism, the rest of

this section on stratified ontology draws heavily from the descriptions of Sayer (2000). The *real* is

> whatever exists, be it natural or social, regardless of whether it is an empirical object for us, and whether we happen to have an adequate understanding of its nature … they have certain structures and causal powers, that is capacities to behave in particular ways, and causal liabilities or passive powers, that is specific susceptibilities to certain kinds of change. (p. 3)

Simply, "Something is real if it has an effect or makes a difference (Fleetwood, 2004, p.29). On its side, *the actual* "refers to what happens if and when … powers are activated, to what they do and what eventuates when they do" (Sayer, 2000, p.4). And the empirical is "the domain of experience" (Sayer, 2000, p.4). To explain reality satisfactorily critical realism's position is that the level of the real (Bhaskar, 1975) or the 'deep' (Maxwell, 2004) must be reached. The real is anything that has effects and, as we shall see shortly below, one way that critical realism is 'critical' is that it criticizes anything that denies or is inaccurate in relation to the real. It is through this differentiation of the real, the actual and the empirical that critical realism stratifies ontology: "In distinguishing the real, the actual and the empirical, critical realism proposes a 'stratified ontology' in contrast to other ontologies which have 'flat' ontologies populated by either the *actual* or the *empirica*l, or a conflation of the two" (Sayer, 2000, p.5). And within the *real* domain, *structure* "suggests a set of internally related elements whose causal powers, when combined, are emergent from those of their constituents" (p.7). *Emergence* refers to the "situations in which the conjunction of two of more features or aspects gives rise to new

phenomena, which have properties which are irreducible to those of their constituents, even though the latter are necessary for their existence" (p.5). *Emergence* is made possible through the operation of causal mechanisms through which critical realism renders explanation by "identifying causal mechanisms, how they work and discovering if they have been activated and under what conditions" (pp. 7-8). In other words, critical realism "gives priority to potentiality over actuality and to actuality over experience…it stresses that tendencies of generative mechanisms may be real, yet unexercised, exercised, yet unactualised, and actualised independently of human perception or detection" (Vandenberghe 2009, p.218).

3.1.4   Differentiating Critical Realism from Positivism and Social Constructionism:

On a very broad basis, two dominant views try to explain the nature of reality and how it can be understood. The first of these two, positivism, is the view "that the social world exists externally and that its properties should be measured through objective methods, rather than being inferred subjectively through sensation, reflection or intuition." (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2008, p.57). The second view, social construction or constructionism posits that "knowledge of the world is constructed, most usually socially" and in its extreme version, that there "is no reality to be discovered" (Easton, 1997, p. 215). It further holds that:

> What we regard as knowledge is that which we, as social animals, choose to accept as knowledge. When we collect data we use our perceptions of the world to decide what to collect and we only recognise what we have concepts for. When we

analyse and interpret, we do so through language that is, in turn, a socially conditioned tool. (Easton, 1997, p. 215)

These two views thus express irreconcilable views of reality at opposite ends – reality is either one hundred percent 'out there' or it is entirely 'made up by us'. Though positivism and social construction do validly represent aspects of reality, they as well create issues that need to be overcome. In this sense, one cannot deny subjective reality and meaning-making as positivists do nor reject 'that there is a leader who leads' as social constructionists do without creating "two independently given sets of phenomena, a dualism" (Giddens, 1984, p.26). The polarization between these two dominant approaches has led to the emergence of a third approach, realism, which diminishes the dualism while accentuating emergence (Bhaskar, 1989). Ackroyd and Fleetwood (2000) explain this point further:

> Nothing happens out of nothing. Agents do not create or produce structures ab initio, rather they recreate, reproduce and/or transform a set of pre-existing structures... Every action performed requires the pre-existence of some social structures which agents draw upon in order to initiate action, and in doing so reproduce and/or transform them. For example, communicating requires a medium (e.g. language), and the operation of the market requires the rules of private property. (Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2000, p.14)

In summary, critical realism

> states that the theory of knowledge, or epistemology, is different from a theory of being, or ontology. There is a reality which exists independent of its human

conception. Critical realists believe that there are unobservable events which cause the observable ones; as such, the social world can be understood only if people understand the structures that generate such unobservable events…. [by] going beyond the observable and investigating the mechanisms behind any event. The focus of the theory is on ex-post explanations, as opposed to ex-ante predictions. (Brigham Young University, n.d.).

Critical realism is *critical* in a few ways. Foundationally, it is critical about confusing ontology with epistemology. It is also *critical* in the sense that it criticizes anything that denies or is inaccurate in relation to the *real* (Sayer, 2000; Bhaskar (1999). Furthermore, critical realism, especially Bhaskerian, is also critical in that it seeks human emancipation and freedom which "depends upon understanding the truth about reality and *acting towards it*, so it is essential that science and philosophy should be concerned with human liberation" (Bhaskar, 1999, p.1; added emphases). Emancipation is also implicit in Archer's morphogenesis (Archer, 1995). This transformational aspect of critical realism comes about through human agency: "human agency produces effects through drawing upon existing structures and practices which are reproduced and/or *transformed in action* [emphasis mine]" (Fairclough, 2005, p.922). Critical realism has itself been criticised. Jefferies (2011) has criticized critical realism as idealistic, inconsistent in its rejection of empirical realism, and of being a reapplication of Kant's subjective idealism. This criticism, however, fails to appreciate that critical realism integrates ontological realism with epistemological constructionism (Maxwell, 2004). The key difference is that it integrates but does not conflate them and it gives primacy to ontology. The principal difference

between critical realism and social constructionism is that though critical realism accepts that social reality is socially constructed, it rejects radical constructionism (Maxwell, 2004) "that presumes that the world is *merely* socially constructed or is *determined* by the concepts people hold about it" (Ackroyd and Fleetwood, 2000, p. 8, original emphases). As well, the principal difference between realism and positivism is the critical realists' retention of ontological realism - a real world exists independently (Maxwell, 2004; Nairn, 2012) and the positivist's focus on sense experience and observed events (Fleetwood, n.d.) and their rejection of the unobserved (Easton, 1997).

3.1.5   Causal Mechanisms:

Critical realism is "primarily interested in explanation" and not prediction (Bhaskar, 2014, p.vii) and therefore focuses "on *structures* and *mechanisms*, not regularities or patterns of events (Bhaskar, 2014, p.vii; Bhaskar, 2008). Being that causal mechanisms are central to critical realist explanation and that their identification as well as how they operate in *context* to bring about *outcomes* is key to the objective of this research, causal mechanisms are explored in this section as proper understanding of their role is essential to the exploration of short-term informal leadership learning that this research is focused on. According to Andrew Sayer (b.1949), a prominent critical realist scholar, "To ask for the cause of something is to ask what "makes it happen", what "produces", "generates", "creates" or "determines" it or, more weakly, what enables or leads to it" (Sayer, 2000, p.104)." Relatedly, Mason, Easton and Lenney (2013), after reviewing multiple definitions of causal social mechanisms from several scholars

summarized the list of verbs from those definitions as including "responsible for, brings about or prevents, produces, provides, triggers, leads from and behaviour" (p.348). Causality is thus about both the relationship among events and their causal powers or liabilities, that is, their ways of acting (Bhaskar, 1978, p. 14; Sayer, 2000, p.105). A mechanism is thus "that aspect of a structure of a thing by virtue of which it has certain power" (Collier, 1994, p.62). Mechanisms operate in open systems (Sayer, 2000; Easton, 2010; Bhaskar, 2014) and have 'triggerable causal powers" (Mason et al., 2013, p.349). In the literature, some studies have successfully identified mechanisms that undergirded the phenomena that they studied. In the field of organizational studies, examples of mechanisms have been proffered by scholars. For example, following a study of a US law firm, Lazega (2006) identified three mechanisms that are likely operating in the firm: *bounded solidarity, lateral control, and oligarchic control*. For Pajunen (2008), the likely operative mechanisms in his study of a Finnish business that failed were *commitment escalation, maladjustment, confidence erosion and fragmentation*. And Bygstad (2010) identified two mechanisms in his study of an airline's information infrastructure: *innovation mechanism and service mechanism*. Specific to leadership learning, in his earlier work, Kempster (2006) hinted at the following mechanisms (without directly using the terms 'mechanism' and 'causation') – *notability, becoming, interactivity, and participating*. In his more recent critical realist grounded theory work, Kempster (2014) along with his collaborator, Ken Parry (2014) – this time explicitly employing the term 'mechanism' and profusely using 'causal powers' – offered six likely mechanisms: *self-efficacy, participating, becoming, salience, maintaining (morphostasis), and naturalistic*

learning (observing and enacting). Beyond specific examples given above, Tilly (2001) described three main classes of mechanisms: "*cognitive mechanisms* [that] operate through alterations of individual and collective perception; *relational mechanisms* [that] alter connections among people, groups, and interpersonal networks, and *environmental mechanisms* [that] exert external influences on the conditions affecting processes" (p. 572). While these mechanisms have been suggested in the literature, it needs to be explained that mechanisms operate in particular contexts, with *context* having the ability to influence the generation of *outcomes*. Therefore, the examples of *mechanisms* given above do not suggest that they will operate similarly in all *contexts* along with generating the same or similar *outcomes* all the time. *Outcomes* that can be generated through mechanisms are particularized through *context*.

3.1.6   Mechanisms and Explanation

The purview of this research is causal explanation of short-term informal leadership learning, its context and, the outcomes, therefore mechanisms are being emphasized because they "are the heart of causal explanation" (Easton, 2010, p.122). They allow "researchers to ask themselves by what mechanisms have the particular events that they are seeking been brought to pass" (Mason et al., 2013, p.354), and "What makes [the phenomenon of interest] possible?" (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 97, as quoted by Wynn and Williams, 2012, p.800). Causal analysis is distinctive of critical realism (Sayer, 2000). It is 'causal' because it explains in terms of providing a causal account (Fleetwood, 2013, p.31). To render an explanation through causal mechanisms, critical realism draws

from the inferential logic of abduction and retroduction. In other words, to "identify generative mechanisms, critical realists ask the question: What must be true for events to be possible?" Bhaskar 2009, p. 7). As a research process, this has been described as retroductive movement (Easton, 2010) that goes from observable phenomena, to possible explanations (Bhaskar 2009, p. 7). It is this inferential reasoning that goes beyond leaders' accounts or narrative to identify causal mechanisms which will permit the plausible explanation of the phenomenon of short-term informal leadership learning. Abduction and retroduction are therefore key critical realist methodologies.

Abduction involves a re-description and explanation through causal mechanisms while retroduction imagines a model of mechanism, which, if it were real will explain the phenomenon (Bhaskar, 2014) and provide possible explanations (Belfrage and Hauf, 2017), "from a description of some phenomenon to a description of something which produces it or is a condition for it" (Bhaskar, 2009, p.7), conditionality being conceived as "context-sensitive inference" (Thompson, 1995, p.3) that is not the same in all situations. The process of abduction begins with a particular event (restructuring experience as the *context* and learning as the *outcome*) and then takes an "imaginative leap" to render an explanation that might account for the event (Mingers, 2012). Retroduction infers underlying mechanisms (Julnes, 2015) and "Retroductive argumentation involves suggesting a theory that seeks to provide causal explanation of what has not necessarily been empirically deduced or induced, but has been synthesized and inferred from available empirical data [abduction] and concepts (Kempster and Parry, 2014, p.91). This inferred "theory cannot say with *deterministic* certainty what will happen. It can say with

probabilistic certainty what will and will not happen" (Burgoyne, n.d., p.9, added emphasis). Through inference, a probable explanation will be made about leaders' context and learning from restructuring.

While critical realism seeks the explanation of reality through causal mechanisms, the process it uses to do so is critical realist causal analysis. Few frameworks have been put forward for critical realist causal analysis. Exceptions include Sayer's (2000) which starts with description of an effect or event to the explication of the relationships and interactions, and Easton's (2010) which begins with deciding the phenomenon to be investigated and terminates with interpreting and explaining the data using causal language. Bygstad and Munkvold's (2011) offered up their "critical realist data analysis" (p.5) framework with description of events as step one and validation of explanatory power as the last step. As well, Kempster and Parry (2014) advanced their causal configurations framework as part of their "retroductive critical realist grounded theory" (p. 87) "to explore and suggest what might be the causal powers shaping leadership emergence" (p.87). Kempster and Parry's (2014) is one of the very few that have specifically been applied to leadership emergence. Pawson and Tilley's (1997) proposed the *Context-Mechanisms-Outcome* configuration as one of the earliest frameworks which drew from "Bhaskar's Transformational Model of Social Action (TMSA) and elaborated later by Margaret Archer in Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach" (de Souza, 2013, p.141). The work of Kempster and Parry (2014) demonstrated that critical causal analysis framework can be applied specifically to leadership emergence. Having reviewed these frameworks, the question that requires an answer is - is there a particular

model or an adapted model that fits the current research most closely while at the same time ensuring that all key critical realist causal analysis steps are included? After a careful review, Pawson and Tilley's (1997) *context-mechanism-outcomes (CMO)* framework was adopted as the framework through which a critical realist causal explanation was rendered. The key rationale for this is primarily because it contains the "trio of explanatory components" (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p.77), meaning a simultaneous exploration of *context*, *mechanisms*, and *outcomes* undergirding phenomena in one framework and acting together as "a powerful tool to hypothesise the existence of contexts and mechanisms in the process of explanation and evaluation" (Kaboub, 2004, p.153). The CMO framework is described briefly below.

3.1.7   Pawson and Tilley's Context-Mechanisms-Outcome (1994; 1997; 2004; Pawson, 2001)

The *Context-Mechanisms-Outcomes (CMO)* framework proposed by Pawson and Tilley (1997) glimpses of which are discernible through their earlier (1994) and later (2004) works, is essentially a framework for the "application of critical realism in micro contexts" (Kaboub, 2004, p.153). One such context is that of leadership learning through a healthcare restructuring experience, where explanation is rendered by demonstrating that "causal outcomes follow from mechanisms acting in contexts" (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p.p.58). As they argued, "outcomes = mechanisms + context" (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p.57) with the plus sign being used here not as an addition sign but the depiction of the "necessary interrelation between context and mechanisms that must exist" for

outcomes to be generated (Kaboub, 2004, p.53). The key emphasis of the CMO framework is around how outcomes are generated: "outcomes unearthed in empirical investigation are intelligible only if we understand the underlying *mechanisms* which give rise to them and the *contexts* which sustain them" (Pawson and Tilley, 1994, p.292). How to understand this is that though outcomes are important in and by themselves, *how* they are generated, that is, "the process and context" (Clayton, 1999, p.92) should receive same amount of importance and validation.

Context:

"The context of action refers to the context delineated for investigation" (de Souza, 2013, p.144). It specifies "the then-and-there" (Pawson and Tilley, 2004, p.3) and "describes those features of the conditions…that are relevant to the operation of the...mechanisms" (Pawson and Tilley, 2004, p.7). Context can both "enable and constrain" (Pawson & Tilley, 2004, p.8) and is characterized by "many shades-of-grey" and is not "black-and-white" (Pawson & Tilley, 2004, p.3). While geo-place is part of context, it could be more than that because "what is contextually significant may not only relate to place but also to systems of interpersonal and social relationships" (Pawson & Tilley, 2004, p.8) among others.

Mechanisms:

Though mechanisms have been explored above in its general context as a central feature of critical realism, what is being added briefly here is its relation to *context* and

outcome in the Pawson and Tilley's CMO framework. Mechanisms, often hidden (therefore requiring identification), are what brings about effects (Pawson, 2001). And causation through mechanisms is expected to "be sensitive to contextual influences" (Julnes and Mark, 1998, p.40). In fact, the actual triggering of mechanisms depends on context (Pawson, 2001). "Put simply, a mechanism is a 'causal force' that makes an outcome happen" (Wong, 2016, p.109). While Wong's (2016) statement seems to suggest *singular* causation, it needs to be clarified that singular causation is not always the case: *multiple* causal forces can act to bring about an effect. Mechanism thus straddles *context* and *outcome* in the sense that contextual influences on mechanisms shape the outcomes that emerge.

Outcomes:

The CMO framework operates "on the premise that aspects of context trigger particular mechanisms … which result in observable outcomes" (Jolly and Jolly, 2014, p.44). Outcomes can be intended or unintended (Wong, 2016; Westhorp et al., 2011) and depending on context, can be "'x' outcomes in one setting and 'y' outcomes in another" (Westhorp et al., 2011, p.5).

In summary, critical realism as a philosophical approach and CMO as one of its frameworks will enable the exploration of the nature and characteristics of short-term informal leadership learning (STILL) by allowing a causal explanation reached through inference to be rendered about how leaders learn in the short-term from restructuring experience. Explanation anchored on the triad of *context*, *mechanisms* and *outcomes*

allows leadership learning to be understood, not just at the empirical, narrative level but up to the level of the deep where emergence is based on possibility, potentiality and plausibility. While critical realism enables this exploration as described above, the case study research method is used in this research to identify and establish boundaries for the units of research. As both critical realism and case study research both aim at explanation, this research is best described as a critical realist case study research. With critical realism explored above, the focus below is on case study research. After that, how the research was conducted will be presented.

3.2   The Use of the Case Study Research Method

3.2.1   Clarification of Terminology

Though various terms such as case study (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Verschuren, 2003), case studies, (Madureira, n.d.; Hakim, 1987), case study method (Bromley, 1986), case research (Easton, 2010a; Easton, 2010b; Verschuren, 2011), case study research (Yin, 2014; Easton, 2010), are used in the literature, to avoid confusion, I have adopted the term *case study research* as being the most intuitive. The term differentiates case study research as a *research* method from case study/studies as a *teaching* method (Reynolds, 1980). Where an author's use of any of the terms listed above is interpreted as referring to the case study research, the author's particular term will be retained though it will be interpreted as referring to case study research as a *research* method.

3.2.2   Case study Research: What is it?

It has been acknowledged in the literature that describing case study research is difficult (Easton, 2010), that there are a number of misunderstandings (Flyvbjerg, 2011), and ambiguities and misconceptions (Verschuren, 2003) around case study research. In terms of misunderstandings of case study research, Flyvbjerg (2011) has been influential in articulating the misunderstandings and explaining why they do not reflect a good understanding of case study research. Both Flyvbjerg (2011) and Verschuren (2003) rejected these misunderstandings and misconceptions as mostly unmerited criticisms from positivist and reductionist-inclined researchers. For Verschuren (2003), case study research "should be on the holistic side" (p.125) and the criticisms of the case study research] "come from a reductionist perspective, and as such does not hold for a case study" (p.128). Flyvbjerg's (2011) conclusion: "The main strength of the case study is depth—detail, richness, completeness, and within-case variance—whereas for statistical methods it is breadth" (p.314). He goes on to argue that "If you want to understand a phenomenon in any degree of thoroughness…what causes it …and so on, you need to do case studies" (p.314). Case study research can be qualitative and/or quantitative in orientation (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Verschuren, 2003; Yin, 1989). However, for social science research looking at the social reality of a leader's learning and seeking causal explanations as its goal, the case study research in this instance needs to be qualitative because it is looking at leadership learning holistically, through the experience of leaders, in the context of their own environment (the organization and its activities) and is seeking to understand the "unitary character" (Goode and Hatt, 1952, p. 133) of their experience

and learning, and will conduct causal analysis to understand in some detail what caused a leader's learning. From this perspective and to meet our purpose:

> A case study is a research strategy that can be qualified to be holistic in nature…looking at only a few strategically selected cases, observed in their natural context in an open-ended way… and aimed at description and explanation of a complex and entangled group attributes, patterns, structures or processes. (Verschuren, 2011, p.137).

3.2.3   Critical Realism and Case Study Research in the Study of Leadership Learning

As stated earlier, leadership learning has been criticised as being dominated by positivist and constructionist approaches and their attendant empirical weaknesses in not fully addressing context, in creating an "either/or" dichotomy between agency and structure (foregoing *interaction* of the two), and in paying scant attention to emergence and causation of emergence (Kempster and Parry, 2011; 2014) through mechanisms. What is lacking in leadership studies, according to Kempster and Parry (2014), is the need "to develop an integrated understanding of leadership emergence and the causal powers shaping such emergence occurring within the real, the actual, and the empirical reality" (p.86). Emergence and complexity are the hallmarks of social phenomena in open systems (Bhaskar, 2014) and is the process of something coming into being (Vincent and Wapshott, 2014, p. 150). Critical realist leadership learning case study research is well suited for emergence through learning and makes sense for this study as follows:

At the level of the *empirical*, the case study method allows "casing" (Ragin, 1992. P. 127) which identifies the leaders who learn and their restructuring environment. Case

study, being descriptive and bound by lived experience, allows a rich description of the leaders' account of their experience. Yin (1981) has argued that reaching this level of rich description typically requires lengthy narratives as this allows for more effective collection and analysis of experience. For Parry and Hansen (2007) the narratives enable the understanding of organizational stories as metaphors of leadership. As was seen above, all causal analysis frameworks rely on rich and in-depth descriptions of an event or phenomena as the first stage towards understanding it so that causal explanation can be rendered on it. At the level of the *actual*, the context and conditions of leadership learning are identified and explored. And at the level of the *real*, the explanation of the short-term informal leadership learning through mechanisms that are conditioned by their context and generate specific outcomes (Bhaskar, 2014; Pawson and Tilley, 1997; 2004) are rendered. Both critical realism and case study research seek explanation as their goals; critical realist case study research thus allows us to explain "*how these powers operate in particular contexts*" (Kempster and Parry, 2014, p. 87, added emphasis.). Kempster and Parry (2011; 2014), being the key work in the literature that has specifically spent time investigating critical realist leadership causal analysis in some depth, had identified paying attention to emergence and causation of emergence in leadership learning as needing more research attention and exploration. By attempting this research from a critical realist case study stance we hope to contribute to filling this identified theoretical void.

3.2.4   Unit of Analysis

Case study research was used in this research to identify and closely circumscribe the event that was studied (organizational restructuring), the units of study (leaders who led or participated in the restructuring), and the units of analysis (leaders' individual and organizational contexts). And in combination with critical realist approach, case study research was used to conduct *a critical realist leadership learning case study research causal analysis* on the units of analysis (leaders' context and their learning). A "central attribute of a case study design, clearly differentiated from the survey, is that no difference is being made between research units and observation units…the researcher tries as much as is possible to look at a case as a whole" (Verschuren, 2010, p. 126). These "units of analysis are the units on the basis of which the research, once gathered or generated, is analysed and transformed into conclusions" (Verschuren, 2010, p.125). The event, context and units are shown below:

Event studied   =   Organizational Restructuring (A)

Research context   =   Leader's personal experience and the

                                                        organizational   environment   of

                                                        restructuring (B)

Research object/unit of study   =   The leader him-/herself (C)

Units of analysis   =   Leader's experience and learning

                                                        within   the   organizational

                                                        restructuring environment

                                                        (A+B+C)

In summary, what has been presented up to this point in the chapter is that this research is a critical realist case study research that is focused on understanding short-term informal leadership learning through using the Pawson and Tilley's (1997) CMO framework to explore this type of leadership learning in depth, as a case study research, and in depth as well as a critical realist investigation, at the ontological level of the deep where phenomena are understood as outcomes made possible via causal mechanisms in particular contexts. The next and final section of the chapter below describes how this research was conducted including how the inferential reasoning that undergirds critical realist explanation was undertaken as well as how the research findings will be presented in the next chapter. The research process starts immediately below with participants' selection.

3.3   The Research Process

3.3.1   Participants' Selection

As a first step towards selection of participants, each of the three organizations that participated in the research was approached formally with a written request to allow its leaders to participate in the research. All three granted the request. Afterwards, a recruitment letter was sent to the whole class of leaders who met the criteria for eligibility to participate or "bounding" the event being studied, to use case study research term (see below for the criteria). These criteria were developed by the researcher based on his practitioner-knowledge as an organization design specialist who leads restructuring activities as well as with regard to what is reasonable, makes sense, and would contribute

meaningful data for the research topic (for example, it makes sense that for one to be able to share meaningful data about a restructuring as a leader, s/he would have been involved in leading or participating significantly in the restructuring).

The eligible leaders in the study were *bound* by the criteria set in **Table 3.1** below:

Table 3.1: Criteria to Participate in the Research

Criteria	Organization		
	Org 1	*Org2*	*Org3*
Term for Restructuring/Re-organization Change	Formation, Transition & Transformation	Realignment	Consolidation
Employment Status	Employee during or since formation, transition and formation, and at interview time	Employee during realignment and at interview time	Employee during consolidation and at interview time
Leadership Accountability	Corporate service or support program or provincial clinical support program	Geographic clinical services zone or provincial clinical support program	Geographic clinical services or provincial corporate programs
Restructuring Activity	Led or participated in leading a service or program or the whole organization as part of the overall shared services transition and transformation mandate	Led a clinical services zone or provincial clinical support program during the realignment	Led clinical or corporate service or the whole organization as part of the overall consolidation
Role Context	New to their position, given new, different or expanded functions, or tasked with a mandate	New to their position, given new, different or expanded functions, or tasked with a mandate	New to their position, given new, different or expanded functions, or tasked with a mandate

In summary, bounding was by time, accountability, activity, and role context:

➢ *time* [that is, they were employees within the period of the restructuring change or since the restructuring, and were still employees at interview time],

➢ *Accountability* [that is, each of them was accountable for a geographic clinical services zone or clinical services support program or provincial corporate programs or corporate service or support program],

➢ *activity* [that is, each of them led or participated in leading a service or program or the whole organization as part of the overall restructuring], and

➢ *Role context* [that is, each of them were either new to their position, given new, different or expanded functions, or tasked with a mandate as part of the restructuring

The bounded leaders as per the criteria above who responded and consented to participate in the research were included for interview purposes. This selection approach follows the replication logic as a guide for *selection* and not sampling logic (Yin, 2014) which "requires an operational enumeration of the entire universe or pool of potential respondents and then a statistical procedure for selecting a specific subset of respondents to be surveyed" (Yin, 2014, p. 59). Both Easton (2010) and Flyvbjerg (2011) have emphasized that generalizability in case research is different as "a single case study must be able to stand on its own". (Easton, 2010, p.119). "A case is a single instance; a sample of one…. The key opportunity it has to offer is to understand a phenomenon in depth and comprehensively" (Easton, 2010, p.119) and in the context of leadership, "to illuminate the 'deep' causes affecting leadership learning" (Kempster, 2006, p.4). Furthermore, a

leader as a single-case-research-unit treats "case sampling and contextualisation as a joint decision rather than as two separate tasks" (Poulis, K. et al. 2013, p. 305) and acknowledges boundaries of cases (Ragin, 1992).

3.3.2 Number of Participants

24 leaders participated in the research, ten (10) from *Org1* with 100% participation rate, seven (7) from *Org2* out of twelve (12) that were eligible, and, five (5) from *Org3* out of seven (7). Unfortunately, recorded data from one participant who was interviewed long distance via a web-based video technology couldn't be retrieved for transcription; reported data is thus based on 23 instead of 24 participants. In reporting the findings, the names of the participants were substituted with the term "Leadership Research Participant", shortened to *LRP*. Each participant was then assigned a number so that they can be referred to as *LRP1, LRP2* and so on. This was done to preserve their anonymity.

3.3.3 Sources of Data: Interviews and Document Review

Interview was the primary source of data. Other sources of data that were considered included questionnaires (rejected because process-wise it will be very involved, may reduce likelihood of participation, and also, not being as open-ended, may 'straight-jacket' collectible data thereby yielding less rich data) and autoethnography (time-wise will be longer, co-construction of data more susceptible to researcher bias, and the general criticism levelled against autoethnography regarding validity). Observation was not possible as this research was retrospective and observation would have been too

intrusive and disruptive for such a highly sensitive and potentially emotional activity as restructuring where confidential and personally-impacting decisions such as terminating employment, re-locating staff and changing reporting relationships are being made. Interviews are the "most important sources of case study evidence' (Yin, 2014, p.110) and they were used to "secure vivid…accounts that are based on personal experience". (Burgess, 1982, p.107). While in critical realism

> interviews may not reveal *real* causes of action… [however] without conducting investigations into action as experienced by actors, it is not possible to get insights into the actual and empirical representations of action. Given the autonomy of the individual from structures, we need to have some means of accessing the individual experience, and interviews are one such method. (Smith and Elger, 2012, p.4.)

Type, Format, and Timeline of Interviews

Using an interview guide, semi-structured open-ended interviews were conducted with questions aimed at capturing "views, perceptions, and opinions" (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 126) of the leaders regarding what they experienced.

Each participant was interviewed one-on-one, once, with the average interview being about one hour in length. Most of the interviews were conducted face-to-face in several locations (mostly at the locations where the leader works; the researcher travelled to meet with them) across two Canadian Provinces, Alberta and Saskatchewan. The interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed.

A pilot interview was conducted prior to the main set of research interviews for the sole purpose of testing the interview questions. Following the pilot interview, minor changes were made to the interview guide. The pilot interview occurred in March 2014 while the main interviews were conducted over a ten-month period between September/October 2014 – July 2015.

Documentation Review/Archival Records

Documentation from the participating organizations were reviewed and used to achieve an enhanced understanding of the leaders and their organizational contexts. Yin (2014) suggested that documentation that are relevant to case study research be reviewed. Aligning with this, the documentation that were reviewed included emails, agendas, memos, announcements, reports, press releases, action plans, weekly restructuring updates, messages from the CEO to the organization during the restructuring, FAQs (*Frequently Asked Questions* documents), restructuring models articulated to help leaders with their restructuring considerations, documents tracking the number of senior leader roles, organization charts and related administrative documents. In all, over thirty documents were reviewed and some of them, for example, the organization charts for Org2, was more than three hundred org chart pages. These documents played an important role in providing contextual data especially those that provided non-publicly available information such as the directions that leaders were given as part of their restructuring accountabilities, the restructuring-specific performance expectations of their roles, amongst others. As an illustration of the role that

documentation data played, the review of organization charts showed the scope of accountability and span of control for the leaders within their organizational hierarchy. This completed and more fully complemented on-the-spot data that leaders provided during the interviews about their organization structure, the number of their direct reports, their teams and others. This provided the researcher a broadened view of the organizational context of their leadership enactment. Another example would be memos and action plans which provided information in terms of what leaders' were expected to perform and deliver on as part of their restructuring accountabilities, and, FAQs and emails including mass-emails to the whole organization which showed how organizational communication flowed, including the content of the communications, the intended audience, their frequency, et cetera.

3.3.4   Data Coding

"Each researcher needs, through experience and reflection, to find the forms of analysis that work for him or her" (Stake, 1995, p. 77)". Following Stake's (1995) exhortation to use direct interpretation or categorical aggregation to make meaning of case research data, in vivo codes from interview data as well as the researcher's own constructed data (from the in vivo codes) were used for the experience and learning parts of the data. Subsequently, constructed data were used as meaning units to begin critical realist data analysis to identify mechanisms and through them suggest possible causal effect(s). "The case and the key issues need to be kept in focus. The search for meaning,

the analysis, should roam out and return to these foci over and over (Stake, 1995, pp. 84-85)."

A sample:

In Vivo Coding: Sample Participant Responses:

Participant A: *But the zones were very loosely organized. They're all here and those are the key operational components but there was no official connection locally.*
Participant B: *so we had to revise the whole structure within the zone. You know, realign in terms of the reporting relationships. We also did some kind of consolidation of roles, so that was important.*
Participant C: *And then we started to align our thoughts on how to go about proposing a leadership team, which included operational leaders for jurisdictions. We drew up what we considered to be our service areas*
Participant D: *Certainly with the realignment, the initial step of identifying the zones, getting the senior leadership in place. And looking at the functions, the programs and the services*

First	Second	Third
• zones were very loosely organized • key operational components • no official connection locally • revise the whole structure • realign in terms of the reporting relationships • proposing a leadership team • operational leaders • identifying the zones • getting the senior leadership in place • functions, the programs and the services	• Organizing and reorganizing • Accountabilities and span • Mapping Reporting relationships • Leadership roles	• Organization Structure • Realignment of organization structure • Hierarchical Leadership

3.3.5   Theme Identification Process

Being that the objective of the research is the identification of causation of learning from a restructuring experience, the structure of the interview questions in the interview guide, were laid out in two broad categories - *experience* and *learning* - during the research design phase. This is where the researcher naturally started the identification of themes from the data in the transcribed interviews. This was done by the researcher asking himself the questions:

Is this about *experience*?

Is it about *learning*?

Yin (2009) suggested that case study researchers should start analysis by playing with the data and asking questions while Stake (1995) encouraged researchers to adopt ordinary and naturalistic ways of making sense, "giving meaning to first impressions as well as final compilations" (p.71) and using "intuitive processing to search for meaning" (p.72). As the researcher intuitively answered the questions above about *experience* and *learning*, relevant interview data were placed either under *experience* or under *learning* categories. The rationale for what was included and what was left out followed the Stake's (1995) proposition that it is "Not the beginning, middle, and the end, not those parts but the parts important to us" (p.71), a point he argued expansively and because it is very important to understanding the researcher's approach, is quoted fully:

This is case study... our primary task is to come to understand the case. It will help us to tease out relationships, to probe issues, and to aggregate categorical data, but those ends are subordinate to understanding the case. To devote much time

to formal aggregation of categorical data is likely to distract attention to its various

involvements, its various contexts. Usually, we try to spend most of our time in

direct interpretation. (Stake, 1995, p.77)

The further review of the interview responses produced themes under these two

main broad categories that represent the focus of the empirical aspect of the current

research: *what did the leader experience? What did s/he learn?* – see Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1: Architecture for Theme Identification

```
                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │   Restructuring     │
                        └─────────────────────┘
                         ↙                 ↘
              ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐
              │  Experience  │      │   Learning   │
              └──────────────┘      └──────────────┘
                         ↘                 ↙
                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │       Themes        │
                        └─────────────────────┘
                         ↙                 ↘
              ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐
              │  Experience  │      │   Learning   │
              │   Themes     │      │   Themes     │
              └──────────────┘      └──────────────┘
```
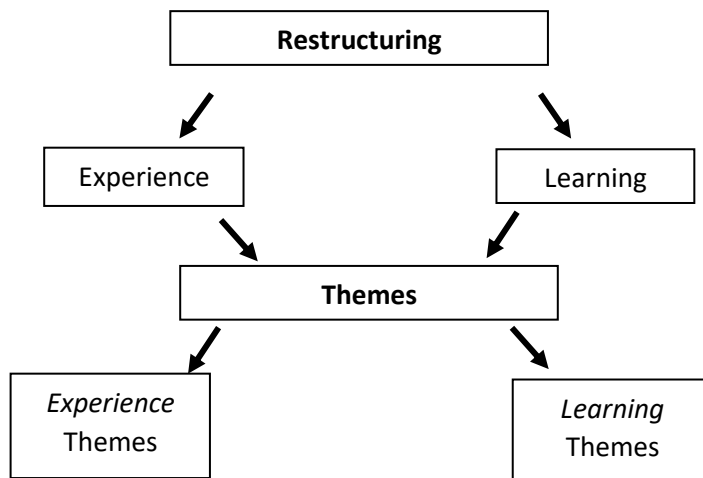
The theme identification process started with identifying words, phrases, and

sentences in the transcripts that seem related to learning and/or experience. The

researcher did all this work via electronic files in Microsoft Word format. This made it

easier to highlight, underline, insert comment, cut, copy, paste and otherwise easily mark

up the transcripts.

First phase:

Upon reading the transcripts, words, phrases, and sentences *within individual*

transcripts were colour-coded to differentiate sections that related to *learning* and those

that related to *experience*. Then all green sections *from all the transcripts* were grouped together in a new *learning* file while all red sections were grouped together in an *experience* file.

Second Phase:

In this phase, the two files, *learning* and *experience* were reviewed separately to further understand their contents. Phrases and sentences that seem to refer to same or similar subject of *learning* or *experience*, following natural meaning units (Lee, 1999) were grouped together by cutting and pasting them into the same column, a technique that is "particularly useful for identifying subthemes" (Ryan and Bernard, 2003, p.103).

Third Phase:

Further review led to labelling or naming these columns. The thought process guiding this labelling and naming were the questions, *what type of experience*? *What type of learning?* Answers to these questions resulted in same or similar *experience* and *learning* being grouped under one label or name.

Fourth Phase:

The fourth phase looked at broader categories for the particular classes of *learning* and *experience*. These resulted in the broad themes for both learning and experience.

The Themes

The themes that resulted from the four phases of theme identification are shown in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2a: Identified Themes in Details

Context/Experience Themes	
Leaders' Experience Relative to themselves as Individuals ⬇	Leaders' Experience Relative to the Organization and the Health System ⬇
Sub themes:	*Sub themes:*
Reacting	Understanding
Performing	Criticizing
Struggling	Hoping & Improving
Being Humble	
Influencing	
Supporting	
Envisioning/Futuring	

Table 3.2b: Identified Themes in Details

Learning/Outcomes Themes		
Re-conceptualized Leadership (Learning about Leadership)	Expanded Context (Learning about Context of Leadership)	Learning about Self: Authentic, More Self-Aware and Resilient Leaders
⬇	⬇	⬇
Sub themes:	Sub themes:	Sub themes:
Change in perceptions of what "leadership" means	The Concept of Absence in Context	Being Authentic
Leadership is not easy; demands of leadership are exacting and tasking	Learning about differentiation	Being More Self-Aware
Acknowledging the limits of leadership and the role of followership	Whole System Knowledge: Learning about the Patient as both a Healthcare Consumer and a Citizen in a Publicly Funded Healthcare Model	Resilience

3.3.6   Inferential Process

In addition to the process of generating themes for analysis of the *context* and description of the *outcomes*, a later and further process was embarked upon as part of the critical realist inferential processes to identify and explain the *mechanisms* behind leader's learning outcomes.

Inferred mechanisms – from abduction and retroduction - were employed together as explanatory vehicles for leaders' learning context and outcomes with abducted mechanisms coming first in sequence before retroduced mechanisms which are critical

realism's "central mode of inference" (Lawson, 1998, p. 156). The work of identifying mechanisms started with the questions – *What can be inferred from what the data is saying? How can these be abstracted and described conceptually?* This then led to the middle column below which represents the first inferential stage of abduction. The process then went further to ask new and different questions: *what needs to exist to help in explaining the concepts in column two? What can be inferred from these concepts that originally were inferred from the data?* In other words, *in this particular context, what reality must exist in order for learning to emerge?* This is retroduction, the second and critical realism's final stage of inference. It yields the mechanisms "that derive directly from the nature of the bodies involved" (Easton, 2010, p.121).

As seen below in Table 3.3, the inferential processes led to the identification of five mechanisms:

Table 3.3: inferential Processes and Identified Mechanisms

Contextual Description	*Abductive Re-description*	*Retroductive Imagination*
Examples: • several group meetings during restructuring; • meeting a lot of different people • hearing what other people have to say during the meetings • seeing how people responded	Examples: • Nearness • Access to people • Social interaction → • Relationship building	• Proximity - *Learning by observation* - *Learning from others*
Examples: • Choosing to chair a committee so one's influence is maintained (action) • Watching other leaders handle issues well (observation) • Reflecting on the effectiveness of current skills and concluding "I am not there yet" (reflection)	*Examples:* • Leader's areas of personal need for improvement → • Leader's goals leading to looking forward to something • Self-referencing judgements	• Salience - *Learning from action* - *Learning from reflection* - *Learning from observation*
Examples: • Trial and error • Constantly curious	*Examples:* • Different and multiple approaches → • Discarding of routines • Trialing new variables	• Improvising & Experimentation - *Learning by action*
Examples: • Comparing oneself between two time periods and seeing one as being more deliberate • Expressing that one has changed from his 'traditional' leadership style	*Examples:* • Introspection • Contrasting → • Reflective expression	• Introspective Engagement - *Learning by reflection*
Examples: • Mimicking other leaders • Picking up what one wants to emulate • Witnessing what one doesn't want to be	*Examples:* • Picking up information → • Rejecting • Practising	• Modeling - *Learning by observation*
The Described	*The Re-described*	*The Imagined*

This research came up with multiple abducted and retroducted mechanisms as shown above as vehicles to explain how *short-term informal leadership learning* takes place. Mechanisms that explain events can be one or several; this makes sense in open systems. Bhaskar (19981; 1998b) as well as Sayer (1992), Clark, MacIntyre and Cruickshank (2007) and Pawson (2001) supported the notion of multiple mechanisms and Benjaminsen (2003) opined that "Factual events can be composed of the effects of different mechanisms" (p.7). These mechanisms were generated through action, observation, and reflection.

3.4   Reporting Findings

This section explains how the findings are reported in chapters four and five. This research is focused on explaining *short-term informal leadership learning* through a critical realist approach and employing Pawson and Tilley's (1997) CMO framework to do so. Given this research objective, findings are presented in two ways. In chapter four, leaders' experience, context and outcomes are presented through the mechanisms that were inferred from the data and from abstracting from concepts as seen above. The key aspect of the findings in chapter four is that it refers to the specific experience of the restructuring context for these leaders, these organizations and at the specific point in time. In chapter five, an explanation is offered to understand *short-term informal leadership learning* further by exploring a model of leadership learning that explains how this may occur in other contexts beyond the particular context in chapter four. In doing this, since the aim of critical realist case study research is rendering an explanation, a

process model was employed to suggest a model of *short-term informal leadership learning* (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2 in chapter five) that is anchored on two processes, the first being an explanation of the learning process itself, and the second, being that of how the learning is surfaced for the leader. The second process, the surfacing process, is important to be understood because in short-term informal leadership learning, the leader is not aware that s/he has learnt as the learning is unconscious. The surfacing process suggests how this learning can come to the leader's awareness. This is proposed as having potential implications for leadership emergence and development. These two process models are related in that the first one, the learning process parallels leader's engagement with leadership activities, meaning that it happens in the present. Surfacing, however, happens later, through reflection and/or expression. And it is through surfacing that the leader becomes aware that s/he has learnt. A process model was used because it is a way of explaining sequence of events and attempting to connect causes to effects (Pentland, 1999; DiMaggio, 1995; Einhorn & Hogarth, 1986).

3.5   Chapter Summary

In summary, there are various ways that leadership learning can be explored. Critical realism was adopted in this research because of its potential to start ontologically and go behind phenomenon to look for causes. In doing this it employs abductive and retroductive inferences (instead of deductive reasoning) to render explanation through mechanisms. In other words, if short-term informal leadership learning is to be understood well, it needs to be understood at the level where mechanisms explain its

processes beyond what is empirically noted. While this understanding can be particularized to its context, leadership learning is helped further if models that leads to understanding how this may be possible in other contexts are also suggested. This research suggests such a model in chapter five.

This chapter presented the philosophical approach taken in the study, the methodology used, and how the research process was carried out. The next chapter will begin the discussion and interpretation of the findings.

CHAPTER Four: Learning Context, Learning Mechanisms and their Outcomes

4.0   Introduction

This chapter begins the analysis sections of this research. The objective of this research is to identify the causal mechanisms underpinning leaders' learning in the short-term from restructuring experience in health care. The leaders that participated in the research were involved in the restructuring activities of their organizations. This chapter presents and discusses the context, the mechanisms, and the outcomes of leaders' learning from the experience of leading and participating in the restructuring of their organizations. The chapter is in three sections. The first section presents the learning context. Section two explores the mechanisms that underlie the learning while section three presents the outcomes of these mechanisms.

4.1   Learning Context

Learning in the short-term by leaders is foregrounded by conditions and circumstances from the *LRPs' restructuring experience*. The leader as a learner is an individual with characteristics and capacities and s/he interacts with relevant aspects of the learning environment which is inclusive of the organizational settings and their component infrastructure and relationships (Pawson, 2013; Pawson & Tilley, 2004). These have potential abilities to influence by either enabling or constraining (Kahn et al., 2012; Archer 2003) through a range of factors and activities (Clark & Cruickshank, 2007; Fleetwood, 2004) such as organizational hierarchies and their authorities amongst others. Taken together, the learner as an individual and the organizational setting where the

restructuring took place constitute the learning context described as "'for whom'" and "'in what circumstances'" by Pawson & Tilley (2004, p.7). "For whom" or the learner-as-an-individual comes forth through the accounts of the restructuring experience given by the *LRPs*. Experiences are observed events of real-life scenarios (Wynn and Williams, 2012) in open (as opposed to closed) social systems (Bhaskar, 1998). And the detailed explanation of these events and experience form the foundation for critical realist causal analysis (Wynn and Williams, 2012; Danermark et al., 2002; Sayer, 1992). The phrase, "In what circumstances" by Pawson & Tilley (2004, p.7) which is referred to here as the learner-in-the-environment, is identified through a discussion of some of the features of the organizational context of the restructuring. Both the contextual knowledge (Pawson & Tilley, 2004) emanating from individuals and the contextual influences (Shaw et al., 2018) are important to the understanding of the learning mechanisms and outcomes that shaped *LRPs'* learning. Thus understanding *LRPs'* restructuring experience (C for Context) is foundational and critical to understanding both the mechanisms (M) and outcomes (O) of their learning within the C-M-O framework – the details of the CMO framework (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) and how it will be used to render a critical realist explanation have already been discoursed in chapter three. The *LRPs'* experience *relative to themselves as individuals* as well as their experience *relative to their organization and the health system* came from the interview data where they described their *experiences* with leading restructuring in their organizations. The discussion of the context (C) starts below with the *LRPs'* experience and their organizational context.

4.1.1   Leaders' Experience of the Restructuring: The Organizational Context:

In terms of context, organizations are the arena of situated actions (Abowd et al. 2002; Suchman, 1987), operating interactionally (Dourish, 2004) amongst stratified realities that include history and time (Archer, 1995; de Souza, 2014) in terms of pre-existing and existing conditions whose properties can be both emergent (may arise or not arise) and causative (may explain A or B, or not) or regarded in a summary way as *general possibilities* that can come about in different ways (Hulswit, 2001). From a learning perspective, these organizational context "factors possess generative powers of constraint and enablement in relation to learners' own configuration of concerns and foci for attention" (Kahn et al., 2012, p.868). To understand the organizational context of the leaders' learning from their restructuring experience, brief historical, structural and organizational leadership highlights of the three organizations whose restructuring form the basis of our study as well as some organizational information that are relevant to our research topic, are presented. We start with *Alberta Health Services*, then *Covenant Health* which will be followed by *3sHealth*.

Organization: Alberta Health Services (AHS)

The Organization and Its History

AHS was established in 2008 and became operational in 2009. It was formed through the merging of twelve organizations including regional health authorities. Later AHS was expanded to include all emergency medical services (EMS) previously provided by municipalities and health services in all provincial corrections facilities (inmates in jails).

AHS has three wholly-owned subsidiaries, Capital Care Group, and CareWest (providing continuing care services) and Calgary Laboratory Services (providing laboratory and diagnostic services) (Alberta Health Services, n.d.). The merger that brought AHS into being has been described as the largest in Canadian history in terms of the number of employees and the number of organizations involved (Bourassa 2010) as well as the organizational challenges it presented including governance and organizational leadership. From a complexity perspective, mergers are predominantly one organization merging with another. It is exponentially more complex to merge 12 [twelve] entities simultaneously" (Bourassa 2010). The merger brought together 90,000 people, a budget of $11B a year, and assets of $9B. It created the largest employer in Alberta, the 4th or 5th biggest in the country, and the largest single provider of health care in Canada"(Hughes, 2010).

The Nature of the Organization, Services Provided, and Facilities

Alberta Health Services is Canada's first and largest province-wide, *fully integrated health system*, responsible for delivering health services to more than 4.3 million people living in Alberta (AHS, 2019). Fully integrated health system refers to a health system that provides "all levels of care - primary, secondary, tertiary, restorative/ rehabilitative and long-term" with its "key characteristics" as an organization being "the organization's breadth, depth and geographic dispersion" which is typically "under one management umbrella" (Leatt, Pink and Guerriere, 2000, p.1). In the case of Alberta Health Services (AHS) it delivers most of the healthcare services in the province – acute care, public and population health,

continuing care including home care, rehabilitative care, emergency care, diagnostic care, amongst others. With this depth and breadth of provided services, AHS is one of the largest organizations in Canada with more than 102,700 direct employees (plus almost 11,700 staff in its wholly-owned subsidiaries), almost 8,400 physicians, dentists, podiatrists, and oral and maxillofacial surgeons as members of its medical staff as well as more than 14,100 volunteers. In terms of facilities, programs and services are offered in more than 850 facilities across that province and AHS has 106 acute care hospitals, five standalone psychiatric facilities, 8,483 acute beds, 472 subacute care beds, 27,163 continuing care beds/spaces (long-term care beds, designated supportive living beds, and community palliative and hospice beds/spaces) and 2,772 addiction and mental health beds, giving a total of 38,890 AHS operated and contracted beds in service. AHS also provides clinical education for university and college students (Alberta Health Services, 2019) as well as locum for researchers as almost all healthcare facilities in the province are either AHS-owned, AHS-contracted, AHS-affiliated or AHS-regulated. On an average day, AHS

- cares for almost 8,000 patients, 26,000 seniors in 464 facilities, 2,700 clients in addiction and mental health facilities,

- oversees home care for about 50,000 registered clients,

- performs 800 surgeries, delivers 150 babies and complete 210,900 laboratory tests, and

- operates 470 ambulances, 11 air ambulances, and 140 community ambulatory clinics. (Alberta Health Services, 2019).

Of the three organizations in this research, AHS is by far the largest in terms of size of operations, budget, employees, and the number of leadership positions and their scope of accountabilities. For example, currently, a senior operating officer who is the top leadership position for a big hospital and in an urban facility may be responsible for 2,000 – 5,000 employees is not an executive position for AHS (its hierarchical layer is around 4th: it typically reports to a Chief Zone Officer who reports to a Vice President who then reports to the CEO/President). Comparatively, a leader who is responsible for 5,000 employees in other Canadian jurisdictions will either be a President or Vice President.

2011 AHS Restructuring

On May 03, 2011, AHS announced a major restructuring with the principal objective of the restructuring being to "better align AHS structure and people to achieve AHS goals" (Alberta Health Service, 2011). Amongst its key areas of focus, the restructuring (the preferred term was 'realignment') focused heavily on the leadership cadre within the organization, a point AHS's CEO emphasized in his initial memo: "I'd like to stress first that … these changes … primarily involve AHS' senior leadership."(Alberta Health Services, 2011). The major outcomes, processes, and characteristics of this realignment relevant to this research include:

- *The creation of five zones across the province for the delivery of care* (South Zone, Calgary Zone, Central Zone, Edmonton Zone and North Zone).

- *The introduction of the dyad model of leadership decision making* whereby an administrative leader and a clinician leader are partnered for joint leadership.

- *The appointment of several senior leaders to new roles within AHS* at all senior leadership levels (excepting the CEO).

- *Provincial Services Model for Support Services*. Support Services have been defined to include the following: Laboratory Services, Diagnostic Imaging Services, Pharmacy Services, Nutrition and Food Services, Environmental Services, Linen Services and Protective Services and Parking.

- *The Provincial Services Model for Corporate Services.* "Corporate Services will be … based on three legs: transactional services, centres of expertise and business partner services."

- *Establishment of a structure in each realigned area*. "Portfolios [should] develop their proposed organization structures in conjunction with their EVP with consultation with the ZEL and Provincial Clinical Services Leadership."

- *Anticipated Change-Impact Scenarios.* AHS articulated the following considerations regarding anticipated impacts of the realignment to the scope of leadership action and the impact on people as individual employees:

  - Ability for Leaders to make decisions regarding their areas – "Local decision making and autonomy will increase."

  - Role Changes – "In most cases, roles and positions will remain largely unchanged. In some cases, roles and positions will be changed as part of the restructuring. This might impact reporting relationships and scope of responsibility".

- o Layoffs – "Realignment is not about staff reductions. Our focus will be on retention…there is enough work that we need everyone."

- o Accessing newly created senior leadership opportunities – "Where there are new roles… there will be an expression of interest process targeted at the appropriate levels of the organization."

- o Filling newly created positions – "Positions will be filled by appointment based on skills and expertise. Competitions will be held in some cases."

  (Alberta Health Service, 2011)

AHS' Leadership Structure

AHS defined its senior leaders as positions below the CEO and down to vice presidents. The broad career levels are, in descending order:

- The CEO (Chief EXECUTIVE Officer)

- The EVPs (Executive Vice Presidents)

- The SVPs (Senior Vice Presidents)

- The VPs (The Vice Presidents)

Organization: Covenant Health

History

Though Covenant Health as an organization started in 2008, the history of its component entities began around 1863 when the Youville Home in St. Albert, Alberta, was founded by the Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns) of Montreal, Canada (Highlights in Our History, Covenant Health, n.d.) as part of the Catholic Church's health mission and

ministry. What was began in 1863 continued on in several forms as part of the Catholic Church's health care ministry till 2008 when Covenant Health came into existence following an internally started efforts at the consolidation of Catholic Healthcare organizations in province of Alberta. Covenant Health's consolidation brought together 16 Catholic healthcare organizations under one organization, with over 10,000 employees.

The Nature of the Organization, Services Provided, and Facilities

Covenant Health is "a denominational health care organization, providing a full spectrum of care" in Alberta (Alberta Health services, 2019, p.81). Almost all healthcare services delivered in Alberta is provided by Alberta Health Services and Covenant Health. While "Covenant Health is an independent, separate legal entity with a separate Board of Directors" (Alberta Health services, 2019, p.81), it is considered the largest contracted service provider for AHS. Historically, Catholic health care in Alberta which is Covenant Health today, is the oldest health care service in the province having been around for more than 150 years. It has the "largest budget and covers the largest geographic area of any public Catholic health agency in Canada". (Hoskins, 2017, p.2). In 2015 it had a budget of almost a billion Canadian dollars (at $895m), with 88 percent of its revenue coming from the provincial government and making up about 5% of the provincial health budget. It accounts for 10 percent of ER visits, 20 percent of deliveries and 12 percent of acute care beds in the province (Hoskins, 2017) and 1 in 4 physicians in the province has privileges to provide care at a Covenant site (Covenant Health, 2019). It has 984 acute

care beds and 1559 continuing care beds (Covenant Health, 2019). In terms of service activity, in 2018-2019 it recorded:

- Acute patient days: 332,079

- Resident days: 536,962

- Emergency visits: 188,627

- Outpatient visits: 398,532

- Surgery cases: 32,686

- Deliveries: 9,544

- Diagnostic imaging exams: 253,812

- Laboratory tests: 1,2766,052 (Covenant Health, 2019)

As an organization, Covenant Health has about 10,721 employees, 846 physicians (plus an additional 1,494 that have privileges to care for patients in its facilities) and 2,364 volunteers. After Alberta Health Services, it is the next biggest healthcare organization in Alberta. It has a 13-person executive leadership team and a 10-person Board of Directors that currently includes Ed Stelmach (former Alberta Provincial Premier) as its chair and the Most Reverend Richard Smith, the Archbishop of the Catholic Diocese of Edmonton. One thing unique about Covenant Health is that while its services is provided to all Albertans regardless of their religious faith, the organization itself adheres to the beliefs, ethics and practices of the Catholic Church and has a very close relationship with the catholic bishops in Alberta who provide guidance regarding healthcare issues that affect the teachings and beliefs of the Catholic church such as Assisted Dying and abortion which are both legal in Canada. In this sense, Covenant Health has dual accountability: "Its board

has a commitment to AHS, which sets annual targets for quality and cost. But Covenant must also adhere to policies set by the Catholic Bishops of Alberta" (Hoskins, 2017, p.3). Leadership in this environment, thus, includes meeting the needs of both the Catholic Church and the people of Alberta.

Organizational Restructuring Change: 2008 Consolidation

"Covenant Health is a not-for-profit, faith-based health care corporation that resulted from the October 7, 2008 merger of 16 multi-level-care Catholic facilities in Alberta, Canada." (Murphy, 2010, p.2). The goals for this merger, termed consolidation, were to revitalize the mission and pursue a renewed vision for catholic healthcare, leverage the strength of the 16 sites, and simplify and streamline relationships as one operating entity and with the Catholic Health of Alberta as the Public Juridic Person which in the Catholic Church's Canon Law means a legal entity that allows the Church's ministries to function in the name of the Catholic Church (Shea, 2009). "We believe the new consolidated organization will be well positioned to strengthen and revitalize a 145-year legacy of Catholic health providers meeting the needs of Albertans with compassion, resourcefulness and dedication." (Alberta Catholic Bishops Statement, August 7, 2008 in Shea, 2009, p.65).

Leadership Structure (Pre and Post Consolidation)

From several CEOs and executive team members pre-consolidation, Covenant Health at and post- consolidation, adopted a single CEO with one set of senior leadership team comprising 13 leaders for the whole organization. The broad career levels are:

- The CEO (Chief Executive Officer)

- The Vice Presidents

- Senior Operating Officers

Organization: 3sHealth Shared Services Saskatchewan

History

To better understand the history of 3sHealth, one needs to know first about its predecessor organization, Saskatchewan Association of Healthcare Organizations, SAHO, which came into existence on July 1, 1993 by the merging of the Saskatchewan Home Care Association, the Saskatchewan Association of Special Care Homes, and the Saskatchewan Health Care Association (Forrester, 2009). SAHO's membership covered "the continuum of care – the hospitals, special care homes, home care" (Louise Simard, 2008 in Forrester, 2009, p. 16) and membership provided access to the following SAHO services – labour relations programs and services, workplace health and safety support, employee benefits programs, communications consulting, payroll services, materials management program, direct mailings and reduced rates for conferences and education programs. Other services on a fee-for-service basis included legal counsel, research and report writing (Forrester, 2009, pp.22-23). In summary, SAHO was created as a shared services organization that enabled its members to access centralized programs and services, removing the need for each of them to maintain their own in-house departments for these services that are centrally available. This was the case until 2012 when 3sHealth Shared Services Saskatchewan was created.

The Nature of the Organization, Services Provided, and Facilities

Unlike Alberta Health Services and Covenant Health, 3sHealth is a shared services organization that does not provide direct clinical care. Rather it provides services to the health authorities that provide care – some of these services are mentioned in the immediate next section. In all, it is a shared services organization for twelve health authorities in the Province of Saskatchewan (AHS and Covenant Health are in the Province of Alberta). The concept of shared service refers to "the concentration or consolidation of functions, activities, services or resources into one stand-alone unit. The one unit then becomes the provider…to several other client units" (Bergeron, 2003, as cited by Burns and Yeaton, 2008, p.10). In healthcare, "Health shared services are part of a larger trend toward managing costs by streamlining" services. (Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Healthcare, 2011, p.1). And healthcare shared services organization is found in other Canadian provinces such as New Brunswick, British Columbia, and Ontario (Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Healthcare). Since this research was concluded, the Province of Saskatchewan has also gone to the fully integrated health services model by merging all the 12 health authorities in the Province into one healthcare organization similar to AHS. However, 3sHealth was still retained as a shared services organization to the new entity. Currently, 3sHealth has a 9-person Board of Directors and an 8-person executive team and over its 7-year history has generated $362 million ($57.6 million in fiscal 2018-2019 alone) in savings for the Province of Saskatchewan (3sHealth, 2019).

In terms of leadership, a visible feature of a shared services organization is leading through influence and persuasion. As *LRP1* shared during the interview: *it is the smallest organization I've ever worked for but it's probably the most challenging job I've ever had because as a shared service organization we've got to lead through influence…[because] they don't report to you (LRP1)*. To illustrate his point, he added further: *LRP8 did a count one time and said: "I think it's about 240 hands that have to go in the air at the end of the day for us to get agreement (LRP1)*. Another manifestation of leading through influence is the approval process for projects for which 3sHealth needs to target for savings:

> *So when we take a business case forward, we get the operational group to validate our work…Then we take it to the transitional oversight committee and Council of CEOs. Then it comes to our Board, then it goes to the Governing Council, and then a lot of these business cases need to go [to] the ministry, sometimes all the way to Cabinet for approval (LRP1).*

In its 2018-2019 Annual Report, 3sHealth summed up the expectations and targets that they are focused on meeting:

> The organization's vision is to provide province-wide services that better support a high-performing and sustainable patient- and family-centred health system. Two key targets include positively impacting the lives of 1.2 million people and saving $1 billion dollars by 2025. (3sHealth, 2019, p.7).

Organizational Restructuring Change: 3sHealth Formation

As a successor organization to SAHO, 3sHealth was created on April 17, 2012 (Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan, 2013, p.101). 3sHealth mandate is "to provide shared services to Saskatchewan healthcare organizations and to certain healthcare organizations outside of the province" (Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan, 2013, p.101) and "to support Saskatchewan's healthcare system and help ensure its long-term sustainability… [and] actively contribute to system-wide efforts to identify new shared services opportunities" (3sHealth, n.d.). Currently 3sHealth line of services and programs include employee benefits program, provincial contracting, contracting management, payroll, supply chain, staff scheduling, transcription services, Gateway online, Nursing Information System Saskatchewan (NISS), provincial linen service, lean initiatives, enterprise resource planning, business development, clinical services and disability income program (3sHealth, n.d.). 3sHealth uses a business case model to get its proposals approved. This model involves the creation of an identified future state, then an analysis of the current state for gaps, then the development of interim reports of potential actions that could be taken, based on the interim report, options analyses is conducted leading to the development of a business case, finally this business case is presented to the stakeholder-organizations, the 3sHealth Governing Council, for approval.

2012 Restructuring: Formation of 3sHealth

Key events of the formation of 3sHealth in 2012 relevant to this research include:

- *Chief Executive Officer*: 3sHealth's first CEO was recruited in 2012. The new CEO was expected to lead the restructuring in a newly formed organization.

- *Recruitment of Senior Leaders*: Following his coming on board, the CEO started building his leadership team leading to the recruitment of other leaders. Most of these leaders came from other organizations and had new portfolios to lead. And their new accountabilities were mostly province-wide.

- *New Leadership Environment*: From leadership context and learning perspectives, both the CEO and most of the leaders were new to the organization, having just been recruited and mandated to lead the provision of common services to the Saskatchewan health system. Both they and their leadership environment were new.

- *Leading Various Stakeholder Groups and Processes*: 3sHealth leaders' restructuring process requires them to build business cases and present and get each case approved by several health organizations, and depending on the business case, may require approval by the Government of Saskatchewan. Leaders in 3sHealth do not only lead their organization and areas but must also lead the discussions and collaboration towards stakeholder agreement and approvals. Leading the restructuring thus means not only internal 3sHealth employees but also engaging leaders of other healthcare organizations and the provincial government at very senior levels. They lead internally and externally simultaneously.

Governance and Leadership Structure

The 3sHealth Governing Council, made up of the representatives from the Regional Health Authorities and the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, appoints the 3sHealth Board which governs 3sHealth activities. 3sHealth is led by a CEO with 6 senior leaders reporting to the CEO's position.

The broad career levels of 3sHealth senior leadership are:

- The CEO (Chief Executive Officer)

- The Vice Presidents

- Directors

Brief historical and leadership background were provided above so that the leaders' organizational context of the restructuring could be understood. From the above it is clear that the *LRPs* were leading restructuring in fairly new organizations, the restructuring meant expanded scope of accountabilities for them, and they necessarily had to interface with substantial influencers and decision makers outside their own organization.

4.1.2   The Individual Context: Leaders' Experience of the Restructuring

4.**1.2.1**   **Brief Leaders' Profiles and Backgrounds towards Understanding Their Individual Context**

Leaders that participated in the research were senior leaders who, based on their positions and scope of responsibilities, led and/or participated significantly in the organizational restructuring in their organizations. All of them have been in healthcare for

a number of years [data was not sought for exact number of years but leaders provided indicative data through their responses to interview questions]. Two of the leaders (8%) were Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), the top executive position in their organizations. Eighteen (18) of the twenty three (24) participants (75%) reported directly to either the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or to the Chief Operations Officer with overwhelming majority of them being Vice Presidents or equivalent Medical Directors in the cases of physician-leaders. Three (3) of the leaders (12.5%) reported to these vice presidents. Occupationally, 21 (87.5%) of the leaders were non-physician administrative leaders while 3 (12.5%) were physician leaders, a difference which is notable because of the dyad leadership model that pairs or groups physician leaders and their non-physician counterparts in joint leadership enactment. Other **s**elected demographic and other relevant information on leaders are presented in a tabular format below (Table 4.1) so that more information is available to assist in understanding the individual context of the leaders' restructuring experience.

Legend:

LRP	=	Leadership Research Participant
U	=	Urban-based Leader
SU/R	=	Semi-Urban/Rural-based Leader
D	=	In a dyad partnership
ND	=	Not in a dyad partnership
Z	=	Accountable for a Zone (Clinical Services only)
P	=	Accountable Province-wide (Clinical Support and/or Corporate Services)
M	=	Male
F	=	Female
ML/P	=	Medical Leader/ Physician

TABLE 4.1:   A Tabular Summary of Leaders' Demography and Attributes

	LRP	Organization	Leader's Titles	Male/ Female	Urban-based/ Semi Urban/ Rural-based	Provincial/ Zone Scope	Dyad/ Non Dyad	Medical Leader/ Physician
1	LRP1	Org1	CEO	M	U	P	ND	
2	LRP2	Org1	Vice President	F	U	P	ND	
3	LRP3	Org1	Director	F	U	P	ND	
4	LRP4	Org1	Director	F	U	P	ND	
5	LRP5	Org1	Vice President	M	U	P	ND	
6	LRP6	Org1	Vice President	M	U	P	ND	
7	LRP7	Org1	Executive Director	F	U	P	ND	
8	LRP8	Org1	Vice President	M	U	P	ND	
9	LRP9	Org1	Director	F	U	P	ND	
10	LRP10	Org1	Director	F	U	P	ND	
11	LRP11	Org2	Vice President/ Zone Medical Director	M	U	Z	D	ML/P
12	LRP12	Org2	Zone Medical Director	M	U OR SU/R	Z	D	ML/P
13	LRP13	Org2	Chief Zone Officer/ Senior Vice President	M	U OR SU/R	Z	D	
14	LRP14	Org2	Chief Zone Officer/ Senior Vice President	M	U OR SU/R	Z	D	
15	LRP15	Org2	Chief Zone Officer/ Senior Vice President	F	U OR SU/R	Z	D	
16	LRP16	Org2	Senior Operating Officer/ Vice President	F	U	P	D	
17	LRP17	Org2	Senior Operating Officer/ Vice President	F	U	P	D	
18	LRP18	Org2	Zone Medical Director	F	U OR SU/R	Z	D	ML/P
19	LRP19	Org2	Senior Operating Officer/ Vice President	M	U	P	D	
20	LRP20	Org3	Vice President	M	U	P	ND	
21	LRP21	Org3	Vice President	F	U	P	ND	
22	LRP22	Org3	Vice President	F	U	P	ND	
23	LRP23	Org3	CEO	M	U	P	ND	
24	LRP24	Org3	Vice President	M	U	P	ND	

4.1.2.2   LRPs' Individual Context

LRPs described the individual context of their restructuring experience in two broad ways. In the first instance they described how they responded to the restructuring and how they navigated the activities that came with the restructuring. In terms of context this is important because it provides the direct and practical experience of the learners which is essentially the fundament for the exploration of learning mechanisms and outcomes. In the second and related instance, *LRPs* gave account of their feelings and wishes about the restructuring, but not in regard to themselves as individuals, rather towards the organization and the health system. This part of the context presents some of *LRPs'* views and perceptions of their organizations and the health system and through them we got a glimpse of some of the "underlying relations between [the] learning environments… and the interior world of the learner." (Khan, Qualter and Young, 2012, p.860).

The accounts of the *LRPs'* experience r*elative to themselves as individuals* manifested under three areas. The first is *reactin*g where leaders explained their response to the initiation of the restructuring. *Reacting* is important because the nature of restructuring in publicly-funded health systems is that it is typically imposed (Wynne, 2004), perceived as a threat with low trust levels and high anger (Burke, 2003) and can impact learning in the workplace (Nikolova et al., 2014). From a critical realist perspective as argued by Archer (2003), an individual's contexts and concerns influence their engagement. The second area is *performing* which articulated what *LRPs* did during

restructuring. The third, *struggling*, described what leaders found challenging as they went through restructuring.

Reacting:

The first area, *reacting*, explains the response of the leaders to restructuring. The analysis of the data showed that at the beginning of the restructuring the two principal, immediate reactions for the leader, *relative to them as individuals*, revolved around the leader's own employment status, with questions, uncertainty, and anxiety around job security and job competition. Leaders wanted to know if they had a job or not. And if they still had a job, what job was that. If they did not have a job, were there other jobs available and were there processes to compete for those jobs. Those who did not have this reaction were the CEOs (2 out of the 24 *LRPs*) and those who were appointed to or recruited into their positions following external competition, *before or as part of* recruitment related to the restructuring. The majority experienced anxiety about job security and uncertainty around job competition. Participants *LRP14 and LRP12* exemplified the reaction of those whose jobs ceased to exist and those who did not know whether or not they had jobs. For *LRP12* especially given that he was away from work when the restructuring began, the anxiety was heightened because he was away on vacation and the organization did not initiate contact with him to advise him of his employment status. He had to do so himself: *"[I] connected by telephone on numerous occasions to firstly know that I still had a job… (LRP12)".* For *LRP14* the anxiety was also present though the organization gave him

advance notice that his position was to be eliminated and that there was going to be a competition for the new jobs that were available.

> *It was particularly tough for me quite frankly… I was told that the position had been eliminated and that I was going to need [to] reapply… and go through the competition …. it was quite a stressful time … having to go through competition for a position after being eliminated. (LRP14).*

The expressions *"particularly tough"* and *"quite stressful"* (*LRP14*) indicate the depth of anxiety that followed the elimination of the leader's job and the uncertainty around competing for a new job. *LRP23* elaborated further that "*there was a lot of anxiety among people who had been employed for a long time whether they had a job. (LRP23).* Unsurprisingly, job loss anxiety was least or absent among those whose jobs continued such as *LRP24 ("I was in the same role, same title… but just got expanded")* and *LRP20 ("I was similar to what I have now. I was the vice president … very similar level of responsibility and authority and accountability")*. However, low or absent job loss anxiety was not always the case as evidenced by *LRP17* whose job continued but still experienced anxiety:

> *I maintained my role as Vice President.... So short of a few anxious months, because of course if you don't have a provincial program you don't need a provincial lead and it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out you're on that severance list. (LRP17)*

It is informative that though *LRP17* continued in her role, did not face job loss or job competition, this did not allay the job loss anxiety for her. *LRP17* represented the situation where *job loss and job continuation* anxiety was present among leaders despite

actual job loss not occurring. For *LRP17, prospective* job loss anxiety was felt beyond the

beginning of the restructuring and continued as restructuring activities progressed. This

finding seems to suggest that job loss anxiety persisted for some leaders beyond the initial

reaction phase and without regard to actual job loss or not. A related finding was that

leaders resisted the restructuring at the beginning due to anxiety related to the potential

for job loss as expressed by *LRP22: "there was resistance to that…"[what does] this mean*

for me? Am I gonna lose my job?"

    The other employment status-related finding was around uncertainty created for

LRPs who had to apply and compete for new jobs. The leaders that had to apply for their

jobs included those whose jobs were eliminated and those whose jobs continued but they

applied and got some of the positions that were created and available. Competition meant

that the new job was not guaranteed. The leader may get it or s/he may not. In *LRP13's*

case, there was a formal requirement for the leader to first indicate that they were

interested in the position*: "So I did have to express interest. Go through an interview".*

Instead of an expression of interest, *LRP3* had to do a formal application: "*I applied … and*

that's the job I moved into…significant career change for me". LRP22 is an example of

leaders who could apply to more than one position: *"there were new positions to be*

applied on for sure …. So I chose to only apply on that one position... and I was very blessed

with getting that position" (LRP22). One finding that applied to most of the *LRPs* is the fact

that their areas of accountabilities got expanded. This is important for understanding

what *LRPs* learnt from restructuring in the sense that they were tasked with leading new

functions, new programs, new processes, expanded geographies and multiple stakeholders.

A related finding that had the potential to reduce anxiety was the commitment made by senior management to select leaders from their internal cadres first. *LRP23,* the CEO of *Org3*, demonstrated this commitment:

I said…"here's the structure …we want to fill that structure with the most capable folks and if there isn't people within our organization or capable we would look outside, but we would look inside first to make sure". (LRP23)

This commitment by *LRP23* was corroborated by two senior leaders in *Org3*, *LRP19* and *LRP21.According to LRP21, LRP23* stated "*that we have the talent that we need within the organization"* and that the restructuring "*was not about making changes because we didn't have the talent that we needed (LRP21)".* This decision to consider internal leaders first implied a step that had the potential to reduce anxiety and uncertainty for leaders as the literature has suggested that uncertainty leads to stress (Starr, 2011) and leaders did express anxiety as discussed above. Overall, this finding about job loss anxiety and job competition uncertainty is supported by previous research which indicate that at the beginning, restructuring is viewed and perceived as a threat (Nikolova, Van Ruysseveldt, De Witte, & Syroit, 2014; Chen, Westman, & Eden, 2009). The finding that leaders could experience job loss anxiety even when they did not lose their jobs aligns with the literature in terms of things that 'survivors' (Wagar, 2016; Burke, 2003) of organizational restructuring might experience. There is also a connection to learning in the sense that levels of stress, especially when it overwhelms, can and do impact learning (DeRue and

Wellman, 2009; Fielder & Garcia, 1987; Sweller, 1994). Through the critical realist lens, leader's experience of stress could be causative towards their learning.

Performing:

The second area is about *performing***.** Restructuring has been defined "as an organizational change that is much more significant than commonplace changes" (de Jong et al., p.93), involves "deeper changes" (Stanford, 2007, p. 311), is a time of significantly fluid situations (McKinley and Scherer, 2000; Spiers et al., 2016) regarding "roles, responsibilities, knowledge flow, and organizational and unit-based directions" (Spiers et al. 2016, p.69), and an activity that may result in the "creation of new divisions or the consolidation of existing ones" (McKinley and Scherer, 2000. p.741). The three organizations that were researched all underwent restructuring involving significant changes that impacted roles, responsibilities, structural units ["divisions"], and the health system. Leaders in the organizations were saddled with the responsibility of implementing the restructuring activities. For the *LRPs*, restructuring of their organizations required them to perform activities supportive of the restructuring. *Performing* articulates *LRPs'* account of the restructuring activities that they led and/or participated in as part of their organization's restructuring. Analysis of the interview data showed that the *LRPs'* major restructuring activities were around 1) determining and filling new leadership positions, 2) navigating new reporting relationships, 3) creation and/or realignment of organization structures, 4) assuming full responsibility for the new areas of accountability, and 5) developing necessary relationships. Taken together, this section on *performing* explained

the activities that the *LRPs* undertook as part of executing their restructuring activities. These are presented below.

Determining and Filling New Positions:

The data showed that determining what type of positions were needed, where they were needed and how many of them, and how to fill the positions were one of the first tasks that *LRPs* undertook. The data suggests that this happened hierarchically and sequentially. Starting at the apex of the organization, the CEO-level, this involved recruiting their direct reports, individuals that would form the senior leadership team, and doing so quickly. As stated by *LRP1*, the CEO of *Org1*, recruitment of leaders was a top and urgent priority as he essentially had only one leader in addition to himself to lead the new organization – *"when I came on board* [to lead the restructuring as the top executive, we]*…only had two vice presidents, two direct reports to the CEO" (LRP1).* In his own case, the only other *CEO-LRP*, *LRP23,* the CEO of *Org3,* he too made selection of leaders a top priority: *"we were able to put our senior team together quickly" (LRP23).* In the end, *LRP1* felt that the time and effort spent on forming his senior leadership team was worth it: *"I was really fortunate….We've been really blessed to bring those talented people together" (LRP1).* The rationale for determining and filling the leadership positions quickly was not to *"lose momentum" (LRP23)* in restructuring which has been described above as a period of fluidity and uncertainty for leaders and the organization (William and Scherer, 2000; Spiers et al., 2016). Beyond the CEO-level, the non CEO-*LRPs*, once in place, also had to determine and fill positions that they needed as well, that is individuals who would

become their direct reports and make up their immediate team. Similar to the CEO-LRPs, this was also one of their first priorities as exemplified by *LRP14:*

> *the next piece … was putting our team in place, ensuring we had the right team [to] support the work going forward… I think we were able to create a team fairly early on and fairly quickly. (LRP14).*

In addition to *LRP14*, *LRP12's* account also indicated as well that one of their first tasks was "*how to go about proposing a leadership team, which included operational leaders" (LRP12)*. However, job losses did occur as the *LRPs* built their own teams as *LRP17* shared*: "we did sever a few people… as part of re-doing our org structure... And we did lose some numbers (LRP17)*. As described, the job losses here seem to be permanent job elimination without any opportunity to compete for other positions. This would provide an instance where downsizing, which eliminates the size of organizations and/or teams, was implemented as part of the restructuring (Wagar, 2016). Making permanent job loss decisions are always difficult for leaders' making decisions of this magnitude. As well, sometimes the leader's personal values and those of the organization may clash and be in conflict in these circumstances. It may also be new ground for leaders who have never terminated an employee before. Novelty and new territory have been identified as causative factors in what leaders may learn from experience (Thomas and Bennis, 2002). Additionally, it presents leaders the opportunity to learn or enhance their learning on how to make difficult decisions in times of significant change. It may also impact a leader's identity as this may lead them to question and reflect on their leadership: who they are as leaders, the values they personally hold, and how others will perceive their leadership.

Navigating New Reporting Relationships:

New positions and changes to existing ones do result in new reporting lines. Many *LRPs* mentioned experiencing reporting changes in terms of who they reported to (*LRP3, LRP4, LRP7, LRP11, LRP12, LRP14, LRP16, LRP17, LRP18, LRP19*) with the main issue being *"really developing and understanding how reporting would work (LRP11)*. As part of understanding how the new reporting relationship would work, some *LRPs* mentioned what they knew about their new superiors as a guide to how the relationship could be navigated. *LRP17* stated that her new bosses *"by virtue of just their personalities, they're not the most touchy feely of guys"*. *LRP16* expressed similar feeling: "*[boss' name] was a hard driver, and … he pushed buttons in people…. So when I reported to [him] I was like, "oh no, this is going to be interesting!*" An additional issue came up for medical leaders, that is, physicians who held both clinical and operational leadership roles (*"you know the medical world is always a bit different"* - *LRP11*, one out of 3 medical *LRPs*), as illustrated by *LRP12*, the second medical *LRP*: *"we report up in one direction for operations and another direction for medical affairs"* (*LRP12*). According to *LRP12 and LRP20*, this reporting on the medical side was guided by the "*Medical Staff Bylaws*" which is signed at the ministerial level (*LRP11*), beyond the organization. *LRP11* implied that this reporting is clear to physicians. However, *LRP12* acknowledged that reporting in two different directions was not as clear because "*it became a little confusing going forward" (LRP12).* From an experience and context perspective, reporting is one of the areas where the leader exercises his/her organizationally-given and defined authorities "because of his or her title and control of resources." (Billot et al., 2013, p.93). Inherent to it as well is the

formal leader-follower dynamic that has the potential to generate powers that could influence leader's learning in particular ways.

Creation or Realignment of Organization Structures:

Most *LRPs* discussed their involvement with making changes to their organization structures. This ranged from "*I was involved with the restructuring process*" and *"we did a bit of restructuring" (LRP21)* to "*we shook things up significantly*" (*LRP4*) and "*we had to revise the whole structure…*" *(LRP11). LRP15* gave a more fulsome account of what the realignment of organization structures entailed:

> *Once we were in place, a part of our work was really to develop the structure underneath, what that meant, what that would look like. And so looking at the functions, the programs and the services, existing organizational structures, and from there actually coming out of that with the reporting and organizational structure….(LRP15)*

Some of the *LRPs* noted the issue of how long the realignment of organization structures took. *LRP20* observed that still *"it took a while to establish those structures" (LRP20)* and for *LRP4* it involved *"a lot detailed work that was very time consuming" (LRP4)*. This seems to suggest that, as we saw above, filling new positions as part of restructuring needed to be done quickly so that a leader is put into position so s/he can lead the other restructuring activities. And that these other activities seemed to take longer to complete. Further, some *LRPs* observed that the pre-existing structures presented issues that needed to be resolved. *LRP17* gave an example where leaders in the

pre-existing structure *"spent more time on a plane"* travelling. He opined that *"the structure we had was ridiculous, quite honestly"* while *LRP13* described how he perceived the structure that was in place before the restructuring:

> *my issue had always been in the organization, you got the CEO, and then you got a thousand strings coming off the CEO and at no point did any of them intersect… if you had a problem it had to go all the way to the CEO. (LRP13)*

Overall, *LRPs* welcomed the realignment of organization structures. *"Like we really needed to do this change" (LRP4)*, *"it was a necessary restructure" (LRP17)*, *"of necessity, we needed to change that structure" (LRP12)*.

Establishing or re-aligning organization structures is a key part of restructuring and could be challenging to leaders from the point of view of the scope of interactions that they need to have with the organization and the health system as part of putting into place the organization structure that supports their operations. Any of these interactions could influence what leaders learn from restructuring and may highlight the role context plays in leaders' learning. Coming up with new or revised organization structures is laden with opportunities to understand and learn from the *context* of operations as well as relating with others.

In addition to creating or realigning the organization structures, navigating new reporting relationships, and determining and filling positions, as part of their *performing* restructuring activities, leaders, being new to their portfolios or have their portfolios changed and/or expanded, needed to take control of their new areas of responsibility.

Assuming Full Responsibility for the New Areas of Responsibility:

The analysis and interpretation of data revealed that restructuring translated to changes in areas of accountability for the *LRPs*. Many *LRPs* gave account of what assuming full responsibility for their new accountabilities meant for them. In terms of scope, *LRP3* stated that it was *"everything…from strategic planning to improvement planning and engaging [with] stuff on a daily basis" (LRP3)*. In terms of portfolios that he was in charge of, *LRP20* described it as *"an expansion exercise"*, a statement that typified additional responsibilities that almost all *LRPs* took on as part of the restructuring, mostly by responsibilities being expanded zone-wide or the whole province *(LRP2, LRP3, LRP4, LRP5, LRP6, LRP7, LRP8, LRP10, LRP11, LRP12, LRP20, LRP21, LRP22, LRP23)* . For other *LRPs* restructuring additionally brought clarity in terms of accountability. *LRP11* stated that the *"…the biggest difference was that …there was clear responsibility operationally… for all programs" (LRP11)*. Similarly, as expressed by *LRP15*, the restructuring provided *"full accountability for planning, service planning, for the performance expectations, just … significant elevation in terms of the accountabilities". (LRP15)*. *LRP13* connected how the restructuring made a difference to how accountability used to be perceived. According to him,

> *I think it was the first time too that we tried to put a neck in the noose... A single neck and a noose to drive some accountability 'cause prior to that there was no means to be able to look at a particular challenge or gap and hold someone accountable for a solution. (LRP13)*

For the two CEO-LRPs, external focus was stated as part of their restructuring accountabilities. For *LRP1 "Our mandate was really to work together with all the health regions and the cancer agency as their shared service organization to both improve quality and achieve cost savings (LRP1)"*. For the other CEO, *LRP23*:

> *I think the other big shift is that the board really said to me that they wanted me to… be more externally focused than I have been in the past. So you know, before I was mostly internally focused. I was hands on you know operations, running hospitals, where they said, "we know you love that stability, and that's what you want to do, but that's not what you're going to do." (LRP23)*

Assuming responsibility for new areas of accountabilities involves interacting with other people who may be completely new to the leaders. It could also involve higher ups where the leader needs to achieve clarity in terms of expectations. As well, it could be leaders' direct reports and team where they will need to understand how things actually work on the ground. These highlight how leaders' learning may be impacted through listening to others and also hearing about others including their superiors and subordinates.

Developing Necessary Relationships:

Though all *LRPs* highlighted the role that building necessary relationships played in the restructuring, they differed in terms of who one needed to build the relationship with. Of course, as mentioned above, one key and primary new relationship building was the one with their superiors. However, this represented one nugget out of other key

relationships that were built. Some of the *LRPs* gave account of building peer-to-peer relationships. *LRP13* is an example of leaders who sought out peers for relationship building. In her own case, who she needed to build the relationship with was based on similarity of context and the potential for tackling comparable issues. As she explained:

> *we worked together because we share many of the same challenges...So I think there is spectacular value in … forming those relationships, learning from peer to peer discussion (LRP13)*

In a similar vein, *LRP16* added that similarity of function and familiarity with the leaders drove who relationship was built with: "*most of the leaders in the clinical support service area…were a familiar group…. And so…you could pick up the phone and say, "well, what do you think about this?" So that help[ed]" (LRP16).* Similar account from *LRP15* emphasized building this relationship early: "*I think that we probably had a greater connection with the other zone leaders early on, and kept closely connected, tried to really work off of each other a bit" (LRP15).*

Another form that relationship building took was building relationship with one's leadership dyad. Six *LRPs* (three medical and three operational leaders), representing 100% of the *LRPs* that were in a dyad partnership (a formal relationship where the medical leader and the operational leader make joint leadership decisions for their areas of accountability) focused their relationship building between the pair, as dyad partners. According to *LRP12* "*First and foremost what we did is we developed a relationship…a relationship with my… [dyad partner]".* *LRP14* further illustrated what was involved in developing the relationship with the dyad partner:

It was about developing that relationship for LRP18 and I, you know, what was going to be important towards moving forward, what was our style, how was our approach to the work and then what we saw as our priorities. (LRP14)

Though dyad relationship building was *"not an easy process" (LRP12)*, still all the *LRPs* in dyad relationships stated that building the relationship between themselves impacted the restructuring positively and enabled them to exercise joint leadership effectively, a point that *LRP14* emphasized: *"our teams … see very clearly [the] dyad relationship on top of the … organizational change. They don't see a medical leader and an administrative leader. They see joint leadership" (LRP14).* The other relationships that *LRPs* developed beyond peer-to-peer and dyads were with their teams (their direct reports and their wider teams) and with external stakeholders. As a performed activity, building relationships indicate the presence of pre-existing social structures whose interactions may exert causal influences on leaders' actions and outcomes (Bhaskar, 1989, pp. 12, 39–40; Archer, 1995, pp. 139, 147–148, 176). Learning has been identified as an important outcome for effective leadership (Vaill, 1999; Brown & Posner, 2001).

As part of further understanding the *LRPs'* experience of restructuring to enhance the later illumination of learning mechanisms and outcomes, in addition to *reacting* and *performing* discussed above, the next section presents and discusses what the leaders struggled with as part of their restructuring experience.

Struggling

In the throes of restructuring, *LRPs* experienced job loss and job competition anxiety and uncertainty, they navigated new reporting relationships, realigned their structures, assumed full responsibility for their areas of accountability and developed necessary relationships to enable them to execute the restructuring. *Struggling* presents and discusses what the *LRPs* found challenging and struggled with as they implemented the restructuring. "*With more responsibility comes bigger problems" (LRP19)* and *"We had too much coming at us" (LRP15)* – these representative statements from *LRPs* gave clues about struggling and the challenges that they faced during the restructuring and these were shared in the context of their restructuring experience.

At the outset, *LRPs* struggled with getting the support of the people that they needed to lead, influence, or inform. As shared by *LRP23, "that's probably where the hardest part of the initial work was, to make sure that we kept everybody on side." (LRP23)* and *"getting everyone to agree" (LRP24).* The effort to persuade and convince some of these people who were not supporting the restructuring from the beginning led the *LRPs* to a further challenging situation, this time having to have one-on-on conversations with these individuals. *"So at that time, some of those conversations let's say were the most contentious" (LRP5).* Another area that the *LRPs* had challenges was around *adding* restructuring as one more accountability, a project-type accountability, to their regular, ongoing, broader responsibilities. Healthcare is a 24/7, 365/day-a-year operation. Restructuring happens alongside the day-to-day activities that must still be done. As explained by *LRP15*

all of our [other] work was still occurring… at the same time as people were still

doing that foundational work of creating their teams, gaining the knowledge…

having to travel out to all their various communities to connect, to understand.

(LRP15)

And as further commented on by *LRP4*, "*all those people … like me, have daytime hat[s].*

All of us do. And those day to day services, those demands and needs don't go away.

(LRP4). And, reflecting, *LRP20* added – "*I think that … we … underestimated the amount*

of work this takes while you're still trying to run a twenty-four/seven care operation"

(LRP20). LRP12 mentioned a challenge that was specific to him as a medical leader. In his

words,

There were struggles in the approach, and there were struggles in the need to get

over the bumps… that were in the road. I am a physician … I'm used to making

decisions... [but] *from the operational perspective the process of decision-making*

is in effect simply that, a process. Process takes time. As a physician-leader it was

very difficult getting used to that fact. And [the fact that] *that process was*

dependent on number of co-dependencies: budget, staffing, relationships to

unions, relationships to cultures within the organization (LRP12).

Struggling and challenges were important factors in the *LRPs'* experience of

restructuring. Challenges have been identified as one of the factors that enable leaders to

learn (Van Velsor and McCauley, 2004).

What has been presented in the section immediately above were the context of

LRP's experience of restructuring from the point of view of themselves as *individuals*, that

is and in summary, how they *reacted* to the restructuring, what activities they *performed* as part of the restructuring, and what they *struggled* with and were *challenged* by. These experiences were explored so that the leader's context (C) for their learning could be understood, an important precursor to understanding their learning (O) and its causation (M). Going beyond their experience *relative to themselves as individuals*, *LRPs* also gave account of *their perceptions of their organizational restructuring context*. Though these perceptions were theirs, the focus was not on them as *individuals* but rather on how they *perceived the organizational context of the restructuring*. They started by giving accounts of their *understanding* of the rationale for the restructuring, then continued on to identify areas of the restructuring that they *criticised*, and then ended by sharing what they *hoped* restructuring will do for their organizations. These accounts of their experience, *relative to the LRPs as individuals* and *relative to their organization* together gives a fuller and more complete account of the *LRPs'* restructuring context, arising from the interview data. These three areas *relative to the organization*, are presented below. They conclude the *LRPs'* accounts of their restructuring experience.

Understanding

Understanding emerged from the interview data as *LRPs* described their account of the rationale for the restructuring in their organizations. Several *LRPs* (*LRP12, LRP13, LRP15, LRP16, LRP17, LRP18*) indicated that the restructuring was undertaken to correct the problems created by a previous restructure. For five *LRPs*, the restructuring was meant to tap into opportunities for creating efficiencies in the cost of running the publicly

funded health system. Other *LRPs* (*LRP20, LRP21, LRP 22, LRP23, LRP24*) stated that the restructuring was done to overcome a crisis that threatened the survival of a part of the health delivery system. *LRP17*, a leader for a provincial program, is one of those that felt that the restructuring was meant to correct mistakes from a previous restructure. As she stated *"we restructured for a reason. We weren't efficient." (LRP17*). In the context, she meant not being structurally efficient. She emphasized that it was a

"necessary restructure" (LRP17), a point echoed by *LRP12*: *"Of necessity we needed [to] change that structure" (LRP12).* The previous structure that *LRPs* described as needing to be changed created operational issues and excessive travelling for leaders *(LRP16, LRP17).* For *LRP12*, a medical leader, it produced *"clinical conundrums and problems".* He also added *"centralization"* of programs and services *(LRP12)* as one other issue that came out of the previous restructure that affected operational activities negatively. Similarly, *LRP13* and *LRP24* described the loss of local input, local decision-making, and local context as further issues from the previous restructure that the restructuring needed to address. As stated by *LRP13 "operating as a single geographic entity for the whole province" (LRP13)* created issues that resulted in *"no local context" (LRP13)* and *"no official connection … locally" (LRP18)* for health delivery decision making. In *LRP15*'s view *"we did not have full autonomy for necessarily all decisions"* in the previous structure. One way or the other, these *LRPs* saw the restructure as a necessary organizational activity to correct issues that arose from the previous restructure.

For some other *LRPs (LRP1, LRP2, LRP4, LRP6, LRP8)*, example being *LRP1*, restructuring was meant to tap into opportunities for cost saving efficiencies and

improving quality in the provincial health system. As he stated, "*We had a target* [set by the provincial government] *of saving 100 million dollars over a five year period of time…. That was fairly daunting task. We didn't know where all the savings would come from*" (LRP1). A fuller explanation of the rationale that included cost savings was provided by *LRP8* and they were: "*to improve the quality of service, to improve infection prevention and control procedures, to reduce costs, and to improve employee safety*" (*LRP8*) and through these, to relieve the health system which "*was under pressure*" (*LRP2*), mainly cost pressure as *LRP10* added further:

> *our objectives overall are to save money … for the healthcare budget. And we want to release clinician time from managing and ordering supplies, and we want to devote that to patient care …. And in releasing that clinician time there are savings that are going to be associated with that as well. And so we have a 68 million dollar saving over ten years that we anticipate from clinician time savings (LRP10)*

In addition to the cost savings rationale, *LRP4* described creating one provincial system as another key restructuring goal – "*the vision is we have one system*", a point that *LRP6* illustrated further:

> *we're currently made up of a health system of 13 plus partners and different organizations. So the first challenge and outcome is that we need[ed] to get to one provincial system that meets the need of those 13 partners… (LRP6)*

The account of other *LRPs* showed that restructuring was also undertaken to overcome a crisis (*LRP20, LRP21, LRP 22, LRP23, LRP24*). The nature of these crises were

both financial and operational, 'operational' specifically referring to a quality and infection control issue (*LRP1, LRP21)*. As explained by *LRP24*,

> *the trigger point for the coming together in many respects was a crisis in [one facility]…. And so when the … incident occurred… it was … a shot heard around the world. It had implications, ramifications for all of us. And [at] that time too, the political climate … when the Health Minister [is] saying that this is an issue, it's an issue…what that event triggered was an awareness that maybe we would be stronger together. (LRP24)*

The enormity of the crisis and its significance was such that *LRP24* stated that he was concerned that they *"might actually go out of existence"* if they played it *"safe"* *(LRP24)* with the needed restructuring. In similar vein, *LRP23* described the crisis and issues it generated as an "*absolute burning platform*" that made it clear that status quo was *"not viable"* (*LRP23*), hence the restructuring.

Through their accounts *LRPs* indicated that they understood the different rationales for the restructuring: to correct structure problems from the previous restructuring, to achieve costs savings for the health system, to move towards becoming one provincial system, and to overcome a significant crisis within the system. While they understood, they also criticized some of the aspects of the restructuring, which is what is addressed below.

Criticizing

As active participants in the restructuring, *LRPs* voiced concerns about the restructuring. *Criticizing* presents *LRPs*' account of questioning aspects of the restructuring, what was not working, outcomes that did not meet needs or expectations, and things that could have gone better. One of the first criticisms were around politicians and political direction. Given that Canadian healthcare operates on the publicly funded model with Provinces being mostly accountable for healthcare delivery, the criticism of provincial political leaders was hardly surprising to the researcher. *LRP12* aptly described it as *"the political nature of healthcare" (LRP12).* He went on to elaborate his *"frustrations"*:

> *I think one of the biggest organizational frustrations for me was how at the beck and call of the political masters we are. And how political decisions influence what we need to get at, and how we spend our time, waste our time, spin our wheels on issues that happen to be the flavour of the day. I mean [the former Minister for Health] was pretty hands on and critical…we [were] still called an incompetent bunch … [the former Minister and the former Premier] made us change so many things despite the fact that they made clinical sense. (LRP12)*

LRP16 also mentioned receiving *"a directive"* for her area from the same former Health Minister. She implied her frustration and disagreement as well. As she emphasized what the focus should be: *"it's about putting the patient first and the resident. It's not about what [the former Health Minister] wants…it's about the person who's there [to be served]" (LRP16).* As a leader who has been in the health system for a very long time,

LRP16 [Researcher: *LRP16* is retired as at the time of writing], comparing periods, ended her account by stating that "*we're far too political now. It's more political than ever*" *(LRP16)*. Additionally, other *LRPs* used similar terms to describe what they perceived as increased politicization of healthcare delivery. *LRP11* decried being prevented from talking to the communities that they provided health services to "*because of ministerial direction" (LRP11)*. According to him, *"that was particularly challenging" (LRP11)*. Further, during the interview stage of the research, activities having to do with elected officials affected the interview process. One scheduled interview was cancelled while the researcher was waiting outside the *LRP's* office, having arrived at the *LRP's* location after a 5-hour drive, because the *LRP* needed to attend an unscheduled meeting with an elected official. In another instance, an interview in progress was ended prematurely for another meeting with an elected official. On the third occasion, though the interview concluded without interruption, the *LRP* gave an advance notice that the interview may be cut short so he can see a politician. In the last occurrence, after the researcher have flown to the location the night before, the whole interview schedule for the next day involving several *LRPs* had been changed overnight so that some of the *LRPs* can make a short-notice meeting requested by elected officials.

In addition to criticisms leveled at politicians, *LRPs* further described not getting timely access to the leaders that they needed as part of implementing restructuring activities. These leaders included internal organizational leaders (mostly their superiors) as well as leaders in other organizations within the healthcare system that they needed to interact with. As acknowledged by *LRP8*, *"it's difficult to get their time and attention"*

(LRP8), referring to external leaders that he needed to interact with. *LRP17* stated similar experience, this time regarding her internal organizational superiors: *"access to them was almost impossible" (LRP17). LRP11* explained that the reason for limited access to his superiors could be attributed to the scope of their responsibilities: *"they have broad operational accountability for a lot of issues, and that created a bit of bottleneck in terms of getting things approved and move[d] forward" (LRP11). For LRP17,* her superiors were *"Hugely busy, huge portfolios, you know, weight of the world on their shoulders" (LRP17).*

Additionally, several participants mentioned that no formal post-restructuring review was ever done. *LRP15* posed not doing the review as a question *"did we really did do an evaluation? As a system, I don't think we did" (LRP15).* For *LRP12*: *"as an organization this is the first time that anybody has sat down and asked us to reflect* [referring to the research interview]*… So you'd be the first person that has come with these questions" (LRP12). LRP17* expressed surprise that post-restructuring review was not done, being that this is a common practice in the clinical side of healthcare, a view that was shared by *LRP20.* As *LRP17* described it: *"we do quality assurance reviews all the time for health care …They don't do that really in management. 'You know, let's do a post-mortem on this transition'" (LRP17).* Still referring to evaluation not being done, *LRP20* stated that he is "*a big advocate of knowing why, wanting to know why something worked well… not just "let's investigate what went wrong". You have to know why it worked well"* (LRP20).

Another issue that came up for a majority of participants is the view that the health system is biased more towards the needs of urban healthcare, and not so much for rural

and semi-urban. This is important because, as we shall see in the Outcomes (O) section later, *LRPs* who are mostly urban-based, expanded the context of their leadership by learning about rural healthcare.

While *LRPs* gave account of understanding the rationale for the restructuring and criticised aspects of it above, they also expressed their hopes in terms of what restructuring can do for their organizations and the health system. This is addressed immediately below, concluding this section of the *LRPs'* account of their restructuring experience.

Hoping and Improving

As part of their restructuring experience, *relative to the organization and the health system*, *LRPs* shared what they wanted the restructuring to do for their organizations and for the health system and some of the positive outcomes that were realized. *Hoping and Improving* describes the *LRPs* account of what they hoped the restructuring will do and the positive results that came out of it.

LRP23, one of the two *CEO-LRPs*, aspired to the restructuring to provide a new vision and a new future for their organization. According to him "*we don't have a vision for the future" (LRP23).* Counterintuitively he opined that "*Our vision is looking backwards*". He went on to elaborate:

> we've been so internally focused and focused on the past that we've lost our voice
>
> with government and other key decision makers on how we might positively
>
> influence those situations where people were not getting the services that they

require. So we expressed it in that way, which really resonated again with

everybody and so we came together … to create Org3 (LRP23).

The metaphor of *lost voice* and hoping to use the restructuring to restore it and

the need for a new vision and a restored "*mission fidelity*" (*LRP21*) were also mentioned

by *LRP20, LRP21*, and *LRP24*. Restructuring was thus approached as an opportunity for a

better, stronger future than the present. For *LRP12* it was

a time of excitement because finally we were looking at arriving at a structured

and better supported zone decision making and engagement of zone executive

leadership and reports in the affairs of local communities, local departments etc….

So that was an exciting time for us. I do believe and do remember, in fact we faced

this … more with the potential for where it could go and where it needed to be.

(LRP12).

Other *LRPs* noted that the restructuring was anticipated to re-invent and revitalize

clinical zones[1] as a key organizational area. As *LRP18* observed "*there were always zones.*

But the zones were very loosely organized" (*LRP18*). However, the restructuring

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[1] A clinical zone is a geographically demarcated organizational unit where all

clinical and patient care – acute, primary, community, mental, public, population,

paramedicine and others – are provided under the direct accountability of the leaders of

that zone for client and patient care but who only have indirect authority for clinical and

corporate support programs that enable the care (such as laboratory and diagnostics,

pharmacy, Human Resources, Finance and others) which are centralized provincially.

was the first time we identified a real true geographic identity… 'cause prior to that

there was no means to be able to look at a particular challenge or gap and hold

someone accountable for a solution, because for every gap there were 17 people

that sort of had to be involved, but nobody owned it. (LRP13)

LRP19 added that the main intent of the restructuring was to formalize the zones.
As he stated:

one of the biggest outcomes… [of the restructuring] was formalization of the zones.

That was the one of the largest outcomes of that realignment (LRP19).

LRP13 is of the same view with *LRP19* that "*the intent of formalizing the zones was*
to create a higher accountability at a local [clinical zone] level" *(LRP13).*

On their side, medical leaders gave account of how the restructuring made their
role more effective. Prior to the restructuring *LRP12* stated that "*as medical directors we*
weren't necessarily taken seriously" *(LRP12)* while *LRP11* added that *"my role as a clinical*
leader was not emphasized as much" (LRP11). All the three *medical-LRPs* (*LRP11, LRP12,*
LRP18) stated that the introduction of the dyad relationship during the restructuring
changed their roles from advisory to authoritative decision makers. All three described
this as a positive development. As an example, *LRP11* expressed this in some details:

having the emphasis on the dyad relationship and managing [the] zone from one

person perspective…has been a big plus in terms of managing issues on a daily

basis. [Also] in terms of planning, in terms of engagement, because people knew

that you were the lead in the zone and that the buck stopped for a lot of things

*there, not everything, but a lot of things. [*The emphasis on the dyad partnership

led to] *more efficient decision making. I had more pertinent information to make decisions, and we worked better as a team, and then lead. So it was easier also to lead the team of senior leaders that we had in the zone, which are a team of you know physicians and operational leaders. (LRP11)*

LRP15, an operational leader, also emphasized the welcome difference that the dyad relationship brought: *"I did work with physician leaders in somewhat dyad roles, but it really changed to a strengthened dyad role under that new aligned structure." (LRP15).* And especially more so for her because *LRP15* was neither a physician nor did she have a clinical background:

> *having my direct dyad partner as a clinician was a tremendous benefit, and has added to my personal growth and understanding from a clinical aspect as well. So that that was huge and continues to be huge. (LRP15)*

Overall, *LRPs* were positive and hopeful about what the restructuring could do for their organization and the health system. As *LRP5* describes it:

> *I want to position our organization in the system to be successful at the transformational projects and the system transformation and the achievement of the benefits that have been defined within that transformation…to help position us so that we can continue to identify opportunities… which ultimately ends in better health care, sustainable health care and continually improving things and gaining more efficiency…. That's what I want to do. I want to ensure that my organization is positioned and has the capabilities. (LRP5).*

Other *LRPs* expressed similar feelings. For L*RP2: "many of us are all still very hopeful around possibilities and opportunities, which is great".* And *LRP3: "If I do my job well, then what Org1 produces for the health system will be better. So I feel like if I do my job right, the health system will be better".* LRP4, LRP6, LRP12 and *LRP15* expressed similar sentiments, with *LRP15* concluding:

> *through this we were able to create a structure that really made a shift in terms of integration of the health services. I think that the structure supported the type of change that we needed. (LRP15)*

From the accounts of their experience above, *LRPs* were overall hopeful that the restructuring will result in positive outcomes for their organizations and the health system.

Being Humble and Vulnerable

Humility is another finding regarding *LRPs'* individual context during restructuring. Being humble and vulnerable requires "*understanding your own ego, and your own pride, and being willing to humble yourself before those that you're working with and serving"* (LRP6). He described this as *"an important goal"* in the leadership process. *LRP19*, a leader of a province-wide program, also mentioned being humble. He stated that "*You have to … display … humility … vulnerability to those you lead"* (*LRP19*). *LRP19* in a different context had also mentioned being humble as an approach to leading that he learned to use in trying to influence his two new superiors:

So I had to somewhat display some vulnerability and humility to present myself so they understood where I was coming from … So the end challenge for me was for them to understand my perspective, for me to better understand their perspective, bring the two together to make them work" (LRP19).

Both *LRP5* and *LRP24* also mentioned about being vulnerable. According to *LRP5*,

"I think … putting yourself in a position of a little bit of exposure, being vulnerable, being transparent to the point of being vulnerable. (LRP5)

For *LRP24*, it is *"about being authentic and vulnerable"*. In this instance he was referring to the role of vulnerability amongst a leader's peers. As he stated further, *"you have to take stand on issues. And that means standing up and that means being vulnerable" (LRP24)* even among one's peers. *LRP7* expressed a similar view of being vulnerable but in the context of when a leader is not right about something:

And it's not an easy goal for any of us to swallow our pride to admit we're wrong. So it's not easy to do it at home, it's not easy to do it at work. It's not easy to do it anywhere but at the same time it's a powerful, powerful thing. And it has to be genuine. (LRP7).

For *LRP20:*

So in leadership you realize that it's not from an ego point of view. It's more just realizing that what you do actually does make a difference for better or worse.

LRP3 also explained that learning humility and being vulnerable is one way she has matured as both a person and a leader, something she described as a "*good experience*" (LRP3):

> *So it's humbling too. Like it's been a good experience because I have been able to reflect on how my leadership has changed. It's matured and it's matured in a way where I'm more thoughtful, humble, participative…it's maturing as a person but also as a leader (LRP3).*

It is interesting that learning to be humble and vulnerable was presented by *LRPs* as an approach to leadership as they went through restructuring. Displaying humility and vulnerability with a leader's subordinates, superiors, and peers resonated with *LRPs* as a factor during the restructuring. *"Vulnerable", "humility", "humbling", "not an ego point of view", "swallow pride"* and similar words and phrases that *LRPs* mentioned above, together seem to go against the grain of leaders being perceived as all-powerful. As *LRP3* concluded, "*I can't do it all by myself. I need people" (LRP3)*.

Influencing

Influencing is another factor that was present and LRPs used during restructuring. In this context, influence is not being described as an exercise of power (Krishnan, 2005), though the *LRPs* are formal leaders, with formal authority and power arising from their organizational positions. Rather it is more akin to "consultation and inspirational appeals" (Yukl and Falbe, 1990, p. 139) to the constituents that *LRPs* needed to influence in order to carry out their restructuring. Westphal (1998) had explained that the greater use of this

type of influence happens when existing sources of power are unavailable, and as the *LRPs* found out, either not working or challenging. In describing their dilemma, *LRP13* explained that

> *The con for us* [as in pros and cons] *is that we have very critical service requirements that we don't have direct responsibility or authority over. So we have no choice but to work through influence, and that's how we've had to operate for the most part is working through influence and trying to build partnerships and relationships… (LRP13)*

Illustrating this further, *LRP10* added that

> *we have no direct authority over the regions and coming from a region where you had absolute authority over your area, it's a very big change in how you need to connect to get everyone to work together. It's a different way of doing it. (LRP10)*

In the same vein, *LRP4* emphasized that what he learnt is that in the exercise of leadership

> *you still have all the relationships and the people that you need to be able to influence and move along together towards your ultimate goal. (LRP4)*

Continuing and emphasizing how critical leading by influence was for them, *LRP1* recounted that *"LRP8 did a count one time; he said, "I think it's about 240 hands have to go in the air at the end of the day for us to get agreement" (LRP1). Therefore, concluded LRP1, "we've got to lead through influence" (LRP1)* - principally because they didn't have direct authority in all the aspects of restructuring.

Further, *influencing* is about both *people* and *health systems*, as illustrated by *LRP23*:

> *there is a contribution that we make in terms of our leadership and our ability to influence the system…[by] using our voice so those key decision makers understand gaps or the services that are missing, especially as it relates to our most vulnerable populations…[and] those situations where people were not getting the services that they require." (LRP23)*

For *LRP12*, a physician/medical leader, the need was

> *to influence whatever needs to be influenced for the sake of our patients, patient safety, quality of care, access and all those things that we do healthcare for…. We need to think of patients as being primary and everything we do should begin towards forwarding the aims of the care we provide to our patients (LRP12).*

Supporting

Supporting emerged in the forms of *being supported* (receiving support from others) and *being supportive* (giving support to others) as LRPS went through the restructuring. Starting off *LRP3* described restructuring as an *"enormous task" (LRP3)* while *LRP6* stated that leading restructuring was "*not easy*" (*LRP6*). *LRP6* went on to illustrate that in terms of being supported it meant for him that *"you didn't feel that it was you against the world" (LRP6)*. For *LRP3* what she learnt was how critical the support of her superiors were. In her words, *"without that I'd think we would have been dead in the*

water" (LRP3). In her own description, *LRP22* stated that her boss *"always had an open door. Even though he might be busy, I know I can always go to him" (LRP22)*. LRP6 described how helpful being supported by his superior *(LRP1 is LRP6's superior)* was overall during the several meetings necessitated by the restructuring:

> *Some of those meetings we had were really challenging. I talked about [a particular restructuring project]. LRP1 came with me and the two of us together walked to those meetings and just having the support of somebody beside you … makes a huge amount of difference. And so that was something that stands out for me and I really appreciate that type of support. (LRP6)*

Beyond being supported by superiors*, LRPs* talked about being supported by their teams *(LRP6, LRP8, LRP21, LRP22)* and by their peers (*LRP14, LRP16, LRP17)*. Receiving support allowed bouncing off ideas with others *(LRP22)*, being stretched and challenged by peers *(LRP8, LRP22)*, and enabled growth in leadership *(LRP24). LRP8* and *LRP24* underscored these in their accounts:

> *That actually would be the single most influential thing that's helped me be able to learn is just having a very well-balanced leadership team that's supportive and that I work well with, peers that are pushing me in different directions. (LRP8)*

Further,

And so when I look about what helped me to grow and to be able to further my work was having people that believed in me and supported me. And that's one of the lessons learned from a leadership perspective. (LRP24)

In addition to being supported, *LRPs* reported that the other way that the mechanism of supporting acts is through being supportive of others. As the analysis of their accounts show, most *LRPs* felt that they should have provided more support especially to their subordinates as they went through the changes brought about by restructuring. As described by *LRP8*, the *"org structure change… impacted people. So it is having the ability to try to support people and to come at it from a people perspective"* *(LRP18)*. LRP15 illustrated this in some details:

I really think that's important to really listen to the teams that are working on the change… And to involve them in that….So what I found is that I needed to change my role …I needed to be more of a support role. I needed to spend a lot more time out there and really spending a lot of time visiting the sites, meeting with the teams, being a presence….There's a desire to draw the picture and draw the structure right away, and then just hand it over….And like I said, probably for me, that alignment in 2011 spending much more time actually getting out there, visiting sites, visiting staff, going, doing staff meetings, being able to connect provincially what was happening to what was happening within our zone, and what was happening for that department. (LRP15)

It is noteworthy that *LRP15* saw the need to change her role to include that of a leader who supports people. Not just a leader who directed their activities only or demanded organizational accountability only or exercised other forms of positional authority only, but a leader that also supports her staff through the restructuring. This point was also acknowledged by *LRP21* who stated that

> *it would have been important to just take it that one step further… to really drill down a little bit further, and understand …what people were feeling, how they were managing through the process, and be able to address those concerns sooner than later" (LRP21).*

LRP24 posited that providing this support turns both leaders and staff into a community and that if you built a community, restructuring becomes easier to do:

> *And I think if you look at the consolidation story [consolidation here refers to restructuring in his organization], people like LRP22 and others, and LRP23 … had that emotional intelligence and recognized you gotta support people and listen to people and respect people, and if you do that … it'll create community and the community will, if there is community then the consolidation becomes secondary. (LRP24)*

4.3.7   Envisioning/Futuring

Envisioning/futuring enabled *LRPs* to identify some leadership shortfalls that they would like to address in future. In doing this, *LRPs* articulated areas of leadership which

they need to strengthen and improve on. *LRP10*, for example, pinpointed the need for her to learn to listen better, "*I've always been able to listen, but maybe not hear… will continue to work on that active listening …and listening to the other perspective*" while LRP5 is seeking to "*being more open and engaged and thoughtful and listening.* For *LRP8*, it is about the need to circle back to people, *"I don't do that well… I don't do a lot of going back*". *LRP4* acknowledges that she is "*less reflective"* and would like to be more so. *LRP3* wants to be more organized – "*I'm not there yet."* And *LRP19*'s is "*learning to say no with authority".* The mechanism of *envisioning/futuring* serves as a conceptual map for areas of focus for future learning. It also validates leaders-who-learn as autonomous agents (Ryan and Deci, 2000) as learning is regarded as autonomous "if it is a result of person`s own intention" (Studenska, 2012, p.599) and the learner takes responsibility for the learning and controls the content of the learning (Benson, 2001). However, in *envisioning/ futuring* leaders are projecting what they *intend* to learn. This is a way of straddling the present and the future *simultaneously*. In the present, it enabled leaders to assess their learning shortcomings. For the future, it enables leaders to project and articulate helpful areas of learning that they *will* engage in. In other words, though the learning has not happened yet, the *envisioning/futuring* influenced leaders' current *motivation* positively towards a goal that the leader desires to attain. In essence, it generated the desire to learn in the *future* as an ontological reality in the *present*. This aligns with Bhaskar's view that "the world is not just the totality of what is actually the case, but includes what might or could be, grounded in the structural properties of things" (Bhaskar, 1986, p.209). In this

sense, future "is real but not yet determined and…directional change is possible through human agency" (Patomaki, 2006, p.10) enacted autonomously.

Summary of this section:

What has been discussed in this first section above is the leader's *individual context* of their experience of restructuring. They showed that the leaders' experience of restructuring were around how they reacted, the activities they performed, what they struggled with, their understanding of the rationale for restructuring, their criticisms of the restructuring and lastly, what they hoped that the restructuring will do for their organizations and the health system. What this has yielded is that as individuals *LRPs* interacted with restructuring agentically in the sense that their experience revealed their thoughts, reaction, inter-action, and engagement with others and the context, potentially indicating their learning from the experience. This individual context is important because not only did the "world present itself" to the leaders, the leaders also went ahead to "take the world in" (Gjelsvik, 2004). Burgoyne (1995) has argued that this type of individual experience leads to learning through the discarding of preformed knowledge which may become irrelevant or misleading during "fundamental transitions" (p.61) such as organizational restructuring. With this said, it needs to be understood that the *individual context* is only one aspect of the leader's restructuring context. The other one is the *organizational context* of the restructuring which in this sense means the entities separate from leaders as individuals that have the potential to influence both the leader's experience of restructuring and their learning from it. While the section above concludes

the presentation of the *individual context* of leaders' restructuring experience, what follows below is the presentation of the *organizational context.* This organizational context came from documentary evidence, and not from interview data. It complements and completes the understanding of the leader's full restructuring context. The first part of this context presented above came from leaders' own accounts and this second and final part presented below came from how the organization has articulated the restructuring, independent of leaders' perceptions about them. This is important because context can be more than agentic (Kahn et al., 2012) and causation of learning can arise from the tendencies of entities and structures beyond and/or in interaction with agency.

The salient aspects of the *organizational context* presented below covers historical and structural information of the three organizations where the *LRPs* led restructuring. The combination of the individual context above and the organizational context below provides the full context - individual, social, and structural – and environment where leaders learning took place. It hints at learning processes that traverse the individual and relational paradigms simultaneously.

The organizational context is presented for each organization separately starting in 4.1.2 below with Alberta Health Services, one out of three research organizations.

4.1.3   Conclusion

The first instance of the *context*, the *LRPs'* reaction to the restructuring – *Reacting* – highlighted the presence of stress and anxiety from the beginning of restructuring. From what has been discussed above, this undertone of stress was not restricted to the outset

only. It pervaded all the aspects of individual and organizational context – *Performing*, *Struggling*, *Understanding*, *Criticizing,* and *Hoping and Improving*. While many *LRPs* seem to have managed this stress rationally as could be seen by their ability to talk about and articulate it, some of the emotions observed during the interview such as tears while describing aspects of their restructuring experience as well as tones of voice indicative of both anger and resoluteness seem to suggest that these have persisted, cognitively and affectively, and that have shaped or continue to shape leaders' philosophical positions, points of view, and actions. While not clinically proven as "a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress requires an evaluation of precipitating factors as well as symptoms" (Tehrani, 2004, p.3) by properly licensed professionals, this research's tentative and anecdotal view is that some of these reactions may be indicative of "enduring, negative psychological states" (Tehrani, 2004, p.3) occasioned by leadership enactment. In other words, stress was present while leaders tried to implement the restructuring, as they were challenged by aspects of the restructuring, as well as through their criticisms and the improvements they wanted restructuring to bring. And the outcomes of these seem to still be operative in terms of how leaders approach their leadership. A sub-factor that made this stress more pronounced was the fact of dealing with limited time to act, make decisions, and successfully implement the restructuring. The time-element also becomes important in its potential ability to impact how leaders learn within a short timeframe. While some scholars are of the view that stress and anxiety can inhibit learning through one being overwhelmed cognitively (DeRue and Wellman, 2009) or through affective dissonance (Marshall, 1980), others have argued that stress can also be a trigger for seeking new ways

of doing things (Shors, 2006; Joels et al., 2006) and new ways of coping with situations such as resultant resilience, both of which can ultimately lead to learning (Cristancho, (2016). While one cannot argue definitively that stress is categorically and always negative or positive in terms of its impact on learning, one can safely assume that its latent presence indicates its role as a factor that can be triggered and that can swing a leader one way or the other depending on the influence of the totality of *context* on the particular leader, at the particular point in time. Arguably then, *context* originates both in the minds and actions of individuals as well as from the potentialities of social and organizational structures and their powers to influence or effectuate. In this sense, contextual knowledge emanates from individuals through their accounts while contextual influences arise from the organizational context. The interaction between these individual and organizational aspects of the *context* creates the potential for leaders to learn from the experience through 1) situatedness and their immersive capabilities in particular contexts, 2) dynamism and change which challenges stable parameters, pre-existing patterns of cognition and sense making and potentially the reordering of knowledge towards new understanding, interpretation, and expression, and 3) through real-time adjustment of practices through cognitive re-appraisal and affective feedback (for example, struggles during restructuring can trigger a leader to seek new ways of approaching the issue *while dealing with the issue*). Thus, the main proposition of this section is that the *context of the restructuring* contains within it the ingredients that could make learning possible for leaders, whether these arise from leaders' own experiences or from the influences from their organizational context.

In summary, the *individual* and *organization contexts* of restructuring are important to the learning mechanisms (M) and their outcomes (O). Contextually, restructuring is situated in its "organizational and geographical contexts" (Clark, MacIntyre & Cruickshank, 2007, p.527). Understanding context or contextualization is additionally important in its key role of eliminating or reducing the tendency of faulty causal inferences (Falleti & Lynch, 2009) towards sufficient causal explanation.

Having explored the context (C) above, the sections below will, following critical realist explanation through causal mechanisms, identify and discuss the mechanisms (M) that enabled leaders' learning as well as the outcomes from these mechanisms (O). It is important to emphasize that these mechanisms operated in the specific context of this restructuring and for these leaders, at the time and within their organizational environments. Identifying mechanisms and their outcomes are key steps in Pawson's Context-Mechanism-Outcome framework (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) as already seen in the previous chapter on research approach. It is through them, their potential interactions, and their emergent properties that the explanation of leaders' short-term learning will be rendered. These mechanisms were identified through the processes of abduction and retroduction, critical realist analytical tools and forms of inference which when used together is able through inferential logic of discovery (Dazzani, 2005) to lead to the development of a new conceptual framework or theory (Danermark et al., 1997) that enables explanation of leader's learning in the short-term at the level of the deep.

4.2   Mechanisms that Underpinned the Learning

It is germane at this point to state again that mechanisms are causal powers or the way of acting of things (Bhaskar, 2008) and for this research, they are important in the way that they influence and explain leaders' learning in the short-term. In the section above we explored the context (C) where these mechanisms operated. While the next section will look at the outcomes (O) of these mechanisms, this section identifies and explains these mechanisms because at the heart of the critical realist approach is answering the question 'by what mechanisms have our subject of interest been brought to pass' (Mason, Lenney & Easton, 2013, p.354). Mechanisms are important in their roles in making emergence possible (Elder-Vass, 2005). Following the processes of abduction and retroduction, five mechanisms were identified as key influences shaping leaders' learning the short-term. These mechanisms are *proximity, salience, improvising and experimentation, introspective engagement,* and *modeling*. These are discussed in detail below.

4.2.1   Proximity

Proximity during restructuring was both physical and relational. From a physical proximity point of view, there were series of different types of meetings (examples include the top 100 leader meetings in *Org2*, leadership retreats in *Org1* and *Org3*, peer networks in *Org1, Org2* and *Org3*.) These meetings were described by *LRP15* as *"ongoing mechanisms"* to *"link"* to *"appropriate contacts"* and by *LRP16* as a "*good mechanism to connect us" (LRP16)*. They created physical access as a forum or opportunity for the

potential emergence of relational proximity *("access [to] people through certain leadership meetings that that were held… They occurred frequently enough during that time" [and] you get to meet a lot of different people." LRP17).* The key features of these meetings were that they were frequent, mostly face-to-face (at least one *LRP - LRP17 -* indicated that they used *"online forums"* in addition to face-to-face), mostly group (as opposed to one-on-one), and they brought together those who had similarity or relationship of some sort, an example being the weekly zone executive leadership meeting in *Org2* that brought together the five chief zone officers, the five zone medical directors and their bosses, the Chief Operating Officer (COO) and the Chief Medical Officer (CMO), who were in a leadership dyad. It is noteworthy that some of the *LRPs* pinpointed the role of these meetings as mechanisms for bringing people together for interaction. The view that proximity plays a central role in encouraging social interaction is supported in the literature (Spillane et al., 2017; Rivera et al., 2010; Borgatti and Cross, 2003). And of particular importance to our study, they do this by increasing the likelihood of communication between people (Allen, 1977; Zahn, 1991; Krackhardt 1994) through serendipitous interactions (Monge et al., 1985) or chance encounters (Rivera et al., 2010), for example, hearing or over-hearing or seeing something that may lead to absorbing the seen or the heard into one's "new repertoire" (Greer, Dudek-Singer and Gatreaux, 2006, p.486) or inquiring further about it. Physical proximity thus provided a platform that enabled relational proximity – for example, *"to hear how other people have [done it]" (LRP17),* emphasizing the information seeking aspect of relational proximity (Borgatti, 2003) and its role in enhancing tacit knowledge (Amin & Wilkinson, 1999;). The nature of

tacit knowledge is that it resides in individuals as personal knowledge (Polanyi, 1961, 1962, 1966; Nonaka, 1991; Kikoski and Kikoski, 2004; Kempster, 2009; Kempster and Parry, 2014) and access to it is gained "through watching and doing forms of learning (Fleck, 1996, p.119), a finding that emerged from the data as *LRPs* variously stated and implied watching and observing others (other leaders, stakeholders, and followers – an example, *"just looking at their styles and seeing how people responded to them" – LRP10*) through the proximate events that were available during the restructuring. Proximity is also important for relationship building and trust. Through it "people gradually come to learn about each other, become comfortable with each other, and develop bonds that enable future access" (Borgatti, 2003, p.436), a point emphasized by *LRP6*: "*You know what I've found as a leader is that…it's about relationship, and it's about depth of relationship with people and it's needs to be genuine relationship that builds trust.*" He went on to explain that "*when you have relationship and trust you …you have equity with each other. And that goes a long way" (LRP6)*, with the practical benefit that people are *"willing to give you a second, and third, and fourth, and fifth chance" (LRP6).*

As a mechanism that emerged from leader's learning from their restructuring experience, *proximity* primarily enabled *LRPs* to learn through *observation*. Observation has been supported as a learning process that impacts leaders' learning (Kempster & Parry, 2014; Kempster, 2009; Kempster, 2006; Uhl-Bien, 2006). The research findings show that *LRPs* observed what others said ("*It's the people that are willing to … share and talk about a relevant thought, idea, or experience in an open forum and say…" LRP4)*, what they did ("*seeing it in real and in action" – LRP2)*, what they did well ("*There [are] people*

that you have seen who have handled the press well – LRP16), what they did not do (*"we've lost our voice with government and other key decision makers on how we might positively influence those situations where people were not getting the services that they require" – LRP23*), what they did not do well (*"you can do consolidation* [his term for the restructuring in *Org3*] *and be a jerk; you can be a poor leader and do some form of consolidation" – LRP20*), and how they did what they did ("*watch the way people have operated in that space" - LRP5*). While the key method of learning that *proximity* enabled was *learning by observation*, it also enabled *learning from others by listening to them* as *LRP4* illustrated above. Proximity also enabled leaders to learn vicariously through *seeing* what was done instead of only *listening* or *hearing* them as *LRP2, LRP16, LRP23, LRP20,* and *LRP5* demonstrated. In this sense, proximity acts by shortening the physical and the relational distance between actors so that *LRPs* could be near others, see them, listen to them, and learn from the experience of others without actually being the one acting. In this perspective, proximity further enables informal take up of information by *learning from other's action* and by *working alongside them*. An example from the ones above regards watching others handle the media well. First, in order to be able to observe how the press was handled, the leader-learner had to be close, emphasizing the nearness aspect of proximity in its ability to influence learning. Second, s/he watched and listened. And also did some thinking – some level of thinking about what one saw must have preceded the conclusion that one has seen a skilled handling of press. So, sequentially, proximity may enable some level of *reflection* as part of the flow of learning processes that commenced with *nearness*. Also the account itself ("*There [are] people that you have*

seen who have handled the press well") implies that the observer has made mental notes

or informal take up of information for future action or behavior. In other words, the

observer is relaying that they have picked up at least one way that the press can be

handled well. From these various manifestations, as a mechanism then, it could be said

that proximity could act in potentially different ways to influence learning. It is worth

noting from the research that besides the *LRPs* themselves (the leader-learner), key actors

during the restructuring that were important for *proximity* included: the *LRP*'s boss(es);

the *LRP*'s CEO (when different from the boss); the Board (as a collective) or Chair of the

Board (where the *LRP* is a CEO and reports directly to the Board as his 'boss'); the *LRPs*'

peers on the executive and/or senior management team; the *LRPs* peers as either zone or

portfolio leaders (whether or not they are in the executive or senior management team);

the LRPs' direct reports (a case where followers constitute significant others); leaders that

are external to the organizations but who were inextricably involved in the restructuring

and had authority for decisions or actions during the restructuring (council of CEOs, CFOs,

union leaders, government officials, etc.), amongst others. The presence of these variety

of actors underscores that as a learning process, *observation* is social, relational and

contextual. These three concepts have been captured cogently by Burgoyne (1995) and

described as "a collective entity of individual-in-environment which adapts and develops

as a mutuality" (p.2) and aligns with the position of McCall (1988) and Kempster (2006;

2009; 2011; 2014a; 2014b) that *significant others* play a role in learning by observation.

    In addition to *proximity,* the other inferred mechanism is *salience*.

4.2.2   Salience

Salience involves something receiving "a disproportional amount of attention relative to its context" (Pryor & Kriss, 1977, p.49). S*alience* is foregrounded by a leader's areas of personal need or that which is contextually absent for the leader (*absence* understood in the Bhaskerian sense of the ontologically absent - as shall be seen below in this section) such as an area in which the particular leader is seeking improvement, is very interested in, or one that is just new to him or her. *Salience* can also be triggered by a leader's goals such as looking forward to another leader's story about, for example, to find out how s/he "*got from A to B*" *(LRP4)*. Taken together, *salience* primarily acts through self-referencing and differential retention of information (Pryor & Kriss, 1977; Taylor & Fiske, 1975). This aligns with evidence from psychological research which demonstrated that self-referential judgements (as opposed to *other-referencing*) are better remembered and attended to (Brédart, Delchambre, & Laureys, 2006; Heatherton et al., 2006; Bower and Gilligan, 1979; Rogers et al., 1977) and that this better memory and recall is mediated by differential attention to and retention of information (Taylor and Fiske, 1975). From a critical realist point of view, *salience* highlights the personal agency of leaders as their attending behaviours interact with the proximate organizational structures during observation. As has been argued by Archer (2000), personal agency constitutes the "concrete singularity" that reflects "our-being-in-the-world" and it acts "powerfully and particularistically" through "interior conversation" and "interior dialogue" "because the world cannot dictate to us what to care about most" (Archer, 2000, p.138). This means that leaders *attend* to what they find *salient* in the context,

without regard to whether other leaders attend to the same things as well. This accounts for the variation in what is learned (Kahn, Qualter & Young, 2012) amongst *LRPs* as seen above. *Salience* highlights "agents' own configurations of concerns… subjectively" (Archer, 2003, p.135). While Bandura (1986) gave prominence to the role of salience in observation, Kempster (2006; 2009a; 2009b) and Kempster and Parry (2014) furthered the role that *salience* plays in leaders' learning through apprenticeship (2006), notable people (2009a; 2009b), and significant others (2014). Specifically, Kempster and Parry (2014) highlighted that what is *salient* "changes through time" (p.166). The addition of this temporal perspective means that what is salient for a leader today may no longer be in the future due to factors that may include leader's particular learning needs at that point in time (for example, it may not be about handling the media well; it could be about increasing emotional calmness in very stressful situations) or different contexts of operation. This means that attention is paid to what is salient now with full understanding that this may change at a later time.

While *proximity* enabled *observation*, *salience* influenced what actions or behaviours that *LRPs took, paid attention* to, reflected on, or observed. For example, while *LRP16* paid attention to leaders who handled media well *("There [are] people that you have seen who have handled the press well" – LRP16)*, *LRP20* observed leaders that he described as *"mentors and tormentors"* (*LRP20*), in this context alluding to observed behaviours and actions that led him to the appellations. For *LRP4*, it was leaders that talked about their *"ups and downs"*. As a mechanism, salience acts through *action*, *reflection*, and *observation.*

Action:

It was argued in chapter two (literature review) that learning from action is "the springboard for the extraction of insight from experience". Salience enables direct action by focusing on what one needs to do in order to learn. *LRP13* exemplifies this through his account: *"I used to have a very clear and direct influence on executive [the organization's top management team: the CEO and her direct reports]. I don't anymore. So I sought out the opportunity to be chairing [an organization wide executive-level committee) because it was the closest thing I could get to having any kind of influence" (LRP13)*. In this example, *LRP13* is *sought out* ways to continue to be effective in influencing the executive-level leadership. This is his learning need. It is implied that influencing this level of leadership is important for *LRP13*'s effectiveness as a leader. *Salience* is enabling him on this path of learning to continue to be effective by taking a different action in terms of how to *influence*. *Salience* informs and shapes what he then does.

Reflection:

"I need to improve in being better organized still. I'm not there yet" (LRP3). For *LRP3*, *salience* is around the need for skill improvement, that is, articulating the need to learn how to be better organized. In this instance, *salience* enabled *reflection* that led to self-assessment of one's learning need. While this may appear initially as Schon's reflection-on-action (1983), as one of the actions (the one that demonstrated that organizing skill is weak) has already taken place, from a learning perspective, it is more

appropriately "reflection-before-action" as the primary intended action (learning to be better organized) has been recognized and articulated but has not yet in fact happened: "Reflection before action involves thinking through what one wants to do and how one intends to do it before one actually does it" (Greenwood, 1998, p.1049). This aligns with Argyris et al.'s (1985) position that human agents design their actions, with designing being understood as happening reflectively *in advance* of actual action. Therefore, reflection before action, as shaped by salience on the *reflected upon,* contributes to designing leaders' learning.

Observation:

One key finding of this research is that a lot of *LRPs* reported learning by *observation* as they implemented the organizational restructuring *(LRP1, LRP2, LRP4, LRP5, LRP6, LRP7, LRP16, LRP21, LRP22, LRP23)*. Salience enables observation by focusing attention on what needs to be observed. As an illustration of this, *LRP5* stated: *"I learn through seeing the outcomes of things that have occurred, whether that's at meetings, whether that's individuals, how they are acting" (LRP5)*. And *"try to assess … make decisions based on what we're seeing" (LRP21).* Previous research had found that learning through observation is an important way that learning takes place (Kempster, 2009; Markus and Nurius, 1986).

In summary, whether seeking out a different way of influencing or recognizing one's need to focus on improving organizing skills, or seeing poor leaders in action and making personal mental notes about how to act in the future, *salience* is enabling leader's

action, observation, and reflection. As a mechanism, *salience* is triggered by a leader's

internal assessment of her areas of learning needs while being proximate (physically or

relationally), acting, reflecting or observing. *Salience* in this sense, acts as a mechanism

that directs attention to heightened stimulus in a particular social context (Tallat, 2010)

at a particular point in time.

4.2.3   Improvising and Experimentation

> *I guess I would put it this way, if you learn by trial and error …. and you're*
>
> *constantly curious and you learn from what you've done, you can be a very*
>
> *a successful leader….I think the trial and error… is necessary to really apply*
>
> *the lessons you learn, to be able to really be in a position where you can*
>
> *evolve as a leader. LRP13*

The mechanism of *improvising* and *experimentation* was behind *LRPs'* adoption of

different and multiple approaches to their restructuring leadership. "Improvisation often

takes place and is understood as an intuitive, spontaneous and responsive activity,

sometimes to make the best of things when plans fail or something unforeseen happens"

(Holdhus et al., 2016, p. 4). Fluidity is a key aspect of improvising and experimentation

(Beghetto & Kaufman, 2011). *Improvising* and *experimentation* enables learning by *action*.

It is also direct and non-vicarious, meaning that it has the potential to impact leaders, not

just cognitively, but affectively, as only a personally-experienced phenomenon can do.

Unlike other vicarious mechanisms such as *proximity*, a leader's whole person, individually

and subjectively is involved in *improvising* and *experimentation* and has the potential to

impact feelings at the same depth that *thinking* and *doing* do. In this way the potential for learning is more wholesome and embodied, being the hallmark of non-vicarious learning.

The mechanism of *improvising* and *experimentation* acted through the *recognition of tension* (that is, this way, method or approach is not likely going to work in this particular situation) and *the discarding of routines and the trialing of new variables*. *Tension* is inherent in *trialing* and is likely to increase if the *trialing* ends in *error* as one needs to start the process again seeking through new *trial(s)* that, if successful, will not end in *error* again.

Recognition of Tension:

"I think there were lots of points along the way where things didn't look like they'd go in the right direction" (LRP8). Contextually, *LRP8* was speaking of his role in planning for and leading sessions to influence CEOs, CFOs (on the organizational side) and Deputy Ministers and Ministers (on the government side) during the restructuring. Here, *LRP8* exemplified when a leader recognized that how they were approaching an issue at a particular point in time was not likely going to work. Analytically, two factors are present in this situation, one is the presence of *tension* in a leader's approach, and the second is the leader being able to *recognize* this tension. It is being argued that tension can be present without being recognized. By nature tension prompts information and action seeking; tension exists to be resolved. *Recognition of the tension* is the productive step that allows the leader to assess and move to the next stage of seeking resolution to the tension. Tension may arise, singly or in combination, from the new, the unknown, the

unexpected, the surprising, and/or the frustrating. Tension is individually felt by the leader, however, leader's reaction to the tension, cognitively and affectively, may be observed by others, especially when in close proximity. The generative ingredient in a tension lies in its ability to be perturbative (Sice, Mosekilde, and French, 2008; Fuh, C-C and Tsai, H-H. (2013) – there were *"bumps and lumps along the way" (LRP2)* and *"we were getting frustrated, worn out" (LRP8)*. A tension's perturbativity is a transient state with inherent "multiple paths" (Sice, Mosekilde, and French, 2008, p.60) to choose from so that an adaptive response can be made. Recognition of tension is a sensing process (Cowan, 2018). Sensing has been differentiated from thinking (Cowan, 2018), meaning that as opposed to thinking, sensing is a whole body reaction to the tension that is cogitative, affective and tactile. Sensing focuses on changes "to the initial conditions, external disturbances and parameter variations" (Fuh and Tsai, 2013). Thus, in improvising, *recognition of tension* acts as a mechanism that sensitizes the leader to the fact that something is present and is perturbative. Because something that is perturbative is both transient and inherently requires resolution, *recognition of tension* acts to start the process that may lead to a real-time adjustment of both *tactic* and *perspective* as practically sensible things to do in an effort to come up with a stance that overcomes the perturbation in the tension it does this while at the same time informing a leader's adoption of a new approach that is characterized by its *practical benefit* to the leader (will advance his/her objective) and *novelty* (it is a new tactic that is different from the current orientation). From the research, *LRPs'* accounts showed that they responded to the *recognition of tension* through a process of assessing the current-state effectiveness of

their approach. In this sense, *recognition of tension* assesses known approaches versus new possibilities and leads to the discarding of routines and exploration of new variables; another way that *improvising* acts.

Discarding of Routines and Trialing of New Variables:

      Discarding of Routines and Trialing of New Variables emphasizes *experimentation*. For example, when *LRP22* stated that they were "*building that plane as we're flying it"*, she was metaphorically explaining how *experimentation* played a role in their approach to restructuring leadership. *Experimentation* is undergirded by the concepts of routine, trials, and variety. As an ontological entity (Nelson and Winter, 1982; March, 1991, p. 71; Hodgson and Knudsen, 2004; Rerup and Feldman, 2011) routines have clear boundaries (Rerup and Feldman, 2011) and follow "recognizable patterns" (Rigby et al., 2018, p.322) or known ways of doing things in trying to handle situations. However, routines are susceptible to mindless and inappropriate responses (Feldman & Pentland, 2003; Spillane et al., 2011; Rigby et al., 2018) which then counterintuitively catalyzes the need for a new approach (Spillane et al., 2011) leading to the discarding of same routines through a departure from known or historical approaches (that is, breaking the boundaries) and moving to "the exploration of new possibilities through variation, innovation and experimentation" (Baškarada et al. 2016, p.430). This could be seen with *LRP2* who stated that her approach was *"trying a variety of strategies"* with the goal of "*trying to find out what kind of works"*. This means that she was experimenting and she is aware that not all new trials will work, requiring that she continues experimenting until she finds what

works. As has been presented in the literature, it is this continuous experimentation that eventually leads to a new approach that is qualitatively different from previous ones (Engeström et al., 2007). This allows leaders to avoid competency traps (Levitt & March, 1988) - or reverting back to the known or the previously applied, which is a recourse to historical capability - through not just experimentation but continuously experimenting until better alternatives are discovered (Yukl, 2008) and used. While several *LRPs* indicated through their accounts that *improvising* yielded practical techniques for them (such as *LRP6* stopping and listening to his audience during one of the presentations that he was making during the restructuring so that he can read people's moods), this wasn't the case for all as *LRP3's* account (see section 4.2.3 above) showed that she was unable to improvise despite recognizing the tension with her approach. In the context *LRP3* continued using the same routines despite being aware that they were not working – in effect, she did not, was not able to break out of the boundaries of routines. She, therefore, ended up not experimenting. As seen in the literature, *improvisation* occurs when routines are broken out of through experimentation or trial-and-error (Cyert & March, 1963; March, 1991). *LRP3* exemplified leaders that fell into the competency trap because they were overwhelmed and couldn't experiment. As a mechanism then, *experimentation* is modulated by the level of a leader's tolerance of the exigencies s/he is facing and how they make sense of them.

In summary, faced with the arduous task of restructuring, *LRPs* improvised and experimented to enable them meet the requirements of restructuring and as exemplified by *LRP2's* statement, they found out that "*one size does not fit all" (LRP2)* while the outlier,

LRP3 endured "*lots of things that went wrong*" *(LRP3)* because of lack of experimentation. In shaping leaders' learning, the mechanism of improvising and experimentation acts through *the recognition of tension* and *discarding routines through trials and error*, to enable leaders to learn by arriving at what works.

4.2.4   Introspective Engagement

Introspective engagement, a way of acting that prompts/supports *learning by reflection*, is the mechanism that shaped leader's learning through *introspection* and *reflective expression*. While *introspection* is a feature of autonomous learning (Boud, Keogh, and Walker, 1985, Hubbs and Hixon, 2010) that manifests under the individual learning paradigm, *reflective expression*, a way that demonstrates that learning has occurred, takes place in *practice* and *community* as a dynamic of the relational paradigm. While one may be tempted to see these two as separate and unconnected phenomena, the best way to describe them is that both are part of a continuum at the both ends of the reflection continuum: "Reflection is the process of stepping back from an experience to ponder, carefully and persistently, its meaning to the self through the development of inferences" (Daudelin, 1996, p.39). Through these inferences, the individual approaches "the external world in a way that is different from the approach that would have been used, had reflection not occurred." (Daudelin, 1996, p.39).

Introspection

In reflecting about his restructuring experience, *LRP20* surmised that "*there's some learning right in the moment and then there's the reflective learning" (LRP20)*. The interpretation of *LRP20'*s statement shows that he understood that he underwent two types of learning, implying some separation in *time* between the two. One, *"learning right in the moment"*, akin to *learning as action* as already seen in chapter two, and "*reflective learning*" which could be interpreted as reflection-on-action in Schonian understanding (Schon, 1983). In his own case, *LRP5* stated: *"I've seen myself be much more deliberate in this space for sure. Because that wasn't traditionally my leadership style" (LRP5)*. In analyzing this, it is clear that *LRP5* did not mean that he has *observed* or *seen* himself. He was rather analyzing his experience. "When we reflect on our thoughts, emotions, and memories and examine what they mean, we are engaged in introspection" (Cherry, 2019, p.1). He used *contrasting* as an approach - he contrasted his current approach to what it was historically and through this analysis concluded that he has moved away from his "*traditional*" style to a more "*deliberate*" approach, implying that his traditional style wasn't as deliberate as the current. As well, *LRP24* shared that "*Just as you came in I was rereading a note I sent yesterday, where I took a stand on something … I was saying no to something.… So I was just kind of like, 'how did I say that and that'?" (LRP24).* In this account, *LRP24 went back* to his experience, through *"re-reading"* and *questioning ("how did I say that and that?")*. *LRP24* went back to re-live the experience of how he communicated the day before and examined his thoughts about it today. *Introspecting* as well, *LRP21* stated: *"Well, quite honestly, it's not the first one I've had to do. The insights*

were they never get any easier" (LRP21). Similar with the other *LRPs*, *LRP21* went back to her experience, took it inside, and analyzed it by making connections between it and other experiences (Daudelin, 1996), and coming out with something new: "*they never get easier*". She went through an assessment of how she acted (Mezirow, 1990). Taken together from the above, it is argued that *introspection* acts by *suspending action* and *observation* by taking the *salient inwards* for searching, questioning, mulling over, mind-experiments, and revelations. Through *revelations*, the *salient* is brought back out into practice for others' observation. In this sense a process that could be described as an *out-in-out* is proposed to be at play here: the trigger for *introspection* comes from *practice* (the first *out*, as *out* in the world); is then individualized during *introspection* (the *in* as inside the leader's mind); and then back out to *practice* through *revelation* (the second *out*). While revelation happens to the individual that reflects, s/he can reveal it directly through reflective expression (see immediately below) or it can be revealed indirectly through observation by others even without the leader intending to reveal it.

Reflective Expression:

   Reflective expression is situated in practice in the sense that *expression* makes the outcome of introspection conscious and lends it to discussion, conversation, and other relational practice activities the outcome of which can be learning. When *LRP16* stated that *"I think the hardest thing for me is seeing people fail, and then having to deal with it"*, she had already completed the introspecting and now is expressing both her *affective* response to it and the degree of her feeling about dealing with other people's failure (the

adjective *"hardest"*). As well, in her account, *LRP22* stated that "*I believe that the greatest lesson I have learned is to never ever lose focus of the people we serve. And so in every decision that you make, you have to hold that front and centre*" *(LRP22)*. Here *LRP22* was expressing her personal value that she arrived at after introspecting on her beliefs about the clients within the health system. It is in the act of expression, which is preceded by introspection, that the unconscious become conscious. The factors through which this mechanism acts is sequential: a leader engages in the recall of her learning; the questioning triggers both examination and alternatives; the interaction of recall, examination and assessment of alternatives leads the leader to speak about the outcome of this recall and reflection; in speaking about this the leader consciously relays their learning which hitherto has been unconscious. Kempster and Parry (2014) are of the opinion that leadership learning is usually unconscious and Kempster (2009) argued for surfacing tacitly-held learning. *Reflective expression*, as a factor of *introspective engagement,* acts as the mechanism that fosters the sequence of activities described above to enable the leader to recall and reflect on their learning but also give expression to it, thus surfacing the leader's unconscious and tacitly-held learning. Expressible knowledge had been found to indicate learning that occurs without conscious awareness (Haider et al., 2012). Until expressed, this learning has been held tacitly. And it has been argued in the literature that tacit knowledge is not easily expressed (Nonaka, 1991; Lam, 1999; Kikoski & Kikoski, 2004). The importance of *reflective expression* thus lies in the fact that *LRPs drew out* and conveyed their tacitly-held learning. This aligns with Nonaka's (1991) view that *articulation* is the process that converts what one has learned tacitly into

its explicit form (p.99). Articulation embodies two processes, *reflection* and *expression*. For our purposes at this juncture, *reflection* means "the process of internally examining and exploring an issue of concern, triggered by an experience, which creates and clarifies meaning in terms of self, and which results in changed conceptual practice" (Boyd and Fales, 1983, in Bulman and Schutz, 2004, p. 3) while "*expression*" is the "verbal expression of knowledge" (Battistutti and Bork, 2017, p.464). Together, *reflective expression* brings together the processes of introspection, crystallization, and expression of learning (Battistutti and Bork, 2017). *Reflective expression* refers to leaders being able and willing to articulate and share their learning as part of reflecting on their restructuring experience in the context of a research interview. Whether this willingness will translate into practice, in their actual work environment and practice remains to be seen. In a sense, the interview catalyzed a process that enabled the leaders to willingly express their tacit learning, going from that which is not immediately apparent or tacit (prior to the interview) to explicit (during the interview) and likely back to tacit (after the interview) until such a time a catalyst presents itself causatively and there is willingness as well to share. A vivid example of this could be seen from a leader's account in section 6.6 of Chapter six.

Related and noteworthy is the fact that these leaders did not set out at the beginning of the restructuring with a goal or plan to *learn* from restructuring. They were tasked with a *performing* function, that of implementing restructuring activities, not a *learning* one. Therefore, their learning was not the goal and the leaders did not invest in mining *whatever* learning might have occurred afterwards, that is, until this research

process started and led to the process where learning was unearthed and shared. Additionally then, *reflective expression*, as a mechanism, highlights that learning occurred despite the absence of advance and intentional efforts (de Guinea, 2016) on the part of leaders. Because intended organizational performance goals is dominant in the attention paid to restructuring (Barley, Meyer, and Gash, 1988; Bowman and Singh, 1993; Bowman et al., 1999), *reflective expression* underscores that learning can occur as one of the unanticipated consequences of restructuring (Mckinley and Scherer, 2000).

4.2.5   Modeling

The key difference between learning by adults and learning by children is that while children learn in order to accumulate information and skills, adults learn so they can reintegrate or transform meaning and values (Merriam and Caffarella, 2007). Mezirow (2000) further underscored this point with his statement that for adults, "[L]earning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience *as a guide to future action*" (p.5, added emphases). Furthermore, Greer and Dudek-Singer (2006) have argued that one of the key effects of learning by *observation* is the acquisition of new repertoire, repertoire understood as "observational learning capabilities" (p.487). The way to understand these positions from the literature is that when leaders observe and attend to salient events, they do so with an eye towards new capabilities and actually putting these to action. An example from the data is *LRP1*. Not only did he state that he learned by "*watching others*". He went further to state that he does this by "*borrowing people's gifts and making them*

my own" (LRP1). Further, *LRP19* gave account of *"building on the experiences and expertise of others…literally trying to steal a lot of that expertise"* and *"mimic a lot of their styles… to benefit yourself" (LRP19).* A close reading of these accounts show that *LRPs* were *adopting* what they observed by *""modeling others" (LRP3).* As a way of acting, *modeling* is both a process and an outcome. As a process, *modeling* is about copying and imitating (Greer and Dudek-Singer, 2006) and as an outcome, it is about leaders practicing the "copied" so they can make it their own as part of their new repertoire, or reject them (Gibson, 2003; 2004) when they come to the conclusion that the observed is not something they want to or will put into practice. They still learn from the rejected *("you can kind of pick characteristics that you would like to emulate, and other ones that you think, "You know what, maybe that's not being received so well. I would do this differently." –LRP10).* In this context, the learning is about what not to do or who not to become. *LRP20* provided a further example in this respect. From *"observing all these things"*: a *"quite dysfunctional leader"* behaviourally, with a *"tyrannical lack of direction"*, who *"played people off one another"*, and did *"horrible"* things including those that "lack[ed] integrity", *LRP20* noted that *"you learn a lot about the things that you see that you don't want to be"* such as "*I don't wanna be the person of no integrity or who is angry or makes people uncomfortable or pressured or trivializes experiences"*. As he stated further, these lead one to "*learn about the things that you see you want to be*": a leader who leads with "*values*", is "*kind and compassionate*", acts with "*integrity*" and does the "*right thing" (LRP20)*. On the positive side, *modeling* references the "imitation of the observed response" (Fryling, Johnston, and Hayes, 2011, p.194) while on the negative

side, in rejecting, "in addition to selves they would like to become, individuals also construe other people who represent ''feared selves''… such as the ''self who is disrespectful of others'' (Gibson, 2004, p.146). The factor of this *feared selves* serves as a mechanism that motivates change in behavior (Markus & Nurius, 1986) that is, *modeling* the positive behaviors that are counter to the observed negative behaviours. In this sense, *modeling* references a certain period in time when conceptual practice (Boyd and Fales, 1983) becomes courses of action (Archer, 2007).

Furthermore, in addition to acting through *proximity and others*, it could also be argued that *observation* was itself enabled by the trait of *curiosity*, something that humans and many animals share. Viewed as both a state of emotional arousal (Frijda, 1994; Reio and Callahan, 2004) and a cognitive condition (Clore, Ortony & Foss, 1987) which are inextricably linked (Izard, 2002), research has shown that curiosity motivates information seeking, increases learner attention, and promotes adaptive advantage (Berlyne, 1960). From this perspective, the mechanism of *observation* confirms that curiosity plays a role in learning for human adults. Further and in summary, the mechanism of *observation* is understood through the factors of *proximity*, *salience and attending*, and *adopting* and with the additional understanding that the element of curiosity during restructuring, a significant organizational change, "possess[es] generative powers of…enablement" (Archer, 2007, p.135) in regards to learning.

4.2.7   Conclusion

As a reminder, this research is focused on understanding how healthcare leaders learn from their restructuring experience and explaining this learning from a critical realist lens through causal mechanisms (Bhaskar, 1986). In the section above, five mechanisms – *proximity, salience, improvising and experimentation, introspective engagement,* and *modeling* - were identified as influencing and shaping leaders' learning. Explaining phenomenon through mechanisms is important because mechanisms have the potential to produce outcomes (Blom & Moren, 2011). Outcomes are not always produced at the empirical, observable level. However, when they are, they are "contextually conditioned" (Blom & Moren, 2011, p.63) in bringing about change (Pawson, 2004). Following therefore, the section below explores outcomes (O) of the identified learning mechanisms that shaped *LRPs'* learning from restructuring.

4.3   Outcomes from the Learning Mechanisms

Outcomes arise from the mechanisms operating in particular contexts (Bhaskar, 1998; Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Pawson, 2004). The three outcomes of the learning mechanisms that are being proposed are, first, *leaders reconceptualised what leadership meant, second, they expanded the understanding of the full scope and span of the accountabilities within the context in which they enact their leadership*, and third, *they learnt more about themselves*. In essence, through the mechanisms of *proximity, salience, improvising and experimentation, introspective engagement,* and *modeling*, LRPs were able to *redefine what leadership meant to them, expand the context of their leadership*,

and *learn more about themselves in terms of self-awareness, self-efficacy, and resilience*. These outcomes represent what the *LRPs* now know and what they have become in the discrete context and period of time of and following the restructuring. Firstly, they are leaders who have re-conceptualized what leadership means to them. Secondly, they have become leaders who are more attuned to the context of their leadership. Thirdly, they have become more authentic, self-aware and resilient leaders.

4.3.1   Re-Conceptualized leadership

The universality of the leadership construct as one that applies in all contexts and to all leaders is a contested one (Benington, 2010; Gilmartin and D'Aunno, 2007; Grint, 2010; Blom & Alvesson, 2015). Through the interview data, *LRPs* re-conceptualized leadership as being more than their formal roles, not easy to do and necessarily involved the "led". This appears to buttress the position that emanated from the literature about leadership construct not being a universal one. Re-conceptualization of the leadership construct emerged as an important outcome for the *LRPs* from their restructuring experience. This is addressed in some detail below.

Change in perceptions of what "leadership" means:

What emerged from the data is that about half of all the research participants (11 out of 24 *LRPs*) changed their perceptions of what leadership meant following their restructuring experience. This suggests that leaders' prior conceptions of leadership were tested during restructuring and, as a result of this, leaders' view of leadership changed.

While implicit leadership theories (Lord et al., 2001; Lord & Shondrick, 2011) seek the understanding of leadership from the perspective of a leader's followers or a leader's group, the finding here is that leaders re-constructed their views of leadership based on the leadership processes that they went through as a result of their restructuring experience. In this instance, leaders reformulated in their minds what leadership meant to them *after* having led restructuring. Given that all the *LRPs* were in formal leadership positions with organizationally-given authorities and that the activities involved in restructuring tended to be ones that required formal authority, what emerged strongly from the data, the centrality of leadership as one of *"learning how to work in a position of indirect authority" as LRP10* aptly summed it up, stands in contrast to the conception of leadership mostly as a formal "organizational position or role" (Hartley & Benington, 2010, p.17) which putatively "brings with it the authority and legitimacy to lead others" (Hartley & Benington, 2010, p.18). This reconceptualization of leadership by *LRPs* seems to suggest that formal organizational leaders *learnt through the act of leading* that formal positions that granted "authority" (Dubrin, 1990, p.257) which enabled them to legitimately *start* leading the restructuring was not sufficient to carry them through the restructuring. Leaders seemed to have learnt that there are two forms of legitimacy, legitimacy of role and legitimacy of leadership. Legitimacy of role was granted by the organization and enabled them to be in charge of the restructuring. However, legitimacy of leadership was experienced during the restructuring as a construct that they themselves needed to understand and develop for themselves to enable them play the formal leadership role that they already had. This seems to align with Rost's (1997)

argument and caution that exercising formally given authorities or "positions of power and control" (Riggio, 2011, p.120), should not automatically be considered leadership. Another way of saying this is that being "the most hierarchically superior" (Hughes, 2016, p.369) or the "man [or woman] on top" (Barker, 1997, p.347) has not been found to mean the same thing as the leadership construct that *LRPs* espoused following the restructuring. It seems that the construct of leadership at the beginning of the restructuring meant authority, power and all the other abilities that come from formal roles. However, *LRPs'* restructuring experience cast this construct into question and their restructuring experience evolved it to something other than authority and power. Though Hartley & Benington (2008) acknowledged that "Formal authority is an important form of leadership in healthcare (p.12), the finding here seems to suggest that formal role and the corresponding authority is not necessarily enough nor does it automatically confer leadership legitimacy. As healthcare leadership has been conceptualized as formal and hierarchical, this poses a conundrum as the leaders themselves can be interpreted as saying that, though important, their formal roles did not fully account for what they now understand leadership to mean. As most directly stated by *LRP4* in explaining her learning from restructuring, leadership is *"not positional. You need influential power. So the dynamic shifts there" (LRP4).* In this sense, leadership and legitimacy of leadership did not come from *LRPs'* formal positions. More was required and this more relied on factors that were not necessarily from their formal roles. For example, their formal roles did not necessarily enable effectively building trust or having the difficult conversations that they did. These and the like required a different leadership construct. It is instructive that *LRP4*

expressed this as a *shift in dynamics*, and specifically a shift in *positional* power. In her

fuller statement she had stated that *"your power shifts"* referring to her perception of the

change, meaning in the context, a shift from positional to influential. Her usage of "power"

(in *influential power*) really refers to influence tactics such as "bargaining, coalition and

reasoning" (Krishnan, 2005, p.6) and not the "authority implied in a job description"

(Hartley & Benington, 2008, p.11) or "formal roles" articulated in a "formal structure"

(Bush, 2015, p.671). The leadership construct here is not just that of a role or position. It

is that of influence amongst actors. In summary, *LRPs'* experience of restructuring led to

a change in how leadership is conceptualized and practiced leading to an emergence of

leadership construct that was distilled through the lived restructuring experience of the

leaders. Leadership for the *LRPs* did not equate to leadership position or role. Leadership

meant more than that. It implied interaction and influence. And from these interactions,

beyond leadership construct, *LRPs* gave further insight of their leadership experience. It

was different from their expectations. As their accounts showed, it was hard, lonely and

confusing. This is explored in the section below.

Leadership is not easy; demands of leadership are exacting and tasking:

Hartley, Martin, & Benington (2008) stated that "how people construct meanings

from leadership acts, roles, contexts and experiences" (p.26) inform their leadership. This

particular way of constructing leadership "moves away from a reliance on external

frameworks and turns attention inward to the mental models and metaphors that people

hold about leadership" (Cairns-Lee, 2015, p. 322). *LRPs'* view of leadership, post

restructuring, was that it is hard and lonely. The way *LRPs* spoke of leadership being hard reflected a diversity of meanings: not being able to say what it is *("leadership is leadership…I don't know, I can't explain it" – LRP16)*, the need to keep changing leadership *"styles" (LRP6)* so that one can continue to be effective, continuously surrounding oneself with *"good"* leaders so one can learn from their experiences *(LRP23)*, broadening one's skills to include both *"soft"* and *"hard" skills (LRP5)*, it is about the effort one puts in especially heavy effort *("it's just this hard work – LRP23")*, and it is hard if what one is looking for is *"true"* leadership *(LRP5)*, amongst others. Some of the clues regarding why *LRPs* concluded that leadership is hard can be found in their own contradictory explanations about leadership. For example, the same *LRP* that said that leadership is hard because it requires heavy effort also stated that leadership comes *"natural"* to some people, that some are *"gifted"* with leadership and also that "*everybody can be a leader and be an effective leader" (LRP23)*, all said in one sentence. This confusion about what leadership means was widespread among the *LRPs*. This supports Rost's (1991) conclusion after a thorough analysis that the leadership construct is contradictory and confusion-laden. So it could be said that a more fundamental reason leadership was constructed as hard by the *LRPs* is that the leadership construct itself seems to be elusive to them. The literature has presented this as a perennial problem in leadership (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; Carroll & Levy, 2008). First, management and leadership has been both differentiated and confused in scholarship and in practice. Organizationally, people who used to be called managers are now called leaders but they still perform the management functions of "planning, organizing, and controlling" organizational activities

(Barker, 1997, p.349). If they are now leaders, why are they still executing management tasks? The problem this creates is that organizational leaders struggle with understanding and differentiating what constitutes management and what constitutes leadership because "the reality is that managers must lead, and leaders must manage" (Allio, 2013, p. 5), making it difficult to isolate when a leader is leading and when s/he is managing. An example of this was seen in chapter four where LRPs shared their restructuring experience. A lot of the activities that they performed such as determining and filling new positions (essentially a planned resource allocation function), realigning their organization structures (an organizing function) and assuming full responsibility for the new areas of responsibility (a controlling function) were all management duties. Second source of the confusion is that leaders come to see and refer to themselves as leaders (and not managers) because the organization calls them that. This was seen when a count of word usage was conducted as part of the analysis of *LRPs'* accounts. The words *manager, manage or management* (when used to describe how they see themselves and excluding other phrases such as change management, budget management, etc.) was used 73 out of 800 times by the *LRPs* while *leader, leading, leadership* was used 727 out of 800 times, with 6 *LRPs* not using *manager, manage or management* at all while using *leader, leader, leading, leadership* 100% percent of the time. *LRP22* represented the most divergent use: she used *manager* only 4 times but *leader* 75 times. *LRP11* further exemplified this management-leadership usage issue when he said: *"I think this position is a lot about leadership, a lot more above management (LRP11)."* He then went ahead and described what he meant by leadership: how you present yourself *"in front of the others"*,

recognizing your *"strengths and weaknesses"*, being a better communicator and listener, closing the loop on things, and delegating better *"than I was you know 5 or 6 years in" (LRP11)"*. In this account *LRP11* explained his understanding of leadership in terms of *management* functions. Constructing leadership as good management has been criticized in the literature as old and simplistic paradigm (Barker, 1997; Allio, 2013) which tends to cement the confusion in leaders' minds about what constitutes management and what is appropriately leadership. Though being "hard' was spoken of in terms of a position's overall demands on the leader while loneliness referred to leaders wishing for acknowledgement and support from others, confusion about what leadership meant was a substantial factor in the leader's perception of leadership as hard and lonely. Furthermore, because role-based "leadership has traditionally been synonymous with authority" (Katzenbach & Smith, 1992, p.129), leaders kept coming back to their position or role in the organization as a way of explaining how leadership is tasking and exacting, despite experiencing leadership as something more than their role's authority as we saw in the immediate preceding section. This was reflected by *LRP4*:

> *"Now taking a VP job would be the next step for me, but sometimes I sit*
>
> *around the VP table … and it's like "I don't know if I want those jobs" (LRP4)*

In fact, what *LRP4* is saying is that the higher positions in the organization are examples of how hard role-based leadership can be. Her construct of leadership means role, authority, and demands that come with vice president-level positions though we saw in the preceding section that their experience showed them that leadership is much more than a role. In her leadership construct and in her mind, vice president-level positions are

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hard. The position is hard. And that position has been called a leadership position by the organization, so she sees and calls it as such. This added to the confusion regarding the leadership construct itself. *LRPs* did not stop at the question of leadership construct and leadership being hard. They disagreed with what were expected of them as leaders and through this they brought the issue of followership to the fore as we shall see in the section below.

Acknowledging the limits of leadership and the role of followership:

A further key outcome for the *LRPs* that emerged was the realization that they needed the help of others in their role as restructuring leaders. The analysis of the data suggested that leaders felt that they were expected to be near-omniscient *("know everything" – LRP4)* and super-capable *("have all the answers" [LRP13] and "solve all the problems" [LRP4])*. Though "leadership has been advocated as a solution to…organizational problems" (Barker, 1997, p.345), *LRPs* rejected these demands as impracticable and un-real expectations of their leadership. What emerged is that *LRPs* did not see themselves as the sole bearers of these demands of leadership. Leadership as the *LRPs* saw it, should be an affair between themselves and their direct reports or team, essentially their followers. In doing this, *LRPs* acknowledged that leadership, their leadership, has limits in terms of their ability *to do*. This ability *to do* was expressed from what they learnt through the restructuring as *'doing with'*. In other words, their leadership construct necessarily entailed followership, however that may be bounded. This seems to affirm Giddens (1979; 1982; 1984) central dialectic of control which posits that power

relations are always two-way, no matter how "out-powered" one side may be. In this respect, contingency and interdependence are always effectual (Collinson, 2005; Giddens, 1979, 1984, 1987, 1990, 1991) and leadership as influence is "bidirectional" (Dinh et al., 2014, p.37). While acknowledging that the dualism of leadership versus followership is just one out of many other cogent dualisms (shared versus non- distributed leadership as one other example), what this particular understanding emphasizes is that "leaders will remain dependent to some extent on the led" (Collinson, 2005, p. 1422) and in addition to the led, that "leadership involves the contribution of multiple actors" (Dinh et al., p.37), most notably those understood to be their followers. From the data, *LRPs* used the word *team* profusely to indicate the role their followers played in their leadership. They are the ones that they primarily sought to influence. They are also one of the key stakeholder groups that they established relationships with. Even when *LRPs* exercised their authority (the legitimacy of role), followers made that possible. This "leadership is exercised in relation to others and emphasizes that leaders both influence and are influenced" (Cairns, 2015, p. 322). Followership was central in co-creating *LRPs'* leadership construct, a view that is supported in the literature (Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor, 2010; Shamir, 2007). From the stark realization, exemplified by LRP4 *("I never realized there was that much uncertainty [at the] leadership level" [LRP4])* as well as LRP19 *("I have never worked with this calibre of problems" [LRP19])* to *"together…you work through that uncertainty" (LRP4)* and *"Learning now through experience is really about the individuals on the table that I am working with now" (LRP19)*, followership characterized, paralleled, and circumscribed *LRPs'* leadership. What the *LRPs* learnt through leading restructuring

about followership has affirmed the position of followership scholars that leadership is incomplete without followership (Grint, 2005; Howell and Shamir, 2005; Lord, Brown and Freiburg, 1999). This does not mean however that the terms *followers* and *followership* have gained usage-currency in practice in the same manner that the term *leadership* has. None of the *LRPs* used follower or followership, not even once, during the interview. The terms they used were mostly *direct reports*, *team* and *leadership team,* terms that reflected their *"formal subordinates"* (Blom & Alvesson, 2016, p.486).

This section of the chapter looked at how *LRPs* reconstructed leadership based on their restructuring experience. *LRPs* initially seemed to view leadership as meaning the same thing as their position or role. However, their restructuring experience led them to view leadership as something that requires more than their formal roles. Additionally, they perceived leadership as being hard and consistent with the literature, they also affirmed that there cannot be leaders without followers. From this perspective, *LRPs* learnt that restructuring requires leadership that is much more than a role, is not easy to do, and necessarily involves the "led". This, however, did not exclude confusion and contradiction as *LRPs* wrestled with the inconsistencies of the leadership construct. From here, the next section addresses *LRPs'* outcome about themselves.

4.3.2   Expanded the Understanding of the Full Scope and Span of the Accountabilities within the Context in Which They Enact Their leadership

"How leaders make sense of the context and explain their sense-making to others is a crucial part of the challenge of leadership" (Hartely & B, 2011, p.16) and increased

understanding of the "context has an impact on the opportunities and constraints within which leadership is exercised" (Hartley & Benington, 2011, p. 16). As it relates to this study, the leadership "context or field of operation" (Bhaskar, 2013, p.viii) for the *LRPs* is restructured healthcare operating in "the context of a complex, changing and adaptive whole system" (Hartley & Benington, 2011, p.10). A key example of the expanded context is *LRPs'* understanding of rural healthcare which advanced significantly during and following the restructuring. Context is not just the arena for leadership enactment (Hernandez et al., 2011). It actually generates leadership (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007). It is in terms of the latter that *LRPs'* learning about rural healthcare assumed a higher level of importance for this study. As such, three constructs undergirded and concretized the broader healthcare context for *LRPs*. One is that of *absence* and its resultant *surprise*. The second is the enhanced pragmatic *differentiation* of healthcare between urban and rural healthcare. The third is the location of the patient as a citizen, not just a consumer of healthcare services.

The Concept of Absence in Context:

The findings show that prior to restructuring there was a considerable lack of understanding and exposure by several of the *LRPs* to rural healthcare, a necessary component of health care delivery in the fully integrated publicly funded Canadian model. In fact, two of the *LRPs* described the learning about rural healthcare as their *biggest* and *greatest* learning from the restructuring (*LRP16* and *LRP22*). What this means is that something was absent or missing in terms of the *LRPs'* grasp of the full context of their

healthcare leadership. "Looking at what is missing in a social context/situation or entity/institution/organization will often give a clue as to how that situation and so on is going to, or needs to change" (Bhaskar, 2015, p.xii). Bhaskar thus introduces the concept of *absence* as an important factor in trying to understand context, and by extension and for our purposes in this study, its role in leaders' learning. As he further argued, absence starts with incompleteness which then introduces inconsistencies or contradictions that are solved by comprehensiveness that brings the excluded back into the fold (Bhaskar, 2015, pp. xii –xiii; Bhaskar 1993). At the beginning of the restructuring, the *LRPs*, *"urbanites"* as *LRP22* characterized them, had none, low or incomplete view, knowledge and exposure to rural healthcare. It was new to most of them. It was a missing piece in their understanding of the full healthcare context of their leadership. It was absent, ontologically. As seen in the literature, absence can be regarded as *perceptual* (Farennikova, 2013) or *affective/metacognitive* (Martin & Dokic, 2013) or *realist* (Valdiya et al., 2016) "which holds that the cognition of absence is a real phenomenon…that we can know absences" (Valdiya et al., 2016, p.500). Exposure to rural healthcare signposted a gap in *LRPs'* understanding of their leadership context. Learning about rural healthcare through the restructuring meant that *LRPs* closed this ontological gap in their knowledge of the full context of their leadership. From a learning point of view, though it has been argued in the literature that context could be regarded as strategic *know-how* (Paul & Whittam, 2015), the position taken in this study is that context is better described as a *know-what* rather than a *know-how* as conflating these two dimensions of learning tend to confuse their properties (Garud, 1997). While *know-how* "represents an understanding

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of the generative processes that constitute phenomena" (Garud, 1997, p.81) and a knowledge of how to do something (Cohen, 1994), *know-what* "represents an appreciation of the kinds of phenomena worth pursuing"(Garud, 1997, p.81). In this sense, *know-what* is contextual knowledge (Howell & Boies, 2004; Dutton et al, 2001) not just procedural knowledge. It is a *kind* of knowledge, an ontological entity that formed part of the leadership context but which was absent or missing at the beginning of the restructuring. It was also *new* for the *LRPs*, therefore it contained within it a *feeling of surprise* or unexpectedness (Martin & Dokic, 2013; Koriat, 2000; 2007). Surprise is understood as a "mismatch between the subject's expectations and the actual state of the world" (Martin & Dokic, 2013, p.121; Teigen and Keren, 2003). *Surprising* is essentially the "breaking up" of prior belief (Pierce, 1998, p.287) illustrated contextually here as follows:

- Prior to restructuring, *LRPs'* context of leadership was understood as "urban healthcare" (the "belief")

- During restructuring, *LRPs* experienced the "rural healthcare" which "broke up" ("*surprised* by its absence"- Martin & Dokic, 2013, p. 121) their prior "belief" (urban healthcare) through the emergence of the "surprise" (rural healthcare).

The new, the different, the surprising, and the much broader, as examples of unfamiliar responsibilities that stretch leaders, have been identified in the literature as sources of challenge that spur learning and development (Ohlott, 2004, p.156). These experiences "force people out of their comfort zone" (Van Velsor and McCauley, 2004,

p.7) and demand "that people develop new capacities or evolve their ways of understanding (Van Velsor and McCauley, 2004, p.7). In other words, they learn.

Learning about differentiation:

The other factor of *context* is *differentiation*. The fuller context of *LRPs'* leadership included both urban healthcare (that they were mostly used to) and rural healthcare (that they came to learn about). At the beginning of restructuring, *LRPs* didn't understand that rural healthcare context is different (or how different it is) to the urban healthcare context that most of them have experience in. Across the data, the words *unique* (*LRP22, LRP23, LRP24*) and *different* (*LRP16, LRP 21*) and related expressions were used by many *LRPs* to characterize rural healthcare in reference to and in contrast with urban healthcare. Their accounts underscored that rural healthcare in the Canadian context is different from urban healthcare on several dimensions. The data suggested that *LRPs* learnt about these dimensions through their restructuring experience. Geography is one dimension (Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association, 2010) as 95% of Canada's land mass constitutes rural Canada with up to 30% of the Canadian population (Moazzami, 2013). Rural healthcare in the Canadian context tend to cover greater geography, are more widespread, and there are more rural facilities in terms of numbers. The challenge this presents from a leadership context perspective is typified by the account of *LRP16*: *"just managing the geography is tough…. there are just so many of them…. Whereas in a large central site, you have a little bit more control and oversight" (LRP16)*. At the beginning of the restructuring, many *LRPs* seemed to be unfamiliar with the geographical distinctness

of rural healthcare and the challenges that needed to be overcome so that the differences are not glossed over or only addressed from an urban mindset. Learning about the rural healthcare by *LRPs* in this regard is illustrated by *LRP20* who had to learn *"how the environment [urban healthcare] that I spent 20 plus years … is very different for a rural leader or for a rural site. And so you … understand that you have to open your mind to more possibilities, and to more nuances, and to an environment that's very different"* *(LRP21).* Learning about rural healthcare meant watching for, paying attention to, and responding appropriately to the *differences* occasioned by geographic differences in the healthcare context.

The second dimension is the *differential access to services in rural areas*. Not all services available in the urban are obtainable in the rural. Effective leadership in the rural suggests that the ramifications of access levels in the rural areas such as patient travel or inter-facility transfer needs to be understood very well as part of the context of leading. The third dimension is around health outcomes. "Studies on disparities in health care confirms the view that...People living in rural and remote communities typically have poorer health status than Canadians who live in larger centres" (Romanow, 2002, p.159.) These dimensions explain how rural healthcare is differentiated from urban and understanding them implies that leaders' have a more complete view of their context from the lens of truly knowing the *differences* and *relationships* within the context of their leadership. This is a case of perceiving, understanding, and factoring in *differentiation*. Differentiation is understood as various components of a system and their relationships and interrelatedness (Klir, 1985; Melles, Robers and Wamelink, 1990; Baccarini, 1996). It

therefore connotes and implies completeness in one's understanding of the *differences* within a *context* in terms of both their *distinctiveness* and *relatedness*. Rural healthcare is distinct and at the same time very much connected to the whole healthcare context. It is *distinct* from urban healthcare and at the same time both are interrelated and jointly connected as part of the whole healthcare system. It is the nature of this *distinctiveness* of rural healthcare *and* its *connectivity* (Klir, 1985) with the urban healthcare that *LRPs* learnt as their outcome through their restructuring experience.

Whole System Knowledge: Learning about the Patient as both a Healthcare Consumer and a Citizen in a Publicly Funded Healthcare Model:

Through their accounts, a number of *LRPs* demonstrated that their understanding of their healthcare leadership context as a result of leading restructuring progressed beyond the mechanics of daily healthcare administration and expanded to seeing the rural patient from different perspectives. Patients in the rural areas were perceived as citizens who care deeply about their community – *"they are so tied to their community… So there is a lot of emotion there…Sometimes logic has nothing to do with it" (LRP16)*. They were also seen as citizens with economic lives: *"those [rural] hospitals are often the main employer in the community so you're interfaced between patients, and staff and public" (LRP20)*. And healthcare in a community needs to involve and engage the communities themselves – *"stay engaged with all of our communities that we serve… [and] meeting the communities' needs" (LRP23). And "healthcare is one part of a huge system of how we exist together as human beings in the province of Alberta and in Canada" (LRP22).* As seen in *LRP22*'s statement, the context goes even beyond citizenship. It is about our common

humanity regardless of where an individual happens to live. This aligns with the view of Floyd and Wooldridge (2000) that gaining knowledge of the broader context in which an organization is embedded is a key contextual knowledge that contributes to renewing the strategic intent of an organization (p.728).

Accounts given by *LRPs* in the sections above indicated that they welcomed learning and understanding rural healthcare. It also suggested that this is an ongoing learning for them especially given the fact that most of the leaders only visit and do not reside in rural areas. They do not have a rural mindset but continues to learn about what makes rural distinct. As summed up by LRP20:

> *"you can't have a rural hospital that has a different staffing mix held to the same policy as a big urban acute because they don't fit... we[urban] got people that do certain tasks that they don't have in the rural hospital. They had to accomplish the ends but their means are different…I've kind of made sure that we got both an acute focus and a seniors focus that is mindful of urban acute and rural acute, rural seniors and urban seniors … I have to be thinking about all that landscape."* (LRP20).

LRP20 is saying that rural healthcare dynamics is now part of the "focus" and "landscape" in a way that it wasn't at the beginning of the restructuring. And *LRP24*, following his deeper understanding of rural healthcare, leads now by being "*respectful for our rural care as well as urban." (LRP24)*. LRP24 underscores that both rural and urban healthcare are respected as important parts of the healthcare system.

In addition to the fuller understanding of the *context* of their leadership, another outcome for *LRPs* is that they *re-conceptualized what leadership meant to them*. This will be the focus in the section immediately below.

4.3.3   Learning about Self: Authentic, More Self-Aware and Resilient Leaders

The next outcome from restructuring is that *LRPs* became authentic, more self-aware, and resilient leaders.

Being Authentic:

Many *LRPs* indicated that being authentic enabled their restructuring leadership. While the other accounts of their leadership could be termed descriptive, the concept of authenticity introduced the construct of ethical or normative leadership. Values or internalized moral perspectives has been identified as a key component of authentic leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2008). While authentic leadership references values, *LRPs* viewed these values from the perspectives of *integrity* and *originality* and seem to suggest that a leader has to, not only behave according to these values but should also express, verbalize and demonstrate the values to others. *Integrity* was suggested as a corollary and a reinforcer of *originality*. In other words, leading from the perspective of integrity is seen as the same thing as leading by being one's self, being true to one's self-concept and self-perception, that is, *being original*. This finding aligns with the position in the literature that authentic leadership inherently includes ethical and moral components (Luthans and Avolio, 2003; May et al., 2003). Additionally, *LRPs'* accounts indicated that authenticity

led to positive or desirable consequences. One example is the role of authenticity in creating and sustaining a strong leadership team, a point that *LRP6* put across when he stated that differences amongst individual leaders tend to result in stronger leadership teams "*Not because we do everything the same but because we do everything differently and excel in different ways" (LRP6).* Here, it is being argued that *difference* (as opposed to *sameness*) that comes from *integrity* and *originality* is a positive trait and a strength for leadership teams. In other words, as characterized by Shamir and Eliam (2005), authentic leaders do not fake their leadership nor engage in leadership activities for status, honor or other personal rewards. Rather, they are originals, not copies, and their actions are based on their values and convictions (pp. 396-398). Therefore, the concept of *difference-as-a-strength* (sameness versus diversity) is salient for both individual and collective leadership. Another view from the findings link authenticity to courage, resilience, and hope. The development of these "positive psychological capacities" (Luthans and Avolio, 2003) have been postulated as having the ability to enable individuals to grow (Luthans, 2002a, 2002b; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Seligman, 2002; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Snyder, 2000; Snyder & Lopez, 2002). Overall, *LRPs* implied that being true to themselves by being authentic was valuable as they engaged in leading restructuring. They seem to be saying that being inauthentic would have made them less effective as leaders and would perhaps have led to less credibility with their followers – as *LRP23* put it - *"if you're not authentic then people don't want to follow you" (LRP23).*

Being More Self-Aware:

"A key aspect of understanding oneself is having awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses" (Van Velsor & McCauley, 2004, p.13). Van Velsor and McCauley (2004) explained further that this self-awareness involves coming to terms with what one is good at and not good at, what is comfortable and not comfortable, what one does easily and what is more difficult to address, amongst others (p.13). Sixteen *LRPs* gave accounts that indicated an increase in self-awareness and self-efficacy amongst them. Whilst Goleman (2014) has characterized self-awareness as the first domain of emotional intelligence and argued that it has three dimensions, namely, accurate self-assessment which is "knowing our strengths and limits"; self-confidence which means "a strong sense of our self-worth and capabilities"; and emotional self-awareness that refers to "recognizing our emotions and their effects" (Goleman, 2000, p.17), self-efficacy is understood as a belief "in one's abilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet situational demands" (Wood & Bandura, 1989, p. 48). In this sense, self-awareness and self-efficacy emerged as one linked-construct that together underlined *LRPs*' increased understanding of themselves as they led restructuring in their areas. For example, to confront one's lack of confidence, fear had to be reduced. And reducing fear required amongst others, a belief that one can confront "what one fears" (Bandura, 1982, p.17) whether by self-talk and external motivation as was the case with *LRP7* or by martialing one's internal "psychological resources" (Hannah et al., 2008, p.669) as *LRP20* indicated. Thus, increased self-awareness and self-efficacy had impact on *LRPs'* beliefs

about themselves, their believability and credibility with followers, and their behaviors and performance.

In addition to becoming more self-aware, leaders also became more resilient. This is discussed in the section below.

Resilience:

LRPs became more resilient following restructuring, resilience understood as "bouncing back to attain success when beset by adversity" (Hannah et al. 2012, p.156). *LRP22* described being gossiped about by other leaders during the competition-for-jobs stage of the restructuring, the impact it had on her, and how she grew from the experience. During the interview, *LRP22* was quite emotional about describing this situation though in the end she explained that it was "*an important growth*" event for her. In her account, she started from how she felt about the whole situation:

> *The lashings. I'm not sure I can talk about them 'cause… I might get quite teary if I talk about them. There were times, especially in the beginning [of the restructuring], that I think that people thought I was given a consolation job. They didn't understand that I chose that job….And the conversations that went on that were either started by those individuals … "yeah, well she couldn't handle that kind of level." (LRP22)*

LRP22 went on to describe how she has learnt from this:

> *I think that in many cases that whole transition, again it was the journey that makes you a stronger person, so that journey helped strengthen me, my character, helped strengthen my resolve…and helped provide me with*

> *more in-depth appreciation for people, and what they bring to the table….*
>
> *So it was an important growth. Yeah. (LRP22)*

In his own case, *LRP14* recounted how his work-life balance had been impacted by the restructuring and suggested that he was not going to allow that to happen again. *LRP14* was one of the *LRPs* whose jobs were eliminated and had to apply for a new position with all the uncertainty that came along with that process. Upon successfully gaining a new job during the realignment, *LRP14* had to relocate twice during this period, first leaving an area where he had lived for over twenty years: *"if I had a preference, I probably would have said keep me [there]" (LRP14)*. And then relocating again for the second time about 500kms away *"in about 8 months" (LRP14)*. *"So for me it was a big, big change… it was really difficult time" (LRP14)* which had negative impact on *"work-life balance"*, *"family"* and *"health" (LRP14)*. As he explained, *"I have been through a ton in my career where [I] did that 7 to 11, but I'm not sure it's actually what I wanted to do, because I thought I had to do it if I was to be successful. And it wasn't necessarily what I needed to do or wanted to do. (LRP14)*. He went further to state that *"You need to figure out what it is you want … and then you need to define what's important to you (LRP14)"*. He described his learning as follows:

> *I think through the last organizational change, one, while it made me understand that I'm relatively resilient, it also allowed me the opportunity to think about what those important things were and what I was willing to accept, and what I was not willing to accept from a personal perspective...So I think that was probably one of the critical things that kind*

of came to my attention, and probably because again my work had

impacted my personal life fairly significantly, and more than once. (LRP14)

LRP14 concluded his account with: *"I think some of the real personal things that I*

learned is that resilience is an absolute requirement to make your way through such

significant organizational changes" (LRP14).

LRP8 is a leader in *Org1*. In addition to the difficulties he was facing with

restructuring, he also became a parent during this period. Both events impacted his

worldview, his approach to things, and how he viewed himself, his identity: a confluence

of changing, becoming, transforming, all converging on "the persons we become" (Archer,

2000, p.10) – *"they're all kind of morphing me as an individual...the combination of the*

major change events going on at work and a major change event going on at home, just

it forces you to change your approach on a variety of things" (LRP8).

Similarly *LRP1* gave account of his job transition and how a prompt from his coach

at the time connected this to *learning* for him. Though he has previously transitioned

between few organizations in his career, he perceived this particular transition during

restructuring as not being *"as successful" (LRP1)* and for a time left him with low energy.

As he explained it,

> *I've been lucky in that I've been in lots of different organizations. That's*
>
> *added to my depth in being able to see differences between organizations,*
>
> *and what's made them successful and not successful. That's been a real*
>
> *help. One of the individuals that's coached me lots said that my time in*
>
> *[Org2 during its restructuring] was an interesting learning for me, because*

> *it's the first time I've ever been part of an organization that I didn't feel that*
>
> *we were just [as] successful [as] we should have been. His point was,*
>
> *"you've never failed before. So it's about time you had that learning." And*
>
> *I really did feel that way, and I'll say after leaving, it took me a while to get*
>
> *my full energy back and so that was a good learning for me. (LRP1)*

He later compared how he felt then and how he feels now in his current role, post the restructuring-triggered transition. As he expressed, *"It gave me a renewed energy around my leadership style and abilities" (LRP1)*.

In addition to *LRP1, LRP8, LRP14, LRP22*'s accounts above, other *LRPs* emphasized the *"importance of resilience" (LRP20)* as an outcome for them individually with *LRP16* stating that restructuring threw leaders into the *"deep end"* and they came out at the other end with *"resiliency" (LRP16)*. Resilience "permits people to weave difficult experiences…into a larger sense of purpose and meaning [and] …deepens the lessons they learn and develops their ability to successfully face hardships in the future" (Moxley & Pulley, 2004, pp.186 – 187). Analysis of the findings so far seem to show that the emergence of increased self-awareness and self-efficacy (such as confidence) that was seen in the previous sections seem to influence the emergence of resilience. This wouldn't be surprising as Bender & Ingram (2018) has established that self-efficacy can influence the emergence of resilience. As an outcome, becoming resilient arose from experiences that impacted *LRPs* deeply and which changed them as persons and leaders afterwards. What differentiated this learning from others were the circumstances that *triggered* them as well as *the magnitude* of the *impact* on them as individuals and as leaders. This aligns

with a view from the literature that learning from "events experienced in an intensely personal way" constitute a different type of learning (Moxley and Pulley, 2004, p.185). Common responses from *LRPs'* accounts indicated that the triggers or circumstances for this were difficult or trying ones and the impact they had on *LRPs* were significant and long lasting, changing them as individuals and as regards their behaviours as leaders through the emergence of attributes and qualities such as resilience, hardiness, and resoluteness.

The accounts of *LRPs* suggest that the first impact is akin to what has been described in the literature as "deep learning" (Thomas, 2008a, p.145). The term d*eep learning* is not used here in the traditional sense of deep versus surface learning where "deep learning refers to learning with understanding, while surface learning refers to more temporary learning" (Williams, 1992, p. 45). For this research, deep learning refers to those accounts where the learning by *LRPs* were triggered by arduous situations impacted by time and time-pressure that led to a re-evaluation (Mabel & Morell, 2011) of their personal circumstances and leadership, and that resulted "in deep, structural shifts in their thoughts and feelings" (Hallows & Murphy, 2010, p.3.), prompting new self-awareness (Martineau, 2004, p.244.), that "informs their [future] actions" (Hallows & Murphy, 2010, p.3.), and "teach powerful leadership lessons (Thomas, 2009, p.22). Deep learning is an impact of a leadership crucible as a transformative experience that changes a leader and gets them "to answer questions about who they are and what is really important to them" (Thomas, 2009, p.21) as exemplified by *LRP14* above. Accounts of 10 *LRPs* indicated that deep learning emerged for them from their restructuring experience.

An example would be *LRP22* who described an incident where her superiors made her do something that went against what she believed in and which in her words *"ate me"* and from which she concluded that *"it was not my finest hour".* However, this experience transformed her and her worldview - *"but I have learnt a ton from that, to have the courage to stand up".* And in terms of going forward as a person and as a leader, having learnt and been changed by the experience, her position or red line, has become: *"I don't care who you are…. I will never do that again".* And she emphatically concluded, following her reflection: *"It was a turning moment for me" (LRP22).* Her use of "but" above reinforced that though this was a disorienting experience, she still learnt and grew from it. It is instructive in the sense that it shows the transformative element of what she had learnt and who she has become following the experience. The depth of the learning and personal change can be seen through the *"turning moment"* angle and the finalistic *"I will never do it again"* which is similar to *LRP10's* "*I would put a stop to it now",* a statement she made while describing how she will behave today as opposed to how she behaved when her own triggering event happened. For *LRP14*, it was that *"first and foremost you have to look after yourself".* This worldview came from the deep personal pain associated with both job loss and disruptive efforts to regain and maintain a new job, and the reflection, and search for meaning that ensued. "Often a deep sense of loss causes people who usually live in an outer world to turn inward" (Moxley and Pulley, 2004. P.185) and in this inward journey, people tend to reflect, take stock, and bring forth something new from within themselves. The utility of a deeply felt, momentous, and transformative experience lies as well in its ability to produce new learning (Thomas, 2008). This new

learning aligns with what Mezirow (1995) described as "new perspective" (p.50) where leaders are "more likely to reframe their world-view by incorporating this new knowledge or information into their belief systems" (Hallows & Murphy, 2010, p.3.). While reframing the worldview is not always instantaneous, what is being argued is that the pre-cursor event to the reframing process is a learning event that occurred in the short-term during the turning-point event. *LRP13* illustrated this new perspective and reframed worldview further. His new worldview and perspective is that now he needs to be *"more assertive"* because *"the biggest thing that I learned out of that 2011* [referring to the restructuring for his organization]*, is,* [that I] *was far too passive" (LRP13)*. For him, being more assertive is a learning arising from his changed worldview that he is carrying forward, "*Doesn't mean you have to be ignorant about it… [but] there is a certain role where you have to challenge the system" (LRP13)* and in the case of his own new learning, it is challenging the system by being more assertive. Though *new learning* has been viewed by some as cumulating from previous knowledge (Yew, Chng, and Schmidt, 2011), the new learning by *LRPs* is closer to immediate and simultaneous "dismantling of existing mental structures and reconstruction of new ones" (Jensen, 2009, p.833). Newness arises from this reconstruction process and "the resulting knowledge is not fixed to the original context and can thus be used in different circumstances" (Jensen, 2009, p.833), going forward.

The *impacts* outlined above underline that *LRPs* were transformed by the learning that changed them as persons and as leaders. *LRPs* were transformed in terms of who they became and how they behaved on a go-forward basis whether it is around self-care,

self-awareness, self-efficacy or resilience. Through rising at the other end from trying

events, leaders transformed their way of *being* and *leading*. It has been argued that

"transformative learning . . . is how adults learn to think for themselves rather than upon

the assimilated beliefs, values, feelings and judgments of others" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 18)

– *"I learned what was important to me" (LRP14)*. In the case of the *LRPs*, the trying

circumstances *'shook up'* their assimilated beliefs and enabled them to henceforth think

and decide for themselves, and behave and lead differently. They changed because of

their learning. "We know from…research that behavioral change does not just happen nor

is it something that is "done" to someone. To behave differently, people first need to

recognize a need for change" (Guthrie and King, 2004, p.26). The triggers clarified the

need for change for *LRPs* while the impact led to their learning and the consequent

behavioural changes as individual leaders and individual persons.

In summary, *LRP13's* statement below encapsulates the import of leaders'

learning more about themselves through the restructuring. It illustrates the emergence of

a leader who sees himself or herself differently from when the restructuring began:

> *You get to a certain leadership point, a certain level in responsibility where*
>
> *you are no longer necessarily there because of your clinical expertise and*
>
> *you're certainly not there to create harmony. You're there to create*
>
> *solutions and those solutions will probably create disharmony, and you*
>
> *gotta figure out [how] to deal with that. I would approach it very differently*
>
> *and much more purposefully next time.* (*LRP13)*

LRP13's statement above exemplified a leader who has reflected on what learning more about himself means to his leadership. In this example, the leader has increased self-awareness (no longer clinical expertise), increased self-efficacy (perception of creating solutions and doing things differently) and being true to himself and being more resilient (being more purposeful and being comfortable creating disharmony).

4.4   Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the leaders' learning context, the mechanisms behind the learning, and their outcomes were presented, discussed and analyzed. The *individual context* showed how the *LRPs* reacted to and performed activities related to restructuring in addition to struggling with aspects of the restructuring. Regarding the *organizational contex*t, leaders described their experience around understanding the need or "the why" of the restructuring (understanding), questioning aspects of the restructuring (criticizing), and desiring and acknowledging positive results that came out of the restructuring (hoping and improving). Further organizational context analysis through brief historical, structural and organizational leadership highlights showed that the *LRPs* were enacting leadership in relatively new organizations and were doing so as new leaders who were either new to the organization or new to their positions with most of them accountable for expanded scopes of responsibility. And they were doing so in a political environment of a publicly-funded healthcare system and as urban-based and urban-minded leaders who did not fully grasp the full context of their leadership which included leading healthcare in rural settings. The learning that occurred for the leaders were circumscribed

by the context described above. The question that arises is, what mechanisms were operating in this context that enabled leader's learning? *Proximity, salience, improvising and experimentation, introspective engagement,* and *modeling* were inferred and proffered as the factors influencing and shaping *LRPs'* learning. And the outcomes of these mechanisms are that *leaders expanded the context of their leadership*, *they reconceptualised what leadership meant*, and *they learnt more about themselves*. In other words, through the mechanisms leaders achieved the identified learning outcomes which came with personal costs to themselves in terms of personal stress and changing some of their views about leadership. With this last section, the identification and analysis of the Context-Mechanism-Outcomes regarding leaders learning has been completed. However, as our interest is explaining leaders learning in the short-term given that how leaders learn in the short-term has been identified as a gap in the scholarship around leadership learning, the next chapter will focus on proffering an explanation in this regard. Following from our understanding of short-term leadership learning in chapter two, the next chapter is intended to explore causation for short-term leadership learning which will be a narrower focus than causation for leadership learning in the long-term. The chapter will attempt to answer the question - how does leadership learning occur in the short-term? After that, the last chapter, Conclusion, will follow.

Chapter Five: Explanation of Short-term Leadership Learning through Mechanisms

5.0   Introduction

As this research is focused on understanding short-term informal leadership learning, it is germane at this point to indicate how short-term learning has been addressed. In Chapter Two (Literature Review) what is currently known about short-term learning was presented through the contrasting prisms of the three other quadrants of the Leadership Learning Matrix namely, long-term formal learning, long-term informal learning, and short-term formal learning. Through this literature review *short-term informal leadership learning* was understood to be differentiated from the other three on the basis of *time, time-pressure* and *process* and that it occurs through *crucibles* for the *individual learning paradigm* and through *situated practice* for *the relational paradigm*. Additionally, through the literature review it was found that not only is short-term informal learning not well covered in the literature, there has not been a good taxonomy to first, identify, and then second, try to understand it better. The Leadership Learning Matrix was introduced in Chapter Two as a framework to categorize leadership learning and enable the exploration of short-term informal leadership learning specifically through the introduction of time-pressure as an element of time and temporality (see chapter two, section 2.1) that undergirds learning in the short-term during organizational change. Chapter three detailed the research approach and process that informed looking into short-term informal leadership learning in three organizations and as experienced by twenty-four senior leaders including two Chief Executive Officers (CEOs). Chapter four focused on presenting and discussing the findings about leaders' informal learning

through the restructuring experience of leaders. This was discoursed through Pawson and Tilley's C-M-O framework. It was found that the Context (C) included the individual, the organizational and the health system contexts that acting together influenced leaders' experience of restructuring as well as their learning from it. In addition to the Context (C), the mechanisms (M) that underpinned the learning were identified as *proximity, salience, improvising and experimentation, introspective engagement,* and *modeling.* And the Outcomes (O) showed that the leaders expanded the context of their leadership, reconceptualised what leadership meant to them, and third, they learnt more about themselves. While these improved our understanding of short-term leadership learning in the particular context of the *LRPs,* more needed to be understood about how time-pressure may trigger processes that could result in *short-term informal leadership learning* and how it may work in other or all contexts. This is what this chapter (Chapter Five) will do. The work in this chapter is divided into three sections. Section one begins the exploration of short-term informal leadership learning by looking at its nature and characteristics. Section two describes the different types while section three discusses its learning processes. The rationale for exploring the nature, characteristics, the types and processes of short-term informal leadership learning is that a lot of these have not been covered by the literature especially the role of time-pressure in setting off learning processes. As well, it makes sense to understand the nature and types of the phenomenon under investigation before delving into the processes of how it works, otherwise one has to fabricate a convincing response to a question such as "how *what* works?".

5.1   Types of Short-Term Informal Leadership Learning

As the leadership learning was being reviewed in chapter two, the need arose to introduce a taxonomy for leadership learning (see chapter two, section 2.1 - *The Leadership Learning Matrix and the Gap in the Literature*). The Matrix enabled us to focus on short-term informal leadership learning arising from time-pressure as this area of leadership learning that has not received much attention. As short-term informal leadership learning was explored further through the Pawson and Tillley's (2007) context-mechanisms-outcomes framework, a further description for short-term informal leadership learning became apparent. Short-term informal leadership learning is thus being differentiated into two types namely, *direct* short-term and *vicarious* short-term. The rationale for this further differentiation is that it deepens what is knowable about short-term informal leadership learning: it allows it to be understood at some further depth. It also indicates potential differences in terms of how mechanisms can act on the context depending on the type of short-term informal leadership learning. For example, as will be seen immediately below, the force behind jolting may be more pronounced in direct short-term than vicarious short-term when the embodied nature of direct is put into consideration. It is suggested that the grabbing of one's attention may be more arresting and time-stopping depending on the type of the short-term informal. These two types constitute an extended taxonomy for leadership learning and are described below – Table 5.1

Table 5.1: Leadership Learning Matrix including Types of Short-Term Informal Leadership learning

	Short-term	**Long-term**
Formal	Programmatic-Planned e.g. classroom training programs – well covered by the literature	Facilitated-Supportive e.g. coaching and mentoring – reasonably well covered by the literature
Informal	Autonomous-Emancipatory e.g. situated curriculum & situated practice – core focus of this research	Naturalistic –Processual Naturalistic – some coverage in the literature but not the concern of this research

PROCESS (vertical axis)

TIME (horizontal axis)

Two Types of Short-Term Informal Leadership Learning

Direct Short-Term	*Vicarious Short-Term*
• First-person experience • More deeply felt (eg. crucibles) • High cognitive-affective investment by leaders • More individual and personal in its occurrence and meaning making • Source of learning has shorter distance (that is via own action)	• Interpreting or modeling others' experience • Could be by hearsay, hence third person experience • Based on the seen, the cogitated on or the heard; not on leader's own action • More relational and situated in practice • Distance is longer (2nd person, 3rd person)

Direct Short-Term:

Direct short-term informal leadership learning is the learning that arises from a leader's own personal experience based on time-pressure from organizational change or "scenarios of uncertainty" as *LRP4* described it. And when the learning arises as a result of a crucible, leaders are affected more immediately, deeply and personally through deep and transformational shifts in thoughts and feelings (Hallows & Murphy, 2010; Thomas, 2009). This was seen in chapter 4. In *section 4.1.3* under *Context (C)*, leaders gave account of their immediate struggles indicating time-pressures, and later during the research interview they exhibited what could be interpreted as signs of stress or continuing negative psychological states as Tehrani (2004) described it indicating the depth of personal impacts to themselves. As well in *section 4.3.1* under *Outcomes (O)* where leaders experienced leadership and its demands as hard and tasking, and especially that it demands quick re-appraisals of issues *while they are being dealt with* which is a potential trigger for *direct short-term learning*. For example, as discoursed by *LRP13*:

> *I guess I would put it this way: if you learn by trial and error and you apply those lessons and you're self-aware, and you're constantly curious and you learn from what you've done, you can be a very a successful leader …. I think the trial and error, the exposure, the trial by fire, is necessary to really apply the lessons you learn, to be able to really be in a position where you can evolve as a leader. (LRP13)*

The *trial and error* process that *LRP13* referenced is an *in-the moment and time-limited* re-appraisal, that is, the *point-in-time of the learning,* while the application of

lessons learnt refers to *after-learning* process that can be done in the short or longer terms. The argument being made is that time-pressure triggers learning immediately; that the learning is short-term though the effects of the learning could be felt either immediately or in the longer term. Prem et al. (2017), one of the few that have studied the connection between *time-pressure* and *workplace learning,* have demonstrated that time-pressure, as a challenge stressor, can positively affect learning and "personal growth" (p.111), even within a day:

> we found positive effects of time pressure … on learning at work…This means that on workdays with higher levels of time pressure …during the morning, employees felt that they got better and improved more at what they do at work than on workdays with lower levels of these challenge stressors. (Prem et al., 2017, p.118)

They (Prem et al., 2017) went on to elaborate:

> Our results also indicate that cognitive appraisals play a role … The results show that learning … were … affected by one specific type of cognitive appraisal. Challenge appraisal [the specific type of cognitive appraisal] played a role in the indirect effects of … challenge stressors on learning … This means that on workdays with higher levels of time pressure… employees appraised their work situation as more challenging. These higher levels of challenge appraisal, in turn, promoted learning at work on these workdays. (p.119).

What Prem et al.'s (2017) study has demonstrated, and even doing so at "day-level studies" (Prem et al., 2017, p. 119), is that time pressure can affect learning in the short term. In the case of their research, learning occurred within the time difference between workday hours in the morning and end of workday in the afternoon. From leaders' accounts, daily pressure was part of the experience of their reality during the restructuring as illustrated by *LRP22*: *There were so many day-to-day and basic operations things that needed shifting that became immediately apparent after the merger that we had… a real muddy mess (LRP22)* [to deal with]. This aligns with the view of Marsick and Volpe (1999) seen earlier (see chapter two, section 2.2.2) that being integrated with work and daily activities makes informal learning possible as leaders are challenged by issues including unanticipated ones.

Direct short-term informal leadership learning is non-vicarious. At its core is *experience*, a first-person experience. And it arises primarily from *action* including *practice*, either from the leader's own action, for example, a serious mistake made, or the impact on him or her, of other people's action, for example, being fired from own job, which is action by another with significant consequence on oneself. *Direct short-term informal leadership learning* is *direct* in two ways. One, in terms of feeling the impact of one's own action, initiated and executed by the leader himself. And, two in terms of another's initiated and executed action but the consequences of which are directly borne by the leader.

Based on the magnitude of its impact on the individual leader, *direct short-term* is very susceptible to crucibles, meaning that the experience is such that the leader's

attention is immediately grabbed, perhaps forcefully, and the impact is deeply felt, both

during the experience and *afterwards* in terms of the meaning extracted from it. When a

leader's attention is grabbed in this manner: *"you learn to manage by what is called 'when*

the issues come up'" (LRP4). One way to interpret this is that there is no advance planning

nor deferring to a later time for action on presenting issue. What one has is *now* along

with its time-pressure*,* which becomes the theatre for immediate response that may

include learning. As was seen in chapter 4 *(see the section on resilience),* the extracted

meaning informs leaders' future actions (Hallows & Murphy, 2010) in terms of changes in

behaviour and identity, an example being the *LRP* that vowed never to make a leadership

decision again that goes against her personal values as the one she did "ate" her and was

a turning moment for her *(see the section on resilience)*. In this sense, direct short-term

informal leadership learning is more closely affective than the vicarious form (see below).

It affects the whole person and its cognitive-emotional cost is more substantial in terms

of potential personal impacts to self-concept and behaviour, for example. It is suggested

that it is riskier than vicarious short-term for this reason. Having said this, it needs to be

understood that some direct experiences can only be *reacted* to after they have

happened. The example above about being fired from one's job is an example. In this

sense, the leader does not initiate the experience; s/he is not in control of that. The

learning springs from the *reaction processes* that are embarked upon. In other words, the

learning occurs within a relatively narrow timeframe, that is, short-term.

Further, the outcome of learning from direct short-term informal also has a

distinct quality of resoluteness to it. Afterwards, leaders may use phrases such as "never

again" and "am not doing that anymore" or "that's no longer who I am" to describe how deeply imprinted the learning has been for them in terms of their forward-going behaviour. Resilience and self-confidence represent some of the outcomes that may emerge. Though it did not emerge significantly in this research, perhaps and partly due to the interview being used as the main method of data collection, it is also possible for leaders to learn other-than-positive things about themselves including that they are or can be abusive (Tepper, 2000), bullying (Namie & Namie, 2000; Rayner & Cooper, 1997), tyrannical (Ashforth, 1994), destructive (Einarsen, Aasland, & Skogstad, 2007), toxic (Lipman-Blumen, 2005), ineffective and unethical (Kellerman, 2004), and/or basing their leadership enactment on "purely personal gain" (Conger, 1990, p.44). *LRP22* is the sole *LRP* that gave account of something similar. From sharing that *"I guess one of the things that I have learned over time is, I was a lot more judgemental than I thought" (LRP22)*, s/he went on to add further:

> *I'm probably more patient with people, unless they're deliberately doing something [bad] and then I'm way less tolerant. I have no time for gossip, or for deliberately setting somebody up … in those moments I guess sometimes I can be pretty directive, possibly even vicious, but it's not without also helping them see why what they are doing is wrong. And when somebody doesn't have that kind of insight I don't have the time to spend with them … if they can't understand the real work that we're doing and the importance of the work that we have to do, then they need to go away and do what they need to do and I'll just work around them. (LRP22)*

In this sense, direct short-term impacts leaders' identity, authenticity, and purposefulness. Post-learning, leaders live and act from a new understanding of themselves. The concept of turning point, as an illustration, implies the transformative change for leaders through the prism of *before* and *after*. The way that direct short-term informal leadership learning is distinct in this regard is that there is simultaneity, within a short period of time, of the experience, the learning process, and the outcome of the learning. The experience is immediate, so is the felt tension, the improvisation, the cogitation, and the outcomes. To ensure that leaders are not consumed by cognitive and emotional investments that direct short-term demands, *space for emotions* and *support for expression, as therapeutic interventions,* may be required in order to validate the learning for leaders. An illustration of how the restructuring was viewed by *LRPs* was articulated by *LRP12: I hope that I provided some element of the way I feel … and I hope it's going to contribute to an understanding of what actually happened with leaders and leadership during a difficult transition, difficult time" (LRP12).*

It is known through research that leaders' attempt to learn from experience is susceptible to overwhelming (DeRue and Wellman, 2019), meaning that the leaders become overwhelmed. This eventually results in failure to learn. This is not the point being made here. In this instance, leaders' who, for example, have learnt from an emotionally-charged crucible, need support in terms of emotionally safe outlets to share their learning. The type of support being alluded to here may not be dissimilar to the needs of employees who need processes of emotional recovery after having been through a workplace traumatic incident (DeFraia, 2016) as direct short-term learning could be traumatic in

some instances - for example, *"felt pretty yucky" (LRP22)* and *"it's just that I'm completely exhausted" (LRP3)* were how *LRP22* and *LRP3* summed up their emotional and physical states from the experience. This support is very important given that leaders – especially when hierarchical or constructed from a heroic point of view - are typically not perceived as individuals needing such things as safe and supportive spaces to express extreme agitation, for example. Or deep feelings or shame about a failure. Or share a crisis, including crises from personal life such as experiencing divorce or reaction to death (Three *LRPs* – who shall remain unidentified for anonymity reasons – shared such crises that included marriage breakdown, serious illnesses and as stated by one of the LRPS: *"I was going through a very personal difficult time at that point in time. [Restructuring] had additional implications beyond kind of the professional side"* - that were occurring alongside the restructuring). Or share their learning from it. During my interview with *LRPs* who went through this type of short-term informal leadership learning, tears were shed. Even when sharing this type of direct informal learning is 'allowed' to take place at work, it is typically geared towards organizational ends such as a leader telling her story of loss to her direct reports but not its *emancipatory* impact for herself; it is done as *enacted performance* that serves others. The primary intent wasn't for the leader's benefit. The point being that in the instrumentalist space, organizational power and control tends to emasculate personal power and capacity, personal power and capacity being understood in Archer's (2007) sense as reflexive deliberation "that emerges in significant part from the practical demands of operating within the world, and that plays an important role in determining why individuals act so rather than otherwise within the same socio-cultural

context" (Archer (2007, p. 3). Therefore, "illumination of these neglected dimensions requires careful attention to the ontological attributes of workers as persons (Lynn, 2017, p.157)" whose learning are first emancipatory before meeting any other need.

Vicarious Short-Term:

Vicarious short-term informal leadership learning is the learning that occurs through the leader making meaning of, interpreting, or modeling *other's experience*. It is not direct personal experience as it not based on a leader's own *action*. It is based on what the *leader is seeing or has seen*, or what s/he has *cogitated on*, what s/he *heard* or what another party *shared* with her. *Vicarious short-term* occurs primarily from observation and reflection. Vicarious means it is experience by *substitution* and sometimes the source of this experience is in the third person, for example, when it is knowledge by hearsay or testimony. Being vicarious also means that the actions or stimuli coming from *others* are central to it. Understood this way, *vicarious short-term informal leadership learning* is more relational, situated among practitioners or significant others, and is not as closely affective as *direct short-term* as it is based on the experience of others, not one's own experience. It is not as embodied as *direct* and also displays *distance* that is longer than *direct* as the source of the learning can go beyond the second degree, for example when a leader bases how s/he approaches his new boss on what he was informed of by the new boss's former employee. An example could be given with *LRP16*. During the restructuring she had to report to a new boss. According to her, before reporting to her new boss, this is what she *heard* and *'knew'* about her new boss from other people: *" [name withheld] is*

hard, a hard driver…. he pushed buttons in people. That's the impression we got. So when I reported to [name withheld], I was like, "Oh no. This is going to be interesting" (LRP16). So, *LRP16'*s disposition towards her boss at the beginning was based on *hearsay* from others. However, as she concluded, this turned out to not be the case: *"actually* [name withheld] *and I got along very, very well …"* [name withheld: he] *expects performance, and wants results. Like he's a brilliant person, he's a very good strategist and integrator of ideas … after a while you could get to understand him (LRP16).*

As well, being vicarious and therefore more indirect, cost of errors through improvisation and *playing* back are not as dear as in *direct*. This way it could be said to create a safer space through more distance. For example, going back to the dancer in an audition mentioned earlier, the dancer has the opportunity to watch *first* and to make some sense of the *seen* before *doing* the dance.

Because *vicarious learning* necessarily involves others (the observed, for example), it benefits from more proximal arrangements as proximity can influence familiarity, trust level, and easier communication. The mechanisms through which these happen include serendipitous and incidental occurrences such as a chance meeting in a hallway that leads to a conversation from which salient information is picked up. Deconstructing this scenario shows that spatial proximity enabled the encounter taking place. Some level of familiarity and connection led to talking: one doesn't typically talk with everyone that one meets in the hallway. Further, a level of trust was bestowed on both the person and what they shared. If this sharer of the information is perceived as not being credible or trustworthy, the believability of the information will not be high, if any. Proximity is thus

more effectual in *vicarious* as it is important in enabling learning by *listening to others*, *hearing what is said about others*, *observing actions*, *reflecting on what one has either seen or heard*, or *imitating, copying or playing back*. Opportunities for being in meaningful and purposeful close contact such as meetings, spatial designs that provide serendipitous encounters, social and informal opportunities to get to know other leaders and similar practices are seen as being beneficial in making *vicarious short-term informal leadership learning* possible. *LRP13* demonstrated this by citing how the lack of proximal arrangement negatively affected some of the learning he could have had:

> *So it's difficult, and part of the challenge we have is because it's such a large system spread across an entire province, unless you're in Calgary or in Edmonton, you're quite isolated. You don't have the hallway conversations. You don't run across people on a fairly regularly basis, and most of the interactions you have with the system happen electronically, and they're very business-like: "we're here to talk about these four items, make these decisions, and then we're off." So I think there is value in* that [proximal arrangements]*, but it hasn't been a factor for me anyway, I think, because of the geography (LRP13)*

However, being indirect, *vicarious short-term informal leadership learning* is susceptible to not learning the right things or the right way or the right values or the right approaches to things. The term *right* is not used in a moral or absolutist sense here. It is used pragmatically as *practice* has in-built and bounded knowledge and ways of doing things that self-reinforces. What is outside these can be perceived as not *belonging* to the

practice or not right. As well, *vicarious* is not embodied in the same way as *direct* is and as such the affective-emotional aspect of learning is not as prominent or intense. For example, the feeling of shame at personal failure is not as deeply felt as one that is as a result of one's own personal experience. Even in the case of *playing back* where what was observed is being re-enacted, failure can be rightly attributed to the observed person rather than to the observer ("I followed the exact routine as you asked me to so I am not to blame that it turned out different from yours. I can't explain why it turned out differently").

5.2   *Learning* and *Surfacing* of Learning: Two Key Processes of Short-Term Informal Leadership learning (STILL)

The learning processes behind short-term informal leadership learning has two dimensions. The first dimension is the learning process itself – *how the learning occurs, which is shown in figure 5.1 immediately below and discussed thereafter*. The second dimension is around how the leader knows that learning has occurred. This is shown in Figure 5.2 after the section discussing Figure 5.1, starting from page 262. The connection between the two is, in informal learning a key characteristic is that learning may occur without the learner being consciously aware that learning has occurred. Hence, understanding both the learning process and the process by which the learner becomes aware of his/her learning (that is, surfacing) are critical for a more complete view of any

informal learning. This is the rationale for presenting both processes. The necessity for exploring the learning and surfacing processes is that while the *Context-Mechanism-Outcome (C-M-O)* framework eventuates in the "what" or the outcomes from a critical realist causation perspective, it does not automatically and as a matter of logical flow, tell us the 'how'. Leadership learning (as opposed to leadership performance, for example) is primarily about learning, making understanding the learning process a fundamental and completing explanation to the outcomes that were generated through the *C-M-O* framework. While Kempster (2009) argued strongly for making "historic influences" (p.453) in leadership learning more visible, here the argument is for making the processes undergirding leadership learning more visible. This section discourses on these two dimensions starting with the learning process.

The Learning Process for Short-Term informal Leadership Learning

The view in the literature, especially by Reber (1977; 1980; 1989) is that the learning process for informal learning largely occurs outside the awareness of the learner and there are no conscious strategies to learn as one would find in formal learning which is mostly planned in advance and learning is intentional. While this unconscious nature of informal learning has been acknowledged in the literature as we saw in chapter two, what has not been presented in the literature is how this unconscious learning occurs. This need to understand how this learning occurs assumes elevated importance for *short-term informal leadership learning* because understanding how this learning occurs (and later how to bring it to awareness) may contribute to filling the gap in leadership learning

scholarship which is to find processes of leadership that can enhance leaders' emergence, development, effectiveness, and emancipation since the current dominant formal leadership learning has been found to contribute only marginally to leadership learning.

While both *long-term informal leadership learning* and *short-term informal* occur alongside (and not separate from) leaders' activities, *short-term informal leadership learning* differs in terms of time-pressure that is triggering the learning. It is obvious, of course, that the length of time is shorter than *long-term informal* while the speed is more rapid. However, the point that needs to be understood is around how this short-term informal learning arising from time-pressure starts, progresses and concludes. It is argued that it starts through an interruption that is mostly forceful and experienced as *attention-grabbing* (*jolting*, surprise) which leads to *rapid reaction* (*noticing*, information pick-up) that itself leads to *making-meaning* (*sense-making, seeking understanding)*; *which* then yields the learning *outcomes*. This is explored below through the short-term leadership learning process diagram below (see Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 Short-term Informal Leadership Learning Process (Contemporaneous with Action, Observation and Reflection – Reflection-in-action)
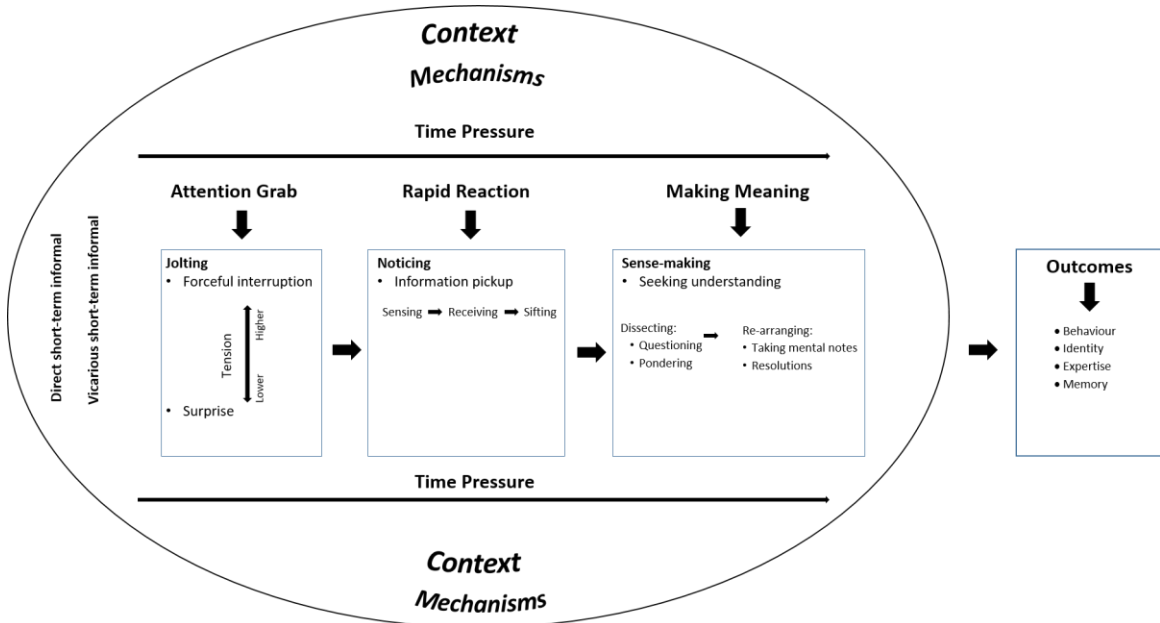
Each of the element in the model will be explored in detail below starting with *Time-Pressure* and continuing immediately with *attention-grabbing* (*jolting*, *surprise*), *rapid reaction* (*noticing*, *information pick-up*) and then *making-meaning* (*sense-making, seeking understanding)* which comprise the key elements of the proposed learning process. While the mechanisms *(M)* behind the learning were explored in chapter four (namely *proximity, salience, improvising and experimentation, introspective engagement,* and *modeling*), this chapter attempts to explore the nature of the *process* of the learning itself. While understanding the *Context, Mechanisms, and Outcomes (C-M-O)* of the leaders' restructuring experience is cogent, a theoretical exploration of the *process* behind the learning completes the full picture of the experience and learning. Until one understands the process behind something, the elements of the 'how' will continue to be a gap. Specific to learning, learning process refers to "the way in which individuals respond

to opportunities to learn" (Brown, 2015, p.53). In the current research, the restructuring experience presented opportunities for learning and leaders' learnt as we saw in chapter four. Kolb (1973) argued that "If managers … had a model about how individuals … learn they would better be able to enhance their own and their organization's ability to learn" (Kolb, 1973, p.1). This is especially relevant in informal learning where the intention to learn and conscious learning may be absent and will need to be uncovered. While learning process has been addressed from the social, psychological, and related perspectives (Brown, 2015), it has not been covered sufficiently from temporal and time-pressure perspectives. Given the fast speed of change during restructuring - "Time pressure can be defined as a state of being compressed" (Orfus, 2008, p.120) - understanding the learning process from a temporal-time-pressure perspective becomes salient. Antanacopoulou (2014; 2006) had argued that the *struggle* (Antanacopoulou, 2014) arising from time as experienced in learning (such as time-pressure) needs to receive more focus because it "is endemic to learning and is experienced by all learners to different degrees" (Antanacopoulou, 2014, p. 84). The rationale for seeking the understanding here is that time-pressure is a critical contextual feature during restructuring organizational change and had impact on how learning occurred.

5.3   The Role of Time Pressure in Short-Term Informal Leadership Learning (STIILL)

In terms of Pawson and Tilley's (2004) *C-M-O* framework, time-pressure is an element within *C – Context*. The role of time pressure in short-term informal leadership learning is being discoursed as part of this research's objective of elucidating the nature

and the processes of short-term informal leadership learning. For example, when *LRP4* stated that "*You only manage the things that are going red*" she implied that she had to quickly learn that as the restructuring was underway, things were moving so speedily that the only things one have time for is, not everything, but focus on the narrower events that are causing bigger issues now [the *red* analogy is meant to convey things that you just cannot ignore or made to wait]. And her response to what led her to learn to manage in this way during the restructuring? "*because we don't have time*" *(LRP4)*. She felt the pressure of time, something that *LRP3* also experienced: "*This was all happening so quickly*". From the lens of Pawson and Tilley's (2004) *Context-Mechanism-Outcome (C-M-O)* framework, time-pressure had already been identified in the literature as a *context* variable in organizations (Kaufman et al., 2016; Gupta, 1992) that can lead to both cognitive and affective outcomes (Maule & Hockey, 1993) including influencing creativity (Baer & Oldham, 2006). Thus, as already argued in chapter four, the element of *time and time-pressure* could be seen in particularizing leaders' *context* and in enabling the learning *mechanisms*, for example through leaders' seeking new ways of approaching an issue *while dealing with the issue* (an aspect of the *improvising and experimentation mechanism*) such as the example of *LRP4* given just above. What has become further apparent as this research probes deeper into the nature of *short-term informal leadership learning* is that this aspect of time, *the sense of time-pressure* that the leaders experienced, was a factor in in how they learned. This time-pressure played a role in how leaders learnt in the short-term through, for example, its effect

- on tension's perturbation as it influences *shift* in *perspective* and *tactic*,

- on *intuiting* as a *push* factor as leaders act,

- on *suspension* of action as leaders *cogitate* to make meaning, and,

- on *connecting* and *situating* learners as well enabling focusing through *freezing* as leaders *observe*.

An example of the above using *shift* in *perspective* and *tactic* can be illustrated through *LRP8*'s learning. In his account, one key progress step during the restructuring that they needed to take was convincing "*senior leaders*" especially "*chief financial officers*" (LRP8) about specific business cases for cost savings that they were proposing. Typically at the end of their presentation to these senior leaders they will send out minutes and then will schedule a follow-up session later. When this follow-up session came up, *LRP8* found that "*they'd forgotten everything that you'd talked about at the last meeting, in spite of having minutes and the whole piece" (LRP8)*. In other words, they found that sending out written minutes of the meeting wasn't helping these leaders to be progressively engaged. This circumstance triggered *LRP8*'s *shift* in *tactic* by not leaving "*too much time between meetings*" (a *tactic* against forgetting) and by "*being more targeted in how we engaged them*" and by "*using their time well*" because (*shift* in *perspective*) "*They've got all kinds of* [other] *responsibilities" (LRP8)* that place demands on their time, attention and memory, therefore one needs to learn how to engage them differently. It is thus being argued that *time-pr*essure is operative in *short-term informal leadership learning* through enabling leaders to learn in the briefest amount of time, including when pertinent, learning in a matter of hours as Prem et al.'s (2017) research referenced earlier demonstrated. Thus, understanding the role of time-pressure in-depth

further contributes to a fuller characterization of short-term informal leadership learning and enhances the understanding of the *process* of short-term learning which is addressed later in this chapter. Therefore, the question that this section answers is: what role does time-pressure play in short-term informal leadership learning and how does it play that role?

Time Pressure and Tension

As seen in chapter four, tension is perturbative, transient, fluid, and inherently resolution-seeking as by nature it cannot be sustained for a long period. And being bounded by the new, the unknown, the unexpected and/or the frustrating, tension's perturbativity can be both cognitive and affective. And given that informal learning is typically unplanned and at times unintentional, it could be surmised that tensions' perturbativity is likely to be immediate and palpable. Regarding short-term informal leadership learning it is suggested that time-pressure acts to further intensify *learning tension* by heightening the cognitive and affective effects of the perturbation, making the need for resolution more urgent and immediate. This triggers the information and action-seeking processes that follow the recognition of the presence of tension thereby motivating and incentivizing the leader to adopt and increase the speed of *improvising and experimentation* through quicker *discarding of routines* for example, an important step in improvisation and experimentation. In order words time-pressure essentially acts as a motivation factor that induces *learning-seeking efforts* through quicker trying of things to see which one will successfully and quickly resolve the presenting issue. For example, *LRP17* relied on her boss for mentorship. In her account she self-described

herself as a *"new emerging leader"* and not the *"most experienced vice president" (LRP17)*.

During the realignment, in her words, her boss *"got the shaft" (LRP8)* [the boss's position was made redundant during the restructuring]. Suddenly, she was without a mentor and still was required to successfully implement the restructuring for her area, and to do so timely. Seeing how her boss lost his job *["you see how people get treated" – LRP17]* and now being without a mentor *["could have benefitted from additional mentorship" – LRP17*] created a *tension* that *motivated learning-seeking efforts* on her part. That learning included, since she no longer had her mentor, how *"to reshape the org structure on the fly" (LRP17)* and given the antecedent of her mentor losing his job that *"you gotta be careful" (LRP17)* while doing it. Time-pressure thus overcomes learning tension by encouraging faster and more *trials* as part of achieving a workable solution (it is acknowledged that errors may be the outcome of the trials, necessitating continuous action until resolution). It thus shifts learning, through motivation, from relying on historical capabilities as antecedents (the competency trap) to adaptive stance (*LRP17*'s example being how to do restructuring *on the fly* and *carefully* as seen above), which essentially engages in a real-time adjustment of both *perspective and tactic,* learning through improvisation and experimentation until success, exhaustion or failure is attained. Success is attained when tension's perturbativity is overcome with the learner being satisfied with the outcome and the outcome meeting the need of the moment. Exhaustion or failure results when the learner gives up before reaching a resolution or is consumed or overwhelmed by the sheer expenditure of cognitive and affective resources that experimenting always require. Failure in this sense is not a failure of experimentation

but a failure of unachieved outcome within the short period of time that is required to meet the need.

Time Pressure and Action:

What *action* enhances for learning is *intuiting as was seen in chapters two and four*, especially as it regards *decision making* and deployment of *practical intelligence* or *skilled application of knowledge* that arise and are improved through *practice*. *Practice* connotes *action* to varying degrees as could be interpreted through terms such as novice, apprentice, master, and expert: novice needs to be *doing* in order to progress while the expert needs to also *do* but to maintain his or her expertise. *Action* that leads to *regression* is symptomatic of failed learning. While action can be planned in advance or be reflected upon after, it primarily takes place in the present. In short-term informal leadership learning, *time* pressure acts to bridge the lag between knowledge acquisition and knowledge use by fusing both in the same moment in time. In intuiting for example, mentally assessing action-options to take (a brief pre-action that pulls from historical antecedents), discarding routines (taking action via experimentation), and assessing the satisfactoriness or not of the action, all happen together within the same short window of time. Intuiting in this sense means acting based on immediate and quicker understanding of a situation. This is *time-pressure* acting through lived experience to influence the alignment of action with the time-interval that matches a leader's expected general pace for execution, which is typically a short period. The reality for leaders is that they are increasingly expected to react to things quickly and stay on top of things as they *shift*. As *LRP19* observed, *"If change is thrust upon the organization, you have to be able*

to adapt to it with a 'sense of urgency'" given "time pressures, political pressure…or you

gonna be in a lot of trouble" (LRP19). Thus, if faster response is the adaptive response to

leaders' fast-paced reality, time-pressure becomes an enabling element to leaders' being

in tune with demands. Time-pressure is therefore suggested to sharpen purposefulness

for leaders by enabling immediate and personal engagement with phenomena. It

becomes a *push* factor that enables action as illustrated by *LRP1*:

> *We had a target of saving 100 million dollars over a five year period of time*
>
> *and they were two years into that target when we started. That was fairly*
>
> *daunting task. We didn't know where all the savings would come from.*
>
> *(LRP1)*

The pressure from delivering on the savings target - *"aggressive targets" (LRP1)* - *while*

already two years late illustrates how time-pressure can sharpen leader's purposefulness

and be a *push* factor to enable action [they eventually exceeded the target]. While action

belongs to the leader's subjective realm, purposefulness is the bridge that transports

action to the objective realm where others, beyond just the leader, play the affirmation

role. As well, pressure coming from the short period of time enables a more rapid pre-

action assessment of historical patterns (routines) and the potential need to act in new

ways (breaking of routines) as may be required by circumstances. Another way that time-

pressure that impacts on action can be explained is through the constructs of *inaction* (in

the extreme) or *delayed* or *untimely action* such as not making decisions within expected,

necessary or effective timeframes. Delayed or untimely action is perceived as an

imbalance between the expected period to act and the period that action finally takes

place. An example of this came from *LRP23* who gave account of working *"very hard…to put our senior team together quickly"*. He stated that they needed *"to act quickly to not lose momentum"* because they couldn't afford *"to spend six months waiting to figure out an org structure and all those sorts of things" (LRP23).* The way to interpret this is that they were preventing untimely or delayed action. Imbalance arising from delayed or untimely action can affect a leader's personal reputation ("he never makes decisions" or "he is weak"), a leader's self-concept ("I always struggle with making decisions"), and the perception of the leader's effectiveness from the perspective of an organization's hierarchy ("he underperforms"). In this sense, time-pressure may advantage those who act quickly as their leadership may be perceived as more effective leading to salient leader-follower-other relationships. For example, if one quickly understands a situation and adjusts timely through their actions, this may make observers or salient others to lean in to this person as s/he may be perceived as a more effective leader. It may also improve a leader's self-concept positively ("I easily make decisions timely") which impacts, for example, self-confidence as a leader, through efficacious self-regulation.

Time Pressure and Reflection:

Reflection for the purposes of this research is understood as the *reflection that is triggered by experience*. As seen already, reflection can occur before action, during, or after. Reflection traverses periods of time: pulls from the past to understand the present,

and to inform the future. Time-pressure acts on reflection by focusing the *extraction of meaning* on the *experience*. It does this through *questioning*, *pondering*, and *taking mental notes*. The nature of reflection is that it prequels, complements or follows *thinking*, *action* or *observation*. Time-pressure acting through reflection enables mindfulness in terms of *attention* preceding, paralleling or following experience. Time-pressure thus suspends *action* or *task focus* briefly to allow cogitation and sense making to take place by *introspecting* and *inquiring* after experience, the whole continuum of experience or only those that are salient. In this way, time-pressure mediates between experience and the *meaning* of the experience. And there are different possibilities that may arise from achieving meaning from experience through reflection. One key possibility is *transformation* whereby a leader's perception of her identity as a leader, her leadership, her values, or the leadership context may change following reflection. This is the juncture where reflection introduces discontinuities that end up informing action, observation, authenticity, effectiveness and other cogent leadership and leadership learning attributes. *LRP13* provides an example here as he reflected:

> *You gotta actually realize that everything that took you to a certain point in being good in what you do, doesn't apply anymore. In fact, it becomes a hindrance to what you should do, and you need to allow yourself the flexibility to think about how to do things differently, to make things happen (LRP13)*

In this example, reflection through the extraction of meaning has led to the perception of something being a *hindrance*, and is informing the understanding that *flexibility* and

different ways of doing things are now required. By acting this way through reflection by briefly suspending action or task focus, time-pressure influences *becoming*. In Pawson and Tilley' (2004) *C-M-O* framework, this becoming is an *O – Outcome*. An example of this *outcome-through-becoming* was alluded to by *LRP13*: *"I mean every time there is a major realignment you come out stronger. You're more knowledgeable, you know what to do, you know what didn't work, you know what did work" (LRP13)*. This becoming is situated in practice, therefore, though it originates from a leader's self referencing, it effectuates relationally in practice and community. The leader becomes *within*: *within* her- or himself and *within* the social context.

Time Pressure and Observation:

Observation is vicarious: there is the observer, the observed, and the observation context. *"I learn through seeing the outcomes of things that have occurred, whether that's at meetings, whether that's individuals - how they are acting" (LRP5)*. Here *LRP5* as the *observer*, 'sees' the *observed* (*outcomes of things that have occurred)* at meetings or while individuals act (the *observation context*). While observation necessarily implies some *distance* such as a certain degree of emotional distance as it is vicarious and not embodied, in terms of learning, it paradoxically also connotes *nearness* or *proximity*. The observed needs to be *in view* in order to be observed. And the observation happens at a specific point in time. Regarding short-term informal leadership learning, time-pressure acts as a *connecting* mechanism that locates and situates agents (the observer and the observed) and the context (observing) simultaneously together to enable *seeing*, *being*

seen, and *information pick up*. Time-pressure achieves this through *freezing*. While time normally connotes a *flow*, in freezing pressure acts by damming the flow, thereby slowing and stopping the current, so focusing can be achieved in the stranded water, using a metaphor. Through the focusing effect of freezing, time-pressure enables the emergence of salience. Salience undergirds *why observe*, *what is observed*, and *what is done with the outcome of observing*. The *freezing* effect of time-pressure is more prominent with *crucibles* (the individual learning paradigm) in the sense that freezing tantamount to quick shrinkage of time to it shortest length to achieve *jolting* (see section below) or very intense and immediate grabbing of one's attention. In terms of situated practice or the relational paradigm, *freezing* still takes place within a short time but not at the same level of intensity as it does with crucibles. For example, *freezing* is still occurring when the apprentice-painter is glued on to the mast-painter who is finessing the broad lines on his canvas. Or the new physician–leader who is sitting in for the first time and observing the collective bargaining session between the union and the employer. This is not as intense as watching the dancing performance in an audition that you would have to perform immediately afterwards, as your third and final try, with failure meaning being booted out of the audition. As well, when we observe and then mimic, imitate or copy, time-pressure plays a *reinforcing* role that enables feedback by comparing the *seen* with its *mimic* or *copy*. In this sense, time-pressure reinforces through a sort of *lookback and playback*. It enables dual action and double observation amongst agents: in the first scenario, the observed acts and the observer watches; in the second scenario, the first observer through playback becomes the observed and acts while the first observed through

lookback becomes the observer and watches. This latter scenario can also be enacted by a lookback mechanism – example a videotaped performance - though acting as an observer, is not a person but a device. In reinforcement, time-pressure is experienced as *what follows immediately after* observation. It is the short window of time following observation when mimicking, modeling or copying is conducted as a reaction to the observed and feedback flows from it as well, after the copying action.

In summary, time-pressure shapes short-term informal leadership learning through the intensification of *learning tension* so that improvising can be triggered towards a resolution. In this role, it acts as a motivator for engaging in learning. In terms of undergirding action, time pressure sharpens purposefulness as a *push* factor that enables action. It also enables *attention* by suspending *action* or *task focus* briefly to allow cogitation, influencing thereby *transformation* and *becoming*. Finally, it is suggested that through *freezing*, time pressure enables *looking back* and *playing back* in imitating, modeling or copying.

5.4   The Elements of the Learning Process

5.4.1   Attention Grabbing

Time-pressure is the element of the *Context (C)* that influences learning as seen above. It is being proposed that this influencing starts with *attention-grabbing* (through *jolting or surprise*), proceeds through *rapid reaction* (*noticing*, *information pick-up*), and then to *making meaning* (*sense-making, seeking understanding*). The first of this learning process, *attention-grabbing*, is explained below starting with *jolting*.

Jolting:

It is being suggested that short-term informal leadership learning mostly starts with the process of jolting (Marsick and Volpe, 1999). The use of 'mostly' is meant to acknowledge that this process can start with other processes other than jolting such as surprise (Martin & Dokic, 2013; Koriat, 2000; 2007). However, while the feeling of surprise, for example, can draw one's attention, it may not be as arresting. *Jolting* on the other hand seems to be more effectual in the intensity and rapidity of grabbing a leader's attention, resulting to an immediacy. For example, as was seen in chapter four, section 4.1.3, *LRP23* wanted to continue *"running hospitals"* but his attention was grabbed by the Board of Directors' no-choice decision: *"that's what you want to do, but that's not what you're going to do" (LRP23)*. The way to understand attention-grabbing is seeing it as a continuum of tension where at the higher end is a *jolt* (Marsick and Volpe, 1999) and at the lower end is a *surprise*. The key here is that the element of interruption is always there. It is more forceful at the jolting end and less so at the surprise end. Time-pressure influences the attention-grabbing effects of *jolting* and *surprise* with *jolting* being more arresting, immediate and forceful. Because of this difference the focus falls more on *jolting* rather than *surprise* and *jolting* is explained further below.

A jolt (Marsick and Volpe, 1999) is something that demands that immediate attention be paid to it as the sole option for a response, if success will be achieved. A jolt grabs a leader's attention now, not in the near future, thereby heightening awareness (Marsick and Volpe, 1999), sensitivity, and salience. This means that the short-term learning process is mostly triggered and starts when a leader's *attention* is grabbed by

salient events as the leader engages with leadership activities. In *direct short-term informal* the nature of this attention is typically forced and intense unlike the *vicarious short-te*rm that is less forced and less intense but still grabs a leader's immediate attention. The short-term informal leadership learning process thus starts with a *jolt*, an attention-grabbing mechanism that makes the leader, forces him or her, to pay attention. *Jolting* can be described as a forceful and powerful process that emerges from experience and which forcefully grabs someone's attention and *demands* immediate or near immediate *attention* to presenting issues including course correction as may be necessary. In this way, jolting interrupts experience and heightens emotionality as *forceful interruption* is a form of discontinuity which can be unsettling. Jolting is memorable in both emergence, impact, and recall in terms of the remembrance of the whole event.

By grabbing attention, jolting enables *noticing* on the leaders' part. This means that the goal of grabbing the leader's attention is to force her to *notice* what is happening. Inherent to jolting therefore, is the need for immediate *reaction*. *Rapid noticing* is the first of the reactions. *Sense-making* is the other. *Rapidity* is the element that *time* introduces as an accelerant to jolting so that *noticing* and *sense making* occur over a short period of time and in quick succession. *Noticing* is facilitated by *proximity* and *salience*, and *sense making* by *reflection*. While jolt as a noun has been presented previously in the literature by Marsick and Volpe (1999) in terms of its ability to heighten awareness, what is new is that jolting, as a verb, is introduced as a forceful attention-grabbing mechanism that impacts salience and that makes the leader, forces him or her, to pay attention, now, and progresses the short-term informal learning by influencing *noticing* and eventually *sense-*

making. Additionally, the introduction of the element of *time* and its plausible effects of *rapidity* and *acceleration* to *jolting* is new as well as both Marsick and Volpe (1999) and Meyer (1982), the key scholars that introduced jolt to the literature did not reference time at all.

5.4.2   Rapid Reaction

From *attention-grabbing*, *rapid reaction* follows and starts with the process of *noticing*.

Noticing:

Noticing acts through *observation* and is facilitated by *proximity* and *salience*. Something has to be *near* and in *view* to be noticed. This may imply some form of deliberateness. However, while pre-noticing or decision to notice, may occur in *formal long-term*, *formal short-term*, and *informal long-term*, *jolting* in *informal short-term* removes the deliberateness through *forcing* noticing on particulars. The gaze, so to say, is no longer in the horizon but on this particular easterly cloud formation, metaphorically speaking. In this sense there is an element of *losing control*, especially at the initiation of jolting as the decision to notice is forced. It is in this sense that noticing is a *reaction*. While the elements of *non-deliberateness* and *losing control* may appear as negative events, they in fact actuate quickened focus on arears of concern, now, and not at some future time. The effect of the *non-deliberateness* and *losing control* factor is that it heightens the affective and emotional responses.

What happens during noticing is *picking up of information* through *sensing* and *sifting*. *Short-term informal leadership learning* is characterized by its tacitness. Tacit

knowledge, as Polanyi (1966) had argued (see section 4.2.1), is invisible, personal, and not easily expressed. As well, it has been recognized in the leadership learning literature that understanding the tacit processes behind how leaders have learnt to lead is significant to leadership learning (Kempster, 2009; Kempster and Parry, 2014). While this understanding of tacit learning applies to informal learning generally, in short-term informal leadership learning, when the influence of time-pressure is factored in, learning tacitly assumes a highly embodied processual form of engagement that introduces and enhances *sensing* as a way of learning. In the immediacy of activities, it is the whole person that learns. And sensing is bodily-felt. In *LRP23*'s example, he characterized everything associated with the Board's direction to him as "*a big shift*" (*LRP23*) for him. If this was explored further it could be found out that "big shift" may encompass his thoughts, his feelings, his reflection, his sense of his leadership, among others. He was responding *wholly*. *Sensing* is thus a whole-body learning that draws from immediately perceived sense-data, feelings, inferential judgements, and contextual outcomes arising from *action*, *observation* or *reflection*. For example, sensing heightens the opportunistic behavior of proximity. In this way s*ensing* acts through *immersion*, in the sense that the whole person is placed into the totality of the possible phenomena as sources of learning. Once immersed, *sensing* plays a further *activating* role in determining salience: is it the body language? Or how she nailed it? Or what I heard? Or interpreted? Or felt? Salience influences what is learned while immersed. As the nature of tacit learning is that it is not easily expressed, the problem of how to surface this learning is still outstanding. This will be addressed below in the section exploring the *surfacing of learning* processes which

deepens the understanding of informal leadership learning especially when the learning is tacit, hence needing eliciting processes (Kempster, 2009). In addition to *sensing* and *sifting*, as the other ways of acting of information pickup, are also enabled by salience. In other words, going back to the metaphor just used above, one would illustrate the picking up of information by asking, which cloud within the easterly cloud formation is of interest? It may be the vertical Cumulonimbus *because* if it turns to rain and gets stormy our newly painted fence will be washed away, and that's why focus is on it and not the others. Information pick up through salience thus enables zeroing in on a particular among the noticed particulars. Because salience acts by attaching degrees of importance to phenomena, picking up of information enables the leader to sift and focus on the important. The processes of *noticing* through *picking up* is immediate, and it pushes the leader to try and understand the *noticed* through *sense making*. *Noticing* is the beginning of the *reaction* processes that end with sense making. The forced immediacy of the *noticing* and *pickup of information* means that the timespan between it and what comes next, *sense making*, is short. In this way noticing enables learning as *sense making* to happen in a shorter period of time.

5.4.3   Making Meaning

From *rapid reaction*, the process moves to *making meaning*, starting with *sense making*

Sense Making:

While the process of *short-term informal leadership learning* begins mostly with *jolting* through *forced paying of attention*, *noticing and information pick up*, it progresses quickly thereafter to *sense making*. In other words, sense making seeks answer(s) to the question: what does what was picked up mean? *Sense making* is enabled by *reflection*. As an act enabled by jolting, like noticing, reflection via sense making is forced. In the quickened and rapid sequence of paying attention, noticing and picking up information, *reflection* takes the presenting information and digs deeper to understand what they mean for the leader. In the *LRP23*'s example above, *sense making* would center on how he would be "*more externally focused than*" he had "*been in the past*", given that he will no longer be "*internally focused*", "*running hospitals*" (LRP23). In *sense making*, reflection seeks a quick understanding of context by mentally *dissecting* and *re-arranging* elements of the *context* towards pragmatic outcome(s). Dissecting and re-arranging, as ways of acting of reflection, occurs through *questioning*, *pondering*, and *taking mental not*es as mentioned earlier in the chapter.

Dissecting:

Dissecting brings the full context of the event into focus for *questioning* and *pondering* - the historical, the current, the political, the cognitive, the affective, the known, the unknown-as-the surprise, the unknown-as-the absent, and others. For example, when *LRP24* observed that "*at the time we thought let's call them* [masked to preserve anonymity] *because we didn't want to rock the boat too much*" and then concluded that "*there are probably some instances where we could have just been a little*

bit more direct … more clear" (LRP24), he was dissecting by *questioning* and *pondering*
some of the processes and outcomes that took place during the restructuring. Nothing is
barred from consideration. In practical terms this may include leaders' relationships and
previously developed competency and/or capability, as examples. As used here,
dissecting further connotes *parts of*. This means that context is seen and approached in
terms of its elemental constitution as a passing through stage to resolution. Once
everything is in view elementally, *re-arranging* kicks in as the next logical step.

Re-arranging

     Re-arranging structures the salient elements of the context (new information, the
re-interpreted, the deeply felt, the nuanced, and others), into a new order by prioritizing
and queueing them up for *resolution* which manifests as *outcomes,* examples of which can
be behaviour (resoluteness), self-efficacy (resilience), identity (new or changed) or action
(immediate and/or self-promise to act in future). *LRP24* provides an example about *re-
arranging. "It's less and less about me … it's about mentoring … modelling, creating, and
passing on the legacy ... of the lessons learned from a leadership perspective ... I'm really
trying to put a lot of energy into that" (LRP24)*. In making this declaration, *LRP24* is
indicating how his leadership will be going forward. *Re-arranging* achieves *new order* that
reduces or eliminates *tension*'s perturbation, minimizes or returns *jolting* to normalcy,
explores *context* deeply and extracts the *salient*, and acts to deliver the sufficiently
pragmatic *resolution*.

One thing to understand is that *dissecting*, *rearranging* and *resolutions* act sequentially within the same *time* and *space* continuum. There is neither *lag* time nor *later* time nor *separate* physical or social space once the dissecting starts. It necessarily passes through re-arranging and is consummated quickly and in the same environment *as* resolutions. In other words, what starts with dissecting ends up as resolutions. *Sense making* is thus generative, emergent, and teleological. These reference potential outcomes of sense making. While we are not focusing on the outcomes of sense making (the elucidation of the process as is being done here is the focus), it is germane to mention, in addition to what was just said briefly about it above, that the outcomes of *sense making* in short-term informal leadership learning could be a more self-aware leader, a leader with heightened and expanded sense of the context of his or her leadership as *LRP24* demonstrated above, a more authentic leader, a more collegial leader, amongst similar illustrations, when learning has been successful. It is in this sense of outcomes that *sense making* is teleological. As well, since it was used above, there is a need to differentiate *sensing* from *sense making*. *Sensing* is a bodily reaction that happens in the present without a time lag between the event and the sensing. *Sense making* is reflective and happens *after*, in the sense that there is a time lag between the event and the drawing out of meaning from it.

In summary, what was presented in this section is a detailed explanation of the elements present in Figure 5.1 (*The Learning Process*) namely, *Time-pressure*, *Attention-Grabbing*, *Rapid Reaction* and *Making Meaning*. The central role of time-pressure in leaders' learning process was highlighted especially the influence it has on *tension*, *action*,

reflection and *observation*, these being elements, as seen in chapters two and four, which are significant and cogent in informal learning as these constitute learning arising from work and daily activities, and leaders may not be aware that learning has occurred for them (Marsick and Volpe (1999). While the delineation of the learning processes of *attention-grabbing*, *rapid reaction* and *making sense* have attempted to respond to the call by Bryman et al. (1996), Parry (1998), and Kempster and Parry (2009) for increased focus on the *how* or *processes* of leadership learning, a gap still remains as informal leadership learning is susceptible to being unconscious or leaders' not being aware that learning has occurred. This logically asserts that the process of informal leadership learning has not been thoroughly investigated if the process by which leaders may become aware of the learning is not explored. This is what the next section does. It attempts to lay out a process that enables *surfacing* of leaders' informal learning. As a term, surfacing has been used in the literature with regard to learning. While Edmondson (2011) used *surfacing* in the context of leaders learning from failures, Cardiff (2011) used it for narratives that enable critical and reflective inquiry while Howitt and Wilson (2016) used it in terms of complex learning within undergraduate research projects. Jones (2009) used it in the sense of *becoming aware* [emphasis added]. It is in Jones' sense that surfacing is used here: as the process by which unconscious learning is brought to awareness. While Figure 5.1 detailed the process undergirding the learning, Figure 5.2 below explores how it may be brought to awareness, a key activity in unconscious learning and tacitly –held learning.

5.5   The Elements of the Surfacing Process

The surfacing process is depicted in Figure 5.2 below (Short-Term Informal Leadership Surfacing of Learning Process) and explained after the diagram.

Figure 5.2   Short-term Informal Leadership Learning Surfacing of Learning Process (Post Action, Post Observation, and Reflection – Reflection-on-action)
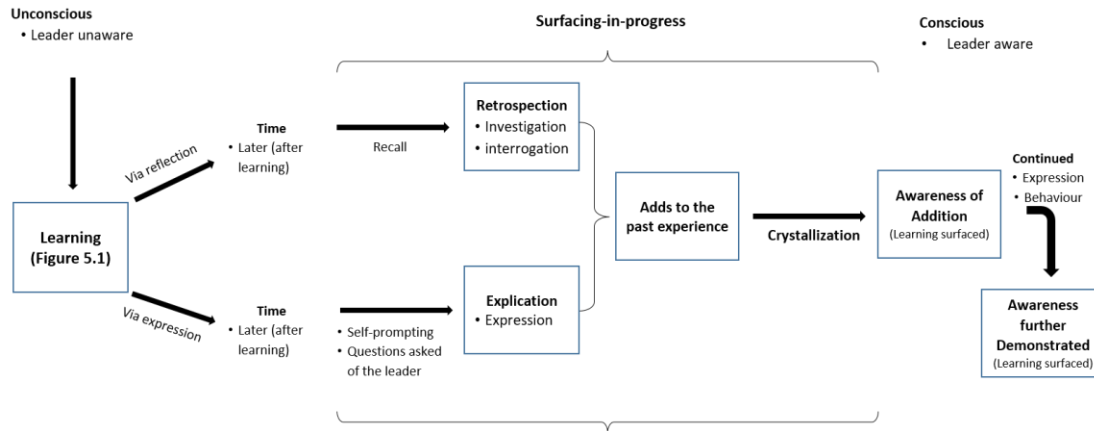
A characteristic of informal learning is that it is unconscious. While leaders learn informally in the short-term through *crucibles* and *situated practice*, most leaders are unaware that they have learnt as the learning is mostly held tacitly. What this means is that though leaders have learnt (and others may have observed the leader's learning through their actions or behaviours), bringing this to leaders' awareness requires some processes to enable it. These processes takes two forms, one is by the leader's own action such as by expression where the leader herself shares what has been learnt by speaking about it, by writing or otherwise sharing the learning herself or by behaviour or action where others observe a change through what the leader does. In the latter instance, it is still not known if the leader is aware or conscious of the learning, that is, unless others

share that with her or serendipitously the leader acts in a different context and self-prompting reveals to her that she learned this from an experience in another context. The other form that this awareness takes is by other people, through different methods, enabling the leader to think about, make sense of, and share what s/he has learned. What these two forms of surfacing the leaders' learning lay bare is that the surfacing process acts through three constructs: *retrospectivity*, *explication, and crystallization*.

Retrospectivity:

Retrospectivity means that the leader's learning is surfaced afterwards, after the learning has taken place. While action typically take place in the present and decisions can be current promise of future action, retrospectivity creates a time-gap that acts through *reflecting back* so that meaningful focus can be placed over the past. What retrospectivity allows is the *investigation* and *interrogation* of the past with a view to understanding it more, essentially adding to it, so that the present and the future can be influenced by the past. In this sense, retrospectivity acts through recall but it doesn't stop there. In fact, not all facts may be recalled but what is effectual is the remembering of the *overall imprint of the experience* or the *experience trajectory*, so that meaning can be made of it, through adding to it. While the emotional stamp of jolting makes the experience more memorable it is through the recognition of what has been added (to the past experience) that retrospectivity surfaces the learning to the leader. The learning is in the *addition*.

Explication:

Explication entails engaging in processes that will reveal or uncover what has been learned. The first form that this takes is the *self-prompted explication* where the leader recognizes the learning herself without other people enabling her to do so. This typically happens through *expression* where the leader talks about her learning. Self-prompted explication is necessarily preceded by reflection and is enacted when motivation is present in the sense that the leader is willing to share the learning. Leadership stories is an example of this. Another way that self-prompted explication happens is through an *after-thought connection* that a leader makes when she realizes, as alluded to above, that learning had occurred after all when as a result of a new experience, especially in different contexts, the leader thinks back and realizes that learning had indeed occurred earlier in a different context. The second form of explication is the *other-enabled* explication, with *other* referring to other people and not the leader herself. *Other people* can be peers, subordinates, superiors, and external other such as researchers and consultants. Other-enabled explication is dialogic. It involves the *other* engaging the leader so that her learning can be *uncovered* through the process. Being dialogic, *other-enabled explication* resides in relational activities such as conversations and works, for example, through asking questions of the leader about their experience and what the experience means for them. *Other-enabled explication* through interviewing of the leaders about the experience is the method that was used in this research. During the conversations, the sharing and probing of experience leads the leader to going back re-living, and more importantly, re-constructing the initial experience by the process of addition referenced above. Other-

enabled explication is an embedded in relational process that is situated in *practice* and in *community*. Explication leads to *crystallization*.

Crystallization:

    Crystallization is the stage in the surfacing process that, after having gone through retrospective explication, the learning is clear to the leader. One of the ways that the fact that learning is further demonstrated beyond explication is through continued articulation or expression, behaviour and other forms of leadership enactment. In other words, if learning is perceived and demonstrated in the real world through change, what changed needs to be heard or observed.

    The connection between the learning process and the surfacing process is that the surfacing process enables the unconscious learning that happened during the learning process to be brought to the leader's awareness. Therefore the question arises, why is it important for the leader to become aware that s/he has learned? Leaders' becoming aware of their learning could be important in terms of its potential effects on learning motivation, expectancy, self-efficacious beliefs, self-regulation, and learning goal orientation (Saks and Haccoun, 2016). In other words, leaders' becoming aware of their learning may positively impact their self-concept and behaviour in the current time. It may also positively dispose them to learning in the future.

5.4   Conclusion

What has been learnt about *short-term informal leadership learning* (STILL) through this chapter?

The first is the role that time pressure plays. It enables action, reflection, and observation. Regarding action, it influences the speed of improvising and experimentation, and acts as a *push* factor to shape intuiting and leader's ability to stay on top of things as they shift. For reflection, time pressure suspends action or task focus so attention can be paid and meaning can be extracted from experience. In doing this it influences becoming through its transformation. For observation time pressure enables things to be in view and through freezing enables information pick up. It also influences looking back and playing back so that copying and mimicking can be undertaken.

The other key learning was the classification of *short-term informal leadership learning (STILL)* into two types, namely, *direct short-term* and *vicarious short-term*. *Direct short-term* arises from a leader's experience that affects them deeply, personally and non-vicariously. And the second, *vicarious short-term informal leadership learning* occurs through the leader making meaning of, interpreting, or modeling *other's experience*. Both types emerged from leader's experience. Vicariousness is a key differentiating factor. At the beginning of this research, the leadership matrix that was advanced helped to identify short-term informal learning by differentiating leadership learning through the elements of time, time-pressure and process.

Regarding how short-term informal learning occurs, it was found that there are two dimensions undergirding the learning process. The first dimension is about the

learning process itself – how it occurs. The second is about how the leader becomes aware that learning did indeed occur. In terms of the learning process, jolting was identified as the key factor that shapes how short-term informal leadership learning occurs. Jolting acts through rapid noticing and sense making as an attention-grabbing mechanism that interrupts experience and heightens emotions. In terms of the surfacing process, it was suggested that this happens through the three constructs of *retrospectivity*, *explication, and crystallization*. *Retrospectivity* means that the leader's learning is surfaced afterwards, after the learning has taken place. *Explication* entails engaging in processes that reveals what has been learned. *Crystallization* validates that the learning is clear through continued articulation or expression, behaviour and other forms of leadership enactment.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.0   Introduction

In the final chapter the researcher articulates the contributions of the research to scholarship, as well as the implications of the research for future research, practice and for health system leadership. It concludes with researcher's personal reflections and the limitations of the research. The chapter begins with a review of the research objectives.

6.1   Main Contributions

Methodologically, leadership learning was approached from a critical realist case study research perspective, thus contributing to the exhortation to do more applied critical realist research. The primacy that critical realism gives to ontology and reality existing independently as well as the process of rendering explanations of observable phenomena through the effects of undergirding mechanisms are distinguishing contributions of critical realism to knowledge, research, and scholarship. In this research it enabled plausible explanations to be suggested for leaders learning informally in the short-term. Their learning, that is the *outcomes*, was explained through the inferred *mechanisms* that operated within the particular *context* of restructuring.

From a leadership learning perspective, the research contributed to leadership learning in three ways. First, a novel taxonomy, the *Leadership Learning Matrix*, was introduced that categorized leadership learning into four: *Formal long-term* leadership learning, *Formal short-term* leadership learning, *Informal long-term* leadership learning, and *Informal short-term* leadership learning. It is hoped that this taxonomy will lead future

researchers to be more specific about their areas of leadership learning research focus. In this research it enabled focusing on *short-term informal leadership learning*. Claim is not being made that this taxonomy is exhaustive. It is presented as a useful start as none has been advanced so far. Secondly, *a typology for short-term informal leadership learning (STILL)* was put forward. Two types were proposed: *direct* short-term informal and *vicarious* short-term informal. Through this typology what is known about short-term informal leadership has been further extended and expanded so comparison and exploratory robustness through differentiation can be applied to the investigation of short-term leadership learning. Thirdly, two related frameworks, the Short-Term Informal Leadership *Learning* Process and the Short Informal Leadership *Surfacing of Learning* Process, were proposed to articulate and advance how short-term informal leadership learning works. In concert, these two processes present a new model of leadership learning that may be theoretically relevant for researchers. Furthermore, a pragmatic contribution of this research to practice is that it provides a conceptual map for leadership development practitioners to understand and hopefully approach leadership development programming from a fresh lens of considering how the focus on the nature and processes of *short-term informal leadership learning* can further inform those aspects of leadership learning that previous research have determined contribute more to leadership learning than the dominant formal learning does. Finally, the researcher feels that the combination of this research's methodological approach and the substantive outcomes through the taxonomy, typology and the model, have advanced the

understanding of leadership learning. Specifically, more is known about short-term

informal leadership learning now than was the case at the beginning of this research.

6.2   Implications for Future Research

For Critical Realist Leadership Research:

There is a need in the research arena for more critical realist works that rigorously

apply the critical realist methodology *by actually identifying mechanisms for that which is*

studied and using them as vehicles for explanation. The paucity of such works has already

been identified in the literature (Bhaskar, 2014; Kempster, 2014; O'Mahoney, 2016).

O'Mahoney (2016) bemoaned the fact that "it sometimes appears that after CR [critical

realism] has been mentioned briefly in the methodology, it is quickly forgotten. It is rare

to read an empirical CR piece that actually names its entities and mechanisms"

(O'Mahoney, 2016, para.3). Bhaskar (2014) also decried the dearth of such works and

promoted it in one of his last works (he died in 2014) as a key contribution to the next

phase of critical realism which he has termed applied critical realism (ACR):

> For even when one has begun to grasp some principles of basic critical
>
> realism, it will not be obvious how exactly one is to 'do it'. How, for
>
> instance… does one identify a mechanism when it is not observable and so
>
> can only be known through its effects? (Bhaskar, 2014, p. v).

He went further to conclude that

> Of course, if CR is to be 'serious', it must be applicable …. it is in its
>
> applications that, on its own self-understanding, the whole point and value

of CR as an *under-labourer*, and occasional midwife, lies. So much so, that one could say that applied or practical critical realism or indeed 'critical realism in action' is, or should be, the soul or heartbeat of CR. (Bhaskar, 2014, p.v)

As well and specific to critical realist leadership learning, the breadth of studies that identifies causal mechanisms and uses them for explanation for leadership learning remains low. Kempster and Parry (2014) is one of the few exceptions. More leadership learning research focused on identification of mechanisms and employing abduction and retroduction to provide causal explanation and through them engage in theory development is needed to continue to demonstrate the distinct ontological and epistemological contributions that critical realism can make to the study of leadership.

For Leadership Learning:

> *What is the significance?*

What this research has brought to the fore is the need for leadership learning research to focus more on exploring the leadership learning that happens informally in the short-term. The research has suggested a taxonomy, a typology as well as a process model as considerations that may guide further exploration. These were not available previously and hopefully will make embarking on this path less daunting. Three key things make focusing on short-term informal leadership learning important in terms of the potential contributions it can make to leadership learning for organizations, leaders, researchers, and to knowledge. First, *organizations* continue to both spend a lot on formal

leadership learning *and* also complain at the same time that they are not seeing acceptable 'returns' from this 'investment', as was seen previously. One way this could be understood is that organizations are seriously looking for help in the sense that they are in a quest to locate, understand and (hopefully) invest in a form of leadership learning that delivers by impacting leadership learning in ways that *outcomes* meet *needs*. What this research offers is that there is an opportunity for organizations to consider short-term informal leadership learning as one form of leadership learning that may meet their objectives. For one, it would be cheaper in terms of financial investment (in addition to the direct costs of learning, other factors that are increasing the costs of all formal learning including leadership learning include travel and accommodation costs for in-person learning, as well as technology and equipment costs for virtual and associated learning platforms, as examples). As well, the length of time-away from work for formal learning purposes, especially for hierarchical leaders, which has always been an issue for organizations, is likely to be reduced in this form of informal leadership learning. Additionally, focusing on short-term informal learning holds the potential to enable learning to contribute more to leadership emergence and growth. The current issue of concern is that formal learning has not demonstrated ability to do this beyond marginal contribution. One reason that gives hope that short-term informal may deliver on this is that research indicates that leaders learn naturally this way as have been observed severally in this research.

Secondly, *for leaders*, this research has demonstrated that this way of approaching leader's learning seems to align with what works for them from *motivation*, *convenience*

and *time-spent perspectives*. These were gauged, first, from how many leaders responded

positively to voluntarily participating in the research – *100%* of the eligible leaders based

on the recruitment criteria for *Org1*; almost *60%* for *Org2* (in fact the numbers for Org2

could have been higher as some said yes to participating but after several interview

scheduling conflicts and postponements declined as they felt that the time conflicts were

frustrating the researcher; in other words, they wanted to participate but logistical issues

were the main reason for their eventual non-participation); and, *71%* for *Org3*. *Motivation*

was also interpreted from what leaders said about being interviewed. Of those that spoke

about it during the interview, almost all were appreciative of the opportunity to reflect

on their experience and share their learning – the well-articulated statement from *LRP20*

presented in *section 6.6* below is representative in this respect. If this research was not

conducted, perhaps, this will be all that one can say about leaders reflecting on and

sharing their learning. However, as a result of this research, more could be said as this

phenomenon can be elucidated further and more specifically as follows:

> *Leaders appreciated the opportunity to surface their learning through reflection,*
>
> *recall and retrospection, and through expression, prompting by other, and*
>
> *explication, leading to their learning being crystallized and made conscious.*

These terms come from *The Surfacing of Learning Process (Figure 5.2)* and demonstrates

further how this research has furthered what could be understood about short-term

informal leadership learning.

Thirdly, for researchers, the question of this research's significance is around w*hat*

difference it will make to leadership learning and how? The first is that this research has

suggested some language for further exploration of *short-term informal leadership learning* (STILL). These are discernible in the suggested taxonomy, typology and model for short-term informal leadership learning. Language and terminology for an area is foundational to interpretation, discourse analysis, making meaning, and the construction and elucidation of arguments, amongst others. To the extent that short-term informal leadership learning can be explored further, this research has introduced terms that can enable subject specificity and contrasting. An example of specificity would be closely identifying the type of short-term informal leadership learning that is the subject of one's research – such as *direct* informal short-term leadership learning as opposed to *vicarious* informal short-term. In this respect, Sayer (1992) is of the opinion that "knowledge must grasp the differentiations of the world; we need a way of individuating objects; and of characterizing their attributes and relationships" (p.86).

Furthermore, the research suggests areas for further exploration. *Time* and *Time Pressure* and how they may influence leader's learning could be explored more deeply. While their role in leader's learning contributed to the elucidation of the *short-term informal leadership learning* processes, in-depth research could go further to look at temporality and historicity as they may shape not just the present time and associated pressures but understanding how past time are activated in a leader's learning process and what it means for what a leader learns or doesn't learn or does or doesn't do, in the future. Still on time, the intersection between clock time or linear temporality and "time as lived experience" or "qualitative temporality" (Dawson, 2014, p.288) could be looked at as leadership "activity cycles" (Ballard, 2009, p. 205) "to illustrate 'how both clock

(objective) time as well as event (subjective and intersubjective) time constitute and are also constituted by members' temporal experience'" (Dawson, 2014, pp.288-289). Weibe (2010) has looked at how the "concepts of time…can be used to explain the lived experience of change" (Dawson, 2014, p.289). The new question is - how can it be used to explain leadership learning specifically? For example, given the short time frame, what factors may enhance learning, what factors may overwhelm leaders and in what ways? Additionally, *contextual focus* in short-term informal leadership learning may be looked at. The universality of the leadership construct and enactment is contested (Hartley & Bennington, 2010). The backdrop of the current research is the healthcare context. However, healthcare-specific contextualities were not deeply explored as the goal was understanding *short-term informal learning* through leaders' *restructuring experience*. Further research that explores the broader remit of healthcare leadership (operational leadership, clinical leadership, et cetera) could tease out sector-specific contextual influences. Beyond healthcare, other areas can be looked at as well, for example, how can short-term informal leadership learning manifest in post-secondary education, for example? Can this be explored deeply? Furthermore, this research focused *on all* leaders that led restructuring without making distinctions according to gender, specific occupations or other such categories. For future research, *population-specific experience-based leadership learning research* (for example, focusing on CEOs only or women leaders or those who are leading restructuring for the first time) may contribute in teasing out differences, nuances, weltanschauung or worldviews, distinctness, effect, emancipatory

intent and/or potential (Habermas, 1987; Outhwaite, 1987, Archer et al., 1998) – *depth struggle* in Bhaskerian terminology (Bhaskar, 1978, 1993, 2009, 2014).

Retrospective Investigation:

"In order to explain a specific phenomenon, associated events must have already occurred. Thus the orientation of the research is, by necessity, retrospective" (Wynn & Williams, 2012, p.804). This research was retrospective but not longitudinal. Antanacopuolou (2014; 2010a; 2010b; 2008; 2006; 1998) and Antonacopoulou and Sheaffer (2014) have deepened the understanding and relationships between learning *and* time as well as the complexity of learning *through* time - "Here the focus on time is on the critical moments that shape how such issues as the timing, timeliness and timelessness of learning acquire significance" (Antanacopuolou, 2014, p.86). Therefore, a longitudinal research design that looks at leaders' learning and experience over a period of time and (perhaps) covering more than one restructuring will expand what knowledge can become available from this *learning-time-complexity* perspective. A further iteration of a longitudinal design could be focusing on a single leader or leaders over time.

6.3   Implications for Practice

The most important implication for practice is the accepted notion that leaders learn naturally from what they do or from enacting leadership through lived experience. The significance of this becomes obvious when juxtaposed with the overwhelming and unyielding focus of leadership development programs on leaders being formally

educated, schooled or trained. As we saw previously in Chapter two, a broader focus on leadership development is required so that leadership development is not primarily seen as "what should be taught in leadership courses, but how can leaders be helped to learn?" (Hackman & Wageman, 2007.p. 46). Being able to convey and convince those who are responsible for organizational leadership development programs of this fact amounts to a success in and of itself. The immediately related key issue is *how* this learning can be surfaced, articulated, explicated, understood, explained, and made available to others. Tacit knowledge and its role *in* and *on* practice has been acknowledged. But by what process can this be elucidated? What this research suggests is that providing leaders the opportunity to reflect *back* and reflect *on* significant organizational activities is one key method of surfacing and understanding learning. *LRPs* themselves gave account of positive disposition and appreciation towards the opportunity this research offered them to reflect on and share their experience and learning. *LRP20* is an exemplar in this regard and for that reason his full thought on this is represented in complete details; his full narrative is presented below - leadership as storytelling - so that this important point about enabling leaders to *reflect* on, *surface* and *express* their learning, can be conveyed in all seriousness as this is one of the gaps in current organizational practice regarding informal leadership learning. The leader was speaking in the context of being interviewed for this research; this was his last statement before the interview ended:

> *So what I thought was just going to be an exercise on you know "let's talk about*
>
> *the consolidation and your history with it", that's pretty straightforward. This is a*
>
> *bigger question in the context of something like - "What is the landscape and the*

terrain in and around that and what is its effect on different things? What is the learning … during and after that, right?" So you know I wrote this once, I probably stole this from somebody who wrote it elsewhere, that significant things are like a rock in the river. They part the current, both upstream just before they happen and afterwards. So that's kind of what these things are like. There's the leading up. The rock was kind of there, whether you know it's there or not, though the current has kind of started to change in the river before you do something like in the consolidation [restructuring] and stuff. And then the consolidation happens and the current has changed afterwards, right. You know after, if you look at a big rock, at a river, that's how it works…I think for me it's made me think a little bit more about the leadership continuum in that circumstance. And for me personally, because I've got such a long history in the organization that's what whole river looks like for me, from way back then 'cause there is back here, the consolidation is about here for me and then I'm gonna go about "what's that all look like?" because I can see some patterns in learnings in me that I took in there and now that's it changed and I come forward and come out from. So "how does something like the consolidation inform my own leadership?" What did I bring into it? How was it shaped, you know?" [Name omitted], one of our VPs, talks about organizational culture as kind of bending the light. He talks about it like a lens, actually that's what a lens does, it bends light. So for better or worse, those things take what is coming in and they bend it and they reshape it. So I think about that as well. And you know just even in reflecting with you and thinking about the things

that I want to do more of, and I want to do better. I can say those things, which is even declaring them here right now as an affirmation, and a recommitment, you know. Um, it's kind of like for some people you know, a prayer or things like that are a reaffirmation of commitment, you know. It is meditation for people or something. It's kind of, that's what you do. Um you have to act, you can't just think and pray about it. You got to actually change things, but also doing the thinking about it is a reminder of what you have to do. You can't have one without the other. You can't not think and reflect and then act on these things. You have to constantly be revisiting that and that triggers you to do things and "you reflect and you do". I mean that's probably the reflective nature of things is probably a big focus for you I would imagine, right? So, yeah that's all I can think about for now. But I appreciate the conversation and, I don't know if you can tell me who else you're talking to or how many other people you're talking to? (LRP20)

The research thus suggests including opportunities for reflection *in* and *on* action, retrospectively and/or contemporaneously, as part of leadership development programming and the resultant leadership development curriculum so that both leaders and their organizations may be afforded learning that would otherwise not be explicated, crystallized, understood or shared. Better yet is to prepare leaders in advance of leading a significant organizational change such as restructuring, *from a learning perspective*, so that the process of leading will be aligned with the process of *surfacing learning*, both in real time and after. In this respect, two key practical suggestions are put forward: 1) After-

Restructuring Facilitated Learning Conversations, and 2) Therapeutic Self-Care Sessions for Leaders.

6.3.1 After-Restructuring Facilitated Learning Conversations

After-Restructuring Facilitated Learning Conversations are opportunities provided by organizations so that leaders will have learning conversations following their restructuring experience. It is explained through its key terms as follows:

After-Restructuring: This happens after restructuring, retrospectively, to allow time for leaders to have reflected on and digested the experience.

Learning: Its focus is on *learning* not *performance* or organizational expectations. It is positioned as an emancipatory action for leaders, intended primarily for themselves. It benefits the organization to the extent that leaders find it valuable and deploy their learnings as they see fit.

Facilitated: These sessions should be facilitated meaning that a facilitator should be brought in to enable leaders engage in remembering, recalling, describing, reflecting and expressing. Ideally the facilitator, when internal to the organization, should not be from regular human resources professionals, but rather from training and development or learning specialists. Or else, when external, a qualified facilitator or management consultant.

Conversations: This allows for openness and reduces the perception that this is about work or performance.

60 – 90 minutes should be sufficient for a session. And the format may allow for a one- on-one, one time session, with the possibility of a second session depending on the circumstances. Alternatively, this session could first be done on one-on-one to explore leader's individual learning, and then in group to explore similarities, differences, and other cogent thoughts that may arise. This will have the added benefit of emphasizing the learning focus of the conversations. Advance preparation for the conversation includes an invitation that requests leaders to think about their restructuring experience and come prepared to talk about it, for learning purposes only, in an informal, loosely structured conversation session.

6.3.2   Therapeutic Self-Care Sessions for Leaders

Given that the nature of restructuring is one of great uncertainty and that this research showed that leaders experienced what could be termed workplace trauma due to the impact that leading restructuring activities had on them, including episodes during the research interview that may be interpreted as re-activating or re-triggering the traumatic experiences, *Therapeutic Self-Care Sessions for Leaders* is being suggested as a way for leaders to deal with issues arising from their traumatic experiences. Unlike the *After-Restructuring Facilitated Learning Conversations*, the therapeutic self-care is intended to help heal the individual leader. Therefore, it is suggested that this be designed as a psychological benefit as part of the organization's employee benefit system that leaders can access on as-needed basis, with the goal being to return the individual to wholeness through these sessions.

6.4   Limitations

Five areas of limitation are presented: making inferential judgement and rendering probable explanation, case study limitations that include non-randomized samples and generalizing to the context, limitations around the difficulty of expressing tacitly-held knowledge and how research participants were selected.

First, this research was approached through critical realism (CR) which allows inferences to be made so that explanations can be rendered through them. While critical realism uses these inferential judgements to explore mechanisms within CR's stratified ontology, questions could be raised as to the reliability of these inferences as means of making statements about collected data and rendering explanations on them. The rationale for this form of hypothetical inference (Peirce, 1883) is explained through the notion of judgemental rationality (Lipscomb, 2011) and the rejection of judgemental relativism (Lipscomb, 2011). While judgemental relativism "gives equal voice or weight to multiple theories or interpretations" (Lipscomb, 2011, p.5), judgemental rationality "suggests that it is, in principle, possible to reach contingently reasoned and accurate judgements about truth and reality" (Lipscomb, 2011, p.5). This raises a further issue: what factors support and enhance this contingent reasonableness? Harman (1965) suggests that "such a judgment will be based on considerations such as which hypothesis is simpler, which is more plausible, which explains more, which is less *ad hoc*, and so forth" (p.89), with the key consideration being rendering "the most plausible explanation…plausible enough and simple enough to be accepted" (Harman, 1965, p.89). On this Bhaskar (1979) says:

the construction of an explanation for…some identified phenomenon will involve the building of a model, utilizing such cognitive materials and operating under the control of something like a logic of analogy and metaphor, of a mechanism, which if it were to exist and act in the postulated way would account for the phenomenon in question." (p.15)

Additionally, as seen previously (chapter three, section 3.1.6), Burgoyne (n.d.) had contributed that plausibility in critical realism aims for *probabilistic* certainty as against *deterministic* certainty (Burgoyne n.d.). Thus, in addition to using judgmental rationality (Lipscomb, 2011) for plausible postulation (Harman, 1965; Bhaskar, 1979) seeking *probabilistic* certainty (Burgoyne, n.d.), it could be argued that reliability for rendered explanation rests primarily on plausibility, and secondarily on simplicity (Harman, 1965): "simplicity becomes an obvious candidate as the final criterion" (Yeung, 1997, p. 61). Yeung (1997) further suggested that enhancing reliability in this process involves engaging in continuous iterative abstraction until adequacy is reached, with adequacy meaning that the mechanisms are known and as described "must be capable of explaining the phenomenon" (Larsen and Lindkvist, 2014, p.144). While iterative abstraction could take the form of collecting more empirical evidence sequentially (Yeung, 1997), this research engaged in iterative abstraction through deploying the two key forms of inference, abduction and retroduction, sequentially – as a form of thought experiment, one out of five strategies for inferential reasoning proposed by Danermark et al. (1997). In thought experiment, as a strategy of inferential reasoning, researchers imagine and work through hypothetical worlds and their constitutive factors. (Tetlock and Belkin, 1996; Meyer and

Lunnay, 2013; Danermark et al., 1997). And the "answer to the question of how thought experiments may provide fresh insight: this is what inference does all the time" (Haggqvist, 2009, p.60). For example:

> When a detective puts the evidence together and decides that it must have been the butler, [s/]he is reasoning that no other explanation which accounts for all the facts is plausible enough or simple enough to be accepted. When a scientist infers the existence of atoms and subatomic particles, [s/]he is inferring the truth of an explanation for various data which [s/]he wishes to account for. (Harman, 1965, p.89).

Therefore, reliability in this research is meant to be understood from this perspective of critical realist inferences. This explains the use of terms such as *plausible* and *suggests* in describing the explanations rendered about leader's learning informally in the short-term. And in generalizing to the context, not to the universe as Pawson (2001) explains:

> Data extraction in realist synthesis thus takes the form of an interrogation of the base-line inquiries for information on 'what works for whom in what circumstances'. The approach to generalisation is also different…[it is not] a 'best buy' (approach 'x' or case 'y' seems to be the most successful) but a tailored, 'transferable theory' (this programme theory works in these respects, for these subjects, in these kinds of situations). (p.4)

> Second, this is a case study research. Specific restructuring cases were selected as non-randomized samples. Second, generalization is to the context not to the universe, in line with critical realist and case study research. Prediction was neither intended nor

achieved, neither were positivism-based "empirical regularities, generalisations or law-like relationships' (Easton, 2003, p.5) sought. In this regard, the researcher agrees with Flyvberg (2011), when it comes to case study research that general theoretical (context-independent) knowledge is no more valuable than concrete (context-dependent) case knowledge, and as well with Easton in his "one case is enough" (2003) proposition, regarding the critical realist perspective that "the best explanation, i.e., the one most consistent with the data, is what is being sought" (p.14) not what is more in terms of their numbers or how many they are. A single case study should be able to stand totally on its own. The third limitation is methodological specificity. Current research was conducted following a critical realist case study research methodology. Because CR does not specify any particular methodology, this research could have been conducted via ethnography and autoethnography, phenomenology or grounded theory. Case study research was a choice based on what was judged by the researcher to suit the research activity the best. Fifth is geographic limitation. This research looked at healthcare organizations in two selected Canadian provinces, Alberta and Saskatchewan. From a solely *experience* perspective, this is limiting as it is neither Canada-wide nor does it represent other jurisdictions (the UK and Australia as examples of similar publicly funded health systems) that co-habit the universal healthcare model.

Third, as seen previously in *Chapter 4, section 4.2.1 (as well as Chapter one, section 1:3 and Chapter two, section 2.2.2)*, tacit knowledge is not easily expressed (Nonaka, 1991; Lam, 1999; Kikoski & Kikoski, 2004). This was no different in this research for the participants as short-term informal learning is argued to be tacitly held. The research

interview thus became the arena where the researcher created a vehicle that allowed participants to travel back and forth from their experience and "situated knowledge" (Smith and Elger, 2015, p.15) through questions that were asked of them. Their responses represent "verbal articulation" (Zhenhua, 2004) and claim is not being made that what was verbalized represents the totality of tacitly held understanding. As seen previously (chapter two, section 2.2.2), Polanyi (1966) had indicated that "we can know more than we can tell" (p. 4) as part of his characterizing tacit knowledge vis-à-vis articulation and expression. All that is suggested is that the account that the leaders gave of their tacitly held informal learning were received as expressed and accepted to represent their reality, even if there are parts unexpressed that may yet be expressed.

Fourth, regarding bias, it is worth repeating here what the researcher shared in *chapter one, section 1.6*, regarding his core beliefs as he approached this research. They are:

1. No matter how formal leaders emerge, leaders can learn from what they do.

2. One's activities seem to be a treasure trove for learning. Experience, as has been classically stated, is the best teacher. Leaders learn naturally this way (Burgoyne & Stuart, 1977; Burgoyne and Hodgson, 1983).

3. Leaders can describe their leadership activities but it is not always easy for leaders to find a way to extract and articulate learnings from experience.

4. When learning has occurred, leaders may be unaware that learning has occurred. As well, how leaders learn and what caused the learning may not be clear.

The rationale for sharing this at the beginning of the research is to strive to eliminate or significantly reduce any unintentional errors that may seep through in data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation. For example, regarding the first belief, that leaders learn from what they do, while this belief pre-dates this research, the researcher did not try to influence or pressure leaders' towards describing their learning as the only possible reality as leaders may not learn at all from their experience, for whatever reason. Upon being asked about it, leaders shared their learning from the restructuring willingly, where they had one, and the researcher probed the learning after they have been shared.

Another area for potential bias is in selecting the population or sample to study. In this respect, this research was guided by the criteria set out in *chapter three, section 3.3.1 and Table 3.1 – Criteria to Participate in the Research*, which is grounded on the principle of *casing* (Ragin, 1992) which is employed in case study research to establish the boundaries of a case, and by implication, only the bounded will be the focus and the individuals within the bounded will be eligible to participate. In this research, the bounded individuals were the leaders who led the restructuring. The notion of casing and the resultant bounding enabled the researcher to target *all* leaders within each of the organizations that met the criteria. All those who met the criteria were eligible to participate and received an invitation to participate voluntarily. Those who did not participate made a voluntary choice not to do so. Also, for those who did not receive the invitation to participate, the main reason was that they did not meet the criteria. For example, the CEO of Org2 did not receive an invitation to participate because s/he was not an employee of the organization at the time, and therefore did not lead any

restructuring for Org2. By contrast, the CEOs of the two other organizations received the

invitation to participate because they met the criteria.

6.5   Conclusion

In conclusion as well as final word: "If experience is the primary driver of leader

development, then learning surely must play an important mediating role in that process"

(Day, 2010, p.44).

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