

1-1-2008

## The whistleblower in the workplace: The influence of the personal characteristics of individuals who have blown the whistle in one Australian context

Sharan Kraemer  
*Edith Cowan University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses>



Part of the [Industrial and Organizational Psychology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Kraemer, S. (2008). *The whistleblower in the workplace: The influence of the personal characteristics of individuals who have blown the whistle in one Australian context*. Edith Cowan University. Retrieved from <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses/229>

This Thesis is posted at Research Online.  
<https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses/229>

# Edith Cowan University

## Copyright Warning

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study.

The University does not authorize you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following:

- Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright.
- A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. Where the reproduction of such material is done without attribution of authorship, with false attribution of authorship or the authorship is treated in a derogatory manner, this may be a breach of the author's moral rights contained in Part IX of the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth).
- Courts have the power to impose a wide range of civil and criminal sanctions for infringement of copyright, infringement of moral rights and other offences under the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth). Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.



EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARY

The whistleblower in the workplace: the influence of the  
personal characteristics of individuals who have blown  
the whistle in one Australian context

Sharan Kraemer BA (Hons)  
SN 948397

School of Law and Justice  
Faculty of Business and Law  
Edith Cowan University

31<sup>st</sup> August 2008

## Use of Thesis

This copy is the property of Edith Cowan University. However, the literary rights of the author must be respected. If any passage from this thesis is quoted or closely paraphrased in a paper or written work prepared by the user, the source of the passage must be acknowledged in the work. If the user desires to publish a paper or written work containing passages copied or closely paraphrased from this thesis, which passages would in total constitute an infringing copy for the purpose of the Copyright Act, he or she must first obtain the written permission of the author to do so.

## Abstract

Whistleblowing is not a new phenomenon but recent technological advances, which make corrupt behaviour difficult to hide, have exposed whistleblowing as a burgeoning problem on several levels: international, national and local. Whistleblowing presents problems not only for the organisation which must deal with the offender, contain any damage to its reputation and manage the problems that enabled the corrupt behaviour in the first place; but it presents problems for the whistleblower. While ultimately an organisation may benefit from a whistleblower's action, the whistleblower's journey is rarely without sacrifices. Individual whistleblowers must call upon personal strengths to report misconduct despite probable adverse consequences.

To explore an aspect of contemporary whistleblowing, this research relies on the theory of Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) which identifies five characteristics of whistleblowing behaviour: altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, civic virtue and conscientiousness (Organ 1990, 1997). Van Dyne, Graham and Dienesch (1994) whose research tested OCB theory, argued that loyalty to the organisation was also an important characteristic. In a later study Paine and Organ (2000) concluded that in Australia, OCBs and loyalty to the organisation are negated by the Australian ethos of "mateship". These concepts are a springboard for the proposed research.

Using qualitative research methods, this research proposes to investigate how self-identified whistleblowers, who have worked in the public sector, speak about their personal qualities and experiences in the workplace to justify their actions. Semi-structured interviews will also explore, from the respondent's perspective, the organisational processes that hindered or assisted their actions. How the organisation managed the reporting process and expedited the complaint; and the influences exerted by the workplace culture and the group to which the whistleblower belongs will also be explored.

## DECLARATION

*I certify that this thesis does not to the best of my knowledge and belief:*

- i) incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;*
- ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due references made in the text; or*
- iii) contain any defamatory material*

*I also grant permission for the Library at Edith Cowan University to make duplicate copies of my thesis as required.*

## Acknowledgements

This work would not be complete without the acknowledgement of the efforts of a number of people without whose contributions, this project would not have reached fruition. First and foremost, I would like to thank the whistleblowers for their honesty and for trusting me with their stories. Their generosity allowed me a glimpse of their lives and the suffering they endured and with which they are still dealing. I learnt a great deal about ethical behaviour and courage from my conversations with these selfless people. I also wish to thank the constant support of my colleagues who buoyed me when my motivation was low and who encouraged me to the end. Finally I would like to acknowledge the endless encouragement and co-operation from my family for generously allowing me the time and the mental space to think and to write and to finally finish.

Sharan Kräemer

31<sup>st</sup> August 2008

## Table of Contents

Copyright and access statement	ii
Abstract	iii
Declaration	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vi
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Chapter 2 Review of Literature	6
Chapter 3 Methodology	30
Chapter 4 The interviews	42
Chapter 5 Findings	56
Chapter 6 Discussion	67
Chapter 7 Support and Protection	85
Chapter 8 Conclusion	97
References	104
Appendices	111



## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

**"Work means everything to me. It is a vocation; it is intrinsically part of me. It is integrated into me." (Paul)**

Whistleblowing is not a new phenomenon although the abundance of recent reports appears to indicate differently (Vinten, 2003). History has recorded examples from such diverse societies as medieval China, Ancient Persia and Venice (Trimmer, 2003) where citizens were exhorted to report the corrupt, incompetent, unethical or illegal behaviour of public officials who then faced the possibility of grim and sometimes fatal retribution. Corruption in Australia was noted soon after the arrival of the First Fleet where officers of the New South Wales Corps monopolised the rum trade for their own profit (Grabosky & Larmour, 2000).

In the workplace, the scope for corrupt or unethical behaviour is broad and can have disastrous consequences. Generally, every workplace has a set of prescribed and acceptable behaviours for workers which contribute to its smooth operation. Sometimes, these are not in the form of strict rules, rather ways of behaving and managing the company's business which have evolved over time. From time to time, some people may engage in behaviour which is questionable or even unacceptable. The behaviour may impede or damage the well-being of the workplace or the workers or the customers or shareholders, and is deemed to be unacceptable and is dealt with by the forces operating in the workplace which regulate it and cause it to cease. The smooth flowing of the workplace relies upon

this procedure. There is, however, some misbehaviour which goes unnoticed by most workers and can be damaging.

Misconduct can occur in every workplace whatever the size or type, to a greater or lesser degree. The consequences of misconduct range from the mild to the dangerous and they may impact on no-one or they may impact on entire populations. Furthermore, the understanding of what constitutes 'misconduct' differs from person to person and from workplace to workplace. Someone will notice something which he/she deems to be improper and will resolve to draw it to the attention of an authority. The response to misconduct varies according to the perception of the person who is defining the problem, or the role they perform in the workplace. From the noticing of misconduct to the actual reporting, there are a number of phases or steps and the decision to report is not taken lightly.

The process of reporting misconduct is different from one workplace to another. The act of reporting may be challenging or even dangerous to the wellbeing of the individual worker in some cases. Many employers or departments already have streamlined and effective reporting procedures, which ensure a degree of support or assistance to the worker. While other employers have no such protocols and the worker who sees misconduct runs the gauntlet of the office culture as well as engaging in the main struggle of whether to report or not. It is this second struggle which is the focus of this thesis.

In accordance with the modern trend to categorise actions and ascribe them labels, the practice of reporting on misconduct has been labelled whistleblowing, which is the name used in this paper. While the name is relatively new, the practice is not.



Whistleblowers can report corrupt behaviour either internally or externally, therefore, it is defined as "the act of disclosing any information that an employee reasonably believes evidences a violation of any law, rule or regulation, mismanagement, corruption, abuse of authority, or threat to public health and safety at the worksite" (Vinten, 2000). Australian researcher Sally McDonald takes one step further and defines a whistleblower as "a person who identifies an incompetent, unethical or illegal situation in the workplace and reports it to someone who may have the power to stop the wrong" (McDonald, 2002).

The consequences for many whistleblowers can be personally damaging: Stanley Adams, for example informed on his company Hoffman-La Roche for their anti-competitive practices in 1973 and suffered greatly as a consequence (Vinten, 2003). He reported his observations to the European Commission and consequently was imprisoned in Switzerland, lost his livelihood, and suffered the loss of his wife to suicide (Vinten, 2003). His intentions were laudable, yet the outcome for him was that he was blamed and vilified across Europe. At this time, whistleblowing was not a widely reported phenomenon, and therefore not a widely accepted practice, nor was there any effective legislative or internal company protection in Britain, Europe or Australia.

Since those early years, the recorded instances of whistleblowers being vilified or physically harmed at the hands of either their colleagues or their management have grown, therefore the increase in numbers has given the practice of reporting misdeeds or corruption a measure of credibility, to the extent that it has achieved "an unprecedented degree of political and organisational respectability" (Vinten, 2003). In recognising this fact governments both internationally and in Australia have prepared to enact legislation and establish effective procedures to protect whistleblowers ("In the Public Interest," 2004; Lewis, 2004; "Public Interest Disclosure Bill 2001," 2002; *Unravelling Corruption II: Exploring changes in the public sector perspective 1993 - 1999*, 2001; Zipparo, 1999). A consequence of the legislation is that organisations and companies have taken steps to incorporate effective internal procedures to manage and protect whistleblowers.

Whistleblower activity raises a number of concerns both for the organisation and for the individual. When problems of dishonesty and unethical or corrupt behaviour exist, a series of actions is set in train. Firstly, a person observes an individual or a group engage in a misdeed or some sort of corruption. Secondly, the observer must decide to report it. Thirdly, there must be a responsible person to whom the whistleblower is able to report, and who has the power to act, and who will protect the whistleblower. Processes are then set in motion to address and rectify the problem. This is the situation with the most advantageous outcome. However, research has shown that at every stage of the process obstacles could deter the potential whistleblower from acting on their knowledge, thus the misconduct remains unaddressed (Barnett, Cochran, & Taylor, 1993; Maria & Jan, 1997; Newman, 1993; Phuttipaitoon & Kleiner, 2003; Rothschild & Miethe, 1999; Zipparo, 1999).

However, despite the obstacles, there are still people who blow the whistle. This research is seeking to find out why, focussing on the second action or step, that is, the decision of potential whistleblowers to report misconduct. This is the precise moment when the personal attributes or qualities of the observer, the potential whistleblower, are most evident. This is the time when their personal qualities are exercised; when they weigh up the decision to report the misconduct against the possible and indeed likely repercussions; when they search their consciences and examine their values; when they test their loyalties to themselves and to their company; when they swallow their nerves; and when they follow the treacherous path of the whistleblower.

Therefore the purpose of this thesis is to examine the motivation behind the act of reporting on misconduct in the workplace. This will take place through a series of semi-structured interviews with people who identify themselves as whistleblowers. Each of the participants will have made a report of misconduct within the public sector, in the full knowledge that they would be likely to suffer some sort of repercussions for doing so. Firstly an examination of the transcripts of the interviews will be made to analyse the stories of the participants and to



identify their personal characteristics. Then those personal characteristics will be considered against the characteristics named within the theory of Organisational Citizenship Behaviours, that is, altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, civic virtue and conscientiousness. Further the matter of loyalty to the organisation will be examined through the transcripts of the interviews; and finally the concept of 'mateship' as it is applied to the Australian ethos, will be looked at as a potentially limiting factor in the demonstration of Organisational Citizenship Behaviours such as whistleblowing in Australia

The chapters to follow will explain and demonstrate the circumstances of the whistleblowing incidents and examine the personal characteristics of the people who identify themselves as whistleblowers in Western Australia. Chapter 2 will provide a review of the recent literature both in the area of whistleblowing and the theory of Organisational Citizenship Behaviours. It will also make an assessment of the available legislation. Chapter 3 explains the methodology of the entire study and the rationale underlying the decisions and choices in the data collection process. In Chapter 4 there is a very brief outline of the whistleblowing events which took place and an introduction to the whistleblowers and their personalities. The focus of this research is on the personal qualities of the whistleblowers and so the precise circumstances of their whistleblowing action are not relevant except to provide a context for their courage. Chapter 5 presents the findings from the interviews and the themes which arose from each of the interviews. They are: the meaning of work; the personal characteristics of the whistleblower; the ideal characteristics and responsibilities of an employee; and the legislative and internal protections. Chapter 6 continues with the discussion relative to the findings and allows the researcher the scope to examine the findings within the context of the theory of Organisational Citizenship Behaviour. Chapter 7 presents a series of suggestions which came from the participants for the protections and support of whistleblowers. The existence of this chapter is a testament to the generosity of the whistleblowers who have all suffered greatly in a variety of ways for their actions and yet are still able to think of the plight of people in similar circumstances. Chapter 8 draws all the elements together in a conclusion.

## Chapter 2

### Review of Literature

"We have got the Ombudsman, the Auditor General, the [Office of] Public Sector Standards – all these agencies. It sounds overwhelming but it is nothing. They do nothing. It is an archipelago of dots in a vast ocean of incompetence and corruption." (Charles)

Although whistleblowing has received wide attention in the mass media and public policy, little systematic research has been conducted on the extent of the observing and reporting organisational misconduct, the character of Whistleblowers and the consequences of whistleblowing for the individual Whistleblower, the work organisation in which it occurs and the wider society (Miethe, 1999). This chapter will review the literature in the area with the purpose of uncovering research in the workplace which builds our understanding of the nature and character of the person who reports workplace misconduct, the Whistleblower. Moreover, it will be examined to identify the conditions under which whistleblowing will be more likely to take place, including the influence exerted by the internal procedures of the organisation on the character of the Whistleblower. The review will also outline the development of the theory of Organisational Citizenship Behaviours and link them to the selfless and courageous act of whistleblowing.

For the purpose of this review, misconduct as stated elsewhere, is defined as those behaviours which are deemed to be either unethical or illegal or both, which occur in a workplace setting, which come to the attention of an employee,

and which compel the employee to report them either to a person within the organisation or to an external body. Whistleblowing is therefore defined as “the disclosure by organisation members (former or current) of illegal, immoral or illegitimate practices under the control of their employers, to persons or organisations that may be able to effect action (Miceli & Near, 1985).

The literature is also examined to understand workplace culture and the citizenship behaviours of the potential Whistleblower, and to identify successful and positive schemes within organisations which encourage Whistleblowers. Further, the review considers the legislation in both the Commonwealth and the State jurisdictions and assesses the protection it provides for the Whistleblower within the Australian workplace for which it is designed. Ultimately, the review seeks to examine the practices surrounding whistleblowing within the context of the effective functioning of the workplace and particularly to highlight the characteristics of the whistleblowers.

The literature is reviewed within the context of the theory of organisational behaviour (OB), with particular emphasis on the theory of Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) and the perceptions by employees of their own control of their work environment. The theories underpin the understanding of workplace structure and the dynamics of the work environment and the interrelationship between the individual and the workplace. The literature covered will encompass research and academic writing both nationally and internationally in the area from the last two decades, beginning with the recent literature on the theory of OCB and its application to the Whistleblower.

### **Organisational Behaviour and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour**

Organisational Behaviour (OB) is that behaviour which “investigates the impact that individuals, groups and structure have on behaviour within organisations, for the purpose of applying such knowledge towards improving an organisation’s



effectiveness" (Robbins, 1991). Early writing on OB reflected on workplaces and the manner in which workplace productivity can be predicted by an understanding of the theory of organisational behaviour (O'Brien, 1984). From a sociological perspective, the theory considers group behaviour, group dynamics, power, conflict, communication and inter-group behaviour (Robbins, 1991). Because OB relates to human behaviour, it cannot be said to be an absolute science, but a science contingent on those behaviours it studies (Robbins, 1991). Embedded within this theory is the implied understanding that an effective workplace would encourage the reporting of misconduct for the purpose of ensuring the best outcome for the organisation. The characteristics of the employee who would speak out are examined in a branch of the OB theory, which is the theory of Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB). This refers to the prosocial or ethical behaviours of an employee and is defined as "individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognised by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organisation" (Organ, 1988). It is this theory against which whistleblowing behaviour will be examined.

Organ's 1994 literature review found that organisational behaviour was inextricably linked to an employee's understanding of citizenship behaviour, and not his personality (Organ, 1994). The behaviours in question included altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, civic virtue and conscientiousness (Organ, 1990, 1997). This was supported by Van Dyne, Graham and Dienesch who found that those people who would report misconduct or unethical behaviour did so because they were guided by "ideal standards of virtue" and not their individual personalities (Van Dyne, Graham, & Dienesch, 1994). They found that the multilevel nature of the theory of OCB (that is the individual, the group and the organisational levels) provides a framework for examining specific work behaviours which are excluded from the traditional measures of job performance (Van Dyne *et al.*, 1994). This underlines Organ's 1988 definition, stated above, that the theory is based upon intangible values not formally rewarded or even noted in the workplace.

The definition of OCB was further refined as “behaviour which benefits the organisation and/or is intended to benefit the organisation, which is discretionary and which goes beyond role expectations” (Van Dyne, Cummings, & Parks, 1995). Certainly research completed by Sims and Keenan showed that the majority of people who would report misconduct are loyal and have the organisation’s best interests at heart and report misbehaviour in order to avoid further wrongdoing or damage (Sims & Keenan., 1998). This idea was examined in a large US study in 2002, which found that incidents of reporting misconduct occurred in lax organisations where management were not supportive of ethical behaviours and where employees subsequently found that misconduct was allowed to flourish (Holmes, Langford, Welch, & Welch, 2002).

Newman in her research into the creation of a just work environment, found that organisations which had a focus on matters other than profit, namely customer need, employee need and community citizenship, were more likely to have an ethical work environment, where the OCB behaviours of staff and management were allowed to develop (Newman, 1993). She found that the “voice” of employees’ or the adequate opportunity to state their views, relating to their commitment and the identification with the goal and values of the company, was a significant factor in the employees’ opinion of the workplace (Newman, 1993). The Newman study showed that the attitude of the organisation or more particularly the management, is influential in the promotion and acceptance of OCB behaviours (Newman, 1993).

The majority of the research discussed in this review was been predominantly conducted in the US and therefore can be said to apply specifically to American workplaces and American workers. In order to establish the presence of OCBs in other nations, further research from Organ in collaboration with Julie Beth Paine, in 2000, examined the OCBs of English speaking individuals in 26 different countries. They found that in Australia, that OCBs and loyalty to the organisation cannot exist due to the Australian ethos of “mateship”. They reported that loyalty to the organisation was not strong in Australia and the organisation would need



to develop initiatives to foster such loyalty, unlike the American workplace (Paine & Organ, 2000). Further they found the “ideal of mateship underlies everything...so individuals will go out of their way to be loyal to their mates ...however that does not include loyalty to the organisation” (Paine & Organ, 2000). They then reported that alternative names for OCB in Australia were “Tall Poppy” or “Crawler”, which are pejorative terms in the Australian vernacular.

The findings from Paine and Organ were made from a sample of one respondent (n=1), that is the smallest of samples, and cannot be said to be a definitive conclusion about the Australian workplace. It was however, included in an international report from the foremost expert in the field of OCB, Dennis Organ, so it is important to examine the Australian workplace in order to determine the attitudes and OCBs from a larger sample, to confirm or refute the claim.

#### **The Australian ethos of “mateship”**

The cultural differences of Australia’s ethos of “mateship” owe their development to the stories and writings about the Anzacs (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) in the First World War where it has been said that the Australian identity was forged (Lake, 1992). It has been suggested that mateship is prominent in the way Australians think of themselves and that it is linked to solidarity particularly in times of conflict but is ‘limited to those with whom one has a special connection’ (Page, 2002). Mateship has two important aspects which could equally apply to the workplace or to a conflict. Firstly, it establishes a sense of the Other, that is one who is definitely not a mate and in a workplace context could be seen to be the manager; and secondly it enables individuals to endure the unendurable, which is particularly apposite in a war situation but could apply in a work situation where misconduct is present (Page, 2002).

Moreover, it is said the “mateship” concept can be said to encompass the Australian notion of egalitarianism and anti-authoritarianism which arose from



the very earliest days of the convict beginnings (Gabriel, 2004; Kapferer & Morris, 2003). It is also underpinned by the hardships endured by the early settlers who worked together to establish communities outside the major cities (Kapferer & Morris, 2003). Much is made of the cohesiveness and supportiveness which is still evident in rural Australia today. The Snowy Mountain Scheme in the 1950s and 1960s is also credited with continuing and strengthening the ethos of "mateship" although it was outside a situation of war as it attracted a large number of immigrants to Australia from 30 countries, who overcame their disparate backgrounds to work together (Griffin, 2003).

This is closely linked with another distinctive aspect of the Australian ethos which is the concept of 'dobbing' or "telling tales" or reporting on workmates. There is a perception that the culture of the Australian workplace actually sustains the corrupt practices which would, in another culture, give rise to the decision of a person to come forward and blow the whistle (Maria & Jan, 1997). "Dobbers, dogs, finks and rats" are terms in the Australian vernacular, which are a reflection of the cultural manifestations which may possibly deter potential Whistleblowers from coming forward and reporting misconduct (Maria, 1996). Yet, Australian research by Zipparo contradicted this, when it reported that 88% of respondents disagreed with the statement that 'people who report corruption in their workplace are troublemakers' (Zipparo, 1999). Further, Zipparo asserted that nine percent of her respondents said they would not make a report because of peer pressure and only 8 people out of the 800 in the study called the reporting 'unAustralian' or 'dobbing' (Zipparo, 1999). This suggested that there was a discrepancy between perceptions of the general public and those people in the workforce. Given that part of the Australian mythology values preserving the status quo or 'not dobbing on your mate', this indicates there is a need for further research in this area to determine if there is any basis for this or if it is just a myth.

### **Self Serving Whistleblowing**

At this point, it is important to note that the behaviours covered by the OCB theory can be viewed as either ingratiating behaviours or citizenship behaviours,

and supervisors will respond differently depending upon their perception of the behaviours and the labels they ascribe to them. In 1994, Eastman found that without knowing the motivations behind the employees' actions, it was not possible for the supervisor to determine accurately whether the behaviour was ingratiating and self-interested or a result of pro-social or citizenship behaviour (Eastman, 1994). Schnake had already found that in the long term, OCB motivated by self-interest produced dysfunctional outcomes (Schnake, 1991). However, in a later study, Bolino took a less stern view when he concluded that information which was made known for self-serving reasons, did make a contribution to the workplace but it was less effective than well-intentioned OCBs (Bolino, 1999).

Closely linked with the dislike of the ingratiating motives of the whistleblower is the view that whistleblowing is 'informing'. It was reported by Gerald Vinten that some commentators, for example American economist Milton Friedman considered Whistleblowers to be no more than informers, with all of the negative connotations of that word, so they deserved no support (Vinten, 2003). Friedman has modified his stance somewhat and has now said that the purpose of the free enterprise system is for companies to create profits, provided that they do this by the rules of complete transparency, and the maintenance of proper accounts that are not "aggressive or creative" (Monteiro, 2004). The inference is that Friedman considered that correct corporate governance would oversee the management of the company and therefore there would be no need for a Whistleblower. Implicit in his comment was the understanding that a Whistleblower would perform a valuable service if he/she were to attract attention to aggressive or creative management lacking in adequate transparency.

Frederick Elliston in 1982 (cited in Vinten 2003) drew comparisons between Whistleblowing and civil disobedience. Later, Elliston refined his criticisms to the practice of anonymous Whistleblowing which he likened to "snitching" because it undermined group cohesiveness and group solidarity (Elliston, 1982). There is considerable scope for research into the ethical dilemma wherein respondents



who agreed that a Whistleblower should be allowed to report his/her misgivings about wrong doing, but must then agree to work alongside them and give them their trust.

Early writing from Dozier and Miceli (1985) explained Whistleblowing as a form of prosocial behaviour determined by the mind of the Whistleblower in conjunction with the situational variables which lead to whistleblowing (Dozier & Miceli, 1985). The literature does, however, ask the question: "Are Whistleblowers heroes or traitors?" (Latimer, 2002b). It is important to remember that the research reviewed in this field has focussed on whistleblowing which is "open, principled dissent by employees" and has not considered those Whistleblowers who make false or malicious claims of malpractice or corruption (Martin, 2004). As previously discussed, there are a number of researchers who regard whistleblowing, by definition, to be the act of a disloyal employee (Jubb, 1999; Vandekerchove & Commers, 2004). However, most of the research in this area characterised the Whistleblower as a conscientious and loyal servant of the organisation (Maria, 1996; Maria & Jan, 1997; Miceli & Near, 1984; Qusqas & Kleiner, 2001; Rothschild & Miethe, 1999). In fact, a report from Colin Grant suggests that Whistleblowers, because of their courage determination and sacrifice, should be seen as secular saints (Grant, 2002).

### **Internal Procedures**

Once the Whistleblower has noted the misconduct and resolved to report it, the determination to proceed appears to hinge on knowledge of and confidence in internal procedures, if they exist (Barnett, Cochran, & Taylor, 1993; Berry, 2004; King, 1999; Sims & Keenan., 1998).

Miceli and Near conducted a meta-analysis of the whistleblowing literature and found that organisations can encourage the use of internal channels to facilitate whistleblowing by providing sufficient information to the employees about the

internal procedures and by reassuring potential Whistleblowers that they will not suffer retaliation (Near & Miceli, 1996). This was supported by a Danish study which found the company's internal procedures to be more effective when they were referred to on a regular basis and embraced by the management team rather than being just being another company document to which lip service was paid (Lindgreen, 2004).

### **Organisational Level**

Within the structure of the organisation, the theory of Organisational Behaviour identifies three main levels of behaviour, being the organisational level, the group level and the individual level (Robbins, 1991).

The organisational level of operation is directly influenced by the attitude of management (King, 1999). This is true of organisations whether they are in Australia, North America, Europe or Asia (Barnett et al., 1993; Berry, 2004; Chiu, 2003; Lindgreen, 2004; Lindsay, Lindsay & Irvine, 1996), where the approach of management also directly effects the efficiency of internal communications established within the entire organisation (Lindgreen, 2004; Lindsay et al., 1996).

The effectiveness of internal procedures was thus improved by the attitude of managers at all levels which encouraged employees to come forward without fear of retaliation or reprisal (Barnett et al., 1993; Duffy, 2003; Lindsay et al., 1996). The procedures were not necessarily improved by being formal or informal, but the common factor shared by all successful internal procedures was the active support given to the process by management at all levels and the trust employees felt towards their senior officers (King, 1999).

Belgian research investigated the ethical position, which claims loyalty and institutionalised whistleblowing to be conflicting (Vandekerchove & Commers,

2004). The researchers perhaps surprisingly, found that the two positions were entirely compatible and one state of mind was a pre-requisite for the second. They found that the employees' loyalty was to the "corpus" of the organisation, its goals, its mission statement, its values and ideals, rather than to the physicality of the organisation, and therefore the Whistleblower was demonstrating his/her loyalty when he/she reported misconduct (Vandekerchove & ...ers, 2004).

Loyalty can also be more applicable to the work group. Referring back to the theory of OB, a group is defined as "two or more individuals, interacting and interdependent, who come together to achieve particular objectives" (Robbins, 1991). Groups can be either formal, where the tasks are stipulated and directed towards organisational goals, or informal which develop in response to the need for social contact. Being a member of a group can also confer on the individual security, status, self-esteem, affiliation, power and goal achievement (Robbins, 1991).

Membership of the work group is further examined in a meta-analysis conducted by Hosmer into issues of trust between colleagues, where it was found that trust was essential for understanding interpersonal and group behaviour, managerial effectiveness, economic exchange and social or political stability (Hosmer, 1995). Therefore the relationship which exists between co-workers is influential. Further research conducted in 1997 using 260 individuals from 49 work groups within eight organisations found that group cohesiveness played a large part in the amount of OCB demonstrated (Kidwell, 1997). The presence or absence of a well-structured workplace with safe reporting procedures, may not directly induce or deter an employee to report misconduct, but it is a significant factor which the potential Whistleblower considers when deciding either to report or ignore misconduct (Callahan, Dworkin, Fort & Schipani, 2002). In 2004, an ethnographic study of employee-driven workgroups in a small childcare organisation found that groups imposed on their members strong informal controls to conform and be homogenous when they managed their own work environment (Summers, 2004). In general, however, in a large workplace, where the employees are clustered



either unintentionally or deliberately into group or teams, there will be a person in the role of leader or supervisor.

The role of the supervisor in the smooth running of the organisation and the maintenance of the level of trust in the organisation is very important, particularly at the team level (Ambrose & Schminke, 2003; Tepper, Duffy, Hoobler, & Ensley, 2004). The supervisor also has an impact on the individual-level and team-level outcomes. These findings supported the research from Shamir in 2003 in a longitudinal analysis of the trust felt by cadets for their superior, when he found that cooperative working environments can be created when the workers had trust in their supervisor. Trust in a superior reflected the cadets' trust in the system, and that team processes also played a major role in the development of trust in the superior (Shamir, 2003).

Attitudes of supervisors can also be influenced by their perceptions of OCB, and whether it is self-serving or altruistic. It is likely that the impact of the supervisor's attitude will be felt on the co-workers and could influence their perception of their colleagues and therefore their ability to work cooperatively and harmoniously (Tepper *et al.*, 2004). The study from Tepper *et al* concluded that the bullying actions of some supervisors actually promoted behaviours similar to OCBs in some employees to decrease the likelihood of their being further victimised (Tepper *et al.*, 2004). They also found that the ingratiating behaviours described by Eastman were evident where the bullied employee was trying to curry favour with an abusive supervisor (Tepper *et al.*, 2004). The presence of these behaviours somewhat clouds the issue of the effective functioning at the group level of the organisation in which the whistleblowing action may take place.

While an effective supervisor is crucial to the success of the team, support for peers from one another is also necessary, for the generation of a pleasant work environment and for the success of managing difficult situations. Research from

Paine and Organ showed that the nature of the work itself may encourage cooperative working relationships between employees, and indeed may be necessary for the successful completion of the task (Paine & Organ, 2000). Moreover, findings from Lepine and Van Dyne found that in the presences of OCBs, workers used helping behaviours to motivate, train and even compensate for low performances from their peers (Lepine & Van Dyne, 2001). However, they did find that helping behaviours disappeared when the peers saw the co-worker continuing to perform at low levels, with the consequence that were replaced by rejection (Lepine & Van Dyne, 2001).

### **What are the Personal Characteristics of the Whistleblower?**

Within the framework of organisational behaviour the question is: What type of person blows the whistle? The literature in this area is broad so this review concentrates on the aspects of the individual in the workplace which are not related to psychological aspects of behaviour, such as personality; rather, it examines a range of personal characteristics that need to exist in an individual who decides to blow the whistle on corrupt practices. These include prosocial behaviours, personal courage or 'ego strength', conscience, moral development and a belief in the integrity of the action of reporting the corrupt practices. Another characteristic is the loyalty of the employee.

There is a view that whistleblowing is undertaken by the employee who has chosen to place his personal integrity over his loyalty to the organisation (Elliston, 1982). This view is challenged by the research of Robert Larmer, who found that whistleblowing was entirely compatible with loyalty and indeed may demonstrate greater loyalty to the organisation than not blowing the whistle (Larmer, 1992). This was borne out by later studies (Faunce, Bolsin, & Chan, 2004; Vandekerchove & Commers, 2004).



Early research from the US found that the potential from co-workers to influence the would-be Whistleblower to conform was high and that there would be pressure to be a “team player” (Greenberger, Miceli, & Cohen, 1987). They found that the success of the whistleblowing was dependent upon the personal characteristics of the Whistleblower (Greenberger et al., 1987). Research from Trevino and Victor (1992) found that while participants regarded peer reporting of unethical behaviours as laudable and highly ethical, they simultaneously evaluated those who reported to be unlikeable (Trevino & Victor, 1992). This finding highlights the disparity between a research finding in the academic world and a real life situation. Research from the UK addressing precisely this disparity, examined actual behaviours among accountants and HR professionals, rather than hypothetical, and found that employee action in the face of an ethical dilemma, was impacted by concerns for their current and future employment at the hands of their management (Lovell, 2002). He concluded then that the ideal of ethical work practices was not a reality in the workplace (Lovell, 2002).

At the same time, research undertaken by Michelson and Mouly focussed on the impact of rumour and gossip in the workplace among co-workers. They found in this under-researched area that informal communications between employees, that is grapevine activity, rumour and gossip, can be either beneficial or destructive or both to the individual and to the organisation (Michelson & Mouly, 2002). An understanding of the effect of these mechanisms on individual behaviour, can be applied to the decision making process for the Whistleblower, where an employee can effectively isolate him/herself from the group by reporting misconduct; thus, in some cases making him/herself the target for office rumour and gossip. Research by Hafen found that gossip acts as a regulatory mechanism within the organisation on the OCBs of the employees which detract from the desired but unwritten goals of citizenship (Hafen, 2004). This research demonstrated that the presence of gossip and rumour may be one of the strong deterrents to a potential Whistleblower.



From the early days of research into the whistleblowing phenomenon, Miceli and Near based the profile of a Whistleblower on their 1984 research, finding that Whistleblowers were more likely to be better educated and to hold positions of greater power or authority (Miceli & Near, 1984). In 1985, Dozier and Miceli added to the profile concluding that prosocial behaviours were also a strong feature of the person who is likely to inform on misconduct (Dozier & Miceli, 1985). Miceli and Near added to this in 1988 with seven characteristics of a Whistleblower. They found that Whistleblowing was more likely when observers of wrong doing (1) held professional positions, (2) had more positive reactions to their work, (3) had longer service, (4) were recently recognised for good performance, (5) were male (though race was unrelated to whistleblowing), (6) were members of larger work groups, and (7) were employed by organisations perceived by others to be responsive to complaints (Miceli & Near, 1988).

This profile was an early guide for understanding of Whistleblowers; however, the advancement of the research has revealed that a wider variety of individuals reported misconduct than first thought. Indeed, subsequent research focussing on the personal qualities of the Whistleblower, demonstrated that the educational level and the position in the organisation had little influence on whistleblowing (Maria, 1996).

In contrast to Maria's conclusions, it was seen in the study completed in 1998 by Dworkin and Baucus, that the length of tenure in an organisation was a significant factor in whistleblowing. They found that people who blew the whistle generally had worked for the organisation for less time than the rest of their co-workers in that organisation, and that they had greater evidence of wrongdoing and were more effective in bringing about change in organisational practices (Dworkin & Baucus, 1998). This directly contradicts one interpretation of the OCB theory which is that the person who blows the whistle is a person with sound citizenship behaviours and who would report misconduct if they saw it whether they were at the company for any length of time. The findings from Dworkin and Baucus infer that only the employees who had not been employed for long and consequently

had no accumulated loyalty to the organisation or had not yet been included into the inner circle of employees engaging in misconduct, were more likely to blow the whistle. The immediate conclusion to be drawn could be that the presence of OCB does not play a part in the decision to report, or that OCB may only come into play in the presence of other conditions. Later researchers argued that there can be no profile of a Whistleblower (Rothschild & Miethe, 1999) apart from his/her perceptions of responsibility to the organisation. These findings indicate that further study is needed to survey the attitudes of the Whistleblower to determine if the length of tenure actively influenced their decision to speak out because they had more or less to lose.

Somers and Casal (1994) tested the notion that whistleblowing was more likely to occur, the greater the commitment to the organisation, in their study of the concept of the employee being either a reformer or an organisation man. Their study questioned 613 accountants in the upper echelons of their organisations, about targets of reported wrongdoing and the form of the relationship between commitment and whistleblowing (Somers & Casal, 1994). They found that moderate levels of commitment to an organisation were consistent with the propensity to report wrongdoing while very high and very low levels of commitment inhibit whistleblowing (Somers & Casal, 1994).

Further study is warranted to determine if those people with moderate commitment were reporting because they had no pressure of a financial interest in the organisation which may have compromised the attention they were able to give to their OCBs, and felt therefore that they were able to answer within the framework of OCB. What then does contemporary research say are the personal characteristics of a Whistleblower and what conditions or structures need to exist in the workplace to encourage the person with the 'right' qualities to come forward?



The literature investigating the personal characteristics of the employee in the workplace largely covers the area of the personality in the workplace from a psychological perspective. However, that not being the focus of this study, the review centres on the behaviours of individuals within their workplace setting and the personal qualities individuals may have which facilitate their speaking up to report misconduct.

The structure of any organisation is such that an individual exercises a degree of autonomy and control over his or her own work output within the constraints set down by the organisational structure (Robbins, 1991). The personal control or authority an individual may exercise is dependent to a large degree on the structure of the organisation, as well as the employee's personal traits. Robbins explains that the personal characteristics of employees include their biographical details their abilities, their personalities and their learning; biographical details being age, gender, marital status, the number of dependents they have, tenure with the company; their abilities being intellectual abilities, physical abilities and fitness for the job; and learning including an understanding of the way the employees learn and make use of their experiences (Robbins, 1991).

### **Locus of Control**

One factor which can be enhanced by the organisation but is manifest in an individual is the locus of control, a theory enunciated by Rotter in 1966 and tested by Trevino in combination with the cognitive moral stage of the individual (Trevino, 1986). The theory is characterised by Chui as the employee's perception of control (Chiu, 2003). He applied the theory of locus of control to his research, reporting that whistleblowing practices in China depended on the existence of a strong internal locus of control (Chiu, 2003). He found that while the culture of Chinese professionals generally militated against whistleblowing, there was still recognition that an intention to report misconduct, where there was clear evidence of wrongdoing may be sanctioned by management. He claimed that the element of an internal locus of control was significant. Accordingly, he hypothesised the locus of control explained part of the variance of whistleblowing

intention, and his research found that individuals who had their own personal determination of right and wrong (an internal locus of control), were more likely to take responsibility for the consequences of their actions, than those with an external locus of control or a set of values externally imposed by the organisation (Chiu, 2003).

It was further refined by Premeaux and Bedeian in the same year as either internal locus of control where the employee believes that he exercises control over his own life, or external locus of control where the individual believes that his destiny is largely beyond his control and is determined by fate, chance or powerful others (Premeaux & Bedeian, 2003).

The concept of locus of control can also be linked to the notion of empowerment, which was a component of the research by Zhu, May and Avolio. They found that a clear link between the presence of ethical leadership and individual outcomes such as psychological empowerment (Zhu, May, & Avolio, 2004). They proposed a model to explain how ethical leadership behaviour influences employees' organisational commitment and trust through empowerment although they did note that the application of the model may vary between public and private sector organisations (Zhu *et al.*, 2004).

#### **Confidence in internal procedures**

The literature shows that a fluid situation exists where corrupt practices are noted, the employee decides to report the behaviour, then the designated responsible person or the management decides on a course of action with all of the expected consequences (Phuttipaitoon & Kleiner, 2003). At any point, the behaviour of the people involved would be influenced by a range of factors, which may halt the process or may advance it to the next stage and finally to a satisfactory conclusion (McDonald, 2002; Zipparo, 1999).



In 1984 ground breaking research from Miceli and Near in the US found that employee knowledge of the internal procedures and their confidence in them, contributed to the Whistleblower's decision to speak out (Miceli & Near 1984). A further study in the private sector by Barnett Cochran and Taylor found that the existence of Internal Disclosure Policies and Procedures (IDPP) positively contributed to the decision of potential Whistleblowers to speak out (1993). Further research has underlined these findings (Callahan & Collins, 1992; Lewis, 2004; Lindsay et al., 1996; Trimmer, 2003).

Research in Australia by Zipparo (1999) then McDonald (2002) indicated a cause and effect mechanism which may have prevented the reporting of corruption because of fears for the safety of the Whistleblower, a situation with two immediate consequences: the unchecked continuance, of the corrupt behaviour; and an increase in stress for the potential Whistleblower. An electronic survey of Whistleblowers in 2003 found that there were factors influencing each of the steps in the reporting process which were mitigated by the preparedness of each party to properly address the issue (Duffy, 2003). This meant that Whistleblowing could be moderated by the internal management plan to deal with such issues and by the degree of protection offered to the Whistleblower by the organisation and under law. The research found that part of the recognised procedure within the organisation was to have a designated person to receive the report or a Hotline through which the Whistleblower may choose to report either anonymously or openly (Duffy, 2003). These findings echo the earlier results (Barnett et al., 1993; Lewis, 2004; Lindsay et al., 1996; McDonald, 2002; Zipparo, 1999). Therefore it can be concluded that the existence of a recognised internal process will make the choice of the Whistleblower easier to make, but it does not identify the personal characteristics which prompt the report in the first place.

Further research in the US found that even though a company may have a code of ethics, they often made decisions in their own self-interest in the face of Whistleblower complaints about illegal or unethical practices by retaliating against the Whistleblower through terminating him (Phuttipaitoon & Kleiner,

2003). This clearly shows that some employees have the right to be fearful and to lack confidence in internal procedures.

A further area of interest in the literature is that of the Whistleblower who acts externally, that is he goes to an outside body to report misconduct. This could be to an Equal Opportunity Commission, a union body, an Occupational Health and Safety Administration, the media or law enforcement agencies. There is evidence from research already discussed which shows that organisations attempt to prevent external Whistleblowing by having internal channels through which misconduct can be reported (Barnett, 1992; Barnett et al., 1993; Dworkin & Baucus, 1998; Keenan, 1990; Miceli & Near, 1984, 1985, 1988). However, some employees choose, through fear of retaliation, to report externally (Barnett et al., 1993; King, 1999; Miceli & Near, 1985). Indeed it was found that the greater the size of the organisation the more likely the Whistleblower to report externally (Barnett, 1992). Barnett also found that of 240 large organisations he researched, there was a greater perception among executives, that employees had reported misconduct externally, than in fact had occurred (Barnett, 1992). These findings clearly indicated the need for further research which could objectively and accurately measure incidences of external whistleblowing

### **Failure to Act**

An Australian study on the effects of whistleblowing found that the failure to act on the part of the potential Whistleblower had similar personal health consequences to those experienced by the person who had actually blown the whistle. A survey of health professionals found that those individuals who saw misconduct fell into two categories: those who reported it; and those who did not (McDonald, 2002). The research reported that physical consequences for both groups were similar with an increase in sleeplessness, fatigue, headaches, heart problems and an elevation in blood pressure typically being reported; and psychological problems ranging from anger, disillusionment and anxiety (McDonald, 2002). Interestingly, but not unexpectedly, those individuals who saw misconduct but did not report it also experienced a higher percentage of



emotional problems including guilt, shame and unworthiness (McDonald, 2002). Research has previously been undertaken to determine the adverse health effects on people who blow the whistle in the health industry (Lennane, 1993). McDonald's research into the adverse health effects for non-Whistleblowers is the first of its type so it is not able to be determined whether the findings could be applied to the wider population who may not necessarily have the same codes of conduct to safeguard patients from harm as nurses. Similar research must be undertaken in the broader work environment to determine if the findings could be applied more generally.

The research clearly demonstrates that there is a need to have a conjunction of both personal characteristics leading to whistleblowing intention and adequate internal processes to manage Whistleblower information.

### **Barriers to blowing the whistle**

A quantitative study in Australia was made on the attitudinal barriers to public sector employees reporting corruption and how protective legislation might impact upon those attitudes (Zipparo, 1999). She found that while the majority of her respondents (93%) supported the idea of protective legislation, only 55% believed the protection of Whistleblowers to be possible (Zipparo, 1999). Further, only one third of her respondents had faith that their organisation would handle reports of corruption appropriately (Zipparo, 1999). The question of 'faith' in the organisation to handle Whistleblowing was an important one, but a limitation of Zipparo's study was that it did not consider this aspect rather it confined itself to the quantitative aspects of the research. This is an area for further research.

A study of Whistleblowers in the Queensland public sector in the years of the Goss Government (1989 –1996), found that formal reprimand (in 40% of cases) was the most popular form of official reprisal, although there was evidence to suggest that there were subtle official reprisals like the unexplained loss of

promotional opportunities, positions suddenly being made redundant or compulsory referral to a psychologist (Maria, 1995). While this seemed puzzling to the researchers when the Whistleblower was 'doing the right thing', the reasons appeared to be that the Whistleblower was being publicly punished for misreading the public sector requirement of loyalty (Maria, 1995). They also found that the unofficial reprisals consisted largely of ostracism and banishment from groups (Maria, 1995). The study showed smaller numbers of more damaging reprisal, both official and unofficial, for the Whistleblower, including damage to career, damage to personal honour and damage to personal life (Maria, 1995). One limitation of this research was that it did not examine the issues surrounding the blurring between official and unofficial reprisals and in particular had no scope to investigate further the dynamics of the ostracism.

#### **Australian legislation: What protection does it provide?**

A review of the legislation in Australia reveals that the issue of Whistleblowing is presented under various titles. In some legislation it is identified as Public Interest Disclosure, in others it is called Whistleblowers Protection, and in still others, it is named False Claims. For the purposes of this literature review the matter will be called Whistleblowing, unless otherwise stated. The Senate Select Committee on Public Interest Whistleblowing concluded that whistleblowing is a legitimate form of civil action within a democracy ("In the Public Interest," 2004). Federal Legislation was proposed to protect Whistleblowers in the form of the *Whistleblowers Protection Act 1991 (Cth)* and *Whistleblowers Protection Act 1993 (Cth)* (Maria, 1995). Both of these bills were designed to encourage Whistleblowers to make disclosures of corruption or fraud to the Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB), and provided legal protection for them. Both pieces of legislation were abandoned in Federal Parliament and to date there has been no replacement legislation federally, although there have been two Senate Committees whose reports would normally be the basis for future legislation for the protection of Whistleblowers ([http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/history/uwb\\_ctte/pi/](http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/history/uwb_ctte/pi/)). The first Committee made 39 recommendations for the establishment of a public sector disclosure agency, but which has never been formed (Sawyer, 2003).



The Federal Government went some way to addressing the issue with the *Public Interest Disclosure Bill 2001*. It had a broad aim to provide a safe environment in which a potential Whistleblower could come forward. Indeed, the Bill held that "The objective of the proposed legislation, the *Public Interest Disclosure Bill 2001* [2002], is to provide a comprehensive Commonwealth public sector whistleblowing scheme. It aims to enable a person to report improper conduct in the knowledge that the allegation will be duly investigated and that he or she will not suffer from reprisals on account of disclosing such information" ("*Public Interest Disclosure Bill 2001*," 2002). The committee acknowledged that there were existing provisions under S. 16 of the *Public Service Act 1999* which covered the problem of Whistleblowing, but noted in this Act that there were shortcomings in terminology and lack of protection from reprisals. The *Public Interest Disclosure Bill 2001* has never been passed.

There is however, some protection in common law with the case *Tournier v National Provincial and Union Bank of England* [1924] 1 KB 461, setting the precedent (Latimer, 2002a). Nevertheless legislation in all six States, and one territory (ACT), has been written to give the Whistleblower varying degrees of legal protection (Latimer, 2002a).

Reports on the legislation in Australia shows there to be considerable disquiet that all of the State legislations may be ineffective in promoting trust and confidence: to very little use has been made by any Whistleblower (Hood, 1998; Latimer, 2002a; Sawyer, 2003).

Research has assessed the impact of legislation on particular industries or in individual states (Grabosky & Larmour, 2000; Hood, 1998; Warren & James, 1996). Furthermore, surveys have been completed of specific industries with a view to addressing perceived shortcomings of internal or industry-wide procedures (Baxt, 1996; Duffy, 2003; Trimmer, 2003). There are also reports written by experts in their fields on the need for effective procedures in the workplace for protecting

and managing Whistleblowers (Maria, 1996) Independent Commission Against Corruption 2001}). No research has been identified which examines why no Whistleblower has spoken out under the existing legislation. There is a gap in the literature examining the shortcomings in the legislation nationally, and linking this to the confidence of the potential Whistleblower to come forward. There is also a dearth of research examining the role played by the designated person within an organisation.

### **Do Whistleblowers need or deserve protection?**

The research from Callahan & Collins found that their respondents sided with the Whistleblower in seven out of nine cases in a qualitative questionnaire, and between 62% and 94% of respondents supported a successful legal outcome for Whistleblowers in the courts (Callahan & Collins, 1992). This attitude was supported by later research from de Maria (1996) who found that Whistleblowers suffered considerably, both personally and financially for their reporting, often knowing in advance that this would happen, yet reporting in spite of it. David Lewis found that all of the legislation in Australia contained provisions to protect the Whistleblower from retaliation from the employer (Lewis, 2004), which clearly points to the provision in law for the Whistleblower not to be blamed, and to be protected.

### **The effect on the Whistleblower**

Surprisingly, a meta-analysis by Near and Miceli found that the literature does not support the contention that Whistleblowers do not generally suffer retaliation (Near & Miceli, 1996). This is a contentious conclusion and which contravenes the accepted understanding of this issue, so would need to be the subject of further research. A later US study contradicted these results and found that well over half of the respondents reported significant personal and employment consequences after they had blown the whistle (Rothschild & Miethe, 1999).

Future employment prospects of the Whistleblower were canvassed by Qusqas & Kleiner and they found that although provisions existed within public sector organisations to ignore the incidence of Whistleblowing when assessing candidates for future promotions, Whistleblowers were significantly disadvantaged (Qusqas & Kleiner, 2001). Other research in this area is both quantitative and qualitative and measures health, well-being, quality of life, employment security and retaliation and reprisals. Recent Australian research revealed that the physical effects of stress on the Whistleblower were felt by 70% of the respondents and surprisingly, that 64% of the respondents who were aware of misconduct but did not report it reported the same physical effects (McDonald, 2002). There is a surprising gap in the research literature on the impact on the personal well-being of the Whistleblower and his/her personal life which pointed to the need for further study into this aspect of Whistleblowing. It is reasonable to expect that if Whistleblowers were significantly affected by the processes stemming from their actions their families would also feel the effects.



## Chapter 3

### Methodology

"I wasn't going to show weakness and go on leave, because everyone expected me to. I was going to ride it out, because I knew I was telling the truth and I knew I was right." (Helen)

As previously stated, the aim of the research was to elicit the personal qualities of individuals who had lived experiences of whistleblowing. To this end, it was necessary to use an approach which fostered a responsive environment wherein sometimes sensitive, and sometimes awkward conversations were able to be held with people whose experiences had left them mistrustful and 'bruised' or even suffering ill health after their experience of whistleblowing. This chapter outlines the methodology used in the research, looking firstly at the aim of the research, the method of data collections and the participants. Then it examines the ethical considerations which apply to this particular area of investigation and outlines the limitations for the reporting of the circumstances and maintaining the confidentiality of the interviewees. The previous chapter reviewed the literature on whistleblowing and the theory of Organisational Citizenship Behaviours through which the personal characteristics of the participants will be considered. Therefore chapter 3 outlines those elements of the theory which are appropriate to this research.

An interview using a semi-structured questionnaire was a relatively 'calm' method to draw out the stories and thus the personal characteristics and experiences of

whistleblowers in their organisations when they choose to inform, and further, the reasons they chose to inform even when they knew they may suffer adverse professional and personal consequences. Therefore, this research employed a qualitative methodology from which to bring to light the personal qualities and whistleblowing behaviour of the informants. Within the field of social research, qualitative studies are able to provide the researcher with a great depth of knowledge and understanding of the thought processes and reasons behind the actions in which a participant may engage, rather than a purely statistical measure of the actions (Patton, 1990). Qualitative interviewing allows the researcher to explore the points of view of the participants and to accept those points of view as reality (Miller & Glassner, 1997).

For reasons of public accountability and legislative requirement, the workings of the public sector are more readily accessed; therefore this study focussed on whistleblowers who informed on misconduct in the public sector agencies at different levels within the organisational hierarchy. Thus, individuals who identified themselves as whistleblowers and blew the whistle on people or bodies within the public service were those people to be interviewed.

Initially this research looked at the personal qualities (self-reported) of the people who identified themselves as whistleblowers and sought to test the five characteristics articulated in the theory of Organisational Citizenship Behaviours (Organ, 1997) as well as loyalty to the organisation. This was to determine whether or not these dimensions or others do in fact underpin the actions of whistleblowers. The research then sought to investigate the reporting process in each workplace and the person to whom the misconduct was reported. From there it was interested in whether or not the organisation had internal procedures for dealing with whistleblowing; and whether the whistleblowers being at different levels of their workplace hierarchy, impacted the efficacy or effectiveness of their whistleblowing. The research also set out to identify the limitations if any of the Australian ethos of "mateship". It has been previously claimed that the Australian ideal of "mateship" precluded any form of prosocial

behaviour unless it was related to the protection of, or support for, the person considered to be a mate (Paine & Organ 2000). It was important therefore that the research investigate the limiting influence of the ethos of 'Mateship'.

The aim of the research was to reveal the personal characteristics of the whistleblower through a thematic context analysis of interview data. Further, it sought to make an assessment of the association or link between Organisational Citizenship Behaviours and the action of whistleblowing.

The research was looking to identify the

- The personal characteristics of the whistleblowers, including the OCBs and loyalty;
- The potentially limiting effects of "mateship";
- The whistleblowers' confidence in the internal procedures; and
- The experience of the whistleblowers within organisations after whistleblowing has taken place.
- The use that each whistleblower made, if any, of the legislative support for whistleblowers.

The ultimate aim was to find out what were the personal characteristics of the whistleblowers which drove them to report misconduct and how they distinguished themselves from the people who notice misconduct but do not report it. The research sought to find out if the actions of the whistleblowers show a relationship with the five personal dimensions articulated by Organ or other factors, such as loyalty to the organisation in the light of the ethos of "mateship".



Therefore the questions for investigation were:

1. What are the personal characteristics of the whistleblower which prompt them to speak out against misconduct in their workplaces?
2. Are the Organisational Citizenship Behaviours of altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, civic virtue, conscientiousness and loyalty the only motivations underpinning employees reporting misconduct or blowing the whistle?

Previous quantitative research (Organ, 1990; Van Dyne, Graham, & Dienesch, 1994) has identified six main characteristics which are common to the people who would speak up against misconduct. The current research sought to validate the six characteristics in an Australian context, through a semi-structured interview.

An additional element of the semi-structured questionnaire was a consideration by the participants of the presence of the Australian ethos of “mateship” and an appraisal as to whether it was a factor in the decision to inform or not. The question of legislative protections has been a subject of recent public discourse and over recent years whistleblower protection legislation has been introduced into most jurisdictions in Australia. Accordingly, legislative protections will also be canvassed in the semi-structured questions, thus giving the respondents an opportunity to address this area as well.

### **Participants**

A sample of between five and ten participants was sought for this research. The sample group was a purposeful sample, that is a sample selected ‘purposefully’ to permit enquiry into and understanding of a phenomenon in depth (Patton, 1990).

This allowed scope for the selection of individuals who, as a result of their own experiences, were able to provide insights into the personal qualities of whistleblowers (Patton, 1990). Participants were gathered through a variation of the 'snowballing' technique (Patton, 1990).

Snowball sampling is an approach through which the researcher is able to locate information-rich key informants (Patton, 1990). The process begins by the researcher speaking to a small number of people who have blown the whistle, and asking them to suggest the names of other people whom they know have been through similar experiences. This method is most often used by qualitative researchers who start with a small number of contacts in order to build a larger group of potential participants (Fitzgerald & Cox, 2002). A sample generated in this way finds people who identify as whistleblowers (Fitzgerald & Cox, 2002). The snowball sampling method draws upon the discretionary knowledge of the initial participants who due to their positions as whistleblowers know of the other individuals who have reported misconduct for the positive reasons this study is seeking to identify. This method ensured that each new participant was 'recruited' by a previous participant and was therefore a person for whom the recruiter had sympathy and a degree of insight.

The interview procedure relies upon the generosity of the participants to the extent that they open themselves to scrutiny in an area of great sensitivity, and which they willingly share with the interviewer. The snowballing procedure capitalises on the commitment of the original participant to find another person similar to him/her self for interview. Whistleblowers, because of their experiences, can be reluctant to speak about their actions, so only close friends or people who share a similar experience would know whether or not they were willing or able to participate in an interview. Certainly, none would recommend another whistleblower for whom they did not have a kindred feeling for the emotional ordeal of an interview; nor would they recommend anyone who would denigrate or diminish their experiences. It is known that some people call themselves whistleblowers when they in fact may have self-serving motives for



speaking out and may not even be speaking out for the benefit of others but for their own ends. These are the people this research is aiming to avoid. The overriding purpose of the research is to uncover and name the qualities of whistleblowers, where they speak up for reasons other than self-interest, and it was important that the person who speaks out in order to draw attention to his/her own issues is not included in this sample. Moreover, this particular type of person does not sit within the parameters of the theoretical framework. Using the word of mouth recommendations promoted by the snowballing technique, the interviewer had complete confidence that the whistleblowers were not from this smaller group.

To enhance the consistency of the sample participants, the sample was selected from people already known to the researcher (Group A), who are currently or previously employed in different branches of the public sector, and who had identified themselves as whistleblowers. They were asked to identify other prospective participants from within their organisations (Group B). Then the Group B participants were asked to identify another group of whistleblowers from within their organisations (Group C). Members of each group were invited to participate in the study.

The participants who indicated their willingness to participate in this research came from Western Australia and had made complaints or reports of misconduct against various Public Sector agencies or their officials. They either dealt with or worked within the clerical and administrative areas of the respective agencies at varying levels of seniority. Not one of the participants still remains in the same position and some have moved on to other locations or to different employment. It must be mentioned that three of the respondents are still nominally employed by their original organisation but are on enforced leave for the duration. All participants were interested in participating in the research to benefit the community. This in itself is an important finding and will be discussed in greater depth in subsequent chapters.



Due to the nature of the subject matter, it was anticipated from the outset that each of the participants believed that their speaking out against misconduct had impacted upon their professional or personal lives to some degree, whether positively or adversely. A participant who had reported misconduct without any effect at all on his/her personal life, was not the intended target of this research. Instead, this research set out to find out why people spoke out even when they knew there would be a bad consequence. Again, as a consequence of the snowballing process, the potential interviewees were of a similar type to those in Group A, who had suffered adverse effects, so during the course of each interview the expectation was met.

Therefore for this research, interviews were conducted with people who fitted the criteria for inclusion; namely, they were individuals who had taken the step to report on misconduct in the public sector whether on a large or small scale in spite of their reports having positive or negative outcomes; and secondly that the whistleblowers included in this study were those people who spoke out for reasons other than personal gain or spite.

### **Ethical Considerations**

At all times during the interviewing and participant recruitment process, it was always intended that no volunteer be excluded, except those who were under 18 years of age. Therefore the participants were of both genders and from all age groups over eighteen. At no point was any remuneration asked for or offered, although all of the interviews took place in a neutral environment, and the interviewer provided the refreshments. The only personal information which was recorded either on tape or on paper were the demographic details of each participant, enabling each person to remain anonymous. Each participant was given an Information Sheet (Appendix B) explaining the research and was also asked to sign a Consent Form (Appendix C). The Consent forms which had identifying signatures are now stored separately from all materials relating to the interviews, the transcripts or any other written materials. The seriousness and gravity of some of the information which was freely provided by the respondents,

was such that the names which were occasionally mentioned during the course of the interview, were also erased from the transcript. The researcher also had no conflict of interest with any of these potential participants either professionally or personally.

The confidence of the participant in the interviewer was a consideration and to this end, all efforts were made to accommodate the needs of the participants; sometimes meeting at a neutral location such as a tea shop, or in their home. The interviewer provided refreshments to avoid imposing any impost on the interviewee. In this way the separation of the participants from their workplace was conducive to their ability to relax and tell their stories.

One feature of the interviews, which was notable for all participants was the unrestrained honesty with which they spoke and the level of trust they placed in the interviewer. The realisation of this high level of trust naturally placed a further impost on the interviewer to ensure the utmost security surrounding the interview material. The delicate nature of the subject matter meant that actually finding and speaking to participants was a difficult process. The snowballing technique was an entrée into the private world of whistleblowers and the referral of possible participants was a seal of approval of the interviewer, which naturally gave the new and potential participant confidence that his/her story would be treated with respect and confidentiality.

Even with this very effective method of finding new and appropriate participants, the numbers of willing people were very small. Initially, it was thought that the snowballing itself may have been the limiting factor, because this method ensures that only those people who were known to the whistleblowers could be approached, but after conversations with the interviewees, the researcher discovered, as previously mentioned, that each participant was very reluctant to re-visit old wounds and speak about matters which had caused great pain, both



psychological and in some cases physical. This realisation strengthened again the respect and gratitude that the interviewer had for each participant.

The nature of the subject matter with which each participant entrusted the interviewer was such that every precaution was taken to protect the details of their story and the anonymity of their characters. This naturally meant any names mentioned were either changed or deleted for the purpose of this document. Nevertheless, in some cases, the change of name was not sufficient to preserve confidentiality; because the features of some of the stories of the whistleblowing were such that the mention of some of the activities and some of the circumstances could automatically lead the reader to identify the agency or the players or both. Given that Perth is a small place and the subject matter revealed by the interviewees covers a range of agencies, it was resolved that even descriptions of the whistleblowers' circumstances and actions would need to be of the briefest nature. Accordingly when writing of the consequences for each whistleblower, and their reactions, greater attention will be paid to the whistleblowers' characteristics than to their actions, that is, unless it can be done in such a way that it does not reveal any identities.

The demographic details of each of the participants have also not been included in this paper, due also to the same reasons as stated above. The personal circumstances of each participant are not seen to be pertinent to their character or their reaction to the wrongdoing which they had witnessed. The prosocial behaviours of the interviewees are not dependent upon or linked with such demographic elements as their age, their gender, marital status etc. Where those aspects are important or significant to the story, they will be included in this document.

The original proposal for this project called for the interviews to continue until the point of redundancy, that is until no new information emerged (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It was expected that due to each circumstance of each respondent, the



number of interviews would be between five and ten before redundancy was reached. In reality however, while the employment circumstances and the whistleblowing events were all entirely different, the characteristics of the individuals appeared to be almost identical and the information being given in each interview became repetitive after the first two interviews. Due entirely to the qualitative and narrative nature of the subject matter, it was thought that the interviews should continue in case the first two interviews were simply an accidental juxtaposition of similar stories. This was found not to be the case and after six interviews, data saturation had indeed been reached and this fact coupled with the extreme difficulty of actually securing further interviewees, it was decided that the range of data and the richness of the material could not be augmented by further interviews and it would become repetitious if continued.

## **Materials**

Since the goal of this research was to determine the personal qualities of whistleblowers; and to examine whistleblowers' experiences in their workplaces, it was deemed that the most effective way was to use a semi-structured interview which allowed participants to explain their experiences (Appendix A). The questions were open-ended and were constructed in such a way as to allow the respondents to discuss their experiences and their underlying motives and reasons without prompting by the researcher; and to allow the participants to discuss their perceptions of their locus of control, the effectiveness of any internal procedures and the attitude of colleagues and management. An initial set of questions was created, but the questions were adjusted as the interview progressed. The interviews were taped and transcribed and a copy of each interview was returned to the participant for verification or amendment if necessary.

## **Adequacy and Rigour**

Internal validity or credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was enhanced by the findings and conclusions drawn from the interviews being subjected to a member check,

which involved their being verified by the interview participants themselves. Construct validity was facilitated by the inclusion and comparison of data from multiple sources, these being the commentary from experts in this field, the findings of related research and surveys and the experiences of the interview participants. External validity or fittingness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was demonstrated when the findings were reported to similar organisations which assessed them to be credible, and showed that the data were reliable and auditable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to the extent that another researcher would be able to repeat the study, conduct a survey of the literature and interview similar people in equivalent positions in their organisations and reach equivalent conclusions.

The interviews were transcribed *verbatim* by the researcher, to ensure authenticity and preserve the accuracy of the words of the participants. Common themes were then identified, and unsurprisingly, it was found that some of the themes coincided with those established in the literature; however, as expected, additional themes were revealed, given the Australian context and the presence of the Australian ethos of "mateship".

The information was organised on a large grid in a question ordered matrix in order for a methodical analysis to be made by the researcher (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The matrix consisted of the participants organised in rows by code names with the questions and responses including direct quotes from each participant in columns. This process allowed the researcher to view large amounts of information at one time, without having to hold pages of transcribed interview material in her head (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Care was taken not to reduce the responses significantly because it is the richness of the material which provides the understanding of the investigation (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Much use was made of a complex cross-referencing technique which linked the actual transcripts to the question-ordered matrix, to ensure that participants' words were not lost or diluted through the re-writing by the researcher. Unconscious assessments of data in the transcribing process were not possible using this method, nor were



omissions of information possible. This then enabled a thematic content analysis to be made to identify recurring themes.

The findings of the research will be discussed in the next chapter, but at this juncture, some limitations of the study can be foreseen, since they had a bearing on the overall conclusions. At the outset of the interview process, as previously mentioned, the researcher was expecting to hear about the clear sets of guidelines that were in place in most workplaces as reported in the literature. However, this expectation was doomed to failure, as surprisingly, it was revealed that there were some workplaces which had no guidelines known by all staff and no reporting procedure at all for staff to bring misconduct to the attention of management. This was a considerable disappointment since the purpose of limiting this study to public sector bodies was because they are required by legislation and regulation to have internal reporting procedures. Therefore respondents were reporting on their dealings with public servants and public entities, wherein transparency and accountability are an expected element of the workplace. Nonetheless, this set of questions was asked of each participant and the responses discussed; and it was a matter for discovery whether the internal procedures which were in place, were seen by the whistleblowers to be effective, and whether they encouraged confidence in a potential whistleblower.

Another significant surprise was found in the responses to the questions relating to the legal protections; not one of the respondents used or would ever use the legal protections, principally because of their poor design and inadequacy to manage the intricacies and sensitivities of the situations. This also must therefore be seen as a limitation of the study, since the question of legal protection was one of the original research questions.

While it is not possible for reasons of confidentiality to reproduce the interviews here, a brief outline of each appears in the next chapter, along with a small introduction to each of the participants.



## Chapter 4

### The Interviews

"You don't realise you're being a whistleblower until you are in the middle of it." (Julia)

While knowledge of the circumstances of the whistleblowers' actions is not necessary for the understanding of their personal characteristics, and it certainly does not detract from the reader's ability to focus on those personal qualities, a brief outline has been provided to locate the whistleblowing actions within a context. As previously stated elsewhere, each story will be recounted in the broadest terms to preserve the confidentiality of the interviewees and their situations. Furthermore, no biographical details for each of the participants will be available, because the public sector in Perth is a small community and the biographical information, when matched with the brief accounts of the whistleblowing circumstances, may lead to a breach of the confidentiality of the participants. The names of participants have been altered to protect their identities, so for the purpose of this thesis, they are Helen, Charles, Julia, Angela, Charlotte and Paul and their stories are recounted below in no particular order.

#### Charles

Charles spoke to his manager about the advisability of continuing with a project which he, Charles, considered was inappropriate and unsuitable for the office. Further, Charles knew that the project would be very costly and since it was in an area in which Charles had considerable expertise, he not only thought his manager would heed his advice, he also believed that his colleagues would support him. This quiet and polite conversation with the manager was the base

upon which Charles became known as a whistleblower. He considered the initiative on which the office was about to embark, to be ill-advised and bound for failure. He expected that given his expertise, his manager would take note of his concerns, weigh up the pros and cons and make a decision.

The worst response that Charles could possibly have expected was that his manager ignore his advice and continue on the path he had begun. Not only did this happen, but also the manager embarked upon a concerted agenda of reprisals and ostracism that seemed completely disproportionate with the initial report. Charles himself explains the manager's unusual reaction as the actions of a man with a "monstrous arrogance" trying to shield his own ego and save his own face. Charles believed that it was not an honest mistake, because the manager

"wilfully wasted public money and he broke the rules. He appointed people, paid contractors and.....cut across the checks and balances of the public service."

This took place many months after the original quiet conversation with the manager. Charles began to suffer health problems and his personal life began to feel the impact of the tension at work. Indeed, one of his colleagues came to his desk one day and:

"picked up a photograph of my family and said, 'Who are these people?' I said, 'that's my family.' She said, 'what have you got against them? Why are you trying to ruin their lives?' I knew exactly what she was saying ....if you don't let go of what you are doing, you are going to get into terrible trouble. You will probably lose your job and it will ruin their lives, so why don't you just get smart and pull your head in and let it go."

This was said even before a formal complaint was lodged. In Charles' case, the payback came first. This process continued for more than six months. Charles had still spoken only to his colleagues and his manager and no-one outside the agency. During this time, the waste of money and the incompetence of the project were obvious to everyone. After the waste of hundreds of thousands of dollars, and words of advice from his colleagues, Charles finally made a report to the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) the forerunner of the CCC and to the Office of Public Sector Standards. It was only then that Charles felt that he needed support and would have accepted help.

### **Paul**

Paul is a nurse and values his job highly for the contribution it makes to the community and to the people in the community. He enjoys working as part of a committed team where everyone works towards the same goals and has the same strong sense of duty and service. This quality has been developed in him from his childhood, then later in the army. He has learnt that it is his responsibility to stand up and fight for the people who cannot fight for themselves and for whom he is responsible.

"I stand up and fight even at personal cost. I am an Advocate.  
I need to protect my patients."

Paul's action was to report to a senior colleague some staff behaviour, which had endangered patients and other staff. He used no names or identifications and expected the colleague would thank him, quickly rectify the situation, and the matter would be finished. It was only when the senior colleague and some of the close associates of that colleague began to publicly deride Paul and question his ability to do his job, that he began to realise that the quiet comment, not made known to another person, was the cause of the change in attitude to him. In Paul's words:



"I told management without mentioning names, but they ignored me and the problem. Then I became the problem because I knew. I did not see myself as a whistleblower."

In Paul's case, there were no offender names, but the ward name was enough to identify the area; everyone on that ward was told of the report. This naturally led to reprisals. Of course, the staff members of this ward had friends throughout the facility and they spoke of Paul's action in terms of disloyalty, thus ensuring that the staff of the difficult ward knew what Paul had done.

"There was a consistent practice of when somebody did make a complaint, there were certain managers down there that would immediately go back and relay to members of the nursing staff that this one's making complaints ..... and that they were warning nurses who had been the subject of complaints of substandard practice and giving them a heads up to be on their guard around different individuals."

It is not easy for an outsider to understand that nursing staff would place their loyalty to their colleagues and friends above the safety and welfare of their patients, but that is what happened in Paul's case.

So great was the level of anger generated by Paul's report, that other staff, not all, but friends of the reported nurses, actually wrote complaints about Paul to the Health Department. To this day, Paul's record at the central staffing area of the Health Department is swollen by a large number of reports sent by his peers. Part of the reason for such high levels of anger would naturally be the fear that the Health Department would investigate the matter and find that people had indeed breached their protocols and made the work place unsafe. This is an understandable fear, however, at no time, did Paul contact the Health Department, instead simply choosing to speak quietly of the matter to a senior colleague.

The repercussions for Paul were career-threatening and personally devastating. A gregarious person, who loves his interaction with colleagues, he was "frozen out", and expected to resign. Paul found that his shift roster had altered and he was sent to the difficult ward. The staff members in this ward were neither communicative nor helpful and he was made to feel unwelcome. A number of small situations arose in this ward, as is normal in the nursing profession, during which Paul needed the assistance of his co-workers but which was not forthcoming. He therefore became increasingly concerned for the welfare of his patients. He was eventually suspended and reported to the Nurses Registration Board, with the threat that he would lose his registration.

Paul did not seek any counselling support or appear to suffer any health consequences, however, his relationship did collapse and he chose to fight the reprisals in the only way in which he knew, which was to write letters, and make reports to the CCC, the Nurses Registration Board and the Health Department. His actions certainly added to the growing number of individuals who were ostracising him, and as a consequence of this treatment, his health suffered badly.

## **Helen**

Helen worked in a hierarchical organisation and reported to a senior colleague, misconduct which in reality was criminal behaviour. She did not make her report immediately the misconduct occurred and tried to put it out of her mind it, but the impact upon her health and her relationships both at work and at home was too great.

It was not until a 'chance' encounter with a counsellor, which had been staged by her loyal friends, that Helen came to the realisation that her life had been affected by the actions which precipitated the complaint and that for her peace of mind and the possibility of a resolution to the matter, she had the choice of several courses of action. The course she chose, to report the misconduct to her

supervisor, required a great deal of personal courage, because it was to do with an unpleasant and personal matter which was confronting to discuss and which would expose her to derision in her office. But that was the extent of her nervousness over the report. Not ever, did she think the report would turn into the personally destructive and gruelling series of events that dominated her life for years.

After she made the report, the most immediate impact was that her reputation within her organisation suffered badly. Previously she had been highly respected and had held a number of responsible positions. As a result of her blowing the whistle, her reputation immediately fell amongst her peers.

"I was called up to the C-----'s<sup>1</sup> office and I wasn't even asked my version of events. I was asked to resign and I said: 'Why are you asking me to resign because I have made a complaint?' And I was screamed at and I was told that it is not for me to question a senior officer. I was to either resign or work out where I wanted to be transferred; and I said to him: 'Aren't you actually going to deal with this? It is a criminal offence.' And I was told to get out of his office."

Because her organisation had a strict chain of command, Helen had contact with people who were both above her level and below. The damage to her reputation created a wave of reaction both up and down, which meant that people who were removed from the whistleblowing event and who had no direct knowledge of the matter, formed opinions about Helen and the event. The workplace grapevine was very active in Helen's organisation and the people did not actually stop to verify their information, but simply passed it on. The situation then was that people who were further removed from the whistleblowing incident and did not know about the incident or the causes, but knew about the bad reputation, allowed this 'knowledge' to colour their views of Helen as a whistleblower. Helen

---

<sup>1</sup>Name removed to preserve confidentiality



was also demoted to a Level 1, where she remained for a number of years which was further confirmation in the eyes of her detractors, that her report had been incorrect and the wrongdoer was in the clear.

"I was asked to resign, I was asked to transfer and I was told I was an incredibly negative influence and the poor person concerned was really upset." (Helen)

The determination that Helen felt for the rightness of her action was the reason that she was able to find the personal strength to endure the workplace for so long. This was also the very quality that prevented her from leaving her job and working elsewhere, believing that to leave would be an admission that she had been wrong all the time.

"He immediately went on stress leave, and this is where my sense of social justice kicked in, in the sense that I was not going to show weakness and go on leave because everyone expected me to. I was going to ride it out because I knew I was telling the truth and I knew I was right."

During the very worst time of the reprisals towards Helen, she did not speak about the issues with her partner and at home became sullen and uncommunicative. This caused great strain on her relationship and her marriage was under threat. As soon as her husband became aware of the problem, the situation improved. In fact Helen's greatest strength was the support of her family after she had finally taken them into her confidence.

### **Angela**

Angela was privy to a very dubious proposed venture with an outside body and was increasingly uneasy when she realised that indeed some of the elements of the venture were illegal and would almost certainly attract interest from law enforcement bodies and moreover bring great suffering upon the many clients

who were its targets. As soon as it became known that she was planning to report the behaviour, even before the documentation had been gathered and the reports made, she received death threats from one of the main interested parties. There were further threats principally from the same source, and the threats ranged from offering her money, frightening her by stalking her, to threatening to ruin her career and her livelihood. These actions served only to reinforce her determination to proceed with her planned course of action. Her sense of integrity and honesty were never swayed.

In order to report the misconduct Angela had to gather together a number of documents as supporting evidence; and given that she had received threats against her life, she had to summon what most people would call 'courage', to sustain this action. She on the other hand thought it was no more than the right thing to do and did not consider it a courageous action at all. She simply went about the business of cataloguing and documenting, photocopying and watching. At no point was Angela secretive about this process. Indeed when she told the parties that she was planning to make good her threat to report them, one said: "You haven't got the guts, you little b....", and I said 'watch me.'"

She had tried to explain to her manager that the proposal that he was entertaining was unethical, contrary to guidelines, almost certainly illegal and that he should withdraw his support for it. Despite this, he pushed for it to proceed. This decision meant that Angela was the only person who reported the misconduct and Angela was the only person to suffer the repercussions. When she made her report to the Director of the overseeing agency,

"he said: 'you do not think very much of your job do you? And I said: 'I think very highly of my job.'"

Angela's loyalty to her organisation and the members of the public who would have been affected by the underhand and illegal nature of the proposed initiative, is strong.

Even after the initial report was made, the parties were trying to corrupt Angela. "A-----<sup>2</sup> was trying to bribe me with real estate deals and I told him to get lost and he said: 'who do you think you are?' The resolve that Angela displayed in the face of this determination is heartening, yet reveals her strength of character. While Angela says dismissively that "anybody would have done the same", it is doubtful whether this is the case.

It would be reasonable to expect that Angela would seek some sort of redress at least through counselling or therapy, but she is so determined that her actions were those of a normal person with a decent conscience that she cannot see the need for therapy. She was not an accidental victim who was not alert to what was happening. She was in possession of all the facts and made her own decision to report, knowing the consequences. The kind of support that Angela may accept would be financial support and employment which utilises her skills rather than the now lower level position through which she currently earns her living.

### **Charlotte**

Charlotte made her report to the local police in the town in which she lived after she had been brutally beaten by a person who was prominent in the town. It was the actions of the police which were the subject of her report to the Ombudsman. Her life had become almost dominated by the misconduct to which she alone was privy. She lived in a small community where most people knew each other and where secrets were never kept. Accordingly, the police had chosen to accept the perpetrator's version of events and as Charlotte said that the police were:

---

<sup>2</sup> Name removed to preserve confidentiality



"were taking a pleasure in watching my confidence crumble. There was a court order for the police to accompany me to collect my belongings .....and they did not do that. They were helping him torment me, they were passing on messages, delivering bits and pieces of mine broken; and not responding to him stalking me."

She was always expecting repercussions, and indeed she found that she had many vehicle checks, tyre checks, and was pulled over on the road frequently. She made her report to the Ombudsman and then because the matter was in a small country town, the Police were asked to act on behalf of the Ombudsman. This led to the strange situation of the Police investigating themselves.

The reprisals which she suffered were far reaching and caused her considerable anguish and distress over a long period of time. However, she was another person who believed that by leaving the town, she would be running away from the issue, and it would appear to everyone who knew about it, which was almost everyone in the town, that she was retreating because she had been wrong. She stayed for as long as she could, but her health suffered greatly and friends finally prevailed upon her to leave. She now lives in Perth, is unable to work and is receiving counselling support. She suffered serious health consequences and grave damage to her confidence. She also endured a severe reduction in her personal circumstances as well as the collapse of her relationship. One other important impact on Charlotte's life was in her words, "the loss of my assertiveness and 'guts', which I had before." She is still trying to manage the ill-effects of her whistleblowing and is one person who has been reduced to such a state where she actively sought assistance and credits her 'return to sanity' to that support.

## Julia

Julia had a position where her duties were to oversight the programs designed to “plug the gaps” in matters relating to health, particularly Aboriginal health. She discovered that a number of payments were being scheduled for individuals without the existence of any contract and for whom there was no legitimate reason for payment.

“He was sending cheques without a contract which is obviously a no-no, because basically if they use the money to go on holiday with, there is no contract to say what they are supposed to be doing with it. This was quite a few million dollars.”

She refused to sign the payment authorisations and explained her reasons to her immediate manager, and when she was ignored, promised to report the irregularities to the Director General. His reaction was to remove all the contracts from Julia’s care and isolate her from the process. Julia was asked to stay at home and work from there.

They still wanted the other work that she could do, and indeed, she had signing authority on a number of projects and was the contact for the people who ran the health projects that the department supported. However, they did not want her at the office:

“M----<sup>3</sup> said to me ‘Would you like to work from home?’ ‘No. I am not going through that caper, because I know what you are trying to do. I’ll be coming in to work and if you don’t give me anything to do, that is your bloody problem, because I am coming in to work.’”

---

<sup>3</sup> Name removed to preserve confidentiality

It seemed that they thought that she would not be able to contact them or question them or even go over their heads if she were physically not in the office. The prevailing feeling seemed to be that if she were isolated she would lose her appetite for oversighting what they were doing and would not have intimate knowledge of the projects and so therefore would be less likely to question them or check on them. By doing this they revealed two main things, the first being that they had no idea of her principles or integrity or "personal stubbornness" and they thought if she could not see what they were doing, she would not mind, and would eventually give it up; and secondly, they were trying to isolate her from the co-workers and supporters. She did not stay at home, choosing instead to come into work every day. Her workload diminished daily and she found herself with a great deal of time on her hands. Gradually all the paperwork was removed from her control. Julia said:

"So....one of the senior managers stuck up for me and he was isolated as well, so basically we had no work to do at all. All that was of course taken off me and given to other people."

She was effectively excluded from the work of the office, and from the outside contacts which she had developed and nurtured. She remained a substantive Level 7 in her department and although her normal duties had been removed from her, she still went to work every day:

"The office was kind of split in two; there were people who supported me and there were people who supported Z-----<sup>4</sup>, because they were doing OK out of it, and it was probably about 50/50 through the office although more of the lower levels supported me because they had suffered under him the most. It was fairly horrendous at that stage.....the whole thing was a basket case."

---

<sup>4</sup> Name removed to preserve confidentiality.



Furthermore, Julia discovered that three of her level 5 staff had suddenly been promoted over her head to Level 9 positions. This was only revealed accidentally after Julia returned from leave. When Julia asked about the sudden promotions, she was told that expressions of interest had been sought, applications had been called for, interviews had been held and decisions made. In most departments of the public service, this process can take as long as three months or more with positions being advertised in the Government Gazette, interviews being held and appointments being made. Julia, however, had only taken one week's leave. This implies that the whole promotion process had been rushed through while Julia was away in order to exclude her from it. Julia would have been entitled to appeal the process under procedural justice guidelines; however she chose instead to go to the Office of Public Sector Standards, who told her that there was nothing that they could do under the Public Sector Management Act. This incorrect opinion did not discourage Julia, rather it appeared to fuel her determination to maintain her stance and she went instead to the Auditor General.

One important aspect of this whistleblower's life was that she had kept her family informed throughout the entire process, so that she had their unstinting encouragement. Therefore when Julia decided to speak to the media, her family supported her wholeheartedly. This was when she realised that she was at the end of her tether and was in need of some sort of support.

While it is not germane to the questions of this research, the inclusion of the broad details of each whistleblower's experience allows for the opening of a window into their thinking and a revelation of their personal characteristics. The findings and the themes which were common to all the whistleblowers largely adhered to the areas of the semi-structured interview scheduled. Each of these themes will be examined in greater detail in the following chapter. As expected, the themes related to the issues motivating the whistleblower; confidentiality, fear of reprisals and the culture of the workplace; confidence in internal procedures; as well as reduced anticipation for the whistleblower's future

employment prospects either within their own organisation or outside. Within the recurring themes, the personal qualities of each participant reflected those laid out by the parameters of the theoretical framework. While the individual participants displayed varying degrees of emotional distress during the interview, in recalling their experiences, their courage and honesty also bore out the qualities the theory articulates and these will be expanded in the coming chapters.

## Chapter 5

### Findings

"I never knew I was a whistleblower. I had never even heard of whistleblowers." (Charlotte)

The interviews revealed several clear areas of importance in the minds of the interviewees, borne out by the words of the transcripts. During the actual interview, it was immediately obvious when a particular area engaged the interest of the respondents, because their eyes became bright and their voices animated. When they discussed their work and their contribution to society and the meaning that it had for them, it was obvious that they were speaking about something that they valued and enjoyed, even loved. The transcripts, although they are without the vocal cues, facial expressions and tonal emphasis of the interviews, bear out this conclusion. The choice of words and expressions which each participant made underlined the extent of each person's feelings and beliefs and mirrored vocal and visual indicators. This clearly leads to the conclusion that work and contribution to the community was definitely a very important factor in the lives of the respondents. All the information which was freely given without the prompting of the questions, related to work and its importance.

Therefore this chapter examines the transcripts according to the four common themes that the interviews revealed. Given the emphasis that the interviewees placed on work, the main themes understandably related to the meaning of work. The themes reinforced for the researcher, the acknowledgment that all participants accorded to the importance of their jobs; and the reinforcement this



provided of the personal reward which their work gave them and the corresponding loyalty which they gave their work. Another theme centred on the ideal characteristics of themselves as employees and their responsibilities as individuals to themselves, their work colleagues and the organisation. The next major theme related to each interviewee's own assessment of his/her personal characteristics and why he/she was the whistleblower rather than another person in the same workplace who may have also noticed the same misconduct. The final theme was about protections and support, both legislative and within the organisation. It must be said at this point that many of the respondents did not see the need for any type of protection or support beyond what would normally be available to them as part of their normal workload.

As it will be revealed later in this chapter, the whistleblowers did not immediately have the thought of looking out for themselves, but that they had done the 'right thing' for the organisation and could look themselves in the eye in the mirror. Therefore self-care behaviours did not immediately come to their minds. It was only later that each thought about protections and care.

It has to be said at the outset, that some of the themes are predictable because they were areas on which some of the questions were based, so by the mere application of the semi-structured questionnaire, respondents were steered into these directions. The question of the legal protections, for example, was an area which few of the respondents would have entered had there been no questions. The reasons for this ranged from the lack of a cohesive legislative framework at the time of the whistleblowing, through to a mistrust of any legislative process. Indeed, each of the interviewees was scornful or derisive about the effectiveness of the protections offered by the law, so it was certainly not an area on which they would have volunteered information had this research been in the form of an unstructured interview.

## THEME 1: THE MEANING OF WORK

To all of the respondents, work and community contributions carried great meaning. All respondents were at different levels in their organisations and had varying amounts of responsibility, but all had an abiding commitment to their jobs and saw their employment as an extension of themselves. Each of the respondents was very open about the importance of meaningful work. Each was able to explain the value to themselves of their work, and how the loss of that work had robbed them of some of their sense of personal identity.

In some cases, a person's view of the importance of their work changes as was the case with Helen. She said initially her personal identity was completely enmeshed with her job, "work was a huge part of who I was and a huge part of my identity," but in recent years her view had modified. She said:

"I hold quite different values to those people that I worked with, so whereas my work was (*Helen's emphasis*) important, now it is what I get from my work that is important".

Julia liked her job.

"I enjoy the work. It's very challenging....and you can do a lot of good if you have got the commitment from everybody."

She found great pleasure in knowing that her work provided programs which filled gaps in the lives of her 'clients'. She worked with the aboriginal community, and provided the funds to support programs which gave great benefit to the community. She did say that, because of the power imbalance where she was the only senior female, the personal qualities she brought to her job were such that she was at great pains for her work to be faultless and beyond criticism. Therefore, she saw herself as 'obsessive' about her work area and her work output. She said that she was irritated by wrongdoing and could not ignore it.

For Charlotte, work was an expression of her character and a reinforcement of the personal qualities with which she lived her life. She could have had any job, and would have approached it with the same level of honesty, compassion and sincerity. Her aim was “to participate, to be involved and to contribute.”

Indeed all interviewees had pride in their work performance and expertise, and the personal qualities of integrity and honesty. Charles said that his work was fulfilling in a variety of ways; his work gave him a sense of honour; it was more than just a job, more than money: “I derive my sense of identity and worth from what I do.” Similarly, Paul said:

“Work means everything. To me, it is not just work, it is a vocation; it is a profession. It is intrinsically part of me. It is not just something I get up in the morning and go and do. It is something I have personally integrated into myself.”

Angela said that work meant a great deal to her; she was good at it and took great pride in her ability to do her job well. She also valued “compassion, ethic, morals and ....ambition.” She had a strong sense of her own autonomy; and moreover, she made sure that everyone else knew what her boundaries were as well.

## **THEME 2: THE PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WHISTLEBLOWERS**

A major rationale for some of the elements of the semi-structured questionnaire for this research is not only to identify the personal characteristics of the participants but also to have the interviewees isolate these qualities in themselves. It is possible that this, in itself, is an element of the whistleblower which is not present in other people; that they act in accordance with a set of personal beliefs so entrenched in them that they do not examine them or question them. It is a matter of conjecture that the participants will even recognise the qualities when they are brought into the open.



Each individual to a greater or lesser extent was able to discuss his/her personal qualities, and to see a tenuous connection between the actions in reporting and his/her own personal characteristics of each. Surprisingly, however, each had much less regard for what outsiders see as their courage in speaking out. None of them saw their actions as displaying the kind of bravery that sets them apart from the general population.

Although it is reasonable to expect that in order to embark on a process, one must have a sense of where that process is likely to finish. It was also abundantly clear from the interviews that each of the participants is an intelligent person, and therefore had an idea of what sort of ramifications their reports may have provoked. This outcome notwithstanding, each denied his/her own personal courage.

Charles saw himself bringing to his role his integrity, honesty and sense of "duty", so he found the reaction to his whistleblowing to be beyond comprehension. His attitude to his colleagues changed immediately he became aware that they saw his actions in a different light to that in which he saw them. His friends on the other hand, "understand absolutely, exactly what I have done and it is right. It is the right thing to do." He did not see it a matter of courage or bravery, but necessary, "because it has to be done", and "I have a conscience about public money being wasted."

Paul almost laughed when the interview was steered towards his motivations and the personal qualities that he had which allowed him or compelled him to speak up. His first thought was that there was a mistake and the interviewer was asking the wrong questions. When it was made clear to him that this was the area that the research was looking at, he was quite surprised. He could not at first comprehend that anyone would want to speak about so tedious a matter which was after all a product of his sense of duty, and for which he thought he had no choice.

Paul grew up in a family which held dear the disciplines of military life, both his father and grandfather having served in the army, and his mother also hailing from a services background. It was second nature to him to see his role as a duty to which he was thoroughly committed. That is not to say that he only saw it as a duty, but duty and service are the underpinning motivations for Paul's life, and work. Paul also spoke of his determination to stand up and fight even at personal cost. The converse of this is that if he saw wrongdoing and did not stand up and fight, the personal cost would have been greater because he would not have been true to his principles.

Julia on the other hand was quite comfortable speaking about the personal qualities which she brought to her work, because she had said that she was irritated by wrongdoing and could not ignore it, until the interviewer pressed her to identify her own personal characteristics and motivations which underpinned her sense of herself. Then, she had to stop and carefully consider her responses to the questions. This was because to her they were self evident that they did not need speaking about, and certainly did not need explanation. They were the basic qualities underpinning her life that she simply accepted them. In fact Julia became quite uncomfortable in the way that people do when they are asked questions for which they do not know the answers.

Angela was almost annoyed when she was asked about why no-one else had spoken up in the way she had. Her tone became irritated and her words were clipped. It was quite a tense part of the interview when she became almost scornful of the questions about motivations. Her firm responses were that she did what anyone else in the same situation would have done and talking about it was a waste of time. When pressed, (carefully) Angela revealed that she was the only person who knew about the misconduct and could not let it pass. Angela did also reveal that sector of industry in which she worked had its share of people who were prepared to turn a blind eye to matters if there was a chance they would benefit from those matters, unprincipled or not. What she had revealed inadvertently or not, was that in her regional centre, while she said that anyone

would have done the same, she actually believed that she was probably alone in her commitment to report unethical, corrupt and potentially illegal behaviour.

“There is (*sic*) business ethics, and then there’s legal ethics and then there’s personal ethics; there’s all sorts of ethics out there. I would say that mine were firstly personal, then legal.”

Angela also found it difficult to name her personal characteristics; or rather was reluctant to speak about them. Angela showed herself to be a very definite and opinionated person of significant intelligence, so it is unlikely that she was unaware of her own qualities, and much more likely that she found the discussion of them uncomfortable. Her language was most assured when recalling the events of her whistleblowing and she resumed the persona of the person that she was at the time.

She repeated that anyone would have done the same, and stated that even if the legal protections had been available to her at the time of her reporting (she rejects the term ‘whistleblowing’), she would not have needed them because what she did was right.

Helen was forthcoming about her personal qualities which allowed her to report the misconduct and then to endure the repercussions. Her whistleblowing was well in the past and she has a longer view than most of the others. She is also in the position of having been able to think about her actions and to answer the complex personal questions of “why me and not someone else?” She has spent a considerable amount of time introspecting and was therefore quite calm when identifying her personal characteristics. “If everybody gives up then nothing changes, but I certainly do not consider myself a hero.”



She recalled that she had not realised that over a period of time, she was becoming withdrawn and reluctant to engage in conversations with most people on any level, despite everyone else noticing, including her husband. Using the perfect vision of hindsight, Helen concluded that the obstinacy and determination which had driven her to make the report in the first place, were the same qualities which were preventing her from speaking up about her mistreatment.

"It has made me a lot stronger person. It has made me clearer about making sure that you have to follow things through to the end; you cannot leave it half undone."

### **THEME 3: THE IDEAL CHARACTERISTICS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF AN EMPLOYEE**

All interviewees saw themselves as a vital and effective parts of the work unit in which they were employed. Some were in situations that more hierarchical than others although all were within some aspect of the public sector. They all had the sense that they were members of a group from which they derived a sense of their own identity. Not one was unhappy in his/her job and in fact they all claimed a spread of feelings for their jobs ranging from quiet satisfaction to an unashamed passion. Everyone knew that when they went to their job each day, they were making a difference and of that they were all proud.

Each knew and understood the particular requirements for employees in his/her workplace. Helen always followed the limits of the hierarchical structure of her workplace and worked as a collegial member of her 'team' to the extent that the circumstances allowed.

"It is very much a pecking order. There is not room for free speech, there is not room for freedom of movement, of ideas; it's all about the chain of command."

She was however accustomed to making her own decisions within the limits and being responsible for her own area. Julia similarly had risen through the ranks of

her organisation and had reached a level of seniority where her decisions and judgements impacted upon a number of her staff. She was also accustomed to negotiating and consulting with her peers but retaining overall responsibility for her area.

“My job was to manage a whole team of us, to make sure that they were reporting and doing the right thing with the money....the contracts. We did a lot of good things.”

Angela had half hour meetings daily in her office which centred on the tasks for the day and the outcomes of the previous day's work.

“You could not dissemble. Everything had to come out at the end of the day. It was a way to debrief. We both used it as [a means] of getting stuff off our chests and dealing with problems that came up.”

She was another participant who was accustomed to running her own day and taking responsibility for her own decisions. Charlotte on the other hand was a member of a team and made sure that she participated and was involved so that she was a fully functioning employee. She saw her sense of humour and her ability to be “respectful and compassionate” as her best assets at work to allow her to function effectively as a team member.

Paul in his workplace was also a member of a team. This team looked out for each other and helped one another to “advance professionally, to ensure that they have a pleasant and safe working environment”. Paul is an individual for whom team loyalty was essential to allow them to “pull together and make sure that we are looking after each other.” Charles had a great deal of autonomy in his workplace, where “we all worked independently, but we were all doing the same thing.” They worked as a “fairly loose team” but who still consulted one another and provided advice and support for each other.

#### THEME 4: LEGISLATIVE AND INTERNAL PROTECTIONS

Before the legislative protection of the Public Interest Disclosure (PID) Act were implemented there were a number of agencies whose functions were to investigate corruption and misconduct in the public sector; the Crime and Corruption Commission (CCC) and its forerunner the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), the Auditor General, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Investigations; the Commissioner for Public Sector Standards. Legal protections existed also in existing legislation governing public sector agencies, which naturally would have applied in all cases in this research.

When asked about reporting the entire matter to the CCC, Charlotte said, “I don’t think they would listen. I really have no faith in them listening. I feel very insignificant.” The question has to be asked how is it possible to convince a person like Charlotte that the agencies in the system can assist her and can help her to gain some level of redress for both the original misconduct which triggered the whole process and the subsequent reprisals.

Not one of the participants had any faith in the protection that legislation may be able to provide. Indeed they were largely dismissive of the ability of any legislation in general to provide the type of protection they needed and sceptical of the PID Act in WA in particular. Helen said that the aspect of confidentiality of the PID Act was automatically undermined by the rules of evidence which clearly preclude anonymity. Charlotte said:

“Oh my God, I would need to win Lotto and get myself a small army to put around me before I did that. I would be squashed in an instant.”

Her language reveals her lack of preparedness to access the legal supports, had she even known about them. Charlotte’s self confidence had been undermined to such an extent that she even doubted the ability of the law to protect her. Indeed



her fear was so great that she would not have even dared to consider legal support, whether it had been good or bad.

The other general consensus was that the PID was a useless instrument for protection for someone who has already spoken about the issue. Neither Paul nor Angela nor Julia considered the use of the legislation, Paul and Angela because they never thought that they needed to take their concerns outside their professional bodies, and Julia because by the time she realised that she was a whistleblower, the media had publicised her story, and recourse to the law was not possible. The other avenues were seen to be incompetent.

“We have got the Ombudsman, the Auditor General, the Public Sector Standards – all these agencies. It sounds overwhelming but it is nothing. They do nothing. It is an archipelago of dots in a vast ocean of incompetence and corruption.” (Charles)

In order to understand the importance of these findings, it is necessary to examine them more closely. This will be done in the next chapter and the examination will take two forms; the first will discuss the personal characteristics of the whistleblowers; and the second will be in the context of the theory of Organisational Citizenship Behaviours. There will also be in the following chapter, an assessment of the very wise and considered views of the whistleblowers themselves to manage and even reduce the incidence of whistleblowing and the repercussions, so that no one in the future could possibly suffer as they have done.

## Chapter 6

### Discussion

"I never thought I was a whistleblower. I tried to speak to my boss five or six times over a six month period."  
(Charles)

The respondents never thought of themselves as whistleblowers. Not one set out on this torturous and ultimately painful path knowing that the consequences for him/her would be so serious and life changing. It was not until they were well into the process when work mates started turning on them or advising them to abandon their course of action that they began to realise that they had indeed become members of that select group of people who had spoken out against misbehaviour.

"I became a member of the exclusive club. Whistleblowers are a bit like castaways, because they share an experience."  
(Charles)

This chapter focuses on the personal characteristics of the whistleblower. It will do this by looking firstly at their personal characteristics, then at the impact that the workplace reprisals had on them. The chapter also assesses the qualities enumerated by the theory of Organisational Citizenship Behaviours against the qualities demonstrated by the interviewees. Attention is also paid to the discussion about the Australian ethos of 'mateship' and whether it has a limiting effect on the OCBs for the whistleblowers.

## **WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN BE DRAWN ABOUT A PERSON WHO IS A WHISTLEBLOWER?**

An examination is needed of the personal characteristics of the whistleblowers so that there is a chance that those characteristics which set them apart from others can be highlighted.

### **PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

The comments included in the previous chapter are by no means limited to the whistleblowers interviewed. Indeed it is to be hoped that everyone gains some reinforcement of their sense of identity from the work they do. But the focus of this research was on the characteristics of those people who identified themselves as whistleblowers and as such their attitudes to their work are seen as a large part of this. As expected, the picture that emerges of the whistleblowers is a similar picture to a large number of other people in the community. This research, however, is looking at those elements of the picture which are slightly different for whistleblowers, and which set them apart; and it is expected that an examination of their personal attitudes to a number of aspects of their lives, will reveal the personal characteristics which set them apart.

As it has been mentioned previously, the whistleblowers were each surprised that this research was looking at the personal characteristics they shared and which had fostered the reporting of misconduct that they did. Each person did not consider him/herself as possessing any greater citizenship qualities than anyone else. None of the respondents thought of themselves as having any greater loyalty to their organisation than their colleagues or co-workers. It is indeed a testament to their generosity of spirit that they consider each of us to be similarly capable of speaking out and even enduring such consequences if the situation calls for it. Indeed Paul even said that,



"others would speak up, but they are intimidated by a culture of fear in this workplace." (Paul)

He showed even greater generosity in his assessment of his colleagues – the same people who had ostracised him and ignored him, when he explained their reluctance to speak up because;

"They have mortgages. There are many who are good people, but they get caught up in the day to day processes." (Paul)

### **Organisational Citizenship Behaviours**

At this point it is necessary to recall the definition of Organisational Citizenship Behaviours, which is "individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognised by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organisation" (Organ, 1988). Without looking at individual definitions for the qualities contained in the theory of OCB, that is altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, civic virtue and conscientiousness (Organ, 1990, 1997), even the casual observer can see each of these characteristics in the behaviours of all the respondents.

The qualities of the theory of Organisational Citizenship Behaviours, namely altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, civic virtue and conscientiousness underpin the actions of the whistleblowers in this research. However, each of the interviewees denies the existence of these characteristics in him/herself to an extent that is any greater than the normal population. However, the question still remains over the personal characteristics of whistleblowers which compel them to report on misconduct, even though they know there will be adverse repercussions for them. Each one thought the reporting was simply an action which they deemed necessary and thus did not hesitate to do. Each person identified specific higher order personal qualities as being desirable characteristics of a good employee. These characteristics, as has been written elsewhere in this paper are honesty,

sincerity, passion, loyalty, dedication, an ethical and moral sense, a sense of honour, an interest in people, compassion, empathy and the desire to do the “right thing”.

It is a matter of semantics to assess whether these concepts are indeed reflections of those mentioned by Organ in his work on Organisational Citizenship Behaviours. It may be as simple as the difference in language attributable to cultural differences between the American Organ and the Western Australian interviewees. Possibly it may be due to the rich complexity and variety of the choice of words available to us in the English language.

The obvious implication of each of the naming of these qualities by each of the participants, is that each possesses them. They did not speak of themselves in this vein, however, which shines a light on another characteristic which is their modesty. This over-riding characteristic, shared by all interviewees, will be discussed later in this chapter. It would appear that the OCBs are accepted within each person, whatever words they use to name them; but another characteristic which may or may not be specific to the Australian whistleblower is humility or modesty. Indeed this is a contention which warrants further study. It may be a matter of national pride that the self-effacement commonly believed to be an Australian characteristic, be found to be an underpinning motivation for whistleblowers.

## **WORKPLACE REPERCUSSIONS**

### **Reprisals - the subtleties of gossip and innuendo**

Some of the reprisals in the workplace are subtle and insidious and come from a range of sources, from colleagues all the way through to management. The instances of retaliation are small and often unable to be detected by the casual

observer, yet the victim is left in no doubt. Of course, the perpetrator knows the subtle intricacies of the workplace and the small things that would have an impact upon the whistleblower; even things as seemingly insignificant as a turned back, lowered voices, exclusion from lunches or morning teas. No outsider could identify the small but effective reprisals or retaliations meted out in the workplace, but an insider would recognise them instantly.

The literature on gossip and innuendo is filled with the multitude of ways in which people can ostracise and isolate others without doing anything that an outsider would be able to identify (Michelson & Mouly, 2002). If the victim, the whistleblower, were to mention these small strings of events, he/she would sound petty and trivial, and the mere mention of them might sound so inconsequential as to render a listener even less sympathetic. The mere mention to the outsider of some of the repercussions brings to mind the self-pitying whiner who magnifies imagined slights until they assume gigantic proportions. The complaints sound paltry and even annoying as if the victim is imagining things or seeing him/herself as a victim. Even if the complaints were investigated, they would seem insubstantial and almost non-existent.

Recent research has found that gossip acts as a regulatory mechanism within the organisation on the OCBs of the employees which detract from the desired but unwritten goals of citizenship (Hafen, 2004). Hafen showed that the presence of gossip and rumour may be one of the strong deterrents to a potential whistleblower (Hafen, 2004). The knowledge that people continue to blow the whistle on misconduct in spite of the repercussions which they would incur, would appear to mean that these particular people have certain qualities in greater strength than it is reasonable to expect. While the interviewees themselves doubt this, it is nevertheless a fact that in most of the cases discussed, others could have reported the misconduct but chose not to. In fact others tried to get each whistleblower to desist. It is recorded in history in this paper and elsewhere, that their sense of shock, distaste or outrage was stronger than their personal trepidation for the possible repercussions.



Helen said that although her work colleagues knew of her intolerance of wrongdoing before the event, after the report was made, she was ostracised, shunned and smeared. She was immediately marginalised by everyone and 'hung out to dry'. Part of the fall in Helen's reputation was due to the gender of the person against whom she made her report. Under normal circumstances gender would not be a factor and in Helen's organisation, it would be claimed that it is still not an issue. However, the reality of the situation was that "it is an all-male environment"; gender imbalance in her workplace. Not only is the prevailing view in the workplace a male one, but there exists a level of support and understanding among males that means they side with each other.

That is not to say that Helen did not have support from some of her colleagues, both male and female, because it was their support which helped her and which finally gave her a new perspective so that she felt able to make new decisions about her employment.

Helen knew that her report would bring difficulties, but she believed that her organisation would listen to her, do their own investigation and find in her favour. Initially, she was surprised that she was urged to drop the matter and was dismayed but not surprised to discover that all of her male colleagues knew about the details of her report and, furthermore, they had already made up their minds about its veracity. As the time passed, she came to expect the retaliation, although she never became immune to the pain it caused her. But at no time did she ever consider retracting her complaint.



Charles' manager continued to pursue the very expensive new program, although at every step along the way, the problems that Charles had presaged came to pass. He then set about trying to discredit Charles. It is possible that he may have believed that Charles was speaking to other staff about his recommendations, so he (the manager) was trying to discredit Charles before Charles could discredit him. It was only when some of Charles' colleagues tried to talk him into a different

course of action that he realised that the reprisals driven by the manager would not end. The final straw for Charles was when his mentor and trusted friend joined in and told him that the department was about to subject him to a never before implemented policy of his department in the form of a performance review that he began to succumb to the effects of the workplace repercussions.

For Charles, it was a bleak realisation that his resistance had taken on greater significance than he first thought, and it distressed him as much as the sudden implementation into the workplace of the informal review policy. It was difficult for Charles to comprehend that “a person in a position of power is too arrogant to admit he was wrong” and that his ego was so fragile that he was not able to take advice or even ignore it, but he had instead to take steps to remove him from the office where he had worked for eight years.

Paul had colleagues ignore him and ‘freeze him out’, in the expectation that he would leave. It was also hard for him to see the reason behind the colleague’s reaction to his (Paul’s) report, thinking that he would realise that some dangerous behaviours had been allowed to develop and be grateful that he had the chance to change them before damage actually happened.

Paul resorted to the only course of action he condoned. He had been raised and continued to live with a strong commitment and attention to duty and responsibility and therefore did not consider that any of his actions were outside what was consistent with the correct procedure for the circumstances at the time. Therefore when it became apparent that his colleagues both peers and senior staff were setting out to discredit him even to the highest authorities in nursing in Western Australia, Paul wrote letters and visited the offices of the nursing authorities, the Corruption and Crime Commission, and the Ombudsman because he felt sure that as soon as these authorities heard his story, they would find in his favour.



Charlotte found that she developed a kind of paranoia because she started to see the normal actions of the local police as signs of persecution of her. She became increasingly distressed because she felt isolated and vulnerable. Charlotte was initially inclined to let the wrongdoing pass without comment but found that she could not do so. She has retained a strong sense of justice although her experience took most of her confidence. She had a feeling of powerlessness in the face of the wrongdoing, but she knew that it would never have receded had she not actually taken the steps that she did. It was as if the report had taken her last vestige of effort. Indeed had Charlotte not sought help from professional counsellors, she may still be living in a twilight world of nervousness and insecurity.

Angela cannot imagine herself seeking help, yet she also suffered a loss of her job, and income, a change in her personal circumstances and a severe change in her lifestyle. She knew that her report of the misconduct would result in serious repercussions for her, but she continued with her planned course of action. So sure was she that she was doing the right thing that she warned the wrongdoers that she would be reporting them to the authorities. Their threats and intimidations only served to strengthen her resolve, and indeed when she carried out her threat, the resulting report caused the project, which was the subject of the report, to be quietly brought to an end. No charges were ever laid against the offending parties by the overseeing body, and no publicity surrounded the entire event. There was no further report to any legal authorities who would almost certainly have charged the wrongdoers with criminal offences. In fact the entire affair simply vanished. Five years later, Angela views the whole episode with distaste, even disgust because nothing was ever done to the main protagonists in this story, and she was the one who suffered. One of the most galling aspects of this event in Angela's mind is that she alone suffered a life changing impact, and each of the main players went on to live their lives apparently unaffected by the whole matter. In fact Angela has a suspicion, which adds to her distress, that each of the protagonists saw her actions as a minor setback and have simply taken their plan to another agency and succeeded.



Julia's workplace became divided between those who supported her stance and those who supported the higher levels of management. This was further exacerbated when Julia took a week's annual leave, and when she returned she found that three of her staff whose previous positions as project officers were at Level 5, had been promoted to Level 9 positions.

Alone among all the interviewees, Julia was more bemused than anything else and could not believe that her immediate manager appeared not to understand the department protocols and rules and wilfully ignored her well-reasoned advice. She was further surprised when the senior manager supported the actions of the middle manager and then went on to garner the support of other senior figures; all this in spite of the clear guidelines and directives which they all seemed wilfully to ignore. A chance conversation with an influential figure outside her organisation made Julia realise that the reprisals and reports written about her were wrong and that the ostracism in her workplace was a matter to be reported to an even higher authority.

These repercussions rendered each of the whistleblowers incapable of continuing effective functioning in the same workplace and so should have been identified by a senior figure. That they were not, is a sad reflection of the structure of the workplace in the public sector in Western Australia. As required of the public sector, all agencies have policies to manage whistleblowing and it is a matter for the individual stewardship by each CEO or manager whether the policies are effective or useful.

"This workplace has a brilliant policy, but there is no way that it could be implemented due to the culture of the place."  
(Helen)

"We had normal public sector processes, but in reality our office is opposed to whistleblowers. It is vicious and vindictive

and will do whatever it takes to persecute and drive them away. There is no tolerance of whistleblowers." (Charles)

In these circumstances, it must be recognised that people will always be suspicious of and mistrustful of someone who has blown the whistle, because they will always be fearful that the whistleblower is constantly on the lookout for all sorts of workplace indiscretions. Therefore, it is almost impossible for anyone to continue to work among people who are mistrustful and suspicious, so the immediate disruption in the workplace would be three fold.

- The first aspect of the workplace to be affected is the whistleblower him/herself. This person would be unable to perform his/her normal work role, due mainly to the subtle reprisals mentioned above.
- The second aspect to be affected is the work colleagues who would also be unable to perform that aspect of their work which normally involved interaction with or trust of the person who was the whistleblower.
- The third aspect is the output of the work group or the organisation because a new person would have to come into the workplace and time, and productivity would be lost in their training, which impacts on efficiency and profitability.

#### **Reprisals - blatant and overt.**

Some of the reprisals directed towards the whistleblowers came from senior people. In some cases the senior people were actually implicated in the misconduct and so were understandably trying to protect themselves. In other cases there appeared to be issues of ego or "monstrous arrogance" which drove the reprisals. Whatever the circumstances, the overt reprisals still took place. It is not the purpose of this research to identify the specific causes of the reprisals, rather it is the purpose to examine the manner in which each whistleblower coped with them.

A senior figure in Helen's organisation 'screamed' at her to resign, saying that she was a negative influence. The acceptance of her reputation within the organisation for being intolerant of wrong doing, evaporated, as word filtered through the very effective workplace grapevine. The wrongdoer went on 'stress leave' and was supported by the overwhelming majority of the organisation and Helen was demoted to a level 1; the most junior level reserved for the newest employees. When she applied for jobs outside her organisation, her reputation as a troublemaker had preceded her and she never made the short list. It took many years for her to finally find a position outside, which was commensurate with her experience and ability, where incidentally she is now very happy and contented.

Julia found herself excluded from the normal chain of command and her authority to sign documents was removed from her and delegated to someone else. She was isolated and asked to work from home, which she refused. She was sidelined and three of her staff whose levels were below hers were promoted over her, while she was on a week's leave. She now spends her days at work, sitting in her office each day, having no contact with the programs for which she had previously been responsible, and indeed doing very little productive work. She still receives her full pay.

Charles was told that the official policy of performance review, which had never been used in the eight years of his employment, was suddenly invoked and as a result of the review of his performance, he was found to be inadequate, not only to perform the job to which he had just been promoted, but also deemed to be incapable of doing the job he had just left; or indeed any job within the entire office. He was removed from his position. Charles was placed in other departments, but eventually he was moved out of the work force altogether. He is currently still receiving full pay.

Paul's shifts were altered and his work relocated and the ward on which he worked was also changed. Reports were made to the Nurses Registration Board



about him and he was suspended. Charlotte had the experience of having the evidence of the wrongdoing 'lost' and the charges against the offender reduced in seriousness.

Angela was stalked and followed in the regional centre where she lived. She was the subject of several attempted bribes and when they did not work, she was threatened. At all times she was conscious that she must appear outwardly confident knowing that to appear intimidated, would be tantamount to admitting defeat to those whose misconduct she reported. In reality, she was confident and so her demeanour was not manufactured.

The repercussions in the workplace are both subtle and blatant. However, changes in workplaces could eliminate the need to blow the whistle. It would seem reasonable that a workplace manager would actively seek an environment where whistleblowing was either not an issue or managed to the benefit of all parties. But this does not appear to be the case. Changes to workplace culture can be more or less successful if internal reporting procedures exist and are supported by and talked about by senior and middle management. The supervisory level also has an impact and a significant bearing on the cohesiveness and the attitudes of the workers (Ambrose & Schminke, 2003; Tepper, Duffy, Hoobler, & Ensley, 2004). When the supervisor actively supports safe and confidential internal reporting procedures, it has been found that the rest of the workplace also supports them, to the extent that their reactions to a whistleblower are far less destructive (Tepper *et al*, 2004).

Not unexpectedly, the reprisals and the consequences meted out to the whistleblowers eventually had a lasting effect. All of them suffered an immediate impact, previously discussed in this paper. This impact ranged from being shouted at, marginalised, ignored, ostracised to being threatened, frightened and stalked. The respondents had reports written about them, had their statements 'lost', had performance reviews instituted, were demoted and were excluded

from their own portfolios. Yet each one says that he/she would do the same thing again, even if the same consequences were to happen, because he/she believed that it was the right thing to do.

The overwhelming majority of the comments from the respondents bordered on the indignant and impatient that someone would ask them to quantify or codify their motives. They were indignant because they did not see their actions as out of the ordinary; impatient because they thought the rationale for their actions self-evident.

When each one was approached to be interviewed, all were puzzled that a researcher could be interested in them and what they had done. The misery of their current situations appeared to have obliterated for most, the motivations which had prompted the original reporting. Indeed the conversations about the original actions were quite difficult because for most of the respondents, the feelings underpinning them and their seemingly innocent reports, were difficult to uncover. Although intellectually they all knew that their actions in reporting misbehaviour had led to the various outcomes; such as ostracism, poor health, and demotion, they each saw their actions as unremarkable. Each interviewee saw their actions as those of a normal sane person doing the right thing. They were curious and surprised that their stories may be interesting to anyone else. None saw themselves as saints, or do-gooders, or exceptional in any way.

Each whistleblower did not immediately seek support for anything, either mental, psychological, emotional, financial or legal. In fact each one stayed as long as possible preferring to 'tough it out'. Indeed three of them, Helen, Julia, Angela and Charlotte actively chose to stay where they were, because they knew they had done nothing wrong and to move on may leave the impression that they had been wrong all along. , Paul and Charles stayed where they were for as long as their management allowed. The reasons for this may be linked to them "digging in their heels" or may be simply that they did not know what else to do. In fact,

Helen and Charlotte resisted pressure from friends and family to leave, because neither wanted to appear to be 'running away', such was their determination that they had done the right thing. However, the time did come when the realisation hit each of them that the impact upon them personally was unsupportable. At some point they all finally acknowledged that they were damaged.

For each of them the legacy of their whistleblowing is the painful realisation that:

- they have lost their families;
- they have lost their health;
- they have lost their confidence;
- they have lost their jobs;
- they have lost their security;
- they have lost their lifestyle; and
- they have lost years of their lives in both emotional distress and in fighting a management behemoth.

#### **Learned helplessness or losing the locus of control?**

The whistleblowers need to be supported, but not because they say they need protection, not because they are asking for support, but because they need and deserve protection. Not one of these people sees themselves as victims. They each admit to a need to be in control of their workplace to carry out their jobs properly. In reality, the very jobs that these participants performed required that they had a strong sense of personal responsibility and indeed were expected to be able to work independently with their own autonomy. This is not to say that all of the individuals interviewed held senior positions with authority; rather they had their own sense of authority over their designated work. Furthermore, all participants felt that they had a personal sense of control over their work that



came from within and was not externally imposed by workplace protocols or procedures.

One of the most telling findings of this research is the loss of the sense of control or autonomy. Previously each had been confident and sure of him/herself in the workplace. They all saw their work as being an extension of themselves, almost a validation of themselves.

These are not the statements of people who are filled with self-pity so it could never be concluded that these interviewees became victims through a shift in their own attitudes to themselves. The concept of 'learned helplessness' suggests that a person may resort to 'emotional numbing' or 'maladaptive passivity' following any type of victimisation (Peterson & Seligman, 1983). The application of this theory to the situation of a whistleblower would involve the whistleblower learning that responding is futile, however, this could never be said to apply in this case. Each person appears to have accepted the repercussions, without accepting the passivity and numbness that the theory describes.

They all had a strong sense of personal control to their job and a sense of great commitment to the job. For each according to the parameters of his/her job, had a clear sense of the extent of their personal 'locus of control'. Accordingly, he hypothesised the locus of control explained part of the variance of whistleblowing intention (Chiu, 2003), and his research found that individuals who had their own personal determination of right and wrong (an internal locus of control), were more likely to take responsibility for the consequences of their actions, than those with an external locus of control or an externally imposed set of values from the organisation.

But they still all say that if the situation had happened again, they would have done the same thing. The important lesson to learn from this is that each of

these whistleblowers needs support of some kind, and it is the job of our society to provide this. The question needs to be asked: "What type of support can we offer whistleblowers which could be beneficial and sufficiently flexible to suit their varied needs?" This question will be discussed in the next chapter.

### **Mateship**

There was a question to each respondent about their view of the place of 'mateship' in their decision to report the misconduct. Was it a limiting factor or a factor prompting them to speak out? The claim arising from the 2000 research from Paine and Organ that whistleblowing could never happen in Australia due to the prevailing ethos of 'mateship' provided this element to the interview (Paine & Organ, 2000). This present research set out to isolate this cultural phenomenon and to investigate its limiting influence on the OCBs of Australians. While it is acknowledged that the Paine and Organ claim was based upon a limited sample of one (1) and the claim was therefore never taken seriously, it is important that it be tested. All interviewees treated with scorn and ridicule, the contention that the 'mateship' ethos may prevent an Australian from speaking out against misconduct. In the time taken for each full interview the attention given to this assertion was an aggregate of five minutes – enough time for Helen to say that:

"there is no mateship, just a tall poppy syndrome",

meaning that the culture of her organisation actively sought to prevent people from getting above themselves; and for Paul to say that he did not have a sense of 'mateship' for his work colleagues:

"because I always stood up for the people who were being bullied, which set me apart from the others to a degree."

Charlotte scoffed derisively that the only evidence of mateship she saw was when the offenders stood together to protect each other from the allegations against

them. Neither Angela nor Charlotte nor Julia gave it any credence at all and the subject was dismissed.

Therefore the conclusion from this present research completely refutes any connection, either positive or negative, between 'mateship' and whistleblowing.

### **Limitations**

A limitation for this research became evident when it was noted that the whistleblowers were all mature individuals. This realisation lead to the question of whether age and maturity may have played a part in the decision to report the misconduct or whether the decision was made based on the characteristics of each individual alone. Previous research has shown that people will have loyalty to their organisation no matter what their level and no matter what their age or years of service to the company. This strongly suggests that the personal characteristics play a significantly more important role in the decision to report misconduct, than the age or maturity of the whistleblower. To the extent that this may be the case, and there could be doubt over the motivating factors for whistleblowing, further research into this area is needed.

This prompted a supplementary question as to whether their maturity gave the whistleblowers the confidence to speak out against misconduct where a younger person may not. The data was collected in a semi-structured interview with participants gathered through the snowball method, which may have been the reason for the participants being of a similar age. This was an inadvertent consequence of this method of locating interviewees, and is a matter to be tested further. Additional research must also be carried out to remove the variables of maturity and self-confidence so that only the personal qualities of the whistleblowers are under scrutiny.



Therefore it is one of the recommendations of this paper that further research be conducted into the degree of seniority, age and length of service of the whistleblowers.

It is, however, a grim realisation that each of these respondents spoke up about misconduct in the full knowledge that repercussions from their 'mates' and from their management were inevitable. That each one knowingly persisted with his/her actions, brings a sense of humbling appreciation to the reader. This did not prevent each respondent having views on some appropriate and adequate protections and support which should be available for all whistleblowers. They had all struggled with emotional, psychological, financial and marital repercussions of their actions. Consequently, all the interviewees had views on the kinds of supports that would best serve the needs of whistleblowers and these will be canvassed in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Support and Protection**

**"The legislation is a road map to a padded cell."**

**(Charles)**

The whistleblowers each suffered a great deal and continue to suffer in all aspects of their lives. Every one of them has left his/her job and three have had to move towns and only two still have intact relationships. The personal circumstances for all but one of them have been reduced; two are still on full pay but have no job; two are on government support on the form of a pension and two have finally found work in completely different industries. But they all say that if the situation happened again, they would do the same thing.

However, each made suggestions for the improvement of the circumstances for future whistleblowers. Therefore, this chapter firstly looks at the suggestions for legislative reform and personal support for the whistleblowers which came from the whistleblowers themselves. There was no specific question in the interview schedule which called for such suggestions, yet each of the respondents already had a number of ideas to contribute to a public discussion for whistleblower support or protection. This indeed is a re-enforcement of the personal qualities from the theory of OCB of citizenship behaviours and altruism. It demonstrates the desirable qualities for an employee, who can think of others even when their own lives are fraught with difficulty and misery. Then it looks at the lessons for a civil society in the treatment of whistleblowers and our social obligations to provide this. Each of the whistleblowers in this study has a range of needs quite

different from the rest. The question needs to be asked: "What type of support can we offer whistleblowers which could be beneficial and sufficiently flexible to suit their varied needs?"

#### **The support cannot be legislative**

They all laughed at the legislative protections, saying there was no legislation that could protect them from their workmates or their management. Charlotte laughed and said

"I would have to win lotto to buy an army to protect myself from the police. There is nothing a law could do to protect me."

For Charles, protection was too late, because his actions in reporting misconduct were well known to all his co-workers. Therefore he chose the avenue of redress through the available legislation, but this was not a helpful course of action.

"I did use the legislation. At the time, there were two agencies covered by legislative protection. So I notified them under s.52 of the legislation that I was reporting my boss.....and I was sacked." (Charles)

Therefore the problem appears to be twofold: the absence of a reasonable and effective set of internal procedures for the reporting of misconduct whereby the whistleblower is guaranteed confidentiality and a satisfactory resolution to the problem; and sufficient and legally supported protection from the reprisals from management and co-workers. According to the regulations and administrative guidelines within the public sector, the establishment of effective internal procedures for managing reports of workplace misconduct is required. Indeed, research has shown both within Australia and internationally that the requirements of transparency and accountability which are placed upon the public sector, can result in the least difficult and most successful measures for



reporting misconduct (Callahan, Dworkin, Fort, & Schipani, 2002; Holmes, Langford, Welch, & Welch, 2002; King, 1999; Lindsay, Lindsay, & Irvine, 1996; Trimmer, 2003; Zipparo, 1999).

Each of the studies concludes that the most effective safeguard organisations can provide is the preparedness to allow employees to report misconduct confident in the knowledge that their identity will be protected. The problems for the employee may be exacerbated by the other employees knowing that they have made a report (Callahan & Collins, 1992; Hosmer, 1995; Michelson & Mouly, 2002; Miethe, 1999; Phuttipaitoon & Kleiner, 2003; Trevino & Victor, 1992). Therefore it is vital that there be a method of ensuring confidentiality and anonymity so that the reporting does not of itself, contribute to the personal strain on the whistleblower.

Reprisals cannot occur if the behaviour has not happened. It is possible to create a workplace in which whistleblower activity does not need to exist, wherein the internal structure of the organisation is such that it practically eliminates the likelihood of whistleblowing *per se*, because the opportunities for speaking up are frequent and fostered by management and supervisors. It is in the best interests of the entire organisation to implement and give more than lip service to effective practices to encourage or allow reporting of misconduct; indeed to make the reporting of misconduct a normal part of the working of the organisation.

This type of approach by management or supervisory levels of the company would go some way to address the reprisals by colleagues and workmates. A Danish study to which this thesis has previously referred, found the company's internal procedures to be more effective when they were referred to on a regular basis and embraced by the management (Lindgreen, 2004). This is not a phenomenon limited to European companies, because American studies have also reported similar findings; namely, internal procedures were more effective and were improved by the attitude of managers at all levels which encouraged

employees to come forward without fear of retaliation or reprisal (Barnett *et al*, 1993; Duffy, 2003; Lindsay *et al*, 1996).

An element of the discussion to come relates to the supports that could be provided for the whistleblowers. This commentary is limited to the people who actually are whistleblowers and whose organisations have not yet arrived at the necessary levels of enlightenment mentioned above, to introduce and promote adequate internal procedures for their efficient operation. It is to be hoped that the recognition of whistleblowing as a burgeoning form of workplace regulation, albeit an unsatisfactory and distasteful one, would encourage a more diligent attention to the establishment of procedures which would eliminate the need for whistleblowing.

As previously mentioned, the legislative position in Australia is problematic in that the issue of whistleblowing is presented under various titles, ranging from Public Interest Disclosure to False Claims to Whistleblowers Protection. Federal Legislation was proposed to protect whistleblowers in 1991 and 1993, but both bills were abandoned (Sawyer, 2003). A recent announcement in 2008, by the newly elected Federal Government has once again raised the prospect of whistleblower protection legislation.

In the meantime, there is however some protection provided in common law with the case *Tournier v National Provincial and Union Bank of England* [1924]1 KB 461, setting the precedent (Latimer, 2002). This common law precedent notwithstanding, legislation in all six States, and one territory (ACT), has been written to give the whistleblower varying degrees of legal protection (Latimer, 2002).

Currently individuals within the public sector in Western Australia are offered protection when they have made disclosures under the Public Interest Disclosure



Act 2003 (WA) (PID). However, there are specific procedures which individuals need to follow in order that they may access the protections the legislation offers. If they do not adhere to the correct procedures, they will not be protected under the PID Act (Public Sector Standards, 2006). The question must therefore be asked whether the accessibility of the knowledge of correct procedures is clear; and whether potential complainants are informed about their rights and responsibilities under the Act. In the year 2004/2005, only 23 people made complaints to the Office of Public Sector Standards (OPSSC) under the Act (Public Sector Standards, 2006).

“The legislation is a road map to a padded cell.” (Charles)

While the information for potential whistleblowers is readily available from the Office of Public Sector Standards and is very clearly laid out (Public Sector Standards, 2006), there is another possible explanation that potential whistleblowers do not access it, or if they access it, choose not to use it. The steps required to use the PID Act are onerous and research has shown that individuals who observe misconduct in their workplaces are already suffering exhaustion both physically and emotionally or psychologically (McDonald, 2002). The procedure of the Public Interest Disclosure legislation require that the whistleblowers lodge their complaints without having spoken about it to anyone else, that is, the Office of Public Sector Standards be the very first body to whom the employee turns. It also calls for absolute secrecy, so that the officers from Public Sector Standards can proceed with a thorough investigation without the knowledge of the alleged wrongdoer. In order to successfully report misconduct in the workplace, correct procedures must be followed both inside the organisation and outside. Individuals need to know to whom they make their report, the steps they must take and the correct procedures to follow. They must also keep documentation to support their claims and be prepared to complete a lodgement form.

This is an almost impossible situation because as previously stated, all of the people interviewed for this study, have said that they were well into the process



of reporting to their management, thinking the occurrence to be reported was a relatively minor matter to bring to the attention to the management to simply have it rectified. At no time did the realisation that they were treading the path of the whistleblower enter their heads. Therefore, the initial report may have been made as part of a conversation. Most people do not document their conversations on a matter, and would not think to do so, until at least one or two exchanges had already been held. Therefore the record of the earliest part of the process would be missing. The other situation, where people like Helen, know that they are about to report a serious matter, they are already suffering considerable ill-effects and cannot bring themselves to go through the laborious process required by the PID Act.

Consequently, as soon as they realise that they are blowing the whistle, the issue is already common knowledge within the workplace or at the very least within the confines of management, which therefore renders the potential report invalid for the Office of Public Sector Standards; and the option of legislative protection for the whistleblower is denied them.

### **The support must be more practical**

The findings of this research clearly indicate that as a community, we are not providing the kind of support that whistleblowers need. There are a specific range of supports which the society through its legal and social channels, must put in place and then implement. There have already been legal remedies established, but they have been shown to be ineffective and too difficult for the whistleblowers to access. The difficulty arises when it is recognised that all the whistleblowers who might access these services, are individuals and do not behave according to a pre-determined set of actions. The wrongdoings of their specific workplaces have imposed choices and decisions upon them which are peculiar to their circumstances and are in turn determined by their own personal characteristics.

As they themselves have articulated, their needs are as varied as they are. It is reasonable to expect that every single whistleblower in Western Australia would have his/her own particular set of requirements to re-establish lives and livelihoods, or recover lost money or more importantly, restore damaged health. A mathematician would say that the possible combination of circumstances and predictable actions would be infinite, so the supports that the society must introduce would need to be sufficiently flexible to allow for the variety of needs.

Given the findings of this research about the personal characteristics of a whistleblower, it is problematic whether in fact they would even think to access some kinds of support. Although given the absence of appropriate support it is impossible to draw definitive conclusions. However, in the present situation, that is, where there are no practical supports available, there are two possible explanations for this.

The first explanation has already been mentioned and that is that all of the whistleblowers interviewed were well down the path of whistleblowing before they actually realised that that was what they were doing. They took the actions they did because they believed that the wrongdoing they had witnessed needed to be rectified and since they were the people who saw it or became aware of it, they were the ones to report it. The findings of this research have revealed that all of them had a strong sense of loyalty to their workplace and more importantly to the people who used their services and who as a result of the wrongful activities, would be disadvantaged. Therefore, they saw no option but to report the misdeeds. They all believed it was their responsibility and duty to bring the wrongdoing to the attention of someone who could rectify it or prevent it from continuing. None of the people interviewed believed for a moment that their actions were anything other than the normal course of action anyone would or should take. They did not see themselves as having either any greater courage than the other employees or any greater sense of moral decency than any other person in the same situation. These therefore are not the people who would even think to seek assistance, when they believe that they are doing 'the right



thing' and that anyone else would do the same and given a repeat of the same circumstances, they would do it again. Although it was shown through this research that each of the whistleblowers had reached a point in their lives, when the repercussion had become untenable, that each would have accessed some level of support and assistance had it been available, or had they known how to ask for it.

The second explanation is that by the time they realised that they may need some sort of help, it was much later, sometimes months or even years by which time the existing avenues of support are closed. In the normal scheme of things all of the consequence of an action would be felt almost immediately; the impact on the perpetrator, the impact on the victim and the impact on the offender. Long term ramifications are not often felt. Not so with whistleblowing. There is a short term consequence which is the immediate impact of reporting the action – perhaps ostracism, perhaps conversations behind hands, perhaps even quiet praise from colleagues. This is generally short-lived. But there is a long term implication that is as yet undocumented and unaddressed.

For some of the respondents it is the long term impact developed over a longer period of time which is the most damaging. The continuous repercussions eventually erode the self-belief and pierce the self-confidence. For a number of months Helen held firmly to her conviction that she had done the right thing, despite a number of very serious repercussions from her superiors and supervisors. Previously she had been highly respected and had held responsible positions. But as a result of her blowing the whistle, her reputation immediately fell amongst her peers.

Because she worked in a hierarchical workplace, the change in Helen's reputation created a ripple effect both up and down her organisation. She tried to ignore the negative work environment, her demotion and the office gossip, and kept a determined positivity in her demeanour, but eventually she started to feel the



consequences in both her mental and physical health. She was determined to stay where she was, because she believed that a move to a different workplace would be an admission that she had made an error and her detractors had been correct. This may have been the catalyst for her heart problems at a very young age, but in reality that could never be properly determined. The only thing that can be known is that Helen's steadfast determination was only one of the characteristics which previously her co-workers had valued, and it gave her the strength which helped her to survive in an environment of hostility and innuendo.

As soon as it became known that Angela was planning to report the behaviour, she was threatened by one of the interested parties with death – even before her report had been made. There were further threats principally from the one source, but the threats ranged from offering her money, frightening her by stalking her, to damaging her livelihood, to making threats against her life. These actions served only to reinforce her determination to proceed with her course of action. Her sense of integrity and honesty was never swayed; indeed her resolve was made stronger. "I was furious," she said. Angela's action in reporting the misconduct brought about the collapse of the project which was the subject of the report, but the effect it had on her health and future employment was deleterious.

Paul suffered through the subtle application of workplace reprisals such as rostering onto the difficult wards where he was not welcome, during which his colleagues ignored him both during the shift and on breaks. Other colleagues made reports about him to the Health Department. Not everyone in Paul's workplace was involved, but he did not know who was and who was not, so he felt completely isolated, but he held fast to his belief that he was doing his duty, that he was protecting the safety of his patients. Paul always thought of himself as an advocate on behalf of his patients and if he were not to fulfil that role, there would be no-one.

It was only after the whistleblowers endured the workplace reprisals for long enough to wear down their stamina, that they realised that the continuing ostracism and repercussions were not going to end; that their reporting of misconduct or office mistakes was the reason that they found themselves in this position. Only then at that point did each of the interviewees reconsider about their actions in terms of right or wrong, correct or foolhardy. The conclusions that each of them drew were that their reporting had been correct and they would do the same thing again. Indeed each became even more determined that what he/she had done was the right thing.

The support which the whistleblowers may need would vary and be available in as many different forms as there are whistleblowers. There could not a pre-determined set of remedies which can be laid down and used as necessary, because they would need to be as varied as the whistleblowers themselves. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to have an expectation that a number of social and legal agencies be available for whistleblowers to call upon whenever they need.

This research was conducted well after the whistleblowing incidents and so each of the respondents was able to realise the damage that the whistleblowing had wrought. It is a matter for conjecture whether they may have been as forthcoming if the conversations had taken place immediately after their reports were made. What the whistleblowers need, in their own words and according to all the interviewees, is a completely independent body managing the legislation and the support mechanisms. While the Office of Public Sector Standards is an independent and separate body established to administer the PID Act, it is a body whose hands are tied by the specific requirements of its legislation, and therefore whose actions must be limited by the constraints of the law.

The participants had arrived at the realisation that they knew their actions which were right and just and necessary, had precipitated a series of repercussion on them entirely unwarranted and from which each needed some type of protection.



By the time they had come to understand the connection between their current state of personal misery and career ruin, and turned their attention to thoughts of support, their determination was minimal, their energy gone and their spirits close to broken.

They were certainly not in a position to access the legislation as it stands, because their cases no longer qualified for inclusion. Their whistleblowing events were in the past; for some a long way in the past, and the availability of support was non-existent, particularly since the passage of so much time. Their energy to speak on their own behalves had almost deserted them.

The participants all mentioned the need for a disinterested and independent body, with access to public funds which could be an advocate for their rights. They also called for this independent body to have sufficient resources to help the whistleblower, in any areas in which there was a need, including legal support to challenge demotions, performance reviews etc; financial assistance to pay for the counselling and therapy that all the whistleblowers needed both in the short term and the long term. The over-riding call from the interviewees themselves was for the creation of the position of an Advocate for the whistleblower. This role of this position would be to oversee and manage all the complex and varied elements of the restoration of the life, career and psychological equanimity of the whistleblower. The Advocate would be able to pursue the separate but necessary paths for legal redress, the restitution of health, the re-establishment of careers, the settling of family life and the recovery of some of the 'normality' of their previous lives.

One of the responsibilities of the Advocate would be an educative role whereby workplace seminars could be conducted to inform all employees of their avenues for reporting misconduct in their workplaces. The advocate would be able to alert the audience to the possible and indeed likely ramifications of the actions of reporting misconduct. The positive result of such an education programme would



be twofold; firstly causing the management to encourage and strengthen the internal procedures to obviate the necessity of formal reporting; and secondly, forewarning and thus forearming the whistleblowers so that they can prepare for the reprisals.

Each of the whistleblowers suffered a considerable amount in both their work and personal lives, as has been reported, and it would be expected that a program such as that described above may have been able to reduce the severity of the impact in each of the areas of their lives. In some cases, such as those of Angela and Charlotte, whose confidence and self-belief were severely damaged over a very long period of time, an awareness programme would have prepared them for what was to come and perhaps helped them to cope better and be less damaged. Almost certainly an Advocate would have been able to step in and provide both Charles and Paul practical support before they each embarked upon the soul-destroying rounds of complaints to the Office of Public Sector Standards, the Ombudsman, the Auditor General or the Nurses Registration Board etc. Such early support would be a significant factor in the reduction of the psychological impact and damage for the whistleblower.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusion

"I was threatened: A-----<sup>5</sup> said he'd kill me, B-----<sup>6</sup> said that he would see that I would never work again, and Z-----<sup>7</sup> stalked me for a while." (Angela)

A scan of the media in recent times will reveal what appears to be an increase in the amount of whistleblowing, both in Australia and internationally. This does not reflect the reality; whistleblowing is not increasing in frequency, but it is increasing in type. The practice of whistleblowing has always existed, but in the past, public attention was drawn to more celebrated, well-known examples, and so the actions of less notable individuals were overlooked. Indeed much of the early literature devoted to whistleblowing focussed on the large and internationally well-known cases, which may have led to the conclusion that whistleblowing is an action of grand proportions and is not a course available to ordinary people. However, a review of contemporary literature has shown that more recently attention has been paid to the whistleblowing actions of less well-known individuals; thus consolidating the modern understanding that whistleblowing is one of the courses of action open to anyone who sees misconduct and wishes to report it. While the literature and the popular understanding is that whistleblowing is a tool for use by ordinary people, it must never be thought that a whistleblower is an ordinary person. The stories that this research has discovered show the extraordinary courage and loyalty which have prompted the interviewees to speak up and report misconduct, in the face of

---

<sup>5</sup> Name removed to preserve confidentiality

<sup>6</sup> Name removed to preserve confidentiality

<sup>7</sup> Name removed to preserve confidentiality

debilitating and sometimes dangerous reprisals. Furthermore this research has revealed that whistleblowers do not regard themselves as having any extra qualities than any other person; and demonstrate a high level of humility in believing their actions to be no more than anyone else would do.

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the motivation behind the act of reporting on misconduct in the workplace. The research questions were:

1. What are the personal characteristics of the whistleblower which prompt them to speak out against misconduct in their workplaces?
2. Are the Organisational Citizenship Behaviours of altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, civic virtue, conscientiousness and loyalty the only motivations underpinning employees reporting misconduct or blowing the whistle?

To this end a series of semi-structured interviews was conducted with people who identify themselves as whistleblowers and who had made a report of misconduct within the public sector. While the interview transcripts are not available for perusal, a brief outline of the circumstances of each whistleblowing incident is included in Chapter 4. The circumstances of some of the incidents and the individuals involved are such that they are likely to be recognised in a small environment like the public sector on Western Australia, so names have been changed or deleted and details have been omitted. Indeed it was not the whistleblowing incidents per se that were the focus of this research, rather the characteristics of the whistleblowers. Each of these people knew that they would attract some sort of reprisals or repercussions for their actions, but notwithstanding that, they all remained steadfast in their determination. However, it was not anticipated by any of the interviewees that the reprisals would be quite so damaging both in the workplace and in the home.



The interviews revealed a range of issues and consequences which were a direct consequence of the whistleblowing; all of which were negative and impacted all areas of the lives of the participants; including dramatically altered life circumstances; breakdowns of personal relationships; removal from work; damage to their health and loss of confidence. It is significant that not one of the interviewees is still working or living in the same area having either voluntarily removed themselves or been removed.

They also revealed a set of themes common to each participant's story, which were discussed in Chapter 5. The themes were: the meaning of work; the personal characteristics of the whistleblower; the ideal characteristics and responsibilities of an employee; and the legislative and internal protections. Each interview also revealed a number of recommendations for the treatment of whistleblowers. This was not sought throughout the interview and is a welcome but an unintended consequence. These suggestions bear witness to the characteristics of the interviewees, their altruism, their public spirited generosity and civic-mindedness – in a time when it would be understandable that they may be bitter and unhappy at their treatment. They were discussed in Chapter 7.

Each participant in this research has variously described themselves in such general terms as loyal, fair, just, conscientious and principled. US researcher into the theory of Organisational Behaviour, Dennis Organ has branched into a complementary theory of Organisational Citizenship Behaviours (OCB) to explain the prosocial behaviours of individuals where there is no immediate reward or recognition. This theory nominates five behaviours, namely altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, civic virtue and conscientiousness, which underpin prosocial actions and are the motivation behind such public spirited actions as whistleblowing. This research called for these qualities to be assessed against those outlined in the theory of OCB. A sixth quality, namely that of loyalty to the organisation, its customers and fellow workers, has also been included in the basket of qualities for examination.

The interviews were conducted with the aim of finding out what particular personal characteristics were possessed by whistleblowers, which allowed them to speak out against misconduct, when they knew they would suffer some sort of repercussion for it.

Therefore the stories of the interviewees were examined against OCBs and loyalty and it was found that the behaviours of the Western Australian whistleblowers fitted the criteria set down by Organ's theory. Their personal characteristics showed that they were indeed aligned to the theory. Furthermore their loyalty to their company, to their clients and to themselves, was shown to be of the highest order. Some responses mirrored the terms used in the theory of OCB, but others used language which is similar. Julia actually said, "I have great loyalty to those who use our services," while Angela referred to her loyalty to the customers and the company.

While the participants did not use the same terminology when describing themselves, as that of the theory of OCB, the underlying motivations for their behaviours are similar. Indeed the conclusion which this research has drawn is that the differences in terminology may easily be explained by semantic differences across cultures, the Organ theory emanating from the US.

Within this framework, it was important to find out about the degree of control that each participant had over his/her work environment in order to ascertain whether the whistleblowing actions were as a result of personal frustrations and lack of control at work. However, it was found that all respondents had a high degree of personal autonomy in their workplace and were engaged and challenged by their work. The significance of this conclusion is that each respondent was working in a position from which each gained personal fulfilment and enjoyment. Not one of the respondents was from an area wherein he/she had no responsibility. They had each risen through the ranks to achieve a level of



responsibility of at least junior management level or its equivalent and were all mature people.

This information led to the questions of age and maturity and whether they may have been a factor in the decision to report the misconduct. The research had shown that people will have loyalty to their organisation no matter what their level and no matter what their age or years of service to the company. This strongly suggests that the personal characteristics play a significantly important role in the decision to report misconduct. To the extent that this may be the case, this was seen as a limitation because there could still be doubt over the motivating factors for whistleblowing. Therefore it is one of the recommendations of this paper that further research be conducted into the degree of seniority, age and length of service of the whistleblowers.

The conversations also revealed that contrary to the research findings from Paine and Organ (2000), the Australian ethos of 'mateship' was not a limiting factor in the whistleblowing process, as Paine and Organ had found, rather it was not considered by any of the respondents to have played a part at all. Therefore, it was neither a limiting factor nor a factor which promoted citizenship behaviours, a finding which definitely refutes the claim of Paine and Organ.

As it has already been shown, the whistleblowers did not know that they were actually whistleblowers, until they were well down the path of their new-found status. Therefore they would need access to a service which can assist them after they have spoken up about the misconduct, unlike the PID Act. Furthermore, they had not immediately connected the ill effects they suffered at their workplaces with their actions of whistleblowing. So an office which can provide them with knowledge and support services to address each problem as it arises, would be a valuable tool in the struggle against misconduct or corruption.



A key to the understanding of the personal characteristics of the whistleblowers is that when they undertook to report the misconduct in the first place, they had no idea of the extent of the ramifications to them, their careers and even their health. In most cases they expected a small adverse reaction, ranging from annoyance to a short term 'cold shoulder' from co-workers. But the significant finding from this research is that in spite of the adverse consequences for the whistleblowers, which have already been discussed, they have all said that they would do it again and furthermore, that they had done nothing that anyone else would not have done.

This research has set out to examine the personal qualities of those people who identify themselves as whistleblowers and to examine these qualities against those laid down by Dennis Organ in his theory of Organisational Citizenship Behaviours. It has been found that, allowing for the semantic differences which occur naturally across cultures, the personal characteristics of the whistleblowers are indeed aligned with the prosocial behaviours of the OCB theory. The problem identified by Organ relating to the Australian ethos of 'mateship' was also found to be unproven. It was also revealed that the legislative or internal protection and support for the whistleblower was inadequate and the whistleblowers themselves actually made suggestions for improvements and for the creation of a whistleblower Advocate. There can be no demonstration of prosocial behaviours more influential than this; because all of the participants had been hurt to varying degrees by the workplace reprisals and yet each was able to go beyond their pain and make an unsolicited suggestion for the better management of future whistleblowers. The existence of another characteristic common to all participants, that of humility, is a matter for further research.

Therefore the answer to the first research question has been shown to be that the personal characteristics of the whistleblower which prompts them to speak out against misconduct in their workplaces is directly linked to the qualities listed by Organ. This is apparent whether they are called the same name or not; and the answer to the second question of whether those characteristics are the only

motivations for whistleblowing is a resounding negative because the qualities do not occur in isolation and they are within each of the individuals along with their humility and courage.

## References

- Ambrose, M. L., & Schminke, M. (2003). Organizational structure as a moderator of the relationship between procedural justice, interactional justice, perceived organizational support, and supervisory trust. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(2).
- Barnett, T. (1992). A Preliminary Investigation of the Relationship between Selected Organizational Characteristics and External Whistleblowing by Employees. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 11(12), 949-960.
- Barnett, T., Cochran, D. S., & Taylor, G. S. (1993). The internal disclosure policies of private sector employees: An initial look at their relationship to employee whistleblowing. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 12(2), 127-137.
- Berry, B. (2004). Organizational Culture: A Framework and Strategies for Facilitating Employee Whistleblowing. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, 16(1), 1-11.
- Bolino, M. C. (1999). Citizenship and impression management: Good soldiers or good actors. *Academy of Management Review*, 24(1), 82-98.
- Callahan, E. S., & Collins, J. W. (1992). Employee attitudes towards whistleblowing: Management and public policy implications. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 11(12), 939-949.
- Callahan, E. S., Dworkin, T. M., Fort, T. L., & Schipani, C. A. (2002). Integrating trends in whistleblowing and corporate governance: Promoting organizational effectiveness, societal responsibility, and employee empowerment. *American Business Law Journal*, 40(1), 177-216.
- Chiu, R. K. (2003). Ethical judgment and whistleblowing intention: Examining the moderating role of locus of control. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 43(1/2), 65-73.
- Dozier, J. B., & Miceli, M. P. (1985). Potential Predictors of Whistleblowing: A Prosocial Behavior Perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, 10(4), 823-836.
- Duffy, C. (2003). *The Freehills whistleblowing eSurvey*. Retrieved 27th September, 2004, from [www.freehills.com/CA256AD900137BAA/page/Listing-homepage-The+Freehills+whistleblowing+esurvey00196D7Afile:///C:/C%5CDocuments%20and%20Settings%5Csharank%5CMy%20Documents%5CMaster%20research%5CMasters%20Research%5CLiterature%20review%20version%2002.doc](http://www.freehills.com/CA256AD900137BAA/page/Listing-homepage-The+Freehills+whistleblowing+esurvey00196D7Afile:///C:/C%5CDocuments%20and%20Settings%5Csharank%5CMy%20Documents%5CMaster%20research%5CMasters%20Research%5CLiterature%20review%20version%2002.doc)



- Dunlop, P., D., & Lee, K. (2004). Workplace deviance, organizational citizenship behavior, and business unit performance: the bad apples do spoil the whole barrel. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 25(1), 67-78.
- Dworkin, T. M., & Baucus, M. S. (1998). *Internal Vs external whistleblowers: a comparison of whistleblowing process*. Retrieved September 30, 2004, from <http://ipsapp007.kluweronline.com/IPS/content/ext/xj/45621/10/A/11/file:///F:/%5CResearch%20Proposal%20Whistleblower%20.doc>
- Elliston, F. A. (1982). Anonymity and whistleblowing. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 3, 167-177.
- Faunce, T., Bolsin, S., & Chan, W.-P. (2004, February 2004). *Supporting whistleblowers in academic medicine: training and respecting the courage of professional conscience*. Paper presented at the Olivieri Symposium.
- Gabriel, M. (2004). Aspirationalism: the search for respect in an unequal society. *Journal of Australian Studies*, 80, 147-159.
- Grabosky, P., & Larmour, P. (2000). *Public Sector Corruption and its Control* (No. 24): Australian Institute of Criminology.
- Grant, C. (2002). Whistle Blowers: Saints of secular culture. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 39(4), 391-400.
- Greenberger, D. B., Miceli, M. P., & Cohen, D. J. (1987). Oppositionists and group norms: The reciprocal influence of whistleblowers and coworkers. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 6(7), 527-542.
- Griffin, G. (2003). Selling the Snowy: the Snowy Mountains Scheme and national mythmaking. *Journal of Australian Studies*, 79, 39-55.
- Hafen, S. (2004). Organizational Gossip: A revolving door of regulation and resistance. *The Southern Communication Journal*, 69(3), 223-241.
- Holmes, S. A., Langford, M., Welch, J. O., & Welch, S. T. (2002). Associations Between Internal Controls and Organizational Citizenship Behavior. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 14(1), 85-99.
- Hood, A. (1998). Public officials, government and the public trust: Schizophrenia? *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 57(1), 98-114.
- Hosmer, L. T. (1995). Trust: The connecting link between organizational theory and philosophical ethics. *Academy of Management Review*, 20(2), 379-404.
- In the Public Interest, Australian Senate, Senate Select Committee on Public Interest Whistleblowing Sess.(2004).

- Jubb, P. B. (1999). Whistleblowing: A restrictive definition and interpretation. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 21(1), 77-95.
- Kapferer, B., & Morris, B. (2003). The Australian Society of the state; egalitarian ideologies and new directions in exclusionary practice. *Social Analysis*, 47(3), 80-109.
- Keenan, J. P. (1990). Upper-Level Managers and Whistleblowing: Determinants of Perceptions of Company Encouragement and Information about Where to Blow the Whistle. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 5, 223-235.
- Kidwell, R. E. (1997). Cohesiveness and organizational citizenship behavior: A multilevel analysis using workgroups and individuals - A Special Issue: Focus on Hierarchical Linear Modeling. *Journal of Management*, 23(6), 775-792.
- King, G. I. (1999). The Implications of the Organization's Structure on Whistleblowing. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 20(4), 315-326.
- Larmer, R. (1992). Whistleblowing and employee loyalty. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 11(2), 125-129.
- Latimer, P. (2002a). Reporting suspicions of money laundering and whistleblowing: The legal and other implications for intermediaries and their advisors. *Journal of Financial Crime*, 10(1), 23-29.
- Latimer, P. (2002b). Whistleblowing in the Financial Services Sector. *University of Tasmania Law Review*, 21(1), 39-61.
- Lennane, K. J. (1993). Whistleblowing: A health issue. *British Medical Journal*, 307(6905), 667-671.
- Lepine, J. A., & Van Dyne, L. (2001). Peer responses to low performer: An attribution model of helping in the context of groups. *Academy of Management Review*, 26(1), 67-58
- Lewis, D. (2004). Whistleblowing at work: on what principles should legislation be based? *Industrial Law Journal*, 30(2), 169-193.
- Lindgreen, A. (2004). Corruption and Unethical Behavior: Report on a set of Danish Guidelines. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 51(1), 31-40.
- Lindsay, R. M., Lindsay, L. M., & Irvine, V. B. (1996). Instilling ethical behavior in organizations: A survey of Canadian companies. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 15(4), 393-408.
- Lovell, A. (2002). Ethics as a dependent variable in individual and organisational decision making. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 37(2), 145-164.



- Maria, W. d. (1995). Whistleblowing. *Alternative Law Journal*, 20(6), 270-281.
- Maria, W. d. (1996). The welfare whistleblower: In praise of troublesome people. *Australian Social Work*, 49(3), 15-24.
- Maria, W. d., & Jan, C. (1997). Eating its own: The whistleblower's organisation in vendetta mode. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 31(1), 37-59.
- Martin, B. (2004). The dynamics of employee dissent: Whistleblowers and organizational jiu-jitsu. *Public Organization Review*, 4(3), 221-238.
- McDonald, S. (2002). Physical and emotional effects of whistleblowing. *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing & Mental Health Services*, 40(1), 14-28.
- Miceli, M., & Near, J. (1984). The relationship among beliefs, organisational position, and whistleblowing status: A discriminant analysis. *Academy of Management Journal*, 27(4), 687-705.
- Miceli, M., & Near, J. (1985). Characteristics of Organizational Climate and Perceived Wrongdoing Associated with Whistle-blowing Decisions. *Personnel Psychology*, 38(3), 525-555.
- Miceli, M., & Near, J. (1988). Individual and situational correlates of whistleblowing. *Personnel Psychology*, 41(2), 267-281.
- Michelson, G., & Mouly, V. S. (2002). "You didn't hear it from us but... Towards and understanding of rumour and gossip in organisations. *Australian Journal of Management*, 27(Special Issue), 57-65.
- Miethe, B. H. (1999). *Whistleblowing at Work*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Near, J., & Miceli, M. (1996). Whistleblowers: Myth or Reality. *Journal of Management*, 22(3), 507-527.
- Newman, K., L. (1993). The just organization: Creating and maintaining justice in work environments. *Washington and Lee Law Review*, 50(4), 1489-1504.
- O'Brien, G. E. (1984). Group Productivity. In M. Gruneberg & T. Wall (Eds.), *Social Psychology and Organizational Behaviour*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Organ, D. W. (1988). *Organizational Citizenship Behavior: The "good soldier" syndrome*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.
- Organ, D. W. (1990). The Motivational Basis of Organizational Citizenship Behavior. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 12, 43-72.
- Organ, D. W. (1994). Personality and Organizational Citizenship Behavior. *Journal of Management*, 20(2), 465-478.



- Organ, D. W. (1997). Organizational Citizenship Behavior: It's Construct Clean-up Time. *Human Performance*, 10(2), 85-97.
- Page, J. (2002). Is mateship a virtue? *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 37(4), 193-201.
- Paine, J. B., & Organ, D. W. (2000). The Cultural Matrix of Organizational Citizenship Behavior. *Human Resource Management Review*, 10(1), 45-59.
- Peterson, C. and Seligman, M.E.P. (1983). Learned helplessness and victimization *Journal of Social Science Issues* 2 103-116
- Phuttipaitoon, S., & Kleiner, B. H. (2003). How to show retaliation at work. *Equal Opportunities International*, 22(6/7), 37-48.
- Premeaux, S. F., & Bedeian, A. (2003). Breaking the silence: the moderating effects of self-monitoring in predicting speaking up in the workplace. *The Journal of Management Studies*, 40(1), 1537-1562.
- Public Interest Disclosure Bill 2001, Commonwealth, Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee Sess.(2002).
- Qusqas, F., & Kleiner, B. H. (2001). The difficulties of whistleblowers finding employment. *Management Research News*, 24(3/4), 97-100.
- Robbins, S. P. (1991). *Organizational Behaviour: Concepts, controversies and applications* (5th ed.). New Jersey: Prentice-Hall International Inc.
- Rothschild, J., & Miethe, B. H. (1999). Whistleblower disclosures and management retaliation. *Work and Occupations*, 26(1), 107-128.
- Sawyer, K. (2003, 13 January). Let's Encourage Whistleblowers. *The Age*.
- Schnake, M. E. (1991). Organizational Citizenship: A review, proposed model , and research agenda. *Human Relations*, 44(7), 735-760.
- Schnake, M. E., & Dumler, M. P. (2003). Levels of measurement and analysis issues in organizational citizenship behavior. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 76(3), 283-296.
- Shamir, B. (2003). Trust in Organizational superiors: systemic and collective considerations. *Organizational Studies*.
- Sims, R. L., & Keenan., J. P. (1998). Predictors of External Whistleblowing: Organizational and Intrapersonal Variables. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 17, 411-421.
- Somers, M. J., & Casal, J. C. (1994). Organizational Commitment and Whistleblowing: a test of the reformer and the organization man hypothesis. *Group and Organization Management*, 19(3), 270-284.

- Summers, J. (2004). A Lexicon of Conflict under Concertive Control Conditions. *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 25(3), 447-473.
- Tepper, B. J., Duffy, M. K., Hoobler, J., & Ensley, M. D. (2004). Moderators of the Relationships Between Coworkers' Organizational Citizenship Behaviour and Fellow Employees' Attitudes. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89(3), 455-465.
- Trevino, L. K. (1986). Ethical Decision Making in Organizations: A Person-Situation Interactionist Model. *Academy of Management Review*, 11(3), 601-618.
- Trevino, L. K., & Victor, B. (1992). Peer Reporting of Unethical Behavior: A Social Context Perspective. *Academy of Management Journal*, 35(1), 38-65.
- Trimmer, A. (2003). Implementing best practice: Whistleblower programs and providing whistleblower protection. *Keeping Good Companies*, 55(10), 599-603.
- Van Dyne, L., Cummings, L. L., & Parks, J. M. (1995). Extra-role behaviors: in pursuit of construct and definitional clarity (a bridge over muddied waters). *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 17, 215-285.
- Van Dyne, L., Graham, J. W., & Dienesch, R. M. (1994). Organizational Citizenship Behavior: Construct Redefinition, Measurement and Validation. *Academy of Management Journal*, 37(4), 765-802.
- Vandekerchove, W., & Commers, M. S. R. (2004). Whistleblowing and Rational Loyalty. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 53(1-2), 225-233.
- Vinten, G. (2000). Whistleblowing towards disaster prevention and management. *Disaster Prevention and Management*, 1, 18-28.
- Vinten, G. (2003). Whistleblowing: The UK experience Part 1. *Management Decision*, 41(9), 935-943.
- Warren, I., & James, S. (1996, 29,30, 31 July 1996). *Women and Police Culture in Victoria*. Paper presented at the Australian Institute of Criminology Conference First Australasian Women Police Conference, Sydney.
- Zhu, W., May, D. R., & Avolio, B. J. (2004). The impact of ethical leadership on employee outcomes: The roles of psychological empowerment and authenticity. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, 11(1), 16-27.
- Zipparo, L. (1999). Encouraging public sector employees to report workplace corruption. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 58(2), 83-93.

**Appendix A**

**Demographic Questions**

**1. Gender**

Male

☐

Female

☐

**2. How long have you worked in your organisation?**

---

---

---

**3. How would you categorise the position you hold in your organisation?**

Upper management?

☐

Middle management?

☐

Supervisory level?

☐

Entry level?

☐

**4. What age group do you fall into?**

18 – 24

☐

25 – 34?

☐

35 – 44?

☐

45 – 54?

☐

Over 55?

☐

**5. Does your organisation have a recognised procedure to manage whistleblower reports?**

Yes

☐

No

☐



It is anticipated that the following questions will form the initial set of questions.

1. What does your work mean to you?
2. As an employee, what characteristics are most desirable?
3. As a team member, how do you see your responsibilities towards other team members?
4. Can you give me an example of how you respond when someone does something you disapprove of in the workplace?
5. Tell me about your experience as a whistleblower.
6. What was the main thing that compelled you to act?
7. How would you describe the personal qualities that you possess which made you speak out, that other people may not have?
8. Can you name these qualities?
9. Why did you speak out and not someone else?
10. Would you say that another person may have done the same thing if they had noticed what you noticed?
11. Would you say that you have a strong sense of personal control at work?
12. Is there a provision in your organisation for anonymous reporting of misdeeds or corruption?
13. What are the procedures at your workplace for managing whistleblowing?

14. Can you tell me about any reprisals either official or unofficial which have been directed towards you as a result of your whistleblowing?
15. Tell me about the relationship that you had with your colleagues before and what sort of relationship you have now.
16. In your experience, have whistleblowers in your organisation had career opportunities limited because of their actions as whistleblowers?
17. Does your organisation have a policy for minimising workplace reprisals on the whistleblower?
18. What is it?
19. Were you aware of the legislative protection available to you if you chose to take this matter to the courts?
20. Why did you not pursue the matter in the court?
21. Would you ever use the courts to get some sort of redress for the repercussions which have befallen you?
22. What was it about this legislation which made you decide not to use it?
23. What provisions would you like to see in legislation which would prompt you to use it?

**Appendix B**  
**Information letter**

**The whistleblower in the workplace: the influence of the personal characteristics of individuals who have blown the whistle in one Australian context.**

You are invited to participate in my research project, which is being conducted as part of the requirements of a Masters Degree in Criminal Justice. Details about the research are given below.

The purpose of the project is to examine the personal characteristics of you the whistleblower which impelled you to act in spite of fears of possible reprisals and recriminations in your organisation, and how this has affected your job.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be interviewed. The interview will be taped. The interview should last no more than one hour, and will take place at a time and in a place which is mutually convenient and private. The tape will be transcribed and the transcription given to you for verification and then stored in separate locked storage areas in the School of Law and Justice.

The information will be used to complete the requirements for my Masters Degree, and only myself and the supervisors will have access to the raw data. Any information or details given for this study will be kept confidential. If you choose to participate, I also seek your consent to use the information that you have provided for the purpose of other related research that I may undertake at a future time. Again, confidentiality is assured and you will not be identified in any way.

Participation in this project is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you are free to withdraw your participation at any time without giving a reason and with no negative consequences. You are also free to ask for any information to be withdrawn from the study.

If during the interview you feel distressed in any way, the interview will stop and you have the choice to speak about how you're feeling to the interviewer, her supervisors or

Crisis Care: 24hour counselling service. Phone: 9223 1111

Mental Health Direct: 24 hour mental health advice and assessment service. Phone: 1800 220 400 (free call).

Psychiatric Emergency Team: psychiatric emergency assessment and advisory service. Phone: 1300 555 788 (cost of a local call).

If you have any questions or require any further information about the research project, please contact:

Sharan Kraemer  
Phone 6304 5889  
[s.kraemer@ecu.edu.au](mailto:s.kraemer@ecu.edu.au)

Dr Ann-Claire Larsen  
Phone: 6304 5597  
[a.larsen@ecu.edu.au](mailto:a.larsen@ecu.edu.au)

Mr Glenn Ross  
[g.ross@ccc.wa.gov.au](mailto:g.ross@ccc.wa.gov.au)

If you have any concerns or complaints about the research project and wish to talk to an independent person, you may contact: Research Ethics Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, Edith Cowan University 100 Joondalup Drive JOONDALUP WA 6027. Phone: (08) 6304 2170 Email: [research.ethics@ecu.edu.au](mailto:research.ethics@ecu.edu.au)

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.



**Appendix C**

**Informed Consent Form**

**The whistleblower in the workplace: the influence of the personal characteristics of individuals who have blown the whistle in one Australian context.**

I have been provided with a copy of the Information letter, explaining the project.  
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I have been informed by the researcher that if at any stage I experience distress, the interview will be terminated immediately and I will be provided with counselling contact numbers.

I understand that participation in the research project will involve participation in an interview which will be audio-taped. The interview should last no more than one hour, and will take place at a time and in a place which is mutually convenient and private. The tape will be transcribed. I understand that I will be given an opportunity to review the transcriptions or notes and return them to the interviewer to be stored in separate locked storage areas within the School of Law and Justice.

I understand that the information provided will be strictly confidential, and I will not be identified in any written assignment or presentation of the results of this project.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from further participation at any time, without explanation or penalty.

I further understand that the information provided by me may form part of another research project on a similar study should the opportunity arise. I understand that should any aspect of the study be published, no identifying material, for example, people’s names, will be included. I expect that at all times and in all contexts, confidentiality and anonymity considerations as outlined above will apply.

I freely agree to participate in the project

.....  
**Name**

.....  
**Signature**

.....  
**Date**