

The disclosure of intuitions in organisations: A grounded theory

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Abstract

Decision makers in organisations are not exclusively rational as once presumed. Research over recent decades has shown that leaders not only use intuition frequently but also consider it important to their role. Studies to date have focused on what intuition "is", its powers and pitfalls, and consequently how one can best make use of this subconscious and elusive cognitive capacity. The same research however, also revealed that intuition has had a bad reputation and that "gut feelings" are often suppressed or masked by the use of analytical terms. However, the suppression of intuition(s) has been shown to result in lost opportunities and errors, sometimes at significant cost. Despite this, intuition use, as a secret or silent practice in organisations, has never been the focus of empirical research in Australia nor internationally. This paper summarises the findings of PhD research that employed Grounded Theory methodology to investigate the social processes of intuition use and disclosure. The emergent grounded theory was developed through the analysis of data collected from semi-structured interviews with 27 men and women currently leading significant Australian organisations. The findings suggest that intuition disclosure is contingent not only on perceptions of legitimacy, but also on the level of "interiority" of the intuiter. The core category of interiority, at intrapersonal level, was defined as an orientation to feelings, particularly emotions and intuitions, and a consequent superior ability to express them. Interiority was found to be more developed in the participating women. The emergent theory proposes a multi-level view of interiority that also explains the social process of intuition disclosure in interpersonal exchanges and organisations. The study concluded that interiority is a capacity available to everyone, can be developed, and is well needed at all levels of social description.

Introduction

Normative models of organisations as exclusively rational domains and the notion that individual decision making proceeds exclusively by way of rational analyses have increasingly come under attack. Simon (1982), for example, developed the concept of a 'bounded rationality', based on Barnard's (1968) finding that managers used non-logical, intuitive processes in their decision making. The study of emotions in organisations became a 'hot topic' in the 1990s, with emotional labour and emotional intelligence receiving much attention (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2001). Research on intuition use in organisations bloomed in the 1970s and 1980s (see, for example, Mintzberg, 1976; Agor, 1986; Agor, 1989c) and many studies confirmed and elaborated on Barnard's thesis. However, research on managerial intuition, particularly field studies, has stalled somewhat in this new century (Sinclair & Ashkanasy 2005). This respite can be attributed, in part, to the elusive and

subjective nature of intuition and its incompatibility with 'objective' positivist managerial psychological approaches that continue to dominate business research. Additionally, the conceptual development of intuition has been impeded by the emergence of an array of diverse constructions (Osbeck, 1999), each with different properties and characteristics, especially in relation to usefulness and fallibility¹.

The use of intuitions by managers and leaders in organisations has been mostly associated with the term 'gut feeling'; defined as an immediate knowing based on experience and pattern recognition (Parikh, Neubauer & Lank, 1994; Lank & Lank, 1995; Sadler-Smith & Sparrow, 2007). The use of intuitions has been shown to be widespread in organisations (Agor, 1986; Parikh et al. 1994) and is perceived to be important to decision making and leadership, particularly where there is complexity and uncertainty (Robson & Miller 2006). However, it has also been shown that the intuitions of leaders are seldom disclosed (Isenberg 1984; Agor 1986; Parikh et al., 1994; Isenman, 1997; Robson 2004). However, no research has focused on the disclosure of intuition use in Australia, nor internationally. This is a significant omission given the extent to which organisations are reliant on good and transparent decision making. This paper will describe and discuss PhD research that examined the social processes of intuition disclosure by leaders in Australian organisations.

Constructing intuition

The dominant view of intuition in psychology assumes a model of cognition by which information is processed in two distinct yet interactive systems: one that is conscious, rational, analytical, reductionist and linear, and one that is sub-conscious, non-rational, intuitive, holistic and non-linear (Bastick, 1982; Denes-Raj & Epstein, 1994; Epstein, 1994; Hammond, 1996). The dual processing model provided a generally accepted framework for understanding intuition (Epstein, 1998). However intuition research in psychology varies markedly—both in approach to, and conclusions about the nature and efficacy of intuition.

The heuristics and biases program, spearheaded by Tversky and Kahneman (1974), is traditionally associated with intuition for many decision researchers (Sadler-Smith & Sparrow, 2007). The heuristics and biases approach acknowledges the bounded nature of rationality and conceptualises intuition as automatic mental shortcuts. While these 'rules of thumb' are sometimes useful, a major contention is that heuristics can lead to severe and systematic errors (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974; Kahneman, Slovic & Tversky, 1982; Kahneman, 2002). Similarly, intuitive behaviour and decisions based on visceral factors such as excessive hunger, thirst, sexual desire, moods, powerful emotions and addictions (Loewenstein, 1996; Loewenstein, Weber, Hsee & Welch, 2001) can influence decision making and behaviour in a way that is often not in the long-term interests of the individual. Therefore, from these two related perspectives, intuitions should not be trusted.

¹ (see, for example, Sadler-Smith & Sparrow, 2007; Author & Cooksey, 2008).

Much managerial psychological research describes intuition as a cognitive event resulting in an intuition or 'knowing', which the intuiter can then choose to exploit or not. Such intuitions, according to the literature, fall into two categories on the basis of immediacy (Bastick, 1982; Simon, 1987; Cappon, 1994a; Crossan, Lane & White, 1999; Sauter, 1999; Novicevic, Hensch & Wren, 2002). According to Crossan, Lane et al., expert intuition, commonly labelled, 'gut feeling', is synchronous with perception. Entrepreneurial intuition, insight, or the 'Eureka effect', occurs subsequent to immersion in a problem and is described as 'to do with innovation and change' (Crossan, Lane et al. 1999, p. 527). Whereas gut feeling is defined as the sub-conscious recognition of patterns based on past experience, entrepreneurial intuition connects patterns in a new way (Sinclair, 2003) and generates new insights (Crossan et al. 1999, p. 527). However, it should be noted that in both examples, intuitions are associated with an affective experience for the intuiter (Cappon, 1993; Sinclair, 2003) and are informed by a wide range experience as well as domain knowledge (Sadler-Smith & Sparrow, 2007). Therefore these two constructions of intuition can be distinguished from heuristics, as well as visceral influences.

Intuition is also referred to as an aspect of cognitive style. Many instruments have been developed to measure cognitive style, with the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) emerging as the best known and most widely used (Westcott, 1968). Cognitive style instruments are popular because they are cheap and easy to administer and—important for quantitative researchers—have established validity (Hodgkinson & Sadler-Smith, 2003). They are particularly useful in organisations for developing awareness in individuals of alternative modes of thinking, and for maximising the effectiveness of groups through matching cognitive styles (Jabri, 1991). However, these instruments do not describe intuitive capacity or the potential use of intuition(s) defined as gut feelings and measure only propensity for problem solving style. Moreover, they do not account for the specific context and environment of the decision-maker; users are reliant on, for on a Myers Briggs facilitator/trainer to provide direction about context and use.

Finally, philosophical intuition is regarded as a perfect apprehension of² an ultimate reality and one that is self-evident, subjective and therefore incontestable (Westcott, 1968). However, contemporary reviews of intuition in management tend to completely ignore this construct, or acknowledge it but without defence or elaboration. It has been suggested that this is because of the mutual exclusivity of the psychological and philosophical literature (Osbeck, 1999). Furthermore, integration has been impeded by a recognised fundamental disjuncture between how each discipline constructs intuition (intuition as fallible but useful in psychology and as perfect apprehension in philosophy); that is apparently irreconcilable and consequently seldom addressed (Hendon 2004).³

It can be seen from the discussion above that whether intuition is seen as fallible/infallible, useful or error-prone, largely depends on what construct is being discussed, particularly in light of the plethora of vague and sometimes contradictory

² The word, 'knowledge', is not appropriate here because knowledge is, by definition, representational, fragmented and, therefore, cannot symbolise intuition. It is argued there is no word that can represent this kind of intuition because it is beyond symbolic representation.

³ As exceptions, see Hendon (2004) and Robson & Cooksey (2010).

⁴ See Parikh et al. (2000) for an exception.

definitions. However, it is not the lack of an accepted, clear-cut definition for intuition that problematises integration of findings in the literature, as proposed by Lieberman (2000). It is, instead, a failure to acknowledge intuition as multi-faceted, multidimensional and multi-level (see Parikh et al. 1994 for an exception).⁴ Correspondingly, the author has developed a model of intuition which synthesises perspectives (Robson & Cooksey 2008) and is thus more inclusive and comprehensive than those it draws upon. This model, in combination with a philosophical framework for reconciling psychological and philosophical intuition (Robson 2010), underpinned the research reported in this paper.

Context and perceptions of intuition

Limited field research into the perceptions of practitioners has been conducted. Most has inquired into the nature of intuition, how it is used, in what circumstances, and its perceived efficacy. These studies found that a majority of decision makers in organisations considered themselves intuitive (Parikh et al. 1994; Agor 1986), used intuition on a regular basis (Agor, 1986; Agor, 1989b; Burke & Miller 1999), and considered it important to their leadership (Robson & Miller, 2006), particularly where there is complexity, ambiguity and time constraints (Mintzberg, 1976; Isenberg, 1984). Intuition use was also found to increase with seniority and experience (Burke & Miller, 1999).

Despite this reliance on intuition, some of the same research has also found that decision makers tend to mask their intuitions in order that their decisions to be accepted by colleagues, superiors and stakeholders. For example, Agor (1986) reported that executives suppressed intuitions or dressed their intuitions in 'analytical clothing' (p. 38). This has been found both internationally (Daft and Lengel, 1986; Sadler-Smith & Shefy, 2004; Sadler-Smith & Sparrow, 2007), and in the author's own research in Australia (Robson, 2004). Hence, the use of intuition is considered largely a private, secret or silent practice (Agor, 1986; Robson & Miller, 2006). This is possibly because intuition has had a bad reputation (Bastick, 1982; Agor, 1984a; Agor, 1986; Parikh et al., 1994; Cappon, 1994a; Burke & Miller, 1999; Sadler-Smith & Burke, 2009) because of perceptions of intuition as magical, mystical and paranormal (Bastick, 1982; Parikh et al., 1994; Osbeck, 1999). However, research specifically examining perceptions of intuition and disclosure of intuition(s) in organisations is absent from the literature.

I would argue that this is a significant omission given the extent to which organisations are dependent on good and transparent decision making processes. For example, a perception of intolerance toward intuition has been shown to result in serious and costly errors (Grudin, 1989; Robson & Miller, 2006). The need for a greater understanding of the socio-cultural factors surrounding intuition use in organisations has been recognised (Sadler-Smith & Shefy, 2004) and recommendations made for future research in this area (Burke & Miller, 1999). However, no research was found that specifically investigated the socio-cultural context of intuition use and disclosure. Researching the nature of intuition is important, however, knowledge of intuition is less useful unless its application in the real world is also understood.

Thus, the research problem for the present study was expressed as:

What are the social processes surrounding intuition use and disclosure by Australian leaders in organisations?

Methodology

Data gathering

The approach to this research reflected the belief that there have been constraints and inadequacies associated with the typically positivistic and controlled ways in which research on intuition has been conceived and conducted. It was argued that theory concerning intuition use and disclosure was more likely to emerge from data drawn from the descriptions of the practitioners themselves. Grounded Theory, as a flexible, emergent methodology, is ideally suited for uncovering social process in complex and ambiguous field conditions. Grounded Theory embraces both the analytical and intuitive capacities of the researcher in analyses of data obtained through direct contact with decision makers in their myriad of contexts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Dey, 1999).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with twenty-seven leaders of significant Australian organisations. Candidates for interviews were found through utilising the 'True Leaders' lists published in *Boss* magazine 2001–2007. These leaders were experienced, ran significant Australian organisations and had been selected by a 'distinguished panel' (Macken, 2002) of their peers. When this resource was exhausted, further CEOs, Directors and senior executives of major Australian organisations participants were identified and targeted through their corporate websites. This process is fully described in a conference paper written by the author (Robson, 2009).

Elites were purposively selected for four reasons. First, despite the arguments of Pfeffer (cited in Dubrin, Dalgligh & Miller 2006), the decisions of CEOs and directors are often the most influential in determining the success of organisations (often despite environmental influences), and are pivotal in forming cultural practices (Mintzberg, 1989; Sarantakos, 2005; Dubrin et al., 2006; Gill, 2006). Second, because it has been shown intuition use increases with seniority and experience (Burke & Miller, 1999) participants, as elite leaders, would be likely to use intuition. Third, it was theorised that if participants did use intuition, the obligation to justify their decisions to stakeholders and the wider community placed them as ideal candidates to discuss intuition disclosure. Fourth, it was assumed that the leaders of Australia's most significant organisations would likely be well educated, exceptional communicators and would therefore provide rich relevant data. Indeed, this was seen to be the case (Robson, 2009).

Consistent with the principle of theoretical sampling, a near equal proportion of men and women were sought and interviewed (13 men and 14 women) (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1998). This was done because it became clear in the first few interviews that gender played a significant role in relation to the disclosure of intuition(s).

The emergent theory was generated through an iterative interplay of data collection and analysis, and making constant comparisons between instances and groups of instances or categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Dey, 1999). The relevance and importance of generated codes became apparent through their repetition and relationship to other codes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Dey, 1999; Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz, 2009). The development of categories and conditions was influenced by the conditional matrix developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990; 1998), while multi-level analysis and theory building was informed by Layder's Domain Theory (1994; 1997; 2005). The use of Domain Theory as the theoretical perspective was justified because of its capacity to draw on multiple perspectives and sociological lenses in order to tease out the complex dynamics associated with the research problem at different levels of social description.

Findings

The definition, experience and use of intuition

Intuition was interpreted to be experienced by participants as an internal, received, holistic, sub-conscious sense or 'feeling of knowing', notion or mental signal, that 'comes to you'. For participants, intuition flagged the rightness or wrongness of a person, choice, strategy or proposal, the timeliness of a decision and/or caution, and thus the need for action (particularly further investigation). Intuition was interpreted as being informed by substantial experience of a domain or knowledge thereof, as well as past research and reflection. For many, intuition was further informed by life experience, personality, values, culture, upbringing and education. For a few, depending on the decision context, spirituality informed intuition, mostly in connection with values, ethics and motivation for a decision. For some, intuitions could be additionally or wholly informed by extra-sensory phenomena (12 out of 24 participants), although this kind of intuition was generally limited to participant's private lives.

Use of intuition

The use of intuition was perceived by participants to be important to their role as leaders. However, intuition use was conditioned by both the *nature* and *context* of each particular decision. Intuition was considered most appropriate for decisions of a qualitative nature in relation to judgements about cultures of organisations, leadership and people in general. However intuition(s) about quantitative data were also perceived to be useful, particularly where there was complexity, uncertainty or ambiguity. Participants said they were more likely to rely on intuition in decision making in a context of information inadequacy, too much or contradictory information and where there was some urgency. Participants reported they were more confident relying on their intuitions in contexts where they had considerable experience, and most comfortable making decisions where their intuitions and analyses coincided. For example:

... while I'd say it's [intuition] an important part of my decision-making process, it's always there ... I am also very diligent about ensuring that there is due process as well ... sometimes your intuition can be wrong, and it could end up being very costly and you want to make sure that you don't end up in that situation.

Reciprocity and complementarity of intuition and analysis in daily decision making was a strong theme for all participants.

Intuition and gender

Many participants, both women and men, perceived that women had better intuition than men and trusted and relied on their intuition more than men. Some women perceived that men were just as intuitive as women but had less awareness of intuition and, indeed, feelings in general. More importantly, these perceptions were supported by the willingness and ability of the women in the sample, rather than the men, to articulate their subjective experience of intuition. Orientation to, and awareness of feelings became the core category for understanding the social process of intuition disclosure at the individual level. The following paragraphs explain and discuss this orientation/capacity in more detail.

Social processes of intuition disclosure

Core Category—Interiority

The majority of participants perceived that intuition-use is sometimes viewed as both esoteric and unscientific. Some acknowledged this perception might cause them to express their intuitions as ‘judgements’ or as the consequence of analysis, particularly in the wording of formal public statements. Therefore, perceived attitude toward intuition can be considered a factor conditioning intuition disclosure. More significantly, however, both male and female participants perceived variability in relation to the propensity—ability and willingness—of other people to disclose intuitions, gut feelings and emotions, which they perceived as very much related to gender. Many participants (both men and women) perceived that women were both more ‘in touch’ and comfortable with their feelings, including their intuitions. Reflecting this gender difference, some women in the sample reported that women, amongst themselves, used a ‘different language’ that was generally more ‘feeling’ oriented than language used in male-dominated boardrooms.

Thus orientation to feelings ‘to be aware of’, ‘tune into’, ‘recognise’ and ‘articulate’ feelings and intuitions has been labelled ‘interiority’⁵. High interiority represents, at the intrapersonal level, a greater orientation to the inner realm of feelings and intuitions, and consequently a greater awareness and willingness to more effectively articulate and perhaps utilise them. In the words of one female participant, ‘I just think that women, women have a deeper sense of ... how we feel about things’. Differing levels of interiority were reflected by a stark difference in the complexity and depth of responses in relation to questions about the internal, subjective experience of intuition. The women took their time in responding, and often used poetic metaphor:

... you still yourself and you kind of wait for the inner turmoil to kind of settle ... like stirring up the mud in a pond ... and if you just sit with it, it’ll settle, and you can be clear about what it is that you are experiencing...

⁵ Wilber (1995) uses the word interiority to denote the evolution of consciousness that occurs synchronous with outer biological, physical evolution, which Wilber accuses systems theorists of omitting. As biological evolution proceeds to higher levels of complexity, so does the concomitant ‘depth’ of consciousness.

Conversely, some men in the sample replied they 'hadn't thought about it', or said they 'did not think it was much of an experience'. Others replied in simple language such as: 'it feels good or it feels bad', or avoided the question through a tangential response, often changing the subject. Indeed, the author had the sense the some of the men in the sample (due to the author's interpretation of their pauses, sighs and intonation) were disconcerted and made uncomfortable by these questions; that they thought such questions were unusual or strange (this was particularly the case for older male participants).

Men and women said they acted on their intuitions and thought them important. However it was only the women in the sample discussed engaging with and enhancing their receptivity to intuitions. Some reported that they would set aside time to 'sit' with their intuition(s) so that they could allow them to come more fully into conscious awareness through a paradoxical active/passive ⁶ interrogative process:

...taking time out just to try and get the whole thing in perspective and to get all of that kind of deep knowledge to come to the surface and to be part of the active decision making.

From their responses, the author interpreted that all the women in the sample exhibited high levels of interiority. While the overwhelming majority of men did not have high interiority, there were two exceptions that provided a critical insight: that interiority can be uncoupled from sex/gender. The author concluded that interiority should be seen as a capacity for inner orientation that, according to the perceptions of participants, is conditioned by cognitive 'type', attitude to intuition, social and gender conditioning. Furthermore the analysis revealed that interiority is more likely to be developed where it has utility or is normative (such as in caring occupations and in the dramatic arts). Thus, interiority can be viewed as available to men and women that can be nurtured and developed.

Interiority and intuition disclosure

Individuals with high interiority at the intrapersonal level have a greater orientation to feelings, emotions and intuitions and a consequent ability to distinguish between these and express them. Individuals with low interiority will be less aware of their intuitions and may not acknowledge them as such. They might act on their intuition(s), however attribute them to analysis, experience or wisdom, or not be fully aware of the basis for their decision/action (where action becomes automatic). If the intuiiter is aware of their intuition(s) and views these as legitimate, they will be internally acknowledged and trusted. If not, intuitions will likely be ignored, silenced, suppressed or attributed to analysis, judgement and experience. Thus, individuals with high interiority are less unconsciously driven by their intuitions and emotions, and have more choice in their decision making (irrespective of intuition accuracy).

⁶ Here passivity means in relation to the activity of the conscious mind. Many participants explained that intuitions 'come to you'.

Conscious recognition of feelings renders them available for articulation evaluation/verification as well as action. Figure 1 below illustrates intuition disclosure at the intrapersonal level.

Interactions can also be characterised by degrees of interiority. Interpersonal interiority is the extent to which feelings are disclosed in an exchange. Interpersonal interiority is conditioned by: perceptions of intrapersonal interiority in others, the extent of familiarity felt, the context of the exchange (in terms of industry type and whether it is business or private matter), as well as the power relations of the relationship(s). For example, a powerful person may insist on knowing the feelings and intuitions of the other to the extent that they are capable of doing so. Conversely, the intuiter with high interiority will find or fabricate evidence and/or rationale, modify or 'dress up' intuitions in a perceived context of low interiority and/or low power. Common expressions that were reported used to mask intuition(s) were: 'my experience', 'my analysis', and, more commonly, 'my judgement'⁷.

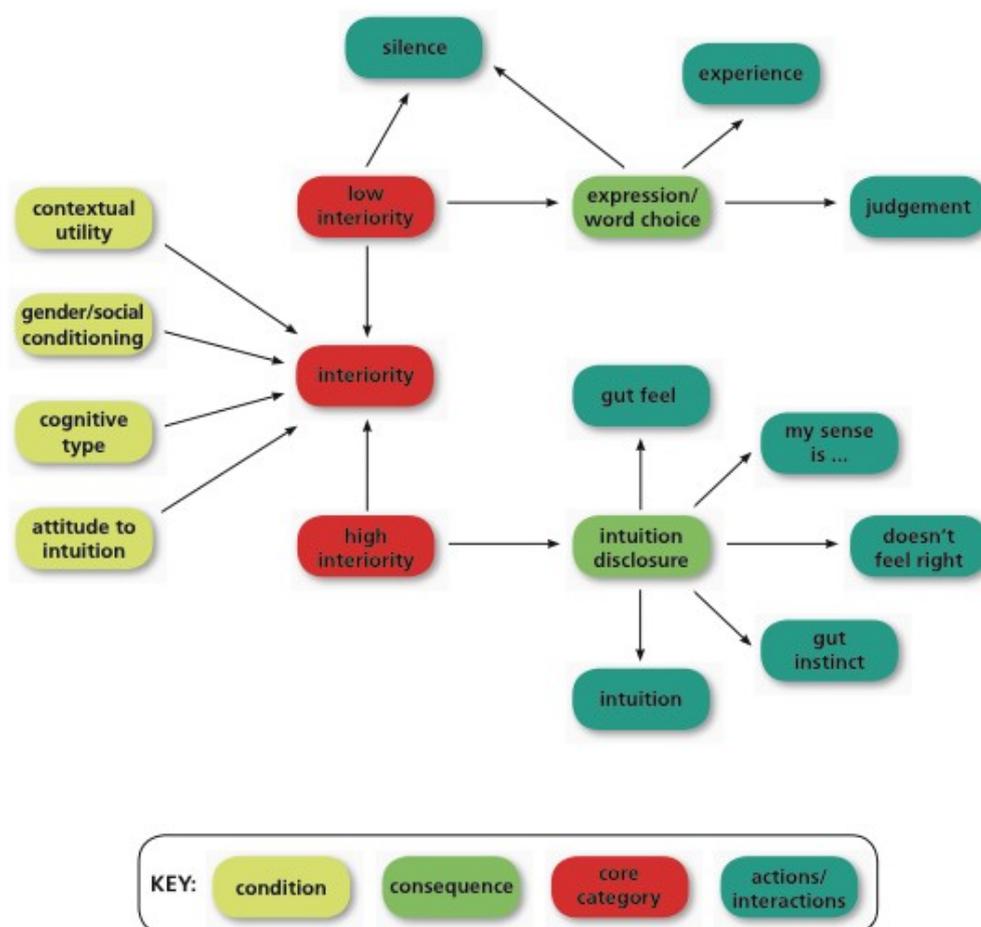
Similarly, the interiority of an organisation can be defined as the extent to which emotions, feelings and intuitions are expressed. Assertive cultures (perceived as most often dominated by men), in the extreme, are characterised by: the need for *appearing* rational, strong hierarchies, and an emphasis on analysis and evidence to the exclusion of other inputs. Non-disclosure of intuition(s) in assertive cultures serves to insulate individuals from tough interpersonal relations where mistakes are punished. In such cultures decision makers must be *active* in making *strong* decisions (number crunching). However, it was found that individuals may disclose their intuitions where there are intervening variables: where there is low precedent and/or information (entrepreneurial ventures), where an individual has power, status, and/or track record, or when they no longer care about their 'fit' to the organisation (when they are about to retire, for example).

At the other end of this cultural continuum are integrative cultures often found in organisations under the leadership of, or dominated by women. These cultures were described by the women in the sample as focused on building supportive, receptive, holistic and nurturing working environments through ongoing connective communication.

... if you get the people right and the culture right, you're there — you don't have to manage the business — they manage it for you.

Intuition(s) were perceived to be legitimate in integrative organisations as part of a different currency of language where 'feeling words' were perceived as normative.

⁷ One participant noted the legitimacy of the term 'business judgement' in Section 181 of The Corporations Act (2001) is defined as 'any decision to take or not take action in respect of a matter relevant to the business operations of the corporation'.

Figure 1: Intrapersonal interiority and intuition disclosure

However, cultures in this respect were seen as fluid and subject to ongoing dynamics as one female participant explained:

They sat round the executive table and were very competitive with each other; they didn't work together as a unit at all ... It was quite extraordinary ... I thought what I could do as a new person was to try and change the culture ... They are now much more open with each other, they trust each other more ... they communicate better.

The benefit of less self-assertive organisational cultures was a more cooperative attitude beneficial to the organisation.

They've actually had a couple of proper discussions where people were taking the organisational line ... rather than their own portfolio—and that was a big breakthrough.

In integrative cultures, the disclosure of intuitions and feelings is encouraged as a consequence of democratic interpersonal and power relations and open language.

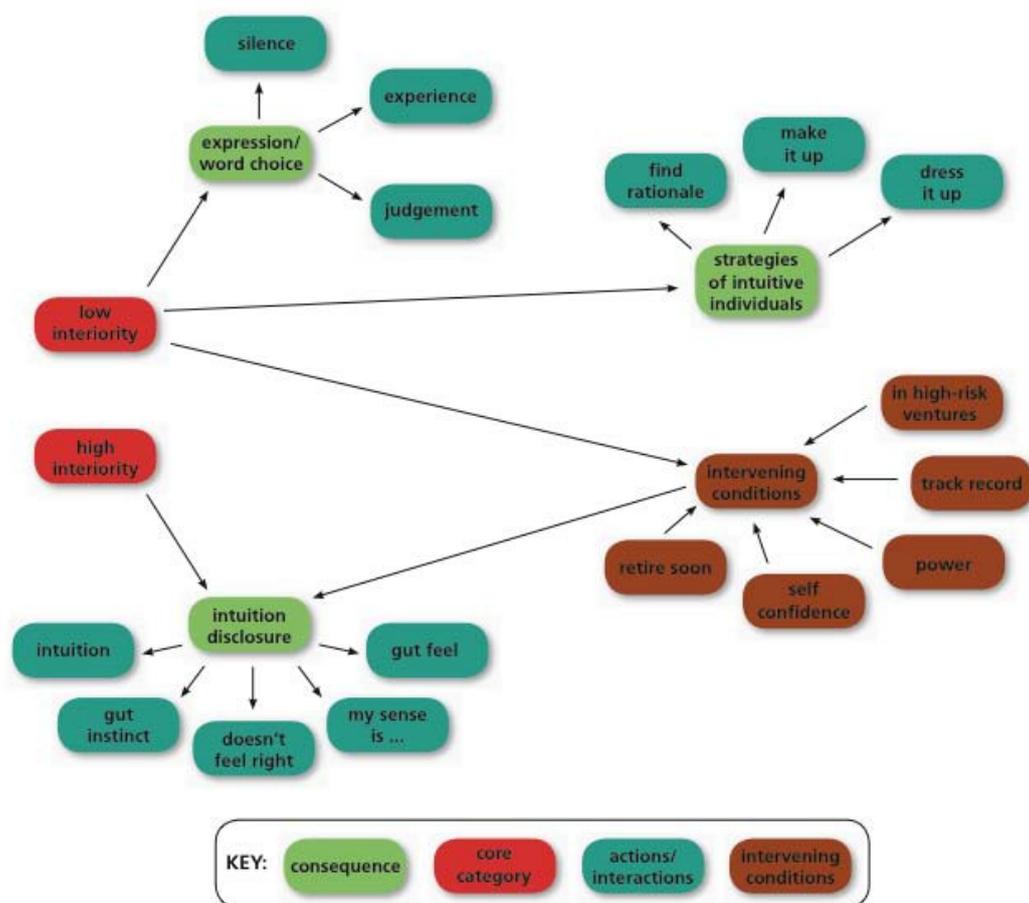
I don't care where people say they come from—we just want the ideas on the table. But I have to build an environment of trust so people can feel brave.

The development of individual agency is also encouraged in integrative cultures through a tolerance of mistakes. However, this is not to imply acceptance of high levels of irrationality and inappropriate risk taking. On the contrary, *acknowledging* emotions and intuitions, renders intuitions and feelings intelligible—enabling leaders to evaluate them in decision making. Disclosure of intuitions facilitates their utilisation while the acknowledgement of emotions broadens communication, deepens understanding and has the potential to improve organisational climate. Common expressions described by participants in relation to intuition were ‘my sense is’, ‘my feeling is’, ‘doesn’t feel right’ as well as ‘my gut feeling is’ and ‘my intuition is’. The social process of intuition disclosure at the organisational level is represented at Figure 2.

Discussion and conclusions

The notion of interiority is consistent with neurophysiological research that recognises differences in the capacities of individuals for ‘subjective awareness of inner feelings’, (Craig 2004, p. 239) and moreover, that women are superior in this regard (Schulz, 2005). This is supported by research into emotional intelligence where women were found to be better at recognising and expressing their own emotions as well as those of others (Barret, Lane & Schwartz, 2000). Sociological studies have also found this same gender divide and, in concert with the author’s conclusions, suggest that emotional expression cannot be reduced solely to sex, but is socially and culturally bound (Brody, 1997; Simon & Nath, 2004). The above studies are considered relevant because intuition is experienced as a feeling/knowing associated with affect. Interestingly, one study linking intuition with emotional sensitivity was published as this journal article was being finalised. Sinclair, Ashkanasy and Chatopadyay (2010) who indeed found that ‘emotional awareness has a positive effect on the use of intuition and appears to be stronger in women’ (p. 382). Thus, this quantitative psychological appears to confirm the findings of this interpretive study in relation to emotional awareness, intuition and gender. Studies were also located that positively correlated emotional recognition and expression with intuition in terms of cognitive style (Higgs, 2001; Downey, Papageorgiou & Stough, 2006). However, as earlier discussed, cognitive style describes a preference for problem solving while gut feeling is an event or a knowing synchronous with perception. This is significant because, while intuitive types may be more likely to have interiority and therefore express intuitions, one can consistently approach problems in an analytical way and still recognise, acknowledge and express intuitions as a consequence of high interiority; the two are not mutually exclusive. When so viewed, these studies support the findings of this study.

Figure 2: Intuition disclosure in organisations



The finding that intuition disclosure is conditioned by organisational culture and that cultures in this respect can be ordered in relation to each other on a continuum, are consistent with the findings of Hofstede (1991). Conceptualising culture in terms of overarching masculine/feminine orientation, he argued that feminine cultures were more likely to accept and express affective forms of judgment, which, by implication, would include intuitions. Hofstede's view of cultures in terms of a masculine/feminine oppositional duality is also consistent with the work of Jung, who perceived the whole as constituted through the tension between opposites, both at the level of the individual and the collective (Jung, 1977; Rowland, 2002). For Jung, receptivity and expression of feeling are represented in his theory by the archetypes Eros (feeling) and Logos (thinking). Jung argued that Eros has been repressed in the West for centuries in cultures dominated by men, science and rational civilisation (Rowland, 2002). This author would concur with this sentiment and concludes that a greater inclusion of feelings, at all levels, has benefits.

Implications and recommendations for future policy and research

It is concluded that interiority at both individual and collective levels is both achievable and beneficial. However Grounded Theory generates hypotheses and, therefore future research, is required to further confirm the findings of this study. Future research could also explore means by which individuals may develop interiority. The theory generated by this study may also help explain why organisations led by women perform better (Sinclair, 1998; Joy, Wagner & Narayanan 2007; Desvaux, Devillard-Hoellinger & Meaney, 2008). At the organisational level, the findings imply that the domination of men at the highest levels of governance may undermine the potential of organisations to achieve their maximum potential. This should be seen not only in terms of quantitative and financial outcomes, but also in relation to culture, climate and the quality of life and the development of individual agency. Of course, in theory, the most obvious and simplest way of increasing interiority in organisations would be to increase the number of women leading organisations beyond the current level of 2 per cent (EOWA 2008). The author does not underestimate the potential resistance to this policy given millennia of institutionalised male hegemony (Calas & Smircich, 1996; Calas & Smircich, 1999)—nor consider convincing men to ‘get in touch with their feelings’ an easy task⁸. Nevertheless, the author argues that developing organisational cultures that embrace open language – inclusive of feelings and intuitions – will be critical as environments continue to become more chaotic and complex.

⁸ See Sinclair, 2000; Collinson & Hearn, 2003 in relation to this

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