

**IDENTITY REBUILDING FOR A WOMAN
LIVING IN AN EXPATRIATE SITUATION:
AN AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY**

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to answer the following question: Can PPL (personal and professional leadership) in any way provides an explanation for what happens in the life of an expatriate woman and can it contribute to the reconstruction of the life of a woman living in an expatriate situation?

In order to answer the research question, the research was divided into two distinguishable parts. In the first part an examination of the loss of identity the expatriate woman experiences was discussed within the context of the PPL (personal and professional leadership) leadership model. The conclusion reached was that the expatriate woman is left vulnerable and disorientated because of the absence of essential and familiar leadership levels, and her own culture and country. Familiar roles and own identity need to be reshaped.

In the second part of the research the rebuilding of a new identity was discussed within the context of the PPL (personal- and professional leadership) dimensional model. This model was explored for its potential in assisting the expatriate woman to understand fundamental dimensions in need of being developed in order to find a sense of purpose, meaning and hope in this time of change. The conclusion was that the PPL dimensional model can be successfully utilised in rebuilding the identity. The importance of this model lies in its fundamental belief that human beings are primarily spiritual beings and that this dimension is the source of the need to serve others, to contribute, to "matter", to make a difference and to have a sense of meaning and purpose.

This research was concluding to introduce a PPL leadership model within the context of country and culture with a final conclusion that PPL can both assist in understanding what happened to the expatriate woman and in providing a tool for assisting and planning the identity rebuilding process.

This was an auto-ethnographic study.

*Change is the timeless interplay
of the forces of creation and destruction*

Janet Feldman

1.1 CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND TO STUDY

Two years before moving to Mauritius I left the professional working environment and effectively ended my career in order to take care of my three children aged six, four and a newborn baby. A year later I enrolled for a master's degree, of which this document forms part. Prior to starting my studies, I worked with my entrepreneurial husband in his business, helping him to set it up and establish it in the international market. This business is based in Mauritius and because of its international presence it took my husband abroad for many days of the year.

There came a time when we started discussing the possibility of moving abroad but it always seemed something vaguely unattainable. Then one day my husband came home and said: "We will be moving to Mauritius by the end of the year." The impact of this sentence was really only felt much later. It was a thought that excited and terrified me at the same time. All of a sudden moving overseas was a reality and I was not sure whether I could really cope with it. I was overwhelmed with questions.

As the company belonged to my husband and it was he who had decided on the change, I realised that if we were to move, we would have to make it work. There was no state department or parent company that would provide us with extra money to help us settle in and make the move work, and then, maybe, bring us back after three or four years. The resources we had were the resources we would have to make do with and these were dependent on the business. This was a risky position to be in and I found myself constantly asking whether we should move or not.

My husband was keen to go, and I also realised that for the sake of the business and its future it would be the right thing to do. Halfway through my studies in Personal- Interpersonal- and Professional Leadership at the Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) in Johannesburg we moved and I was tremendously sad to see a future career in this field disappear. The move would have an impact not only on me as a person, but also on my professional capacity.

Moving abroad was therefore not a decision made lightly. Besides the cost implication we also realised the potential damage it could do not only to the lives of our children, but also to us as a couple if not managed correctly.

Being a spiritually connected person, I knew on a deeper level that it was the right thing for us as a family to do. So when the decision finally had to be made as to whether we would leave South Africa to settle in Mauritius, it was a mutual decision. The process of transition started seven months before our departure.



Nothing could have prepared me for the personal shock and loss I felt within a few months of moving to a foreign country. This move we made was from a first world set-up to a third world set-up; from a dominantly Christian Western culture to a dominantly Hindu Eastern culture. I left a country with a language in which I could express and explain myself, and moved to a foreign country with a foreign language in which expressing and explaining oneself can take a great deal of effort. We moved from a place with a well-functioning and familiar infrastructure to one with strange functioning at a slower tempo. I left a well-established support base to arrive at – nothing!

I found myself looking through the lenses of personal and professional leadership (the study I am currently conducting, of which a description will be given in Chapter 3) at myself and my fellow expatriate women and realising that no amount of money, socialising or exercise would assuage this deep, inner sense of loss. I found myself leaning heavily on the **spiritual dimension**, delving into **personal leadership**, to start dealing with this

change. What I realised was that dealing with change would not happen overnight: but would entail a long journey via my soul to a place of full acceptance and contentment. This would not be for me a one hundred meter sprint, but a marathon that would take a great deal of energy, focus, sacrifice, determination, self-discipline and connectedness in order to complete the journey successfully. This would not be an achievement someone else could determine, but would be measured by my own perception and definition of success. Only I would know how successful I had been once the process was finished – and only I would know when it was finished.

In line with what Covey (1989:83) writes, I realised that my circle of influence had shrunk to include my children, my husband and myself. As my children settled down in school and my husband settled down in his work environment, my circle of influence shrank even further, until I was left alone on the inside of the circle asking the question: What now?

As far as my position in our new country is concerned, I am legally bound not to work, and any move in that direction could jeopardise our work permit. According to the leadership pyramid of personal, interpersonal and professional leadership (Smith, 2003a:11), my sphere of professional leadership in its entirety collapsed and, with that, my ability to express myself in a work environment. Verrier (2002:1) states that one of the ways and places in which people are able to find a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives, and meet their physical, social, emotional and mental needs, is through their work. With this aspect of my life totally controlled by the legal system of the country, I am challenged to find other avenues to bring this level of the leadership pyramid back into my life.

Our move brought about changes not only in the professional sphere of the leadership pyramid, but also with the role-players on an interpersonal level. I started the process of making new friends; however, I found that the “rules of acceptance” in the expatriate community were something I could not relate to. Covey (1989:19) talks about personality ethics and character ethics, personality ethics being the superficial, public image that indicates success.

Accepting or not accepting these rules of acceptance guarantees your acceptance or rejection by the group. Some of the choices we made left us obviously excluded by the expatriate community. These choices will, I believe, benefit us in the long term, but have had a direct short-term impact on me as a person.

Knowing the true north principle, a principle explained by Covey et al. (1994:19-20) in the analogy of a clock and compass, which represents two powerful tools that direct us (see figure 1). The clock represents one's commitments, appointments, schedules, goals and activities – what people do with, and how they manage their time (the reality of their lives). The compass represents our vision, values, principles, mission, conscience, direction – what we feel is important and how we lead our lives.

The struggle comes when people sense a gap between the clock and the compass – when what they do, don't contribute to what is most important in their lives. Some people may experience the pain of the gap intense, others might experience it as a vague discomfort, an inner emptiness or just feelings like discomfort and confusion. They live an imbalanced life, a life where they move from activity to activity and wonder if there's any meaning in their doing. Some people know they are out of balance but don't have the confidence to change, they feel the cost for change is too high, or, are simply too afraid to try. It then becomes easier to live the imbalance (Covey et al. 1994:20).

In the figure to follow, True North (compass) represents a person's values, principles, vision and purpose. Grid A represents the everyday schedules, dates, goals and appointments. Grid B represents the "rules of acceptance".

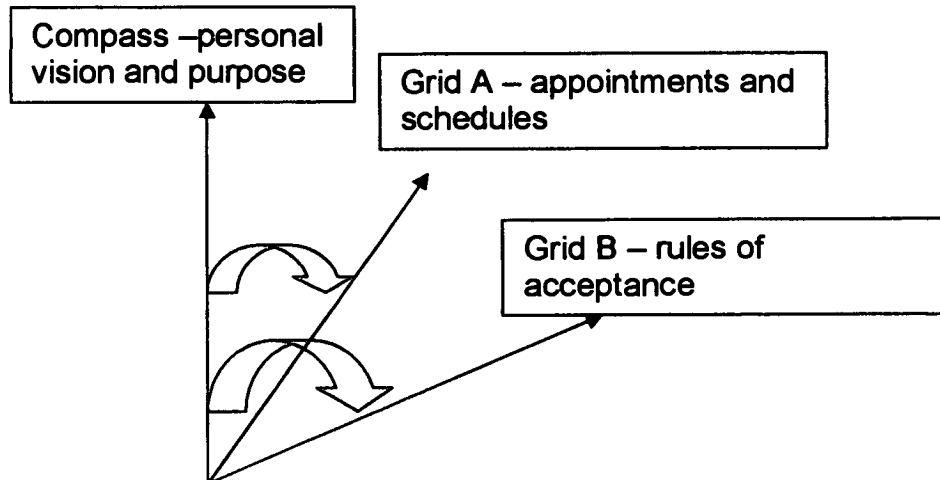


Figure 1: True north grid

I know that indulging in the paradigm (rules of acceptance) would ultimately take me away from my true north but, adding to the feeling of loss, the feeling of not being embraced by a new community leaves one very lonely and despondent. Smith (1994:134) states that the need to love and the need to be loved are more than just desires. They are perhaps the most influential needs we have and they drive us to join groups that do not interest us just because they give us a sense of belonging. He goes on to say that love is the greatest motivating force in the world and that it gives purpose to everything.

And here I am at the age of 36, an age when women are rising to the top of their professional careers in a community that supports and understand the paradigm of the modern woman, and I belong nowhere and have serious questions about the purpose and meaning of my life and the legacy I will leave. These are questions I had not planned to ask at this stage of my life. My life and my dreams had literally fallen apart and I was challenged with the biggest issue of my life so far – how was I to rebuild my life so as to make it meaningful, and purpose driven, adding value not only to myself but also to others?

1.2 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE STUDY

Emily, you are right when you say it's career suicide for us expat wives! (Anon, 2002).

In a city where there are over three million single people, where even guest lists for parties are something that you buy, and where a woman's best friend is often her dog, I should not be surprised that it is hard to get to know anyone. I am surprised however at the response I get when I raise the question of friendship and hospitality. Often I get no response at all. In typical New York style, my comments are ignored, and the topic of conversation quickly and blatantly changed so that the person I was commenting to can get back to talking about herself (Julif, 1998).

My life in New York is that of an outsider looking in. I have no discernible identity. I am neither an immigrant nor a tourist (Burkit, 1998).

These are a few interesting comments found while researching the topic of expatriate wives on the internet. Research done and books written on the phenomenon of expatriate life are scarce. There are, however, many internet sites where the problems, challenges and achievements of expatriates are posted and the impact on the professional, interpersonal and personal domain of the expatriate is evident. An impact brought about by a choice made to move from one country to another.

McGraw (2001:124) talks about the seven critical choices people make in their lives. All choices, good or bad, have the power to be hugely significant, but not all choices rise to the level of life-changing events. A critical choice is a major choice that determines who and what a person becomes, for better or for worse, up to the present day. McGraw (2001:130) goes further to state that every choice one makes is driven by various motivations or needs. Smith (1994:138) explains that direction, or the way we meet these needs, comes

from our beliefs or “belief window”. We interpret the world through that window and we receive information through it. What we believe about the world, ourselves and other people is written onto our belief window, regardless of whether any of those beliefs are true. The beliefs on our belief window exert a powerful influence on our actions and behaviour and, because we believe them all to be true, we will act as if they are true. Moving from one country to another might just fall into the category of a critical choice. McGraw (2001:129) is very clear on the fact that when you choose the behaviour, you choose the consequences as well. Consequences which, in retrospect, I believe we underestimated.

With the choice comes the change. Cashman (2000:85-90) says that we can adapt to change, cooperate with change and potentially influence the direction of change, but we cannot control change. Attempts to do so only lead to frustration, pain and suffering. Learning to be open to the purposeful learning contained in all change is no small task because the shock of change leaves one vulnerable. Change challenges our current reality by allowing a new reality to rush in. If we are not open to change we respond to it as if it was an enemy and we defend ourselves from the fear of loss. We fear that we will not survive change without losing something – the reality is that we will lose something, but the flipside of the coin is that we will also gain something if we are open to purposeful learning. Change always involves both creation and destruction. As something new is created something old is destroyed, but only once the bud has been destroyed can the flower bloom.

Beck (2001:182) teaches us to “honour our losses”. Loss is hard for us and healing with it takes a great deal of energy. The only way we can heal from loss is to grieve and grieving pushes us into a process that she calls “deep rest”. Deep rest differs from clinical depression in the sense that depression leaves one numb and hopeless and is usually the socially acceptable disguise we use to dress up fear or anger. Beck (2001:185) goes further to say that people who do not honour their losses do not grieve, and they may lose all joy in living. They tend to get emotionally stuck at the point where the loss occurred. They cannot move towards their true north because, in this case,

the path to the true north lies directly through the grief. If we stop the grieving process our lives lose direction and everything starts feeling empty and meaningless.

Frankl (1984:16) maintains that the question of meaning is one of the biggest questions of our time. It is a question that gets asked by every person regardless of his standing in society. The question of meaning is where to and why. Asking this question brings us onto the path of meaning and starts to reveal our purpose. Research indicates that meaning and purpose can be found by anyone, regardless of their gender, age, intellect, education, character or environment. It can be found whether a person is religious or not, and, if religious meaning can be found, regardless of the denomination. It is humanity's ability to transcend, to become more than the eye meets, to grow into someone more than just "you". Meaning and purpose lie beyond the self in something or someone. The more you grow to that place the more meaning you find in your life. Life has meaning, but meaning has to be sought. Meaning cannot be created and man cannot give meaning to life, meaning must be found in every situation in life (Frankl 1984:21-23).

Verrier (2002:1) states that of all the wonderful characteristics humankind has been endowed with, the most amazing has to be the fact that we are spiritual beings. We are not just physical, social, psychological and intellectual beings, we as people have a spirit, and that spirit forms the basis of our common drive to ask fundamental questions. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, (according to Verrier 2002:1) said: "We are not human beings having a spiritual experience, but rather spiritual beings having a human experience." This statement is so profound that it forms one of the fundamental presuppositions of this study.

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Psychologists maintain that we have psychological needs that are so powerful that they are essential for us to survive. These psychological needs are constantly impelling us to action of one sort or another. Practically everything we undertake is in response to one or more of these needs (Smith 1994:132).

Satisfied needs do not motivate. Next to physical survival, the greatest need of a human being is psychological survival – to be understood, to be affirmed, to be validated, to be appreciated. Once this vital need is met, one can focus on influencing and problem solving (Covey, 1989:241).

So what is the problem? The problem is that this change in my life has led me to a place where my dreams and my life have fallen apart and, as a result, some of my needs (Smith 1994:131-139) are not being met. The implication is that I can either sink into depression and assume a victim mentality or I can reconstruct my life to such an extent that I can find meaning, purpose, hope and a future within the expatriate life. Can PPL (personal and professional leadership) in any way contribute to the reconstruction of my life?

1.4 AIM OF RESEARCH

The main aims of this study are to

- identify, understand and be transparent about the problems I faced during the process of change by reflecting them through the paradigm of PPL
- apply my knowledge of PPL (personal and professional leadership) in such a way as to create a model that may assist other expatriate women experiencing similar feelings as a result of change

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Having discussed the problem and aims of this study, I will now explain the way in which the investigation will be conducted.

1.5.1 Research paradigm

A paradigm may be seen as an umbrella term that best describes a scientific tradition, stream or school of thought that is shared by various scientists. A paradigm is influenced by various factors; most commonly by the education

the researcher received (Smith 1993:12). This research is an **empirical study** from an **interpretive, anti-positivistic and qualitative** paradigm (Fouche 2004:6).

1.5.2 Research strategy

Smith (1995:19) defines a research strategy as the broad overall plan of action for the way in which the research is to be conducted. It may be described as the general, strategic plan that directs the methods and techniques to be used for achieving a goal. The choice of research study is determined by the aim of the study undertaken, the nature of the problem and the options available for solving the problem, given the circumstances. Smith (1995:18) defines research as producing knowledge about the world.

In order to address the research problem of this essay, an action research strategy will be adopted to assist the author in extending the understanding and obtaining insight into the life world of the participant. Action research makes an explicit commitment to empowering the participant and to changing his or her social conditions, therefore resolving the problem of confrontation (Mouton 2001:150-151).

This study will also make use of a descriptive research strategy, which according to Smith (1993:35), is a systematic, factual and accurate description of a situation in order to gain a better understanding of the problem. As the main focus of my study will be my own experience of moving abroad, the basis of the study will be in an auto-ethnographic form using evocative personal narrative as my research method.

1.5.3 Research methods

Research methods are more specific means within the broader research strategy through which the problem is being investigated (Smith 1993:20). For the purpose of this essay, the following research methods will be utilised:

The phenomenology-subjective method

Smith (1993:59) states that this method is an interpretive (qualitative) method and involves the subjective experience of a person about a specific situation. The focus is on the experience. This method elicits a personal description of an individual's experience of something and may take the form of an unstructured or semi-structured interpretation.

Auto-ethnographic method

This method entails a subject writing an essay about his or her experiences or views of a specific situation. This method does not prescribe the contents of the situation, except where the subject has to give comment (Smith 1993:60)

Auto-ethnography, as described by Ellis and Bochner (1996:9-17), is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. Back and forth auto-ethnographers gaze first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outwardly on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, and refract and resist, cultural interpretations.

Auto-ethnographers vary in their emphasis on the research process (*graphy*), on culture (*ethnos*), or on self (*auto*) (Reed-Danahay 1997:2).

Concept analysis

Smith (1993:44) explains that a concept analysis is used when the meaning of a concept needs clarification or when the different views of experts about the concept are considered. An analysis of the concepts , "leadership pyramid", "personal leadership" and "true north" will be conducted in this study to provide greater clarity.

Literature study

Mouton (2001:86-87) states that a literature study is necessary in order to find out what has been done in the field of study of a topic. It is carried out in order to learn from other scholars how they have theorised on and conceptualised

issues, what they have found empirically, what instruments they used and to what effect. It brings to light the most recent, credible and relevant scholarship in the area of interest. It unearths related and relevant previous work from a range of sources such as textbooks, journals, theses, dissertations, magazines, the internet and newspapers (Fouche 2004:11). A literature study is necessary in the sense that it keeps the focus and leads to expertise on the topic (Smith 1993:47). Relevant literature will therefore be explored to gain insight into and knowledge of existing theories about the problems expatriate women face.

1.6 A PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP (PPL) PERSPECTIVE

This study will be undertaken from a personal, interpersonal and professional paradigm, in short a PPL perspective.

Anthropological presuppositions form the foundation and point of departure of a PPL view of humanity (Smith 2003b:1). These assumptions are the fundamental and radical (deep-rooted) presuppositions that are characteristic of all people and are thus a prerequisite for PPL.

The anthropological foundations that form the basis of the study include

- the idea that people essentially form a spirit-mind-body unit
- the notion that all people seek a sense of meaning in life
- the possibility that constant and never-ending improvement exists for all people

Humans, from a PPL perspective, are holistic, inclusive beings who find expression in six dimensions. These six dimensions need to be maintained individually and collectively to ensure balance and harmony in one's body and life (Smith 2003a:58). The PPL perspective promotes the idea that the greatest problem in life has to do with the state or essence of existence, that is, our spiritual, physical, emotional, mental and career realms. The apparent

turmoil and imbalances in these human dimensions are transferred to our relationships with other people, either personally or professionally.

One of the most significant departure points of PPL is to add value. The value PPL can add to humanity and humanity's quest for a meaningful life may, according to Smith (2003b:5), be summarised in five categories:

- self-knowledge and development
- leadership for self-preservation in times of everyday problems of existence
- a contribution to general health and wellbeing
- relationship building
- authentic leadership based on principle- and value-driven behaviour

In addition, PPL has been described as being a principle-centred, character-based, inside-out approach to personal and interpersonal effectiveness (Covey 1989:42). This particular field of study is anchored in the natural laws that govern human growth and effectiveness (Covey 1989:32).

1.7 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1, the orientation chapter, describes the research topic of this study. It gives a brief background to the study and what led up to the problem. The research aims, research strategies and methods that will be used to achieve the research goals are stated and the PPL paradigm that forms the basis of this study is described.

Chapter 2 focuses on the reconstruction of the experiences (phenomenology) that took place during the move and the transition period overseas. This is done in an auto-ethnographic form, using evocative personal narrative as the research method. In each of the situations, the various concepts (tools) that were borrowed from the PPL perspective and principles, which helped me to cope with the situations and events, are highlighted.

Chapter 3 describes the content of the personal, interpersonal and professional leadership perspective and principles that was applied in order to rebuild identity after the disintegration of identity as described in Chapter 2. The core principles will be highlighted through concept analysis as a way of clarifying the meaning of the PPL concepts.

Chapter 4 will conclude the study by means of a summary and a discussion. It will address other issues relevant to the study and will suggest further areas for research on this topic.

**Every experience is a golden thread
of meaning in our life's tapestry
Jody Thone Lande**



CHAPTER 2 THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

**The significant problems we face
can not be solved at the same level of thinking we were at
when we created them
Albert Einstein**

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter does not claim to be an account of facts and events, but rather a chapter of personal experiences. It relates the experience of moving to a new country that is not yours by birth and settling down in it with myriad new stimuli that were not part of the previous lifestyle. It will try to isolate some of the stimuli in my life, as reflected in the mind of an average expatriate wife.

It is easy for the outsider to get the wrong idea of expatriate life; a conception that combines romanticism and leisure, adventure and pleasure, a better life, a hope, a future. It is seen as a privileged lifestyle and envied by those who stayed behind. These qualities may, in some way or another, be present in this lifestyle, but with them also come the sacrifices, discipline, energy, focus, determination, self-discipline and connectedness that keep the self together.

Reconstructing my life within this situation has been a surprisingly difficult exercise for it is only in this reconstruction that one can see the essential challenges that confronted my life. Questions that I had thought had been well worked through and well defined until I was re-challenged on foreign ground. These questions relate to

- who I am
- where I am going
- why I am going there
- and, in following that route, whether it will add value to me and other people

In his book, *Leadership from the inside out*, Cashman (2000:31) relates the story of a priest in post-revolutionary Russia who was stopped by a soldier. The soldier asked the priest: "Who are you? Where are you going? Why are you going there?" The priest replied: "How much do they pay you?" And after asking that question the priest, in a deeply thoughtful manner said, "I have a proposal for you. I'll pay you fifty kopecks each month if you stop me here every day and challenge me to respond to those same three questions."

The change of moving overseas was thus the "soldier" in my life who asked these questions. I would be prepared to pay a great deal or spend hours on the internet if I were assured that I would find a quick answer to these questions. For these questions, however, there are no quick and easy answers. Finding answers to them involves a journey of discovery.

This chapter explains the nature and impact of change. It then continues by introducing Beck's change cycle (2001:268) (see figure 2) and then discusses the importance of attitude as a factor in bringing order to chaos. From there the chapter looks at the identity before the move and the identity in transition. The discussion of the identities is loosely based on Smith's leadership pyramid (2003a:9-10) (see figure 4). The reason for this is that aspects that belong to one level also impact on one of the other levels and, because of the strong emotions involved, it is difficult to classify an incident on a specific level. The reader has to move with the writer in and out of the different levels of the leadership pyramid.

I will also explain that the leadership pyramid needs to be placed and understood within the context of country and culture (Bryson and Hoge 2003:26). The combination of the two models in figure 5 gives a clear, solid and holistic view of man within the expatriate situation. The chapter will end with a discussion on culture and the important role it plays in the creation and sustaining of identity.

powers (purpose, direction and values) to navigate through change. Change points us in new directions, it suggests new options and it tests our potential.

In his book, *Who moved my cheese*, Johnson and Blanchard (1998:17) relates that the two mice who did better overall in the change they faced were the two who kept things simple. In change it is true that heightened emotions add to the complexity of the whole process of change.

People cannot live with change if there is not a changeless core inside them. The key to the ability to change is a changeless core of who you are, what you are about and what you value (Covey 1989:108).

Beck (2001:243-254) introduces the "change cycle" (see figure 2). She argues that all change goes through the same events. It is therefore within the control of a person to navigate himself with style and grace through change. Cashman (2000:85) agrees with this as he indicates that we can adapt to change, cooperate with change and potentially influence its future direction. However, we cannot control it.

Ultimately, I realised that I would either resist change, or adapt and learn from the change experience, and all three of these reactions would take place within myself (Cashman 2000:88,94). The choice was mine to make. Everyone is questioned by life, and he or she can only answer to life by answering for his or her own life (Frankl 1984:131).

Initially, I found myself living in the flow that the change brought with it. It was an out-of-control situation and it felt as though my life belonged to the volatility

2.2 LIVING IN THE FLOW

Life is difficult. This is the first of the “Four Noble Truths” that Buddha taught (Scott-Peck 2003:3). The same can be said about change. Change is difficult. Once we truly see, understand and accept this truth, we can transcend it. Change then becomes less difficult and we can start to blend the realities of external influences (new culture, new laws and different people) and internal powers (purpose, direction and values) to navigate through change. Change points us in new directions, it suggests new options and it tests our potential.

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People cannot live with change if there is not a changeless core inside them



of the moment and not to me. I knew what it must feel like for a baby eagle chick to be kicked out of the nest to learn how to fly. I knew that I would fall to my death if I didn't flap those wings and fly. This involved my will, my willingness to lay down my pride, and to lay down my anger and my loss; it placed a high value on my maturity. In order to be able to deal with the situation I had to be willing to learn and to open myself to new learning experiences. This included a complete involvement in personal growth and confronting my attitude to life to the deepest core of who I am.

Aspects of the PPL paradigm, as will be discussed throughout the following two chapters, helped me to understand the disintegration of my life and to assist me in the gradual rebuilding of it – a rebuilding process in which I realised I play an active and involved role. This rebuilding process is a place where I can take responsibility for what I am to become.

One thing I knew was that I needed to transform myself to transform my life (Cashman 2000:98), otherwise I would either become depressed with a victim mentality or an ego-driven pleasure seeker. Because none of the above truly reflects my authenticity and none of the above would add value to myself and other people, a complete reorientation of the meaning of my life started to take place and in the words of Dostoevski (in Frankl 1984:87): "There is one thing I dread: not to be worthy of my suffering."

Change brings pain, but change also brings the refreshing trade winds from far-off places with a smell of mystery and adventure carried in its currents. It widens horizons and gives the opportunity for new life to flow from deep within you.

2.3 THE CATALYTIC EVENT

A catalytic event is the start of change and it takes place, according to Beck (2001:246-248), in the form of three events. It can take place as a shock (a sudden change that comes because of an external influence), an opportunity (a change that comes as a result of your own thinking, which looks like a lucky

break) and transition (a slow process of change inside you rather than from the environment). Each of these destroys fundamental aspects of your life and takes you to a place where it is necessary to chart a new course through life.

Our decision to uproot falls into the category of opportunity. A well-thought through process, a lucky break and a certainty that it is the right thing to do. Up to today I still believe that this is the place I am meant to be for now. I was, however, surprised by the deeper impact, the intensity of emotions and the disorientation that came after a few months in my new country. It felt as though some unforeseen tragedy has hit me and I ended up questioning whether or not we had made the right decision.

In the change cycle, square one gets described as death and rebirth, which is the period during which you mourn your old life and begin to explore your new life (Beck 2001:248). Although painful it gives you a chance to work on this new identity. Entering square one means enduring loss after loss after loss. It is the initial period during which you come to terms with the fact that your old identity is lost (or changed) forever. It pushes one into a period of grieving – “grief work”. This experience is concrete, productive behaviour and not a waste of time (Beck 2001:268). For the purpose of this paper, and because of limited space, I will concentrate only on square one.

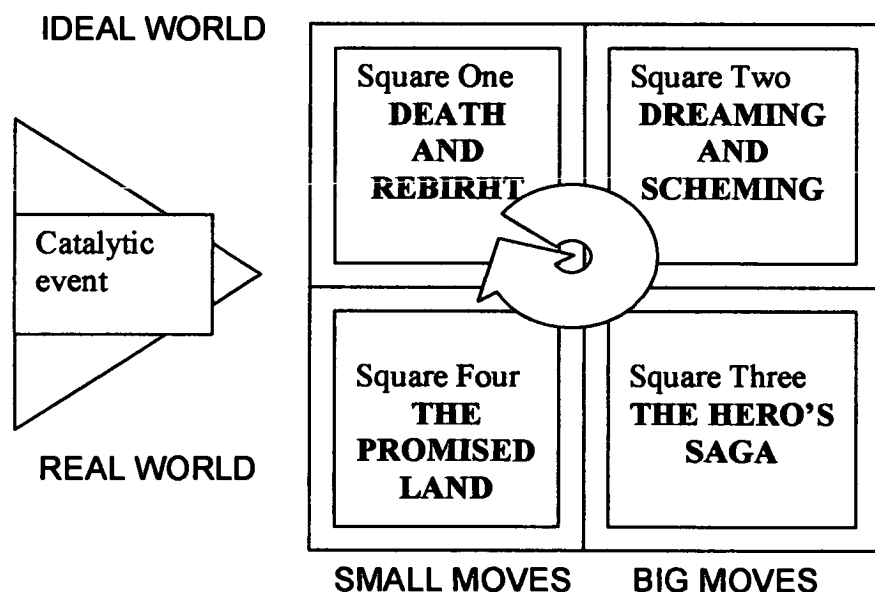


Figure 2: The change cycle

2.4 DEATH AND REBIRTH

I cannot think of a better heading than the above for this specific period of my life. Cashman (2000:84) says that we “dive” into life and the events life offers, but we never really know what is going to happen next. We operate under the illusion that life remains constant, but in reality everything is always changing.

What so often upsets people is not the reality of what happens in life, but the violation of what they expected to happen (McGraw in O 2004:14). But we have to teach ourselves that it does not really matter what we expect from life, but rather what life expects from us. In order to reach this understanding we need a fundamental change in our attitude towards life (Frankl 1984:98). If not, and life does not give us what we expect, we see no more sense in our lives, no aim, no purpose and therefore no point in carrying on. Nietzsche says in Frankl (1984:98): “He who has a *why* to live for, can bear with almost any *how*.”

2.4.1 Identity before moving overseas



Being involved in the business, which facilitated our move overseas, I knew on a deeper level that the move would be the right thing to do. In the meantime, I did not just sit around and wait for it to take place, but carried on with my own life. I had well-established roles within the community I lived in. I had stopped working after the birth of my third child and enrolled for a master’s degree at the University of Johannesburg (this document forms part of this endeavour). I could never have imagined the way in which these events would play a major role in my preparation for the move overseas and in re-establishing myself.

When we had to make a final decision on the move I was excited and frightened at the same time. It was important for me to plan something for myself within this new situation, as this gave me a sense of control, which in reality was a false sense of control. I had huge dreams and great plans for the future and began planning the contacts I would have to build up in order to maintain the same lifestyle.

One of my most important plans concerned my professional future. (This would also be one of the issues that brought me to my lowest point.) Studying had given me the opportunity to re-enter the professional market in my field. After so many years out of the field, it was a dynamic I wanted back in my life and I had decided to pursue it very ambitiously. Cashman (2000:35) says that beliefs are transformational. Every belief we have transforms our life in either a life-enriching or life-limiting way. I found the belief in one's ability to put a career together again with the depth of information I had received was extremely life-enriching. It had added to my self-esteem, which influenced my productivity, which in turn affected the way in which I controlled the events in my life (Smith 1994:26) and I was ecstatic. I had clarified my own personal values, I had established my priorities; I planned, I smiled and I told everyone the "how" of solving problems.

On an interpersonal level, I had wonderfully supportive relationships: people I had known for many years. They were also the ones who encouraged us to make the move. Even when making the decision to move I already felt the enormity of losing these precious relationships.

Yet, I felt connected, excited and grateful – ready to go with stars in my eyes. My identity prior to the move overseas may be described as balanced in terms of the personal, interpersonal and professional leadership pyramid. Apart from this, I was also deeply enfolded in a country, a culture (see figure 5).

2.4.2 Identity in transition

Bryson and Hoge (2003:35) state that the process of leaving home begins long before the departure. It begins with the decision to move. How you feel about your decision touches your life in many ways. As the awareness of the decision unfolds, you make choices about what to do and how to relate to other people. When you decide to move overseas, your identity begins to shift. According to Pascoe (2005c), accompanying expatriate spouses anywhere in the world find the most overwhelming loss they feel after moving abroad the loss of identity.

Danaan Parry writes in *Warriors of the heart* (in Cashman 2000:88-89):

Sometimes I feel that my life is a series of trapeze swings. I'm either hanging on to a trapeze bar swinging along or, for a few moments in my life, I'm hurtling across space in between trapeze bars.

Most of the time, I spend my life hanging on for dear life to my trapeze-bar-of-the-moment. It carries me along at certain steady rate of swing, and I have the feeling that I'm in control of my life. I know most of the right questions and even some of the right answers. But once in a while, as I'm merrily (or not so merrily) swinging along, I look out ahead of me into the distance, and what do I see? I see another trapeze bar swing towards me. It's empty, and I know, in that place in me that knows, that this new trapeze bar has my name on it. It is the next step, my growth, my aliveness coming to get me. In my heart-of-hearts, I know that for me to grow, I must release my grip on this present, well-known bar to move to the new one.

Every time it happens to me, I hope that I won't have to grab the new bar. But in my knowing place I know that I must totally release my grasp on my old bar, and for some moment in time, I must hurdle across space before I can grab onto the new bar. Each time I am filled with terror. It doesn't matter that in all my previous hurdles across the void of unknowing, I have always made it. Each time I am afraid that I will miss, that I will be rushed on unseen rocks in the bottomless chasm between the bars. But I do it anyway. Perhaps this is the essence of what the mystics call the faith experience. No guarantees, no net, no insurance policies, but you do it anyway because somehow, to keep hanging on to that old bar is no longer on the list of alternatives. And so for an eternity that can last a microsecond or a thousand lifetimes, I soar across the dark void of "the past is gone; the future is not yet here." It is called transition. I have come to believe that is the only place that real change occurs. I mean real change, not the

pseudo-change that only last until the next time my buttons get punched.

For me, the time taken to make the transition after leaving my house and my country and to finally acknowledge and accept my new life and new country was approximately eight months. During this time I constantly felt as if I were swinging between two bars.

The period before leaving South Africa was an amazing time of spiritual and personal growth with two friends who gave me tremendous support by sustaining me spiritually and emotionally during this time. My classmates were also a wonderful support group on a non-emotional but encouraging level. I found tremendous stability in the fact that my classes were set for the following year and it was something I could continue doing. On a personal level I felt I would cope easily.

We moved over the Christmas period when most people were on holiday. Gradually I felt the interpersonal level of my life collapsing (at that stage I did not understand it as a collapse). Our goodbyes were said, people left for their summer holidays and we were left to do the packing and finishing up. My sister in Germany was a pillar of strength on practical issues during the move. She had gone through the same exercise a year prior to us. All too quickly the removal company arrived and we sat in an empty house, I saw my life driving away in a truck headed for the port – memories of our life, in our country –and I felt greatly disturbed.

The night before our flight out of South Africa we were looking at the cloud formations during sunset and we had the most amazing experience. The clouds formed a giant footprint in the sky, huge – it covered the entire area we could see, complete with toes and heel. One of the children looked up pointed to it and said: “It is God telling us He will be with us.” The sky turned into an orange, yellow and blue masterpiece, something I had never seen before. It gave us a strange sense of peace – a visible sign from an invisible world?

With that image imprinted on my mind, we boarded a plane and left. What I did not realise at that point was that with the departure not only did the professional and interpersonal level of the leadership pyramid collapse, but also the security of a country and the familiarity of a culture disappeared completely. The holistic person in figure 5 changed into an exposed and vulnerable person (see figure 6)

Flying in over the green little island in the middle of the Indian Ocean, I looked through the window at the combination of greens and greys, foreign to my familiar paradigm of African scenery, and thought: "Is this the place I will call home for the next couple of years?" On a personal level I felt emotionally bombarded as my current and future life came crashing together and pulled me into different directions. It was a wave that hit me and carried me along for the next couple of months.

Because of a lack of sleep, emotions ran high. My own, as well as my family's. The children cried for their friends, their cousins, their pets. I chased mosquitoes and cockroaches, was angry with my husband most of the time and just wanted to run and run and run and never stop. I wanted to run away from the things I felt had stolen my dreams. I felt completely detached from the beauty around me.

On an interpersonal level certain roles and relationships I had were completely gone. Relationships with my family and friends became distant. Bryson and Hoge (2003:15) state that the roles we play make up a great deal of our identity. Roles help define who and what we are and what we do, and they have culturally defined expectations and rules for interpreting and judging. Our self-esteem is affected by the roles we play. Roles place us in a relationship with others.

These authors continue by saying that in current women's psychology the thinking is that as women our identities are strongly connected to our relationships with other people, our husbands, partners, families, friends, and/or colleagues. This does not mean that women are dependant on others

for their existence in an unhealthy or negative way. Women do develop separate, autonomous identities, but in the context of the important relationships in their lives (Bryson and Hoge 2003:15).

My relationships, my dreams, my hopes and my future vanished before my eyes like mist before the sun. Death was a certainty: death of me – my identity. There was nothing left of the girl who left home with stars in her eyes. Though I could have sworn that I was moving forward, I felt as though everything I had ever learnt or experienced had suddenly evaporated. I grieved desperately for the loss of familiar roles, routine tasks which provide familiar and secure situations and my career, all the time stumbling around in my new life like a scared and clumsy infant (Beck 2001:248).

Unlike the death of a loved one, however, there are no rituals for the grief experienced by expatriates when they lose all those important life props. In fact, mourning the loss of home – acting out homesickness by walking around a new city (or school playground) looking dazed, confused and unhappy – is still considered by many expatriates to be somehow "letting the side down". Everyone is supposed to just get on with it, the sooner the better ((Pascoe 2005b)

I did not even find myself questioning who I was, where I was going and why I was going there. There was no me; nothing of the familiar that had helped to define who I was existed anymore. I felt naked, exposed, blown to pieces and very lonely. Peterson's (1995:822) translation of Psalm 119 perfectly describes my life at that stage:

I'm feeling terrible – I couldn't feel worse!
Get me on my feet again. You promised, remember?
When I told you my story, you responded;
Train me well in your deep wisdom.
Help me understand these things inside and out
So I can ponder your miracle-wonders
My sad life's dilapidated, a falling down barn:

Build me up again by your Word
Barricade the road that goes nowhere;
Grace me with your clear revelation,
I choose the true road to somewhere.

This was the phenomenology of my life and it embraced me, whether I liked it or not, whether I accepted it or not. It was in my face and throughout my being the whole time. There was nowhere to run to; nowhere to hide and I had no one to explain it to. I had to return the embrace and get "somewhere" or end up – "nowhere".

Being a first-time expatriate, I felt no joy; the only thing I could feel was my strong emotions. Le Roux and de Klerk (2001:9) state that for us to be able to cope with difficult situations we need to express our emotions or else we will lose contact with our feelings and will be unable to understand them or control them.

Frankl (1984:95) maintains that emotion, which is suffering, ceases to be suffering as soon as we form a clear and precise picture of it. I had no picture of my emotions. I could dip in and out of various emotions from the one moment to the next. There was no meaning in my life and no meaning in my emotions. As hard as I tried I could not manage my emotions, I just felt them as an ever-present ache in my heart. Metrick (in Pascoe 2005b) maintains that loss creates an emotional wound. In order for a person to recover from that loss, people need to work actively at their grief.

The worst for me was that I did not know at that time that I was grieving a tremendous loss. I regarded myself as unable to be grateful and lacking any coping skills. I judged myself very harshly and kept comparing myself to all the other expatriate women who seemed so well adjusted, happy, in control and well liked. I felt none of these things and clung tightly to my hopes of a career.

2.4.2.1 Attitude

My first great challenge came after two miserable weeks when my husband sat me down in a restaurant and challenged me on my attitude. We had a rather heated discussion and he made me aware of a core PPL principle – attitude. If you can change nothing, you can change your attitude. He challenged me on the beauty of teaching it to others and the disgrace of not living it practically. Would I lead from the front or lead from the back – in other words would I be expecting people to do things that I was not willing to do?

This was the bait, and I took it. It was an absolute act of will; an immediate decision of which I had full control. I was the master of the choice to change my attitude and I followed this through.

McGraw (2001:58) says that your quality of life does not just happen; it is instead, ultimately, a product of the choices you make both internally and externally. This means that whether you know it or not, you have had and always will have tremendous power to determine your life. That moment of making a choice about my attitude gave me back my life, recommitted me to my husband and children, and gave me the platform from which I could see my life as a bigger whole. I did not cease to suffer immediately, but at least I had found a starting point.

Melody Beattie (in Smith 2003a:24) states that gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, and confusion into clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today and a vision for tomorrow.

During the next couple of months I would dip to an all-time low, but I still held onto the commitment of keeping my attitude positive and grateful. I journeyed through what seemed to me the destruction of my professional life, I journeyed through the deterioration of interpersonal relationships and I journeyed into my own heart. These are places that we do not choose to visit.

Smith (2003a:24) says that gratitude is the most passionate, transformative force in the cosmos. When we offer thanks to God or to another human being, gratitude rewards us with renewal, reflection and reconnection. I only realised much later that the choice to change my attitude was a giant leap towards a reconnection to myself that eventually changed my life, my hopes and my dreams. It gave me a deeper awareness of meaning and purpose.

2.4.2.2 Circle of concern and circle of influence

Covey (1989:81-85) describes the circle of concern and the circle of influence (see figure 3) as areas that we focus our time and energy on. He explains that we all have a wide range of concerns, which includes issues like national debt, legislation and nuclear wars. These are issues in which we do not have a particular mental or emotional involvement. He categorise these issues as a circle of concern. There is not much, and mostly nothing, we can do about these matters. They lie outside our sphere of influence.

The things we have control over, like our health, our children and our attitude, fall into the circle of influence. Proactive people focus their efforts on the circle of influence. They work on the things they can do something about. The nature of their energy is positive, enlarging and magnifying, causing the circle of influence to increase.

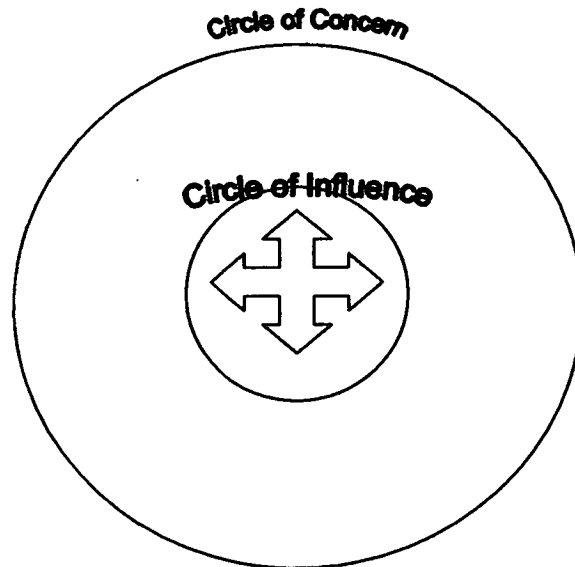


Figure 3: Circle of concern and circle of influence

After a couple of months in my new country I came to the horrifying realisation that my circle of influence had shrunk from a vibrant dynamic circle of people who added value to my life and in whose lives I could make a difference, to only one person – me. I wanted to put my children right in the middle of my circle of influence, but the children had settled down at school and their challenges were being well handled at the school by a wonderful group of teachers. I did not want to get too involved in small problems for I knew I would make them an issue, complicate the matter and try to solve it again, which would only confuse the children.

I felt completely worthless and idle. Small tasks seemed like huge mountains, huge tasks seemed impossible. Minutes felt like hours and hours like minutes. A day could feel like a week and a week like a day. I felt trapped in a time matrix (Covey 1989:151) – being busy yet not productive. I was either doing crisis management with very high anxiety levels or trivial activities with very high depression levels.

Right after a move, feelings of disorientation and isolation are usually brought to light by something such as a woman not being able to find a

mop in a new city or not even knowing what store would sell one, how to get there or how to ask for it (according to therapist Phyllis Adler in Pascoe (2003c)).

Robin Pascoe (2005b) states that most books examining the subject of expatriate life place relocation high on the list of life stages that can trigger grief, along with more obvious major events such as death and divorce. She goes further to say that many people are overwhelmed or even paralysed with inertia from the grief associated with the relocation. They are unable to move on to building a new, exciting expatriate life until they work through all the stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.

My focus shifted from myself to everything outside me. A blaming and accusing attitude slipped in and I felt increasingly like a victim. Covey (1989:83) classifies the above as reactive living. This outflow of negative energy in combination with the neglect in areas I could do something about resulted in the circle of influence shrinking even further.

Zukav and Francis (2001:26) aver that as long as we reach outward in any way to soften the pain of feeling unworthy, or the terror of not belonging, we bring violence and destruction into our lives, individually and collectively.

2.4.2.3 The personal and professional leadership pyramid

Smith (2003a:9-11) describes leadership by means of a leadership pyramid (see figure 4). This pyramid forms a holistic view of leadership and consists of three levels: the personal leadership level, the interpersonal leadership level and the professional leadership level. The three levels build onto each other in the form of a pyramid with personal leadership as the basis and foundation of leadership.

The core of PPL is the scientific study of the personal leader, the interpersonal leader and the professional leader.

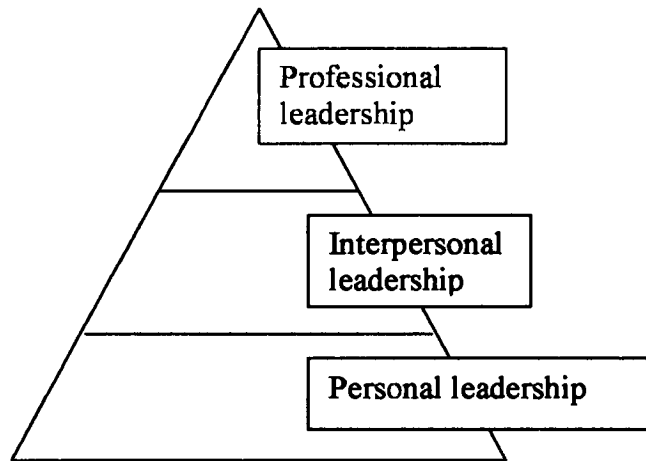


Figure 4: The personal and professional leadership pyramid

a. Personal leadership

Personal leadership is about self-mastery. Self-mastery moves an individual from dependency to independency and on to interdependency. Interdependency is a choice that can only be made by people who are independent. Independency, according to Covey (1989:51), is strictly character based. This adds to Covey's view (1989:41) that the personal leader lives a life that is principle centred, character based and from the inside outwards.

Leadership from the inside out is about our ongoing journey to unfold and express our purposeful inner life in order to make an impact on the world. It is about achieving one thing – consciously making a difference from within (Cashman 2000:20).

Smith (2003a:9) states that personal leadership begins with the knowledge of where you stand now. It leads to a discovery of where you want to go to. Meyer (in Smith 2003a:9) argues the fact that personal leadership requires direction and purpose, a desire and commitment to achieve your goals and a determined action to realise your potential.

Cashman (2000:20) maintains that a personal leader is someone who demonstrates authentic self-expression (an inner identity) to create value. Leadership is therefore an expression of who we are. It is our being in action.

We lead by virtue of who we are. We try to separate the leader from the person, but the two are inseparable (Smith 2003a:8)

According to Smith (2003a:11), the qualities involved at this level include

- personal commitment to quality
- being prepared to be held accountable
- showing initiative
- acting consistently
- showing loyalty
- eagerness to learn about work
- being honest and trusted
- being open to constructive criticism on how to improve

b. Interpersonal leadership

Interpersonal leadership is the ability to understand other people and what motivates them, and to work with them (Goleman 1996:39). It is the capacity to discern and respond appropriately to the moods, temperaments, motivations and desires of other people (Gardener in Smith 2003a:10).

Interpersonal leadership is about self-expression that makes a difference – that enriches the lives of others. It flows from a deep inner identity (authenticity), which is the core of relationships around which synergy and trust grow. It is the dynamic blending of personal power with synergy power to create value and contribution (Cashman 2000:107)

Leadership does not function in a vacuum. It operates in context and in relationships. We create value by virtue of our relationships (Cashman, 2000:108). The essence of any relationship is that a person feels “connected” to another. There is a sense of peace, of belonging, of love, of acceptance, tranquillity and fulfilment within these relationships (Smith 2003a:102). He goes on to say that for a person to feel truly connected they need to be connected first to themselves, then to others around them, to nature and the environment

and to a higher being. The less connected a person is, the poorer the quality and fulfilment of the relationship, whether with themselves, others, nature or a higher being.

According to Smith (2003a:11), qualities at this level include

- giving praise and recognition
- displaying tolerance and flexibility
- treating people with respect
- getting involved
- always looking for ways to make things easier for those they serve
- really listening to the needs of those who are served

c. Professional leadership

Professional leadership is about competencies, skills and attitudes on all three levels. It is not something you give yourself; it is something you hope others will give you. Professional leadership is about you in your workplace (Smith 2003a:11).

Verrier (2002:30) maintains that people do not just work for money. Money is a means to an end, but people also work for intrinsic satisfaction. The nature of the work, relationships at work and the sense of contribution to something meaningful are satisfying in and of themselves (Covey 1989:298).

The workplace is one of the places where people are able to serve others and at the same time meet their own physical, emotional and mental needs. This makes a difference and it gives a sense of purpose and meaning (Verrier 2002:1).

According to Smith (2003a:11), qualities at this level include

- being competent and skilled
- making decisions with the input of others
- criticising constructively and addressing problems

- sharing a mission and goals
- listening to feedback and asking questions

Being halfway through my PPL studies and understanding the leadership pyramid very well I realised that all the dreams I had of a future professional career were gone. This move had been career suicide for me. All the aspects described in par. 2.4.2.3c had fallen away. The realisation of this loss cut deep into my heart, especially when the special issue of *Time* magazine, giving the 100 most influential people in the world, was issued. Reading through the magazine, which described the valuable contributions people had made, brought me to an all-time low. What I wanted most – a career – was gone and with that the legacy I would have left.

In today's world, where identity is equated with career, the accompanying spouse's loss of a professional life upon expatriation can initiate a profound loss of self and manifest itself in symptoms remarkably similar to culture shock (Pascoe 2005a).

My identity was gone and therefore my career. In the same way my career was gone and therefore my identity. It was a vicious circle and the only one that could put an end to it was me. It was only during the change period that I realised how closely I had linked these two aspects of my life. In the expatriate situation I could not marry my identity and my career. I had to see them as two different entities and work at them separately. It was an extremely sad experience but it was also the turning point of my reactive living.

Understanding that the professional level of my leadership pyramid was non-existent, I also realised that the relationships I was holding onto so tightly did not exist any more. Being so far away, the interpersonal level was a level where people with whom I had relationships could only look on as spectators. Watching and praying, but too distant to do more than shout encouragement or voice their fears (Bryson and Hoge 2003:51).

Although their hearts and minds might have been with me, the connectedness was not there because of distance and cost. On the other hand, I had completely unrealistic expectations of the people with whom I had relationships in South Africa. In some way I wanted them magically to know that I was not doing so well. I was also disorientated regarding the priority of my relationships. Relationships that were not close I would give a high priority to, and close relationships I took for granted and did not cherish.

I would open the internet with such an expectation to read news from “home” and there would be no email. This would impact on my “trying-to-survive spirit” so much that it would take me days to get over the disappointment and the feeling of not being loved.

If I expected my friends and family to change in order to make me feel better, I would be, in the words of Covey (2004:17) in co-dependant relationships. By believing others had to change before my own circumstances could improve was a belief that not only disempowered me, but that would continue to suck initiative, energy and excitement from my life

Trying to build new friendships in my new country was also a difficult exercise. Most of the friendships originated in places like book clubs, golf and tennis clubs and card game clubs. I found it extremely difficult to fit in and I also did not want to spend my time talking about people I hadn't even met and happenings I hadn't taken part in. One of the core values that I had clarified in my life was not to gossip and my whole being would freeze up in conversations in which other people were discussed. I also found a scarcity mentality in those groups together with a set of rules that I did not like. So new friends were difficult to make and the interpersonal level became empty.

When two essential levels of the leadership pyramid disintegrated in my life, I was left vulnerable and exposed at a personal leadership level. I was faced with all the issues discussed in par 2.4.2.3a. The essence of the questions I was asking were: Who am I? Where am I going to? Why am I going there?

None of what I had worked out on paper for myself made any sense anymore. Values, goals, action plans, mission statements and so forth. I had them all nicely written out – but they had never been tested.

What I saw of the expatriate group did not appeal to me at all. I did not want to become moulded into the typical expatriate wife. A mould best described by the following paragraph.

I'm a bit concerned about what the expat wives are like though – and I'm not sure if I will find it comfortable or not. I just have this vision of snobby groups of women with plummy accents who get together for golf or tennis parties and lunches who don't want to know you if you didn't go to the "right school". (I'm under the impression that the boss's wife in Singapore is like that). And I keep thinking of that "Stepford Wives" film about those "perfect" wives & mothers who have "perfect" kids, cook great food and actively get involved in their community. (Although they had all been lobotomized!) (Debbie 2001).

There are always choices to make! Everyday, every hour offered the opportunity to make a decision. A decision to determine whether I would or would not submit to the people and circumstances that threatened to rob me of myself and my inner freedom; to become a plaything of circumstances, renouncing freedom and dignity (Frankl 1984:87).

The choice to change my attitude, the choice to use the knowledge I had gained in my PPL studies gave me a sound touchstone to which I returned time and again. As I started to clear the emotional turmoil within myself and to understand that what I felt was not a reflection of anything other than the tremendous loss I had experienced as parts of my leadership pyramid collapsed; I was not functioning holistically within a safe and secure structure. Once I realised that, I could start to accept and work towards healing.

2.4.2.4 Culture

One's first encounter with a new culture occurs after one has flown for many hours. You are still short of sleep, raw from the leave process in your home country and therefore not in the best condition to step into a new environment. In fact you are in the worst possible condition in terms of your threshold of tolerance (Bryson and Hoge 2003:52).

Few people are willing to shout this news out loud, but culture shock and grief are closely connected, according Pascoe (2005b). Culture shock can be an overwhelming physical and emotional reaction to a new environment in a foreign country – driven at the outset by multiple losses. The author continues to say that these losses can be numerous depending on life stage and family configuration, but include leaving behind close family, friends and familiar surroundings and, for many accompanying spouses, careers.

Kohl (in Bryson and Hoge 2003:14) defines culture as:

An integrated system of learned behaviour patterns that is characteristic of the member of any given society. Culture refers to the total way of life of particular groups of people. It includes everything that a group of people thinks, says, does, and makes – its systems of attitudes and feelings. Culture is learned and transmitted from generation to generation.

Your culture is a thinking paradigm through which you receive information and return information. The new stimuli you receive are foreign to the stimuli you are used to, whilst the processing sector is still the culturally ingrained system of your own culture. The result is that you process the new information according to your habitual cultural thinking (and acceptable) patterns and everything therefore will be wrong and is wrong.

Bryson and Hoge (2003:55) state that this is cultural confrontation rather than cultural shock. They argue that what you hold to be true from your own cultural background gets challenged by others' ways of acting and behaving. You are

not only confronted with the ways of another culture, but with what you believe based on your own cultural favouritisms.

For me, the foreign dominant Eastern culture was not such an invasion of my privacy or beliefs. Studies prior to our move had made me aware of cultural differences and over the years I had developed a respect for them. I believe there is no culture that is ultimately right or wrong; there is no better culture or worse culture. I believe that culture is just the way and the context in which you were brought up and you do not have much of a choice in choosing your culture. The new cultural experience was thus interesting and a wonderful learning experience. I wanted to understand the language, the customs, the family way of doing things and the spirituality. So, in the words of Voltaire: "Appreciation is a wonderful thing: It makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well."

What I did miss tremendously was the familiarity of my own culture, which wraps around me like a blanket and protects me. I missed cultural food like *koeksisters* and rusks. I missed the familiar strong beliefs that go with Easter and Ascension. I missed my language and the familiar songs.

Bryson and Hoge (2003:55) state that when you are in your own country you are in a familiar context. You absorb your culture, you live in it and it becomes an internalised sense of culture which includes the values, beliefs and assumptions you have assimilated from your family, community and country. When leaving your country, the background and context falls away, as well as the internalised culture. In the new context you can see how much of your self-definition actually belongs to the mandates of your culture.

Bryson and Hoge (2003:26) introduce a model that surrounds the self, and this gave me insight into the further disintegration of my life. The model includes two aspects that made complete sense to me when applying it. The two aspects are

- culture

- country

I combined the above with the leadership pyramid (figure 4) and could, for the first time, see and understand the total effect of this change in my life (see figure 5).

My identity before moving overseas was completely intact as shown in figure 5, with minor issues in various levels to work on. All the other issues were well addressed and protected by a well-known and accommodating culture.

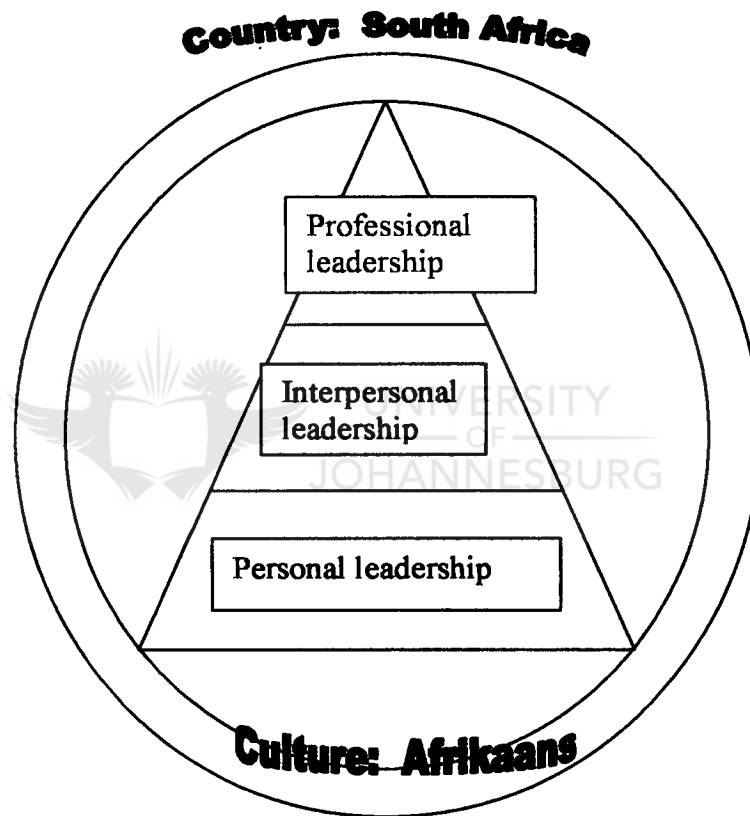


Figure 5: Identity before moving overseas

My identity in transition looked completely different to my identity before I left. Trying to understand this in the million pieces of myself lying on the floor in front of me seemed an impossible task and far too complicated. Understanding it in a holistic way with the help of the models and concepts I had learnt gave me the perspective I needed so badly. It also gave me the words for emotions I

felt and losses I experienced. I could for the first time start to describe my situation to myself and help others drowning in the same pool as me.

Not only did my leadership pyramid collapse, crushing two essential levels and leaving the personal level exposed, but the protective shield that my country and my culture offered (without me being aware of it in my own country) also fell away. This left the personal level of leadership exposed and vulnerable, and it challenged the aspects of the deeper self – dreams, hope, meaning, purpose and future.

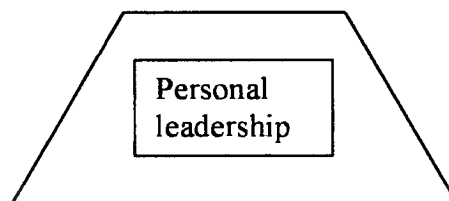


Figure 6: Identity in transition

With these pictures of the “who I was” and “who I am” in mind I felt in a strange way in control of my life. Nehru, according to Ghandi (2004:45), writes to his daughter Indira Gandhi with the following advice, which helped a great deal:

The thing to remember is that it is unworthy and undignifying to run away from trouble. Real troubles have to be faced and if necessary fought, imaginary troubles are to be removed by frank talk. To mope and nurse a grievance secretly is a sign of weakness and folly. It is most undignifying.

Extracting these wise words from the Eastern culture gave me the green light to pull out all the plugs on grief, grudges, judgement and self-pity. I looked excitedly at my life as worthy of living, worthy of loving, worthy of learning, and worthy of leaving a legacy.

2.5 CONCLUSION

Everything around me changed and everything inside me changed. The only thing that remained intact and solid was my relationship with God. I do not know at what stage I realised that I had to change to survive but I changed my attitude and everything changed again. Life was more attractive, I was more flexible, more tolerant and able to start to embrace my new life in my new country. In front of me lay endless opportunities for growth and development.

As explained throughout the chapter this change propelled me into a grief process that I was not expecting; it changed the profile of my circle of influence and circle of concern. My whole life collapsed as I left behind the comfort of my country and culture. It further disintegrated as the professional and interpersonal level of the leadership pyramid collapsed and I felt exposed, leaving me with the personal level as the only level within my control.

PPL aspects, stated and discussed throughout the chapter, were used to understand and verbalise the process that took place during this period of change.

This chapter concludes with the important role culture play within the lives of us human beings. A phenomenon that embrace us, and form part of our identity.

**To teach other is a very wonderful thing but of course
one can only teach after one has learnt
a lot oneself
Jewharhal Nehru**

**The soul would have no rainbow
had the eyes no tears
John Vance Cheney**

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Madeline Albright (2003:510) writes in her memoirs of her time as Secretary of State that while she was in government she learnt the strength of her voice. After she left the office and had to continue with normal day-to-day activities she had to find a new voice. She found it – a voice grounded in the depth of her experience and in the responsibility to contribute what she could to a larger group.

For expatriate women the above might be one of the key solutions. It is to understand that you have to find a voice; a voice different to the one that gave you so much comfort, respect and dignity in the country you came from. In finding your voice again, you not only find the strength of your old voice, but you also find the new situation to be a pool of experience which you can blend and mix to eventually contribute to a larger group.

Covey (2004:4-5) maintains that being effective is no longer an option; it is only the entry price into the playing field. The call is for greatness. This requires a new mind set, a new skill set, a new toolset and a new habit. It is the voice of the human spirit – full of hope and intelligence, resilient by nature, boundless in its potential to serve the common good.

In the previous chapter I examined the emotions that accompany the disintegration of the leadership pyramid – a pyramid that functions and operates within the safe boundaries of a country and culture. Once familiar entities fall away a person is left with only the personal level, exposed and vulnerable, but also well within their control.

This chapter will focus on the dimensional model of the PPL paradigm (see figure 7). This model forms the basis of understanding the rebuilding process of my expatriate life. It is important to mention that the dimensional model will be implemented on the personal leadership level (see figure 7) as the only level within the control of myself, the expatriate. It has been established in the previous chapter that essential security and comfort areas are stripped away from the expatriate and therefore the expatriate no longer functions on a holistic level. The rebuilding process represents the process of becoming a holistic being again.

3.2 IDENTIFYING AND HONOURING THE LOSS

Cashman (2000:90) states that we either live in the past or in the future and seldom in the present. We like to dwell on past successes and future plans, not valuing the reality of the present moment in our lives. In embracing the present, you have to embrace the glamour and the pain at the same time. Rubieta (1997:73) states that “pain is the doorway to hope” and forgiveness is being “willing to bear the pain”.

It would therefore be foolish of me to live in denial about the loss that occurred in my life and it would also be foolish to live in denial about the beauty of the new country. But as demonstrated in the previous chapter the effect of loss took place on four levels: the country, the culture, the professional and the interpersonal. The loss exceeded the inflow of new beauty and opportunities. It would be wise then to deal with the loss. Beck (2001:182) maintains that if you do not deal with loss you tend to get emotionally stuck at the place where the hurt occurred.

The most difficult thing was and is to bring the loss and the feelings that accompany it into the open and to work through every aspect of it. One of the biggest issues was whether or not it would be acceptable to regard this situation as a loss: after all, I had made the decision with my husband to move, rather than to stay in South Africa. In the situation and overcome by the situation, I felt, in the words of Beck (2001:185), that “this choice I made in

some way robbed me of the right to feel bad, sad and grieved”. Choices bring consequences and I had to face them – one side of me said: “I made my bed: now lie on it”; the other side said: “It is not what I expected, please, is there someone out there to save me.”

PPL advocates the inside-out approach, which is described by Covey (1989:42) in his book *7 habits of highly effective people*. I believe that facing the consequences in a superficial, personal ethic way would have been dishonest to my inner functioning. I had to work through the situation from deep within my being until it manifest as a triumph on the outside.

Bryson and Hoge (2003:102-103) state that a form of grief is letting go. It takes place in stages that correspond with the readiness to loosen your grip on whatever you have been holding onto so tightly. “Letting go is not about forgetting or denying or ignoring what was. Letting go is about trusting that the past will survive in you, in your memory and in your essential core self.”

I honoured my inner being and looked at the losses that I had experienced, the house we lived in, the friends added value to our lives, the housekeeper who had served us honestly and gracefully, the children’s school and school friends, the language, the dynamics of my class group, the embracing arms of a grandfather and grandmother, being able to pick up a phone and make contact with loved ones, familiar food and a hundred more things I could list. I looked at them, I valued them and I mourned them; I went into what Beck (Beck 2001:182) suggests is “deep rest”.

3.3 RESHAPING YOUR IDENTITY

Bryson and Hoge (2003:100) are very clear on the fact that in order to move out of this state of loss and devastation one has to make a commitment to take an active role in shaping a new identity. It is a commitment that includes your willingness to grow, your willingness to change and your willingness to take risks.

Emotions can be radioactive waste burning our souls and charring our relationships, or they can be recycled into useable fuel for our lives. Emotions can silence us, hurt us (and others), or lead us through the gateway to deepening maturity (Rubieta 1997:89). I was willing to go through the doorway of hope with forgiveness, a positive attitude and a vision of deepened maturity as my goals,

I can remember one class session during which the lecturer, Prof DPJ Smith, said that he could assure us, if we practised only the foundational parts of the PPL dimensional model the rest would fall into place. That memory was the second piece of bait and I took it.

3.3.1 The PPL dimensional model

On all three levels of the leadership pyramid (figure 4) people function as multidimensional beings. Human beings, from a PPL perspective, are holistic, inclusive beings who find expression in six dimensions:

- spiritual
- physical
- emotional
- social
- intellectual
- career/financial

These six dimensions need to be maintained individually and collectively to ensure balance and harmony in one's body and life (Smith 2003a:58). The PPL perspective promotes the idea that the greatest problem has to do with the state or essence of existence – which is the abovementioned dimensions. The apparent turmoil and imbalances in these human dimensions are transferred to our relationships with other people, either personally or professionally,

Of all the dimensions, the spiritual dimension stays the core dimension which compliments PPL's view of man as a spiritual being. PPL therefore identifies with the words of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who said: "We are not human beings having a spiritual experience, but rather spiritual beings having a human experience" (Verrier 2002:1)

The physical dimension follows the spiritual dimension as the second most important dimension for it represents the dimension in which we as human beings function. Without a healthy body we are limited in our actions. These two dimensions form the foundation for the other dimensions to build on (with no specific order of importance for the dimension to follow).

The dimensions are represented in the form of a house with the spiritual dimension and physical dimension as the base. From there the other dimensions follow. The roof represents inner peace and harmony. This representation is depicted in figure 7.



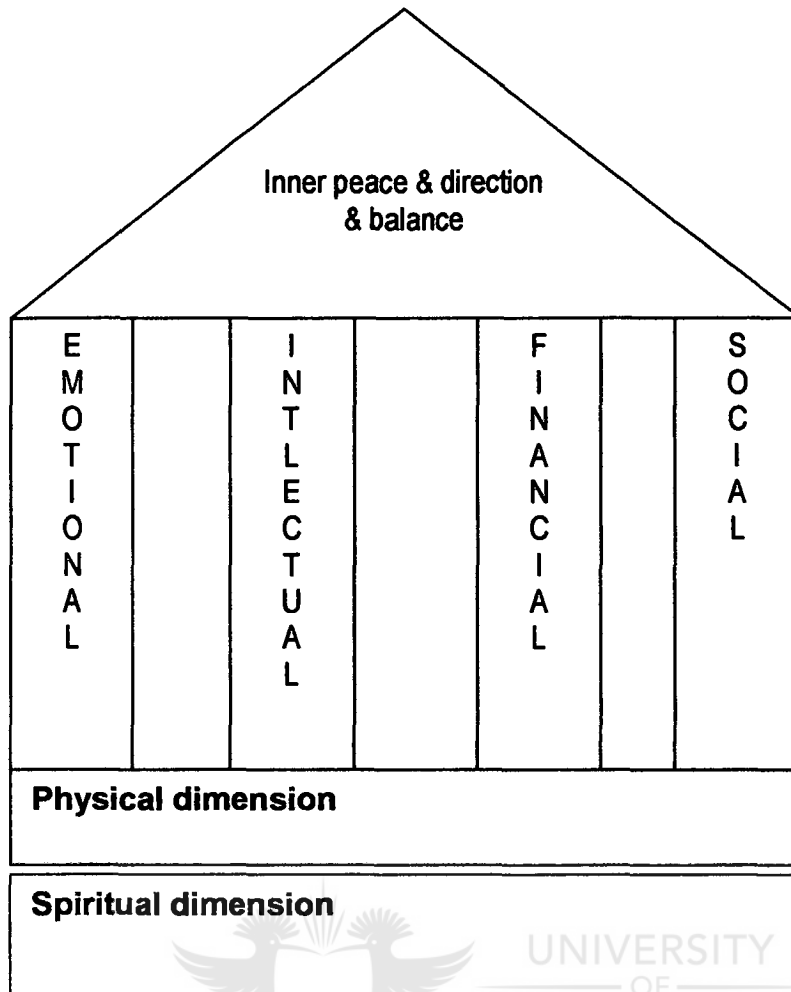


Figure 7: The PPL house model of human dimensions

The essence of each dimension is

- spiritual– harmony, vitality and life energy
- physical– energy
- emotional – control and coping skills
- social – self actualisation
- intellectual – cognitive development
- career/financial – career

I stripped this model of all the dimensions that were not fully functioning or under pressure in my life. I rearranged my life within this model, regarding the foundations as nonnegotiable. The two dimensions that were the strongest became the outside pillars of my “house” and the two weakest dimensions the inner pillars of the house (see figure 8). The reshaped model is as follows:

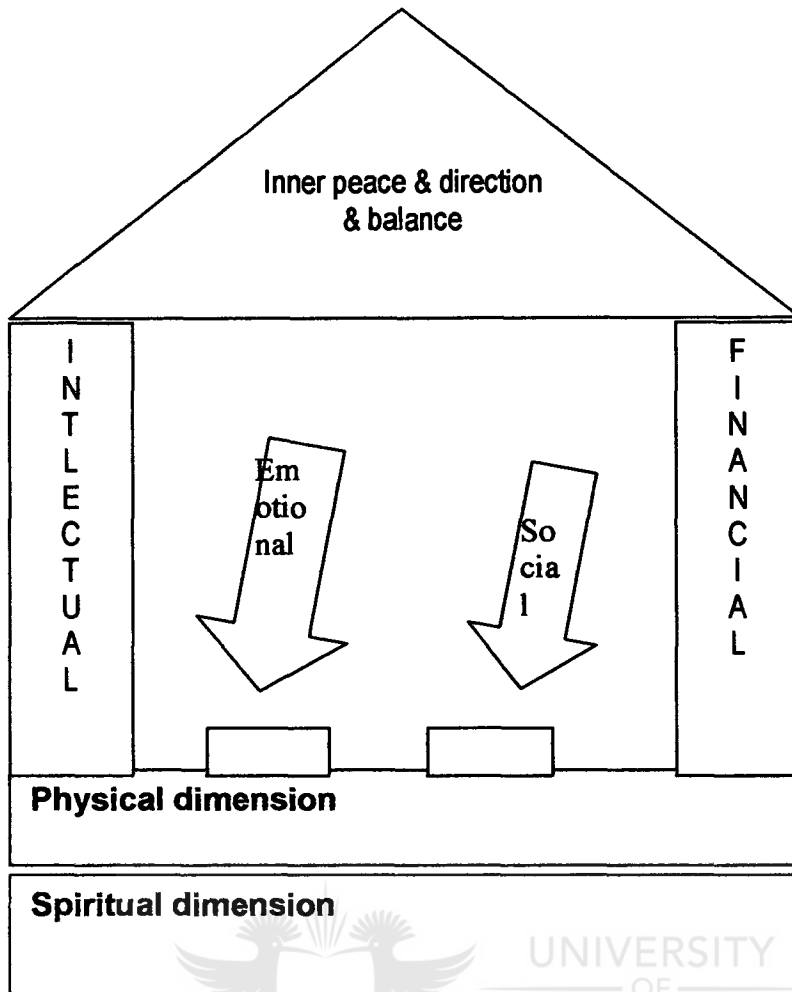


Figure 8: Life in transition according to the PPL house model of human dimensions

It was not difficult to understand the lack of inner peace and harmony. Being isolated in terms of where we lived and an extrovert by nature, my energy resources were limited. I accepted the challenge of being little more introverted; of diving into the dimension that was within my control and fully embracing the present. I made no future plans; for the time being I boxed my life in South Africa as a separate experience and did not compare the two countries with each other. Each country belonged to itself with its own beauty and limitations. I acknowledged the fact that my circle of influence (see figure 3) had shrunk to my self and my family. I refused to live life on the outskirts of the circle of concern and realised that the only way to expand the circle of influence would be from the inside out. That same principle would rebuild the leadership pyramid into a holistic pyramid. I realised time was the only thing

that would bring all these aspects to wholeness again and I was willing to wait it out and see all these things come to fruition.

My task now was to live the PPL model and see if it really would fall into place.

3.3.2 Ability to achieve self-knowledge

Indira Ghandi's father wrote to her:

I want you to grow and develop after your own fashion and only so can you fulfill your life purpose. Inevitably you will carry through life certain hereditary habits and ideas which your home life has impressed upon you in your early days, and I am conceited enough to think that your hereditary background is rather good. But the foreground must be your own creation. To force a growing person into a particular mould is to stultify him or her and to prevent growth and Bernard Shaw has called this the greatest of all crimes (Ghandi 2004:83).

Moving overseas can provide us with a great deal of information about ourselves. When you shift your focus from your environment to how you are doing in the environment you will learn a lot about yourself (Bryson and Hoge 2003:109). From a PPL perspective I do not agree with this in an expatriate situation, the reason being that the environment (which consists of the culture of the new country and a third culture as a mixture of expatriate cultures) has rules and you will always fall short if you measure yourself against that set of rules. Rubieta (1997:33) states that the unfortunate thing that happens is that we will place increasing pressure on our performance in order to feel better about ourselves. Measuring how you are doing "in" that environment would therefore be considered to be "slow suicide". Moving overseas does, however, bring out different strengths and different insecurities that are hidden in a comfort zone situation and, if one is willing, is a source of self-knowledge and growth.

Know yourself is the first and perhaps the most important characteristics of a leader. "This above all: to thine own self be true, and it must follow as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man" (Shakespeare in Smith 2003a:20). At the heart of leadership is self-awareness: an awareness of who you are, what you value and where you are going to. Cashman (2000:18) states that we lead by virtue of who we are; the person and the leader cannot be separated. Leadership is an expression of who we are.

Researching this paper as part of leadership studies placed a high value on my personal leadership style. In the words of Smith (2003a:22) get real with yourself, become aware of your life and look your life straight in the eye. My goal: living the PPL model and recording its outcome.

3.3.3 The spiritual dimension

Of all the wonderful characteristics that humankind has been endowed with, the most amazing has to be the fact that we are spiritual beings. Basic to all people is the common need to contribute to their fellow human beings and society at large in ways that serve worthy purposes, thereby ensuring the long-term survival and progress of civilisations as we have come to know them (Verrier 2002:1). According to Covey (1989:292), it is our spiritual dimension that is the source of this need to serve others, to contribute, to "matter", to make a difference and to have a sense of meaning and purpose.

Zohar and Marshall (2001:3-5) describe spirituality as the source of a person's "ultimate intelligence" or so-called spiritual intelligence (SQ). According to the authors, SQ can be defined as the intelligence with which we address and solve problems of meaning and the ability to be creative, to change the rules and to alter situations.

Human beings are driven by a need to ask fundamental questions. Questions that come to the fore after the comforts of an old thinking system and cultural system have fallen away: Who am I? Where am I going to? Why am I going there? These are questions that can be addressed from a SQ perspective.

Zohar and Marshall (2001:4) also contend that, since we are defined by a specifically human longing to find meaning and value in what we do and experience, human beings are essentially spiritual beings. The belief that we have a spirit, and therefore have the potential to become spiritually intelligent, has been scientifically researched and validated. This spiritual intelligence takes the form of 40Hz neural oscillations across the entire brain. Zohar and Marshall (2001:87) go further to say that these oscillations, which have a quantum dimension, are the neural basis of SQ, which allows us to place our actions and experiences into a larger context of meaning and value. In the scientific world there is also a discovery of the "God spot", which is in the temporal lobe of our brains. It shows an increased electrical activity when "normal" people are exposed to evocatively religious or spiritual words or topics of conversation (Zohar & Marshall 2001:94)

Ninow (in Verrier 2002:4) defines the spiritual dimension as the invisible, immaterial part of being, as embodied by personal values, which give life to the physical dimension of human beings. As it is the core dimension of the human being it will itself have unique needs. If these needs go unmet, the person's quality of life will be reduced, which will manifest in one way or another. Needs in this domain include aspects like adding value to the lives, goals and happiness of other people; living out of one's personal values; having a sense of meaning and purpose in life; being fulfilled; and having a sense of personal harmony and contribution.

Verrier (2002:17) concludes in his study that spirituality can be defined as "a search for direction; meaning; inner wholeness; connectedness to oneself; connectedness to others; connectedness to non-human creation and connectedness to a transcendent God".

Realising that the above is consistent with the PPL view of man as a spiritual being, it was an area that I started to nurture, protect and explore. It was not a foreign area but I felt a freedom to dwell in that dimension like never before. I made time for meditating on scriptures that would inspire and uplift me. I embraced seemingly endless white beaches for this activity without feeling

guilty. Of all the friendships left behind in South Africa there were two friends that I felt very connected with. They contacted and motivated me to continue with “starting at the basics again”. This became a wonderful time of reflection, a time of peace, a time of mourning, a time of joy, gratitude and harmony. I kept a journal of the many days during which I experienced difficult emotions and kept up with a gratitude journal as part of my studies. These two journals became a wonderfully balancing scale.

Psalm 119 became the anchor point: “Help me to understand these things inside out ... Barricade the road that goes nowhere ... I choose the road that goes somewhere” (Peterson 1995:822). In the next couple of months that followed I took nothing for granted. A lady at a bus stop invited me to a ladies group, dinner with business associates led to the book *Finding your north star* by Martha Beck, internet searches led me to more inspirational websites from which I could start to understand that I was not the only one that felt like hiding, crying, running away and embracing life at the same time. It was during that time that I decided to change the topic of my research to the change expatriate women go through during a move to a new country.

Being connected in this dimension it also dawned on me that I was, in some strange way, moving towards my true north and not away from it. I was excited and inspired not to stop the journey. I still experienced bad days, but they were not as intense or destructive as in the beginning. I started to settle into a pattern of taking care of this area. Some people laughed behind my back, some gossiped but for the first time in my life it was of no importance at all. I just smiled and stayed committed to the new road I was on.

An important aspect to mention here is value clarification. Values, as stated previously, form part of the spiritual dimension. To clarify personal values and to live them, are two completely different exercises. It was now an opportunity to internalise the personal values clarified in a classroom set-up, to change them (if need be), simplify them and use them as a tool for deciding which road would lead to “nowhere” and which one would lead “somewhere”. I found it difficult at first to honour these values, but the more I became aware of them

the easier it was to start the implementing process. It was a wonderful exercise that kept me in contact with my inner being on a daily basis. As this journey continued I also clarified in my mind what I wanted to do with my life and in what direction my life was busy developing. It was not an ambitious drive anymore but a gentle unfolding of adding value in places where the need arose.

The spiritual dimension was and is the fountain from which I can freely draw water to quench the burning fires that so easily can overtake my soul. It is the green pastures where I can wander with questions, pain and gratitude. It is a tree planted by running rivers which draw from deep (God) and answers to deep (your own spirit). It gives focus, it brings peace and it provides wisdom for challenging situations.

3.3.4 The physical dimension

Health, according to Gendinhuys (2004) is the optimum, dimensional balance, functioning in the absence of disease and weakness. Vitality (life energy) and quality of life need to thrive. PPL believes that the more balanced and physically fit your body becomes the more balanced and mentally fit your brain will become (Smith 2003a:64). These two work in harmony. There is a great deal to discuss on the benefits of being and feeling fit and healthy, but this will not be done here as it is not within the ambit of this study.

As I grew in my understanding and experience of the spiritual dimension I had a natural desire to tend to my physical wellbeing. I had this deep understanding that if I was not fit, I would not be able to cope with the combination of heat, distance, three children in different schools in different towns, immunity systems that needed to adapt to new virus strings and all the other challenges. But it was more than just these practicalities; it was as though my spirit desired to dwell in a healthy well-cared for body. I realised the healthy living is about living wholly and holy.

I combined and experimented with different exercise programmes and incorporated them with daily meditation and connection to the spiritual dimension. The result was higher levels of energy, and a desire, ability and focus to complete tasks. There was constant progressive movement which started to fill up other “weaker” dimensions of my life. My self-imposed rule was not to focus on the other dimensions as primary dimensions. I nurtured only the spiritual and the physical dimensions. As the foundational dimensions became solid and part of my life, I started to see how the other dimensions “cried” out for help. There came a stronger sense of realisation as to which dimension was busy “healing” and “growing”. I had the freedom to wander in that dimension until I felt an inner peace. There was often the temptation to fast forward the process by building non-authentic relationships as a quick fix, an energy source and a place where I could feel accepted. However, I stayed committed to my values and used them as a decision-making tool (sometimes to the discomfort of others).

3.4 THE HERO'S SAGA

For a period of about eight months I was chewing over bait number two: “only tend to the primary dimensions – the rest will fall in place”. Often during that time I fell apart, became emotionally drained, made social blunders, felt unworthy, meaningless and purposeless. Some days I experienced great anxiety attacks, other days belonged to the activity of deep rest. Nevertheless, I stayed focused on the process and committed to God and myself.

One morning, towards the end of the eighth month of our stay, I woke up and realised this is “home”. The process of transition was complete. Although the leadership pyramid was not functioning holistically as depicted in figure 7, I felt inner peace and solidity within myself as never before. The personal level of the leadership pyramid was intact and it was time to start to move on and grow in the next level – a process I was prepared to give time to. I will not discuss the rebuilding of the interpersonal and professional level in this study as space does not allow and because those levels are in the rebuilding process.

3.5 CONCLUSION

At the time of writing this paper I can with all honesty say that the outcome of “living the PPL model” exceeded my wildest expectations.

Using the PPL models, I was able to understand the breakdown of the holistic person and the emotions that goes with it. The PPL paradigm also gave me the knowledge to rebuild the identity from an inside-out manner. Living it on a continual basis takes time because habitual behaviour patterns takes time to change.

In the words of Jawaharal Nehru (in Ghandi 2004:56):

And life has become for me a long succession of tests. Sometimes I succeed and sometimes I am not so successful. But the curious thing is that the final and real judge of this success or failure is oneself. Others, of course, pass opinions on it, and often praise when a real victory has been won. But in one's heart one knows, or ought to know the real measure of success or failure.

**People are like stained glass windows. They sparkle
When the sun is out, but when the
Darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed
Only if there is a light from within
Elisabeth Kubler-Ross**

**I find myself a liberal amongst conservatives
and a conservative amongst liberals**

Phillip Yancey

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This document has ascertained that the paradigm of personal and professional leadership (PPL) contributes to the reconstruction of the life of an expatriate woman who is not allowed to work.

The specific aims that have been addressed in this document are the following:

- providing a platform or framework according to which the problems facing expatriate woman restricted from working may be identified and interpreted during this process of change by considering it through the paradigm of PPL within a transparent environment
- the knowledge of PPL has successfully been applied to create a model to assist expatriate women in understanding the aspects of the individual that are influenced by this change, dealing with the change of moving from a home country and rebuilding a new identity within the context of the PPL paradigm

This chapter focuses firstly on showing how the research problem and aims as defined in chapter 1 have been addressed in this study. It will, furthermore, summarise the essence of the research as set out in the previous three chapters, as well as the subsequent findings and conclusions. The model created as a result of this document will also be presented.

In conclusion, this document will discuss other issues and concerns relevant to the subject of expatriate women. This document will be brought to a close by presenting certain recommendations for further research.

4.2 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

In chapter 1, we saw how the prospect of moving overseas and the reality of a specific change can bring enormous disillusionment. The impact of change affects every aspect of the person and, from the PPL leadership pyramid paradigm, it is clear that it impacted on the professional-, interpersonal and personal levels (Smith 2003a:11). As has been discussed, the impact on the personal level is felt in the **form of personal shock** and loss, although this change was **brought about by own choice**. This change cut deep into the essential questions of an individual life and, and prompted pertinent questions on a personal level in order to find direction. The PPL true north principle suggests that individuals either strive to live a true north in life with concepts like “destiny”, “purpose” and “meaning” deeply embedded in the journey of life or accept reality and live as though that is the true destiny. In order to understand and address the basic problem, one research question was defined (1.3) in order to assist in understanding the impact and give clarity to the researcher on the reconstruction of an individual’s life.

Chapter 2 described the experiences that took place in the first eight months of the researcher’s life abroad. Essential questions which formed part of the personal level of the PPL leadership pyramid were under pressure and exposed. The researcher introduced Beck’s change cycle (Beck 2001:243-254) and the concept was described. The literature study was reinforced by explaining concepts such as the PPL leadership pyramid (Smith 2003a:9-11) and the circle of influence and concern (Covey 1989:81-85). PPL principles such as attitude (Smith 2003a:24), and choice (McGraw 2001:58) were highlighted as departure points for understanding the healing and reconstruction process. The stages of grief (Pascoe 2005a) were named as important aspects to acknowledge during times of change. This chapter gave a descriptive memoir of the process of “losing” an identity as a result of change. The concepts of culture and country were briefly discussed as an aspect that cannot be underestimated in an overseas move but because of

limited space were not discussed in depth. This chapter successfully accommodates the first aim of this research paper as stated in par. 1.4.

In chapter 3, the second aim of this study was addressed. This aim is closely linked to the research problem. This chapter used the PPL concept of the dimensional model to assist in the understanding of the reshaping process of the identity of the individual going through disruptive change. The dimensional model (see figure 7) forms the essence of this chapter with two accentuated areas: the ability to achieve self-knowledge and the spiritual dimension. In this chapter the fact that not only do people have a spirit (Verrier 2002:1), and as such are spiritual beings but also that this spirituality is scientifically validated in terms of 40Hz neural oscillations across the entire brain (Zohar & Marshall 2001:3-5) was discussed. The spirit is the source of ultimate intelligence (Covey 1989:292), which allows us to ask fundamental questions and which is able to place the life of a human being into a wider, richer and more meaningful context. The spiritual dimension as the foundational dimension of humanity (within the PPL paradigm) is the essential dimension for reshaping and reconstructing the broken identity.

The second aim of this research essay as stated in par. 1.4 was successfully achieved in the sense that PPL knowledge was applied in such a way that it not only tested the PPL dimensional and leadership pyramid model, but it also proved it to be an explanatory model that may assist other expatriate women experiencing similar feelings because of change

4.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study have already been extensively described in both chapters 2 and 3. Only the findings that have a direct bearing on the specific objectives of this study (as defined in 1.3 and 1.4) will be presented in this section.

These findings, which resulted from the research conducted in chapters 2 and 3, will be presented in an integrated manner.

- Change is very difficult for a human being because it changes the dynamics and comfort zone that individuals experience in a professional capacity, an interpersonal capacity and a personal capacity. Even if change is brought about in the best of circumstances the process of change involves shock and loss. Once the individual truly sees, understands and accepts this truth, transcendence is possible. From that platform change becomes more understandable and therefore less difficult. The individual has the opportunity to start combining the realities of external influences (new culture, new laws, different people) and internal powers (purpose, direction, values) to navigate through change (2.2).
- Change can be experienced as a shock, an opportunity or a transition, and each of these destroys fundamental aspects of an individual's life. Change takes the person to a place where it is necessary to chart a new course through life. The collapse of certain levels of the leadership pyramid (the professional and interpersonal level) during the process of change leads to a restriction in the fullness of life the individual experiences. Humanity no longer functions holistically. The circle of influence shrinks resulting in feelings such as isolation and vulnerability within a situation that is supposed to bring joy. Change brings with it a change in identity and unless we understand the process of change and the aspects that it impacts on, we cannot be a victor (2.3).
- The loss of identity is the most overwhelming loss the individual experiences when moving abroad. This implies that there one has a certain identity before moving overseas and another identity during the time of transition and yet another identity during the final phase of settling in (2.4.2).

- Attitude (2.4.2.1) and the ability to attain self-knowledge (3.3.2) can change a life. A change of attitude is well within the control of the individual and it enables the individual to move out of this state of loss and devastation and move to a place of growth. Both a change of attitude and the attainment of self-knowledge can be reached by choice.
- Culture and the country in which one lives form part of the familiar context of an individual's life. A move abroad takes these two aspects away from the individual and adds to the feeling of exposure, vulnerability and loss (2.4.2.4).
- In order to move out of the state of shock, loss and devastation there must be a commitment to take an active role in shaping a new identity. It is a commitment that includes a willingness to grow, a willingness to change and a willingness to take risks. The PPL dimensional model was used as the integral model for reshaping the identity. Two dimensions, namely the spiritual and the physical dimensions, are the core dimensions of nurturing. The dimensions of the intellect and financial were placed as secure pillars in the model and the emotional and social dimension were identified as being the weakest. None of these were the focus point during the reshaping process as only the core dimensions were actively developed. Commitment, focus and a clear understanding of the dynamics of the PPL dimensional model proved to make the PPL dimensional model a workable, practical and simplistic model for use in reshaping the identity (3.3.).
- There is a point at which you can become the "hero of your own story" (3.4). However, the process that has to be undertaken is a journey and not a quick-fix approach. This journey may lead the individual to a place where his or her life can be placed within a bigger and richer context.

4.4 PRESENTATION OF THE MODEL

In the application of these conclusions, it has become apparent that a model may be presented for assisting expatriate women to deal with the spectrum of change created as a result of moving from their home country. The diagram presented in figure 9 provides a visual representation of the model.

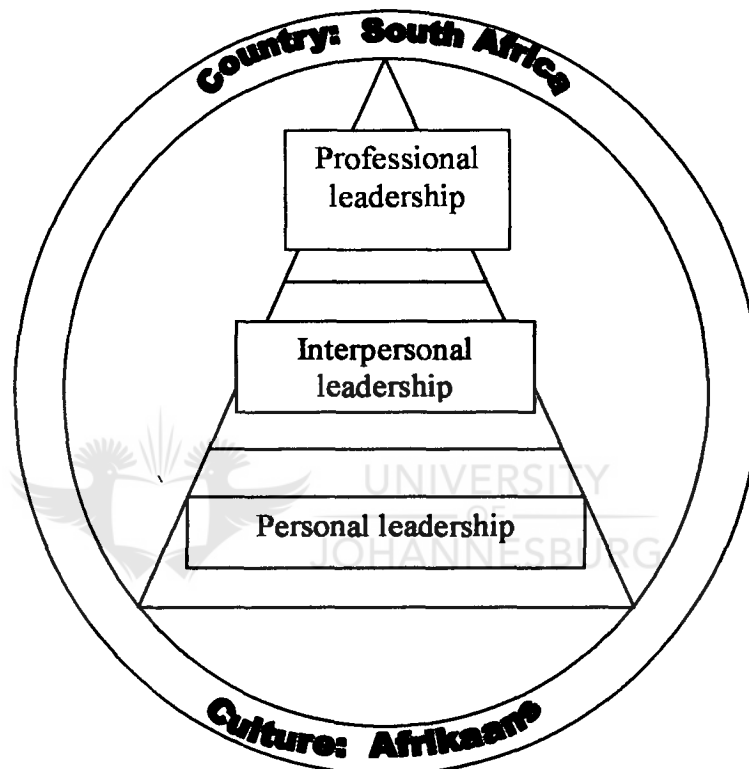


Figure 9 Leadership pyramid functioning within a country and culture

In order for a human to live and function holistically, the PPL leadership paradigm is placed within the context of culture and country. Without this a great deal of identity is lost. The phenomenon of country and culture was not researched in this essay; however the researcher found these two aspects to be an integral part of human beings. All these aspects are interdependent, and a change in one of the five aspects, namely

- culture
- country
- personal

- interpersonal
- professional level

may lead to a change in the other, which impacts on the identity of the individual. This statement does, however, need to be researched in more depth (4.5).

4.5 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As mentioned in 1.5.1, this was a qualitative study, and as such is more interested in the subjective meaning underlying people's behaviour. Furthermore it is stated that the research method (1.5.3) that was used was the phenomenology-subjective method, which is a personal description of an individual's experience of something and that it can take the form of an unstructured, or semi-structured method of interpretation.

It is essential to understand the essence of a phenomenon through qualitative research, before investigating quantitatively the extent of the phenomenon, or problem. With this in mind, the following recommendations can be made with regard to further research into the subject of this study:

- A quantitative study or survey, which would be more objective, to discover the extent of loss and reshaping women in similar situations experience.
- A qualitative or quantitative study on prisoners in an expatriate situation into the loss of identity they experience.
- A qualitative or quantitative study on the CEOs of companies who either retire or have completed their contract, and who experience a sense of disorientation, loss and trauma after leaving at the height of their career.

4.6 CONCLUSION

“Welcome to paradise” lasts only till dinner time. Change is a process of shock and loss. Once it is viewed, understood and accepted as truth, it is possible to transcend it.

This research document has successfully shown that the reality of change in an environment where a woman is restricted from working will result in a loss of identity and subsequently results in emotional turmoil.

In using the PPL models and developing a model for expatriate women, this document has succeeded in giving women a platform from which they may find purpose and hope in a situation of change. This model has been successfully tried on the life of an expatriated wife and can therefore be said to be a workable tool in understanding the breakdown of identity and the reshaping of identity.

The paradigm of personal and professional leadership successfully contributes to the reconstruction of the life of an expatriate woman who is not allowed to work.

To conclude this paper the researcher will revisit the following paragraph from chapter 1:

What I realised was that dealing with change would not happen overnight: but would entail a long journey via my soul to a place of full acceptance and contentment. This would not be for me a one thousand metre sprint, but a marathon that would take a great deal of energy, focus, sacrifice, determination, self-discipline and connectedness in order to complete the journey successfully. This would not be an achievement someone else could determine, but would be measured by my own perception of success and I would only know how successful I had been once the process was finished – and only I would know when it was finished.

Living, there is no happiness in that.
Living: carrying one's painful self through the world.
But being, being is happiness.
Being: becoming a fountain,
A fountain on which the universe falls like warm rain.

Milan Kundera



5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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