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From Passivity to Toxicity

Susceptible followers in a conducive environment



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Abstract

The romance of leadership is over. So is the romance of followership. Indeed, followers are not passive as they used to be considered. The majority of the scholars underline their active role in the creation of the relationship with the leader. This is why when it comes to toxic leadership; the leader is not the only one to blame. Actually, followers are equally responsible for the maintenance and even the creation of toxicity in an organization context. Padilla et al. (2007) argue that toxic leadership comes from the interaction of a toxic leader, susceptible followers and a conducive environment.

This research paper focuses on the interaction of two of these components: susceptible followers and the conducive environment. The aim is to understand the role of the influence of the environment on decision making in a first time. Then, how individuals, under pressure when it comes to decision making are more likely to maintain or foster toxicity.

After a deep digging into the psychological and sociological mechanisms which are at the basis of the following process, this paper ends by a reflection on human being's relation with freedom.

Key Words

toxicity, conducive environment, susceptible followers, following process, pressure of the environment, existential fears, abandon of morality, fear of freedom.

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Did you really believe until now that there were tyrants? Well, you made a mistake. There are only slaves. Where nobody obeys, nobody control.

Anselme Bellegarrigue

1. Introduction

The majority of the authors of these past few decades talking about leadership focused on the bright side or the leaders. For instance Bennis (2009) talks about the leader as the one who is in charge of the construction and on the development of the group; De Pree (2004) thinks about the leader as the one who is giving a momentum to the followers; Gardner (1996) describes the leaders as the manager of meaning, someone who is able to shape a new reality for the followers and give them new points of references. The leader described by these authors is an ideal leader, the one who is able to build a team and makes people follow not because they have to but because they truly believe in the ideas supported by the leader. But this is not always the case; I would say that this is even rarely the case. This is not breaking news, the romance of leadership is over and the leader is not always acting for the well-being of the followers. Show, Erickson & Harvey (2011, p. 575) say that ‘leaders are not always interested in effecting change for the purpose of benefiting the organization and its members as a whole: rather, the leader may be more interested in personal outcomes’. Indeed, leaders can be selfish and lead in order to serve only their own interests. In such a situation, the leader is what is called a Toxic Leader. Padilla et al. (2007) define a toxic leader in terms of negative outcomes in the long-term. They argue that a leader who is acting in his or her first interest can be a good leader on the short-term because whatever his or her characteristics, he or she can succeed in leading the group efficiency. That is the reason why toxic leadership can be evaluated only in term of long-term incomes. Kellerman (2004 in Padilla et al. 2007) distinguish different level of toxicity, from inefficient to unethical. Lipman-Blumen (2005, p. 2) defines toxic leaders as ‘individuals, who by dint of their destructive behaviors and dysfunctional personal qualities generate a serious and enduring poisonous effect on the individuals, families, organizations, communities, and even entire societies they lead’. This explains that a toxic leader is not only a “bad leader”, but a leader whose actions have a toxic effect on people and the organization. Indeed, one can even go further by saying that a leader can be perceived as a good leader thanks to his or her interpersonal skills but can have a poisonous and toxic effect on people. Indeed, a leader can be nice and charismatic and willing to act for the good of his or her people on the surface, but could actually use emotional intelligence to get what he or she wants from the employees and manipulate them. For Salovey and Mayer (1990, p. 189), emotional intelligence is ‘the ability

to monitor one's own and other's feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions' and a lot of authors praise this ability as the ultimate tool of good leaders (eg. Goleman 2006, Salovey & Mayer 1990; Mayer, Roberts & Barsade 2008; Walter, Cole & Humphrey 2011; George 2000). Nevertheless, Delabelle & Bourdoux (2014, p. 56) explain that emotional intelligence is an 'empoisoned gift' for unethical leader can use it in order to get from people what they want in order to serve their own interests.

But leaders are not alone! An increasing part of the scholars focus on followers as actively involved in the construction of the relationship which link them to the leader. The followers are not followers because they are subordinate to a hierarchically superior person, but they actually have to agree to follow this person, whatever his or her title. 'When it comes to leadership, subordinates need to accept these suggestions and understand themselves as followers' (Blom & Alvesson 2014, p.345). Smircich and Morgan (1982) explain that there is no leadership if some individuals of the group do not let someone else, the leader, shaping at least a part of their reality. Being a follower is a matter of personal choice.

Finally, by understanding followership from this scope, it would be way too easy to put the blame only on leaders when it comes to toxicity. If followers are co-creator of leadership and that the romance of leadership is over, it would be natural to think that followers play a role in toxic leadership. There are leaders everywhere, who have, consciously or unconsciously, a poisonous impact on followers. But if followers still follow, if they do not question the validity of the leader's action and continue to obey the orders, and continue whatever happens to "just doing their job", even though they are aware of the toxicity engendered by the leader's decision, so they are toxic too. If the romance of leadership is over, so is the romance of followership. Follower's actions and behaviors have the power to increase and foster toxicity, but also to decrease and prevent toxicity.

Indeed, Padilla et al. (2007) conceptualized toxicity as the 'Toxic triangle' (p.176): 'Destructive leadership entails the negative consequences that result from a confluence of destructive leaders, susceptible followers, and conducive environments'. The idea of the Toxic Triangle is not that followers are toxic but that there is a toxic leader, which has negative outcomes because of his or her behavior, decision making and action taking. The toxic leader is surrounded by followers, which are likely to let the toxicity to spread out because they are not strong enough to stand up against what might be toxic and the whole, supported by an environment which is favorable to the rise of toxicity. So followers can have a behavior, which foster toxicity and have, as it is for toxic leaders, long-term negative outcomes. Such behaviors are multiple and

as it is for toxic leaders, there is a hierarchy in the behaviors of followers, which could foster toxic leadership. Followers can be silent (Carsten et al. 2010), they can be passive (Bardes & Piccolo in Padilla et al. 2007), or they can have a destructive consent (Bratton et al. 2004). From there I define a susceptible follower as someone who is ready to follow a leader not because he or she really understands and shares the ideas of this leader but because he or she is influenced by the general trend and who is not wishing to be an opponent to this general trend.

And finally, in the Triangle of Padilla et al. (2007), there is a third element which has to be taken into account: the conducive environment, an environment, which is likely to foster toxicity. The environment has an important role to play when it comes to toxicity. Hitler is ‘a prime example of toxic leadership’ (Kellerman 2004 in Padilla et al. 2007). Beyond being charismatic and having good rhetoric skills, people wanted a strong man at the head of Germany mainly because of the context. Germany lost the First World War, the country was destroyed people were poor and starving to death. The situation was catastrophic and this extremely conducive environment led people to minimize their critical point of view and ended to accept the unacceptable or stayed blind in front of the reality because they wanted things to be done. In a less extreme context, Blom & Alvesson (2014) studied the need for leadership of high-skilled employees in a professional environment and they argue that the need of leader is ‘on demand’. This means that in the every-day life of an enterprise, middle-managers enjoy a high degree of freedom and do not appreciate to have interference. When the situation is easily understandable and people can give sense to it, they do not need a leader, they need a facilitator. Indeed, they need someone who is in charge of the general organization, who is able to facilitate the working process of the community. Nevertheless, they need a leader as a sense-giver (Weick 1995) in exceptional situations, situations which are out of the routine. Finally, people do not really need leaders when they can give sense themselves to the situation but when it becomes out of control, they need that a higher-skilled person help them to make sense to what is happening. From this theory, I think that people are more likely to surrender their sense-giving power if the situation gets out of hand. The shock doctrine of Naomi Klein (2007) illustrates in a rather extreme way my thoughts. She argues that the natural disasters (Katrina or the hurricane in New Orleans for instance) or created disasters (Wars, political messes, financial crisis...) are used by politicians and other leaders, who take advantage of the situation to implement policies who are less favorable to people but, which give them more power and control. They act as toxic leaders, taking advantage of the state of mind people, weakened by shocks. This theory put the light on the fact that followers are more likely to accept to follow if they have the feeling that the situation is out of control. And they do not follow the leader because they particularly

agree with his or her discourse but because they think that this leader is the one who could put order in the chaos. Let us take again the example of Adolf Hitler for the second and last time. Germany lost the First World War, Germany was ruined and humiliated, people were starving and they could not find by themselves a light in the end of the tunnel. And this Hitler came, bringing hope and promises to these people. He was the light in the end of the tunnel, for he promised to have the greatness of Germany back. The majority of the German people did not want such a disaster of course, but they wanted a strong man and they above all needed the promises brought by the strong man. They needed someone who was able to bring back order in the chaos.

Such stories about the horrible event in the past, but also less horrible other stories like economic or political scandals of the past century show that decisions made by followers in some cases are well affected by the environment at a very moment. One cannot remake the history, but one can imagine that some choices made by some people would have been different in another context, a more favorable economic context, a less chaotic societal context. All the choices we made are influenced by the world around us. This is normal; this is a human being behavior to analyze the situation at a very moment to make the better decision in order to increase our outcomes. The decisions we make and actions we take is supposed to bring what the context does not provide in a first place. But as I developed earlier, there are people who are more likely to be influenced than others, there are susceptible followers and there are also strong followers. And even if there are susceptible and strong followers and that the decision making is in the end, a personal choice, the environment is always a matter of prime importance when it comes to decision making. This is actually why I do not categorize the followers in different categories to explain their susceptibility as do Padilla et al. (2007). I actually think that the environment is so important when it comes to decision making that all followers are susceptible to become susceptible followers as Padilla et al (2007) define them. It means that I think that all followers are likely to follow the general trend because of the environment. I do not think that only one kind of followers is likely to foster toxicity. I think that all kind of followers, all of us, are likely to foster toxicity in certain contexts.

The aim of this research paper is first to understand the pressure of the environment on followers in decision making. Then, how this pressure can make people surrender their critical point of view toward a situation and then, how the abandonment of this critical point of view can foster or even create toxicity.

The starting point of my reflection is the Toxic Triangle of Padilla et al. (2007) but instead of focusing on the interrelation of the three components, I would rather have a ‘Bottom-up’ approach by focusing on the influence of a conducive environment on susceptible followers. This leads to my research question:

How can the relationship between susceptible followers and a conducive environment foster toxicity?

Here is a system which illustrates schematically my research question



Schema inspired by the toxic Triangle of Padilla et al (2007), created by Esther Baronce 2015

1.2. Why this topic?

The aim of my master thesis is to understand how the environment influences followers in their decision making and by this mechanism, foster or create toxic environment. My research question is primarily focused on followers. Why do they follow? Why do they follow even if they do not always want to follow? Why are we, human beings, capable of reflecting in order to make our own choices but we are still somehow making choices which go against our reflection? What is the aim of thinking if we finally do not use reflection? Why? Why are we following?

I have been studying leadership during one year and it has been a wonderful year. I learnt a lot of fruitful things, about how to lead the others, but first of all about how to lead myself. And for this I am very grateful to all the teachers of the program, and especially Philippe Daudi, the head of the program. But what I also learnt is that we, each of us in the class, are more likely to become followers and not leaders, or at least not only leaders. And even if we will certainly have leading roles in some cases, we will still have follower roles in other cases. And this is fine. The matter is not to be a leader at any costs but is to be a clever follower, a ‘courageous follower’ as named by Ira Chaleff (2009), a follower, who is actively involved in the construction of leadership and not only criticizing. This is also a reason why I chose this topic. By talking with people around me, I realized the crazy number of persons, who disagree with their boss, disagree with the politics, the society and basically everything. But the number of person who actually acts is very limited. And I want to understand why. Why do people complain and do not stand up for what they have to say? Why don’t we succeed in constructing something positive out of the anger and disappointment?

1.3. Do I raise an important question?

Yes I think so. Why? This topic has been studied a lot after the Second World War in order to understand the obedience mechanism of human beings. There have been a lot of sociological and psychological experiences conducted and one could think that after such a disaster, human beings learnt from it and would never do such a thing again. But the experiences show the contrary and the History too. And I would like to emphasize that such theories can be applied in the everyday life of normal enterprises. We don’t need to look at horrific catastrophes in the

history or huge economic scandals to discover such sociological and psychological mechanisms. Toxicity is everywhere and is constantly constructed by our behavior.

1.4. Is it an interesting topic?

Yes, I think so too. Why? Well, first of all, I am interested by the topic. I am interested in the group effect on decision taking. I am above all interested in understanding why we do follow. It is fine to be a follower but what are the mechanisms which make us following? And why? And I truly believe that if more people wanted to know why, why do they do what they do? Why is the society organized like this? Why should they follow him instead of her? ... I truly believe in the power of the reflection and I think that if more people asked themselves the meaning of their actions, the world would be a better place. Then, when I talked with the head of the program, Dr. Philippe Daudi and then my tutor Dr. Mikael Lundgren, they both told me that it was an interesting topic and that I raised interesting questions. So from, here, there were at least three persons on the Earth interested by the topic. And then, I found a lot a fruitful literature about followership, the mass effect, and the psychological and sociological mechanisms of obedience at the basis of the following process... So I reasonably thought that it was an interesting topic. And what confirmed it is that along the development of my thesis, I talk about topics, which are discussed by psychologists, sociologists, economics scholars but also philosophers and anthropologists... The fact that my thesis has to deal with literature from different fields is interesting. And all of them have consequences in the organizational environment, which is finally what is interest us here and now. This is not just a discussion in an ivory tower, but it has practical consequences.

Finally, I do not find that my topic is just interesting. My research topic is captivating, fascinating, absorbing and inspiring. And I hope you will have as much pleasure to read it as I had to write it.

2. Methodology

In this chapter, I will explain the method I used to conduct my researches, in order to create knowledge and write this research paper. The methodology is the way to conduct a research in order to build a theory by being influenced by the paradigm of the creator of knowledge. There are different ways to conduct research because it all depends on the paradigm of the 'creator of knowledge' (Arbnor & Bjerke 2009). A paradigm is the way of depicting the reality, depending on one's vision of life. Arbnor & Bjerke (2009) present three different methodologies, three different ways to create knowledge, which are the analytic approach, the system approach and the actor approach. Daudi (2014) says 'Methodology is me'. 'Method has an ideological meaning. A philosophy of life, [...]' (Daudi 1986). This thesis is me. So the method is me too.

2.1 The system approach

In the research process, I start from the Toxic Triangle of Padilla et al. (2007), which assume that toxic leadership comes from the relation among a toxic leader, a conducive environment and susceptible followers. The toxic leader contributes to the environment because the decisions he or she makes and the actions he or she takes become environmental, they got integrated in the environment. But the environment has also an impact on the leader and on followers for it provides frame of references. The environment shapes the way people think, they react and they interact. Finally followers influence the leader because they constitute the majority and if they do not follow the leader, there is no leader any more. So the leader has to take the follower's mindset into account. We clearly understand the three components of Padilla et al's Toxic Triangle (2007) are interrelated and interdependent when it comes to understand toxicity. This schema represents the system as it is describe in the article of Padilla et al. (2007).



Schema inspired by Padilla et al. 2007, created by Esther Baronce 2015

My choice is to focus on the relations between the conducive environment and susceptible followers to understand toxicity, but with a quite similar dynamic than Padilla et al. (2007). Indeed, I think that these elements are related to each other and that the understanding of the toxicity in leadership can be understood first, and then maybe explained, by a definition and an explanation of all the components separately and then, by the understanding of their interaction. This assumption is holism, the belief, that the properties of a system cannot be understood or explained by taking all the components alone and from which, the system approach find its roots (Arbnor & Bjerke 2009). The only reasonable understanding of a system comes from the understanding of the complex interaction of the totality of all the elements of this system, which means that the arrows drawn for the representation of the system are not empty arrows, they represent something, they are an entire part of the system and removing them could lead to a non-sense. All the components have an influence on each other and this is where the complexity comes from.

2.2. An open system

According to Arbnor & Bjerke (2009, p. 116), “Business is not interested in closed systems”. Neither am I. Indeed, my belief is that everything in this world is related to one another. Every element of the world is created in this world, in this reality and has an impact on the reality in return. Nothing can be completely isolated from the rest of the reality. As I defined the system I study, I defined it through my vision of the reality, my paradigm. This is actually one of the three principles of the system approach. Arbnor & Bjerke (2009) argue that the representation of the system is representative of the approach and the paradigm of the creator of knowledge. So as I believe in a kind of never ending connection of the elements of the world, the system I created is also influenced by elements, which are not directly represented in the representation of the system but which influence the system anyway. This is what Arbnor & Bjerke (2009, p. 116) call an ‘open system’, a system which is ‘studied in the context of [its] environment’. Here, the environment itself is present in the system, so the environment is more than taken into account; it is included in the system. But what makes it an open system is that there are some elements, which are not a part of the representation of the system as I depict it, but which have an influence on it, the leader for example. The system I depict can be understood as a subsystem of the system of Padilla et al. (2007), this is why, even if I do not focus on the leader as a person, the leader is still present in my thesis under the form of his or her influence on the environment. Indeed, all the actions he or she takes, the decision he or she makes, his or her behavior, personality and management style become a part of the environment and shape it

Here is a representation of the system I focus on:



Schema inspired by Padilla et al. (2007), created by Esther Baronce

This system is the starting point of my thesis and is also at the basis of the development of it. Although I cannot neither understand, nor explain the system through focusing independently on the different elements, the description and the understanding of the elements will help me to

understand the influence that it receives from the outside and the influence that it has on the outside. This is why the first focus that I have on the system in the chapter 4 of the thesis is a definition of a toxic environment. This description will help me to understand the environment and the influence that this environment has on the other elements of the system. Indeed, it will help me to explain and to understand the influence that the environment has on the susceptible followers in their decision making and their choice to follow (or not). This first reasoning confirms even more that all the components are an entire part of the system; indeed, the second element I want to explain in the point 5 by the understanding of the environment is the influence on followers, which is, in my system, represented by the red arrow. Then, the influence of the environment on the followers will help me to understand partly the decision making of followers but to better understand this process; I will have to focus also on followers. Finally, the establishment or maintenance of toxic leadership will come in the end, as an explanation of the interaction of all the components of the system.

2.3 Data collection

Arbnor & Bjerke (2009) explain that there are two major channels for data collection. Researchers can use secondary data, which are the already existing data and primary data, which are the data collected by the creators of knowledge themselves. In my paper I use both secondary and primary data for several reasons. I use primary data because I had the opportunity to collect it and to add new findings and material to the world of knowledge. And I think that contributing to the creation of knowledge is one of the goals of the thesis. I use also secondary data because the literature is full of fruitful data, which would be a mistake to ignore. The data I used are case studies; I use already existing ones and others that I created out of the interviews I conducted. I think that case studies were appropriated for my topic for the aim is to understand. Thus, a case study enables to illustrate and give a better understanding of the theory and enable in the same time a thorough analysis, which constitute new knowledge.

2.3.1. Secondary data

In my thesis, I use secondary data, which are the already existing case studies. I use these case studies to illustrate the different chapters, which are different parts of the system. I use them because they are illustrating remarkable events in the History, or experiments conducted by

researcher which give a better picture of what I am trying to explain. They also come as a support to my argumentation and my ideas. Arbnor & Bjerke (2009) say that using the system approach, the creator of knowledge should use the historical examples and secondary data with care. Indeed, each system is unique and the data already collected have been collected in another purpose. This is why I use the secondary data in order to describe the elements of the system, as the conducive environment or the influence of the environment on followers, but the analysis I make from these already existing case studies is my creation, my input to the research. The analysis is my understanding, my opinions and it constitutes the knowledge I create. But it is true that finally, what have been documented are the remarkable facts of History. Among other things, I focus a lot on susceptible environment and the influence of the group on decision making for example. And a lot of research and experiments have been conducted to understand the events of the Holocaust. It is true that this is very important and very interesting but my goal is to understand how these kinds of behavior can occur in normal organizations. I want to show that toxicity does not mean mass murders but that this is something which is present in the everyday life of enterprises. This is why I decided to collect primary data as well.

2.3.2. Primary data

There are three ways to collect primary data: direct observations, interviews and experiments (Arbnor & Bjerke 2009). I collected primary data through interviews.

- The structure of the interviews

I conducted face to face interviews and telephone interviews. The interviews had mainly a non-structured form, which means that I did not have a high level of preparation of the questions. Even though I had some basic questions, I liked the fact to be led by the conversation and adapt myself to my interviewees. Fisher (2010) distinguishes three kinds of interviews: the open interviews, in which the interviewer enters a conversation with the interviewee and the structured interview, which is a succession of pre-set questions, and the semi-structured interview. The interviews I conducted are closed to semi-structured interviews. I had guidelines of topics to talk about but no preset questions. I enjoyed the fact that the interviews have been decided and led by myself but the process has been shaped by the interviewees. On the top of

the questions I had, the majority of the questions I asked were related to the stories of my interviewees. I tried to ask question in order to enter the reality of my interviewees because I wanted to fully understand the meaning of what they were saying. Arbnor and Bjerke (2009, p.178), define the influence of the interviewer on the interviewee by the ‘interviewers effect’. What was interesting is that I also experienced an “interviewee effect”: I have been influenced, in my reflection process, by my interviewees. Which places my interviews somewhere between the actual interview and the conversation, what Fisher (2010) would call the semi-structured interview, and what I would call it the adaptive interview. Brinkmann & Kvale (2015) say that an ‘interview has a structure and a purpose’ (p.5). My interviews had a purpose but no structure. The aim was to understand the point of view of my interviewees and I thought that having a rigid structure would have prevented me to grasp the gold out of my interviewees’ mind.

○ The panel

Fisher (2010) talks about the importance of the panel when it comes to the accuracy of interviews but on the other hand, Brinkmann & Kvale (2015, p. 140) say that there is no ‘golden standard’ when it comes to the number of interviewees. They argue in favor of the “less can be more approach”, arguing that the less interviews a creator of knowledge has, the more thorough he or she can be concerning the analysis. Furthermore, they explain that a large number of interviewees does not necessary implies a superior quality. As far as I am concerned, I put an advertisement on social networks, asking for people who worked in a toxic climate. Around twenty volunteers came to tell me their stories. I selected seven people to be interviewed. From these interviews, I came up with three very thorough and fruitful stories and I decided to transform two of them into case studies, I kept some parts of the other to be used as illustration along the text. I selected my interviews according to the level of toxicity and above all, the source of toxicity in their enterprise, but also according to the background and the position of people in their enterprise. It means that I have different socio-economic status, from the chain-worker to the manager, in different business areas. As I said earlier, my aim is to anchor this research paper in the reality of the current socio-economic context. So this diversification is one way to give a higher accuracy to the primary data I collected in the whole understanding of my system.

○ Coding process

I recorded all the interviews I had and then I transcribed them. Having all my interviews written down was a way to facilitate the coding process. Strauss & Corbin (1998), theorize three different coding processes, the open coding, the axial coding and the selective coding. I used those three analytical processes of coding but not in the order suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998). Indeed, as I explained earlier, the theoretical framework and the secondary data are important parts of my methodology process. So it is natural that it biased the way I analyzed the data. Indeed, I encoded the secondary data and the primary data through the glance of the theoretical framework that I wrote in a first place. The concepts and abstraction used in the theoretical framework gave me a first analysis matrix for the data. As I made a first analysis of the data, I realized that there were a lot of things which were not included in the analysis matrix. So I started the process of the open coding. I created concepts and abstractions out of the data I had and I gathered the similar abstractions from different sources, which was a process of open coding. And from there, I have been able to develop concepts, following the process of axial coding, gathering the abstractions, as described by Strauss & Corbin (1998). This has been a very important step for it made me create categories, which did not exist in a first place in my theoretical framework. From a very concrete point of view, the selective coding gave me in the first place categories like “chaotic environment”, “the pressure of the group” and so on... because these are categories that I already had in mind because of the secondary data and the theoretical framework. But by starting assembling the pieces of the puzzle, I realized that some pieces were missing, that the system was not coherent with only these categories. There were abstractions that I found out during the analysis of the interviews that could not be encoded by the concepts I had. So I started an open coding out of the data I collected through the interviews and I came up with an abstraction like “fear”. I realized that this abstraction was a missing piece of my puzzle. So I continued by an axial coding in order to refine the concepts in order to come up with more specified abstraction, which became concepts like “the fear of freedom”, “the fear of losing one’s identity”, “the fear of being excluded”, and so on... So the open coding (Strauss & Corbin 1998) enabled me to create new concepts, which enters in the understanding of one subsystem of the system of Padilla et al. (2007). The open coding is the basis of the knowledge I created and enabled me to dig deeper into the understanding and the explanation of the system I created.

○ The Analysis Process

I followed the analysis process of the qualitative interview proposed by Brinkman & Kvale (2015). Indeed, I started the analysis during the interviews. I constantly summed up what had been said in order to be sure of my understanding and I also checked the meaning in order to avoid interpreting my own way what my interviewees said. Then, when I constructed my case studies or if I wanted to be sure of something, I interviewed my interviewees for a second time. It has been the case for three of my interviews, and it has been fruitful. Brinkman & Kvale (2015) describe three different focuses of the analysis of the interview: the focus on the meaning, the focus on the language and the bricolage. I used the three focuses for it all brought something interesting to the creation of knowledge. The analysis of the meaning is an analysis of the interviews with a focus on the meaning of the words and on the expressions given by the interviewees to his or her words. The language analysis is an analysis focused on the language, the grammar and the linguistic structures. Finally the bricolage is the use of every tools available in order to analyze the interviews. It is a way to connect the analysis based on meaning, the analysis based on language and add coding tools like theoretical frames in order to grasp the essence of the interviews (Brinkman & Kvale 2015). Actually, I first focused on language for it was the basis I have to start the coding process. Secondly; I focused on the meaning for I enter the phase of axial coding and the axial coding needs to be based on concepts. So I focused on the meaning in order to understand the meaning given to the words by my interviewees in order to create concepts out of it. The concepts I created have been created by my understanding of the meaning given by the interviewees. Finally the theoretical concepts have been made out of boxes I created from the meaning I gave to the concepts. So finally, I focused on language and meaning but what I did is mainly bricolage.

2.4. From interviews to case studies

The interviews I conducted were a way to collect primary data. And actually I have been surprised by the quality of the data I collected and the importance it had for my research paper. So I decided to create case studies out of two of my interviews. Thomas (2011) explains that a

case study is remarkable by its uniqueness and that it is not at all a way to generalize a point of view. Indeed, what I found interesting in the data I collected, the stories I gathered, was their uniqueness. Indeed, I study the mechanism of the toxicity by focusing on the environment and on the followers. But in all the stories I heard, the toxicity is different because the mechanisms are different. So this is what is interesting to emphasize. The system I represent in a first place in the introduction is just a representation and this is not the reality. The representation is an extreme simplification of the reality in its complexity. And this is what illustrates my case studies. In each story, the environment is different, it is toxic but in different ways. The followers are also different and the forces at stake in the decision making are different. Then, each of my stories includes some elements of the system, but never all the elements of the system. This is what makes my system even more alive: this is a representation of the reality but this is a limited representation of the reality and the reality is way too complex to be represented by models made of forms and arrows. As Thomas (2011, p.21) says, a case study is a ‘rich picture with boundaries’, which means that this is a good illustration but it cannot include every element, which have been discussed in the theoretical system.

2.5. A method, which opens the door for future discussion

According to Brinkmann & Kvale (2015, p.5), ‘interviewing is an active process where the interviewer and the interviewee, through their relationship, produce knowledge’. This means that the knowledge I created thanks to my interviews are created by me and my interviewees, it is our product, our common interpretation of the reality. This is an application of the postmodern thought of hermeneutic, the fact that the knowledge is focused on the ‘interpretation of the meaning of the social world’ (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015, p.61). I do not try to reach the Truth because I do not believe in the absolute Truth, I only believe in the social construction of the truth. So I am proposing my understanding by exposing ideas and building theories. People can agree and enrich it, or they can disagree and reframe it. This is my interpretation of the world we are living in; this is the meaning I chose to give to the ongoing flow of raw data (Weick 2001).

Furthermore, in each of my stories, there are facts that I did not develop in my thesis, because it does not enter in the system as I represented it. Of course, I would like to have found the “perfect case study”. The story, which would have gathered all the points I developed and with a similar dynamic to the one I describe and explain in my thesis. But nor I found it, neither I manipulated the data a little bit to bring it closer from what I expected, because of my

consideration for ethic. Indeed, Thomas (2011) explains that some researcher methods have been questioned according to an ethical point of view. Indeed, in order to have a good contribution to the world of knowledge, they used quite questionable technics. I did not, because I want to create reliable knowledge, and it might be one of the reason why there are still some points to be developed, by changing the model of the system. But actually, as I already said, the system is an open system; it is a limited version of the reality, which is influenced by forces, which exist outside of the system. And furthermore, Arbnor & Bjerke (2009) explain that, by principle, the limitation of the system can be questioned. This is actually what is interesting. The points I cannot explain by the system as I created it, open the door for further questions and researches.

3. Enron, The infamous story of a well-known disaster to start in a crunchy way

Why this case Study and why here?

I want to start by a small story about a huge scandal in order to illustrate the general view point of my thesis. I use this already existing story, which is the famous and well-discussed case of Enron because Enron scandal is today in the common imaginary of business and ethical failure. Choosing such a known case is a way to show that toxicity is everywhere and above all where we do not see it in a first place. This is also a way to start in a crunchy way.

Quick Introduction to the Enron's story

Enron was one of the largest electricity and natural gas companies in the world. The magazine Fortune named Enron the “America’s most successful company” six years in a row (Seabury 2015), Enron was seen has a very successful company, which succeeded in having both huge incomes and a remarkable ethical and social responsibility (Sims & Brinkmann 2003). Today the name of Enron is related to bankruptcy, corruption and ethical failure. How did the escalation happen from a successful company to a corrupted company?

A culture of the “always more”

The deregulation of the energy market in the United States started in 1998. And from then, the CEO Jeffrey Skilling actively cultivated a culture, where people were encouraged to push their limits, a culture that high valued performance and publicly punished failures or poor performances (Sims & Brinkmann 2003). This culture led Enron to a very quick and an explosive success in the 90s. This successful enterprise attracted investors and was one of the most successful enterprises of the stock market.

Partnerships and computability fraud

Once the Enron's success was launched, the company could not afford to have negative incomes, even if everybody knew that it was impossible to sustain such high incomes. But a negative growth would have been a 'red flag' for investors (Sims & Brinkmann 2003) and would have caused a capital flight. To sustain its growth, Enron built partnerships with enterprises, that allowed the company to report in its books the earnings calculated (and most of the time overestimated) but not realized yet. One example of this fraud is the Project Braveheart. Enron developed a project with Blockbuster to provide movies to homes through the phone lines. Some months after the partnership, Enron recorded \$110, 9 million in the books. There were the "estimated profits" but these profits actually never came because the partnership failed after a pilot project of a thousand homes. (Sims & Brinkmann 2003)

Toxic decisions of the leaders

The fraudulent compatibility reporting has been decided by the leaders, who were pushed by the company culture to earn "always more". And once they crossed the line once, the frontier between fraud and ethics was always further and always blurrier. The early reports of incomes in the book were not a fraud but a matter of time; it was "early reporting" and not "fraudulent reporting" because the incomes were supposed to be earned soon. Or not finally, as it was the case for the Braveheart project. (Sims & Brinkmann 2003)

Unethical behavior relayed by the employees

Sherron Watkins (in Cohan 2002), a former Enron executive, explained that when she discovered Enron irregularities, she reported it to her boss and explained him that the financial situation of Enron was worrying. Indeed, the irregularities on the finances endangered the whole enterprise, which was like a house of cards, which could collapse at every moment. But her boss said that he "did not get it". Watkins (in Cohan 2002) explained that the very culture of Enron encouraged people to lie, or to keep some information hidden because nobody wanted to be the person bringing the bad news. 'To do so [reporting a problem to the CEO], I believe, would have been a job-terminating move' (Cohan 2002, p.277). So in such a climate, bad results

were hidden as much as possible, misreporting became usual and nobody wanted to speak up about possible problems.

I did not know, I was just doing my job

Hiding information became usual in Enron because the terror management and the pushing doctrine of the company encouraged people to lie about the figures. And finally, everybody knew that there were some frauds but nobody took the blame because nobody knew anything (nobody wanted to know would be more appropriate). In some testimonies of the former executives of Enron (Cohan 2002), former leaders said that it was impossible to know everything in such a big company, that this huge machine has to be based on trust in the managers and employees. Finally, Enron was a huge company, which employed more than 20.000 employees, where the flow of information was blocked by frightened employees, and where the employees who noticed irregularities did not ask anything because they did not want to jeopardize their position and just kept on doing their job, heads in the sand like ostriches.

Reflection

Finally, Enron disaster has been caused by the creation of a culture, an environment, which pushed people to do always more and better. But Enron's skyrocketing growth has been trapped by the reality of the market, but the culture, stronger than ethics, led leaders to take unethical decisions. Nevertheless, if the unethical behaviors remained and even increased in Enron, this is because employee relayed it. Imitating their leaders, they did not question the questionable financial practices or even if they did question it, they kept it low. And they protected them by persuading themselves that, they did not know, they were just doing their job.

It was a good start but my aim is not to explain the past but to show that here and now, there is still toxicity everywhere and that it is not reserved to the amazingly scandalous American fraudulent companies. So the rest of my stories which happen in organizational context, will be case studies based on the collection of primary data in order to anchor my thesis in the everyday reality and not in the far far away Wall Street reality.

4. What kind of environment is a conducive environment?

As I argued earlier in the introduction, one of the aims of this thesis is to understand the pressure of the environment on followers when it comes to decision making. This is why I start by talking about the environment. The environment refers to the social environment of people. 'Human social environments encompass the immediate physical surroundings, social relationships, and cultural milieus within which defined groups of people function and interact.' (Barnett & Casper 2001, p. 465). Environment is very wide; this is everything around each individual, which has an impact on their construction as human beings.

For Padilla et al (2007, p. 185), a conducive environment is an environment where 'instability, perceived threat, cultural values, and absence of checks and balances and institutionalization' is destroying the natural order of the situation. To put it in a nutshell, they describe a conducive environment as a disordered environment. Regarding the subject of the thesis, I want to be more precise about this conducive environment because I think that there is more than disorder, which can be conducive and foster toxicity. An environment is conducive when it leads people to misjudge the situation and make them abandon their critical point of view. Talking about toxic leadership, I would like to redefine a conducive environment as an environment, which will narrow individual's judgement about the situation, the toxicity and the leader and then, encourage the follower to follow the leader, despite his or her doubts about the trustworthiness of such a direction. So of course I support that a disordered environment as defined by Padilla et al. (2007) is a conducive environment and I add three other kind of environments: a counter-anthropomorphic environment, a fragmented environment and an environment where the roles are of great importance. I classified these environments into two categories, the accidentally conducive environment and the instrumentalized conducive environment. I made the choice to make this separation to better emphasize that environment can become conducive with no willing behind it or it can be decided to be conducive.

4.1. Accidentally conducive environment

In this part, I will explain how environment can become toxic accidentally, after a shock or has become conducive with time. In such case, the conductivity of the environment is not willingness but is the result of unpredictable events or negligence.

4.1.1. Disordered environment

Let us consider that the everyday environment is calm enough to be comfortable for individuals. In such an environment, there is no reason to feel unsafe or to be afraid of the day after. But in such an environment, shocks can happen and destroy the apparent order. Shocks could be natural disasters, economic crisis, wars... every disaster which destroys the peaceful routine of the society and brings fears about the future. Naomi Klein (2007) is an author who argues that governments use shocks to set up policies or to take decision. She says that shocks weaken people and then, they are less likely to stand up against leader's decisions. Furthermore, in such disordered situations, people are even demanding their leader to take action and restore order. Klein (2007) explains that after a shock, there is a short period of time where the chaos is so frightening that people would not disagree to the authority. Carsten et al. (2010) argue that the emotional state of followers influences their leadership preferences. Furthermore, the study conducted by Pastor, Mayo and Shamir (2007 in Carsten et al. 2010) shows that followers' emotions can reinforce the perception of effective leadership.

The disorder of an environment destabilizes followers. This destabilization can turn into anxiety, stress, and fear of the future because the natural order of things has been broken. These emotions, according to Carsten et al. (2007) have a significant influence on followers' perception of leadership, and by so, their perception of authority and their judgement on this authority is affected. In such an environment, people are more likely to obey orders because these orders are required regarding the situation. They are also more likely to follow the leader, or to choose an emergency leader to face the emergency situation. Cohen et al (2004) conducted a very interesting study about the effects on mortality salience on the preference for leader's characteristics. They showed that when there is a reminder of mortality, people were more likely to vote for a strong and charismatic person and in the same time, their sympathy for leaders who foster a roving leadership (De Pree 2004) or multipliers (Wiseman & McKeown 2010) decreases because people want to "get the job done". In chaotic situations, people are more likely to put their judgement aside because of the need to work together urgently to rebuild the society, or the country, or whatever has been destroyed. In chaotic situation, people are afraid

that the chaos becomes the norm and not the exception, so they accept the leader's decision and if they are toxic decisions, people pray for the toxicity would not become the norm either. As if toxicity could disappear magically with time...

4.1.2. Counter-Anthropomorphism

Anthropomorphism is the tendency to attribute human qualities to non-human elements such as objects or animals. Milgram (cited in Riggio, Chaleff and Lipman-Blumen 2008, p. 205) defines the counter-anthropomorphism as the opposite of anthropomorphism, which is 'the countervailing tendency [...] of attributing an impersonal quality to forces that are essentially human in origin and maintenance.' It means that human beings have a tendency to deny the human control on structures they actually created. Nevertheless, this human control is an essence of the structures because they have been created by human beings to enable them to live together. As Giddens (1995) explains, structures are enablers and limiters. Indeed, to live together, one must have system and rules (societies, laws, cultures...), which forbidden some things in order to make possible for everybody to be free to live and to act in this particular system. Actually, human beings create systems to enable them to live together because they need to live together. But there is a point, when this system becomes "The system", as one was talking about something which exists beyond the control of anybody, something superior, something like God. Indeed, Giddens (1995, p.25) explains that even given the very essence of the structures, nothing prevent those structures 'from stretching away in time and space, beyond the control of any individual actor'. Indeed, a structure is created at a very moment in a very context to enable something given. But with time, this structure is applied in other contexts; it is stretched in the space and in the time. And becomes out of the control of human beings because it comes a point when this system is taken for granted, this is The System, this is how it works and nobody questions The System because there is no point to question it. Of course, it works like that, it has always worked like that and everybody takes part of The System. And beyond this, there is even a point where nobody is conscious of The System for it has become anchored in the subconscious part of the collective mind. Let us take the example of cultures. A culture is a system, which has been created by a community of people who live together. It enables actions and limits other actions; this is why one talks about the "socially accepted". Doing something socially unaccepted would lead to a rejection of the community, even

exclusion in an extreme situation. Because going against the culture of a group destabilizes the order of this group. Furthermore, to be aware of one's own culture, one must compare it to another one, culture exists by comparison and one is aware of one's culture only in confrontation to the differences with another one (Lindgren 2012). Finally, people must have a opposite point of reference for them to be aware of their own culture but this point of reference should stay away and not confronting the culture because if the shock is too strong, it could jeopardize the cohesion of the group. What happens currently in France is a great example of the destabilization of a group when there are contrary streams of cultures. There have been terrorist attacks against the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo which published a lot of satirical drawing making fun of religions. These attacks are against the fundamental right of expression in France. Nevertheless, there are debates every day, discussing the limits of the rights of expression, a lot of important philosopher, psychologists, sociologists, theologians and politicians discuss the meaning of the national identity our culture and how should we, French citizens, behave in the middle of this general cultural incomprehension. And of course, nobody agrees on anything because this is a sensitive subject. This attack has been a shock for French citizens which made them reflect on the meaning of their culture but also destabilizes the cultural cohesion.

But if there is nothing like this shock which makes people reflecting on the meaning of the structures they are living in, no questions ever emerge. In the end, the structure is reified (Giddens 1995) and the relations implied within the structure and with the structure and the outside world are reified too. That is to say, the system is reified in the end and one comes up with a reified system, which governs human beings instead of being governed by them.

4.2. Instrumentalized conducive environment

Contrary to the accidentally conducive environment, the instrumentalized conducive environments are the environments, which have been manipulated, by the leaders or another legitimate authority, in order to avoid the personal reflection of the 'small cogs in the huge machine' (Tsang 2002, p.29)

4.2.1. Fragmented environment

I call fragmented environment an environment, which is disconnected from the whole pattern, as it is for instance in the rationalization of the tasks in a factory. Corinne (interviewee), a worker in an oysters' factory in France, says: 'I have been working here for the past 20 years. The whole day, I place oysters in boxes. It would be funny to know how much oysters I manipulated during my life. [...] But now I do it good. I do it even perfectly. This work does not require thinking; you do not need a diploma. But you need to be hard-working and to work fast. And also to have a strong mind, otherwise you cannot hold on more than a month'. In a factory, all the tasks are fractioned in order to save time. Every worker does one thing and becomes an expert in this thing and does not think about the task of the worker before, or the task of the worker after. She thinks about her task here and now and does it well because this is the only think she has to do, the work becomes a routine. Tsang (2002) explains how task-oriented activities can hide immoral purpose because in such context, individuals do not question the morality of actions. Indeed, as I explained with the example of the chain worker, people are concentrated on one task and do not think about their action in the broader context and are focused only on the finality of their action, not in the finality of the whole. Tsang (2002) says 'people see themselves as small cogs in a huge machine' (p.29). This means that they see themselves as small machines within the machine and their job is just to work in the right way in order to enable the huge machine to work properly. They do not have the control of the huge machine; they just obey orders and do their job. Individuals focus on the mechanical character of the task and not on the meaning of it. In such a fragmented environment, routinization, and more particularly the morality of the routine, has little chance to be questioned. Even if this is right that in the case of my example, the risk of immorality by putting oysters in boxes is quite limited. But anyway the most interesting examples of routinization are in the cases where the disconnected activities conducted normal individuals to take part to horrible events. Some of these examples can be found in the events of the Holocaust. For example, when Eichmann (Arendt 2006) reminds him the moment he has been sent in Slovakia to evacuate Jews from Slovakia. What is stunning in his testimony is that he says that this day 'had been unforgettable because my superiors have been assassinated' (p.82). This is not the horror of what he did, which is memorable, but the assassination of his monstrous superiors. Further, he also talks about some bowling game with Sano Mach... Arendt (2006) thinks that Eichmann has this mindset about what he did because of the routinization, she says 'to evacuate and deport Jews had become routine business, what stuck in his mind was bowling' (p.82). This means that the very fact of the routinization of segmented actions provokes the failure of individuals to think about the meaning of their action and this is one of the reasons why normal individuals, not

necessarily evil individuals, are led to take part of evil action. Another interesting example can be found in the documentary Shoah de Claude Lanzmann (1985). When Lanzmann asks to one train conductor if he felt responsible for what happened, the train conductor says no, he did not have any responsibility because he was just doing his daily routine by “just” conducting a train. By the routinization of an isolated action in the evil machine, the train conductor succeeds in freeing himself of all the responsibility. Carsten & Uhl-Bien (2013) explain that the displacement of responsibility is associated to the intent to obey orders. Indeed, they say that, once individuals do not feel any responsibility in their actions, they are likely to obey any kind of orders, even the vilest one, because they are completely free from the burden of culpability.

4.2.2. The power of the role

Tsang (2002) explains that the role given to an individual in the frame of an organization might blur unethical or immoral actions for the person focus mainly on the role he or she has been given. What is interesting in the case of the importance of the role is that it can actually blur immorality in both ways, from the one who has the role or the title and for the one who respect this role or title. First of all, Blumenthal (1999, in Tsang 2002) argues that if people are given a role and this role includes unethical behavior, they are likely to obscure the ethical side of their actions. They are likely to act without realizing that the actions contradict their moral values. There are some experiments, which confirm these theories. For example the Stanford Prison Experiment of Haney, Banks and Zimbardo in 1973. They selected colleague students, educated and clever young people, to become either prisoners, or guards. Half of them were ‘prisoners’, half of them were ‘guards’, very labelled as ‘prisoners’ and as ‘guards’. The experiment has been set up in order to have a strong relation of subordination between prisoners and guards. This experiment has shown that the one in the position of guards became very demanding and even aggressive toward the prisoners and the prisoners, even if they were mentally strong in the beginning, developed subordination tendencies toward authority.

The most famous experiment in the field of obedience must be the Milgram’s Shock Experiment (1974). In this case, on study the power of the title on the one who respect this title. In this experiment, a naïve participant must inflict an electric shock to another person under the command of a ‘scientist’. During the session, the voltage increases and the victim of these shocks shows that he is suffering but 65% of the participants obeyed the orders until the end and shock the victim to the maximum fatal voltage of 450 volts. This experiment demonstrates

a lot of interesting psychological and sociological mechanism and Milgram (1974), when interpreting the results, talked about a lot of different factors. But one important thing was that the orders had been given by a scientist. His role with all the symbols related to the scientist like the white coat and the measurement instrument are very important. In people's mind, scientists are supposed to know what they are doing. The scientist is a symbol, the symbol of the white coat, symbol of knowledge and expertise; scientists are the ones who are supposed to act for the well-being of humanity. So here, one can easily admit that it was inconceivable for participants that a scientist would act unethically. This experiment shows how the role is important in the obedience mechanism. People are more likely to obey order if the person who gives this order has a role, which is a symbol of natural authority and knowledge. The role can mislead individuals concerning morality and ethic of their actions. But actually, the role itself is not important, this is the meaning given by people to the role which is important. Indeed, for some persons, the titles are very important because they think that it defines who they are. But the most perverse effect is when the titles become important for the others. That is to say, when the others think that they might show more respect to some individuals who have some titles than to others who do not have any title. Such assumptions lead some people to believe that they also should obey the orders of some people who have titles because in the collective imaginary, some people are more likely to order, and should be obeyed. So finally, obedience would be due only because of the meaning given by some people to the titles of other people. Eventually, the manipulation of such titles and symbols by toxic leader can make people lower their critical point of view.

4.3. Conducive environment and the abandon of morality

In the end, conducive environments blind people to the meaning of their actions. All the different environments described are conducive for different reasons but they all can lead normal human beings, even very kind human beings, to take part to evil actions. This is what Hanna Arendt (2006) calls 'the banalization of evil', when ordinary people commit horrible action because they do not grasp the meaning of their actions. They fail in thinking about the ethic or the morality of their actions because the environment is not conducive to reflection, the reconsideration of one's actions and the self-questioning. This is why the environment is of a prime importance when it comes to understand the mechanism of the spreading of toxicity

within an organization. As I described earlier, the environment can be accidentally conducive or instrumentalized in order to avoid reflection, which is conducive. In both cases, people are blinded to the meaning of their action because they do not think about their action as a part of a whole. In such environment, people often think about their actions as an isolated action, forgetting the consequences they might have in a broader context and forgetting that these consequences might be unethical.

But sometimes, people succeed in grasping the meaning of their action, they disagree with what they are doing and they still follow. As if they were undergoing a pressure which made them following anyway. Indeed, the conductivity of the environment itself does not explain the following mechanisms, one need to understand the pressure that this environment has on individuals. In order to understand the pressure that the environment has on individuals, I will separate the environment into two parts in the following chapters: the proximate environment and the distant environment. The proximate environment is the 'immediate physical surroundings' (Barnett & Casper 2001, p. 465), in other words, this is the group of people in which individuals evolve. Indeed, I cannot talk about influence in the judgement without talking about the pressure that the others have on us. The distant environment is constituted by the political, economic, societal and cultural milieus. They are all the human cultural constructions, which enable us to live together and which have an impact on our self-development. Both of the environments are as concentric and overlapping circles around individuals. I made this nuance when I discuss the environment because I will later argue that the proximate and the distant environment have both a different kind of pressure on the individuals.

5. The influence of the distant environment

As I said earlier, I separated the environment in two parts and I will start by explaining the influence that the distant environment has on individuals. The distant environment is constituted by the societal structures, which enable people to live together. The aim of this chapter is to understand the mechanisms of the influence of the distant environment on individual's decision making.

5.1. How the distant environment influences individuals?

5.1.1. Making sense thanks to frames of references

As I already defined in the chapter four, the distant environment is constituted by the structures such as societies, cultures, and economies... all the structures, which enable people to live together by framing the reality. By framing the reality, they give meaning to particular cues in a given reality, they are frames of references. Frames of references are the structures named by Weick (1995) to explain how sensemaking occurs. He explains that people give meaning to particular cues in frames of references and these cues are 'seeds from which people develop a larger sense of what may be occurring' (p.50). I will come back later on the very word 'seed' which is very meaningful. But here what is interesting is the process of making sense to the flow of experiences out there. The world is an ongoing flow of experiences, which do not have any sense, unless we give them one. So frames of references are enablers for sensemaking because one can extract particular cues out of them and make sense out of them. This means that nothing lies in the cues, everything exists in our minds and cues are only triggers for sensemaking (Weick, 1995). They activate the reflex of making sense.

Moreover, Cantril (1941 cited in Weick 1995, p.4) defines a frame of reference as a 'generalized point of view that directs interpretation'. The distant environment, which is a cluster of frames of references, conducts the interpretations toward a same meaning and standardizes the interpretations. Thus, frames of references frame the reality and direct our intention toward similar interpretation. Consequently, people who belong to the same group and whose reality is framed by the partly similar frames of references have a partly similar interpretation of certain cues. Nevertheless, it does not mean that people have a similar reasoning because they belong

to the same community. Quite the contrary, one can have the same interpretative reflex because the reflex of sense making is framed by the environment but one can have quite different interpretations and opinions about these interpretations. Weick (1995, p.50) defines cues as ‘seeds’ for sensemaking. One can have two identic seeds, but depending on the ground, on the light, on the way they are fed, on the quality of water etc... one can have two completely different trees. This is the same for people. If cues are seeds for sensemaking and the ground where these seeds are supposed to grow is our mind, thus, depending on the way these cues are perceived and nurtured, meanings would differ. So sensemaking depends on individual mindset but it also depends on the context (Weick 1995).

5.1.2. The influence of the distant environment on sensemaking

First of all, the context influences what is extracted as a cue. Starbuck and Milliken (cited in Weick 1995) make a difference between noticing and sensemaking. Filtering is the process of ‘filtering, classifying and comparing’ (p.51). This is the first mechanism of extraction of cues. The extraction of the cues is related to the analysis of the environment, within which the cues exist. Sensemaking comes after this first analysis and refers to the very activity to give a sense to a cue. Starbuck and Milliken (cited in Weick 1995) explain that the activity of sensemaking would start only if the cue is noticed in the environment. If there are a flow of experiences out there but no cue is noticed, so no meaning would be made. For Taylor (1991 cited in Weick 1995, p.52), we notice ‘things that are novel or perceptually figural in context, people or behaviors, that are unusual or unexpected, behavior that are extreme and (sometimes) negative, and stimuli that are relevant to our current goals’. For him, we notice what is new in our environment because our intention is caught by novelty and irregularity. Kislner and Sproull’s (1982 cited in Weick 1995) also argue that the environment influences the extraction of cues and that this extraction knows a significant change when the environment changes in a disturbing way for individuals. By disturbing I mean unpleasant, a way, which disturbs the “normal” continuation of life.

In a second place, the environment influences how the extracted cues are interpreted. Leiter (1980 cited in Weick 1995, p.52) says that cues are ‘indexicals’, which means that their meaning is directly related to the context out of which they are extracted. Weick explains before that a cue is a stimulus of reflection, there is no meaning in it, and the meaning comes from the human analysis of the cue. So related to this perspective of the cue, Leiter (1980 cited in Weick 1995)

explains that a cue does not have any meaning or can have a lot of different meaning. This is the context, out of which the cue is extracted, which gives a meaning to the cue. Salancik and Pfeffer (1978 cited in Weick 1995) explain that the social context is very important for it is an action constraint. Indeed, society is a structure which enables, as well as restricts, action. So if the meaning engendered by the cue is linked to the context, here, the society, people must find a reasonable justification to the meaning they gave to the cue, and then, the action engendered by the meaning. They must think within the boundaries of the “socially accepted”. Mailloux (1990 cited in Weick 1995) underlines the importance of the political context for all the decisions made and thus the meaning given to cues in order to take this decision are taken in a politically defined context. The politics shape the context and then the decisions taken reinforce this political context. One can reasonably say that all the structures which constitute a frame of reference influence the meaning of the extracted cues because they shape the meaning a cue should have in this particular context.

To put everything in a nutshell, the distant environment influences sensemaking by directing individual’s intention toward specific cues and then, influences also their meaning, which is created out of the cues. Then, sensemaking is at the origin of decision making and actions. Taking action is the fact of doing something, but to do something, one must be capable of thinking about this action. One must have made the decision of taking action because it makes sense. For example, a hairdresser will analyze the hairs of his client and take the decision of taking the scissors instead of the hair shaver because of the nature of the hair of his client and the hair cut he wants. The hair dresser is a specialist of hairs and he is able to recognize some cues, for examples that because of some curls in the hairs, the hair shaver could lead to some disasters. So he starts cutting the hairs with the scissors. The action of cutting hairs with scissors is the consequence of a decision made thanks to the analysis of some cues, which made sense for the hair dresser and maybe for the hair dresser only. The environment influences sensemaking, which influences action taking. This is the mechanism through which environment influences people.

But for the cues to triggers sense making in people’s mind, these cues have to be placed in a known context. Otherwise, their meaning would not be valid anymore. Indeed, sensemaking is a reflex, which is triggered by cues in an environment. If the cues are not in their context anymore, they cannot engender reasonable meaning. In a chaotic environment for example, it would be difficult for people to make sense of the reality.

5.2. The Fear of Chaos

Chaos here refers to an environment, whose order has been destroyed because of a shock or a radical, brutal and sudden paradigm shift. I think that people are afraid of chaos because chaos represents a state, where things people know disappear. People are facing a new reality, where they cannot always make sense out of this reality. This is why in this section; I will start by giving an explanation of the origin of anxiety. This explanation suggests that anxiety is related to uncertainty; this is why I will develop, in a second section, arguments which suggest that people need a certain routine in their life because it is a matter of survival. I will explain in a third section how the chaos, a break in the routine, can engender difficulties when it comes to sensemaking.

5.2.1. Anxiety and Trust

The ‘Basic Trust’ (Erikson cited in Giddens 1995, p.53) comes very early between a child and the mother. The new-born is a child who has been placed quite violently in an ‘alien environment’, our world that one might consider normal and quite friendly but which is completely frightening for a baby. The only thing which is reassuring for the child is the presence and the actions of the mother, who takes care of the child. Without the presence of the mother (or somebody who would have the role of the mother), the child is probably going to die for he or she cannot supply to his or her own needs alone. The ‘Basic Trust’ describes by Erikson (cited in Giddens 1995) is the assurance that the physical absence does not mean desertion. The mother can leave the child for a while; she does not leave for ever. This is the first situation, where trust has to be established. Then, once the child accepts to see the mother leaving without being anxious, trust becomes confidence, the fact that the mother will come back is a certainty. The relation with the mother evolves and the mother becomes the figure of the “outside world”, the certainty is always created by fighting the uncertainty, which is link to anxiety. The absence of the mother is experienced as a punishment, whose reward is the co-presence of the mother. The child builds trust by learning how to manage the tension between trust and mistrust but the confidence lies in the fact that certainty is associated with outer goodness and anxiety lies in the association of uncertainty and inner harms (Giddens 1995). According to Freud (cited in Giddens 1995), the feelings evolve with the maturation of the body but this early creation of trust and the discovery of anxiety are interesting here. Indeed, one

learns that anxiety is created in the association of uncertainty with inner harms. The very fact to be uncertain of what is coming next is a source of anxiety because it could be harm. This is not certainly harm, which could happen, but it could be, so it activates anxiety and even fear. The fear that “the mother”, the person who is here to take care of us and, who is loving and wants good for us, would never come back. And if “she” never comes back, one would have to live in uncertainty and the fear of scarcity which is associated to it. Anxiety is associated to uncertainty; the uncertainty that what is going to happen is going to be something we know. This is why anxiety can be associated to the lack of routinization. However, Giddens (1995) argues that routinization is something that human beings need to feel safe.

5.2.2. Routinization and Motivation

Giddens (1995) explains that routinization is needed to human activities for it enables people to have a feeling of continuity. He says ‘routine is integral, both to the continuity of the personality of the agent, as he or she moves along the paths of daily activities, and to the institutions of the society, which are such only through their continued reproduction’ (p.60). This means that without a certain repetition in the everyday activities, it would not be possible for individuals to understand the continuity of their experience or the continuity of their identity. For example, I know how to wake up in the morning, go out of my bed and get ready to go to the library to work on my thesis. I know that I can do it today and that it will be the same process tomorrow. Not exactly the same of course but some patterns are constant, I know how to get up, how to walk and how to work. I do not have to relearn everything very day for there is continuity in the partial routine of my existence. Giddens (1995) explains that this routinization is a grounded process, which enables people to react safely to known situation and to create original but systematically accepted reaction in unexpected situations. To support his argumentation, he takes the counter-example of the extreme situation of the concentration camps. Imprisonment acts as a shock in individual’s lives, which destroys the everydayness and where the iterative processes have been completely destroyed to let the space to unexpected and uncertain future. Bettelheim (cited in Giddens 1995, p.61) says: ‘The concentration–camp experience was marked not only by the confinement but also the extreme disruption of accustomed forms of daily life deriving from the brutalized conditions of existence, ever-present threat or actuality of violence from the camp guards, scarcity of food and other elementary provisions for the sustenance life’. The destruction of the routine of the everyday life and the uncertainty of the safety and goodwill associated is the most important reasons of

the changes in personalities, argues Bettelheim (cited in Giddens 1995). This environment was extremely unsafe, people were not even sure that they would see the day after. And the Nazis put a particular effort to dehumanize the prisoners by removing all they could, which make them human beings: names, hygiene, habits... And Bettelheim (cited in Giddens 1995) explains how the individuals who stopped acting as human beings died first. On the other hand, he explains that the ones who succeed in recreating a kind of 'small sphere of control in their daily life' (p.67) manage to survive longer. Indeed, this control of a (much) reduced part of one's life provides a feeling of bodily control within a predictable frame of references and this is what human beings need at least to survive. When one feel that the entire flow of experience of the outer world is beyond our control and that one cannot even control our body needs, this is unbearable for human beings who die, naturally or not. In this very extreme context, the nature of anxiety can be related to the discovery of anxiety explained by Erikson (cited in Giddens 1995). Indeed, those people were completely unsure of what would come next and if they could even survive one more day. Uncertainty was the very essence of anxiety and fear. So chaotic environments are complicated to manage for human beings because they are source of anxiety and fear, because they jeopardize the continuity of our identity, and the most important thing is that they are a threat to our very existence. But there is actually no need to take such extreme example to show that the fear and uncertainty in a chaotic environment can lead to change of personality and immoral action. Jean (Interview), a former banker at the BNP Paribas explained the hardening of the competition among the employees of the bank after the crisis of 2008. He explained that employees were always more competitive and they wanted to sell more contracts because the only certainty was the risks of redundancy. And nobody wanted to loose one's job. So they cultivated the extreme competition, even if it meant cultivating the toxicity linked to this competition because they wanted to "earn" a kind of small piece of certainty.' But what is complicated in a chaotic environment is that a chaotic environment is an environment where the frames of references have been broken. And if one wants to recreate a routine in broken frames of references, one must first of all be able to make sense out of the situation. But this is not easy to make sense out of the situation if the frames of references which are needed for sensemaking do not exist anymore.

5.2.3. Difficulty of sensemaking

As I already explained, sensemaking depends on the context. Human beings live in an environment constituted by a multiplicity of frame of references, overlapping or not. But

whatever their frames of references, the environment directly influences individual's intention toward cues and influences the meaning of these cues. But if a shock destroys the environment of individuals as it is, or as it is supposed to be, frames of references are also destroyed. However, a cue has a meaning only when related to a frame of reference. So if an individual gives a meaning to a familiar cue, which is not in the frame of reference, where it is supposed to be, the meaning will not make any sense anymore. Chaotic environments are destroyed frames of references and individuals have to create new cues in this new frame of reference for them to make sense out of the reality of experiences. But it takes some time and there is a period of trouble on people's mind, when they are not able to make sense anymore. Of course this engenders problems in decision making and in action taking. There are people, who won't take any decision and will be susceptible to other's sensemaking. Those people are likely to follow leaders or group, whose interpretation of the reality seems to be reasonable. And there are other people who will try to make sense out of the situation by their own, take their own decision and decide their own actions in spite of the chaos and the great possibility to do wrong. The problem lies in the fact that the interpretation of the cues in the former and "idyllic" frame of references might not come to a plausible interpretation of the reality in the new and chaotic frame of references. Then, if the chaotic environment remains understandable, so it might be possible to make sense out of it. But let's imagine a completely new environment, chaotic in the sense that everything that one might have known at one point or another is not accurate anymore. All the reality as one might have experienced is not valid anymore. A completely new reality. This chaos would make sensemaking impossible for individuals because it would be impossible to grasp cues. The cues needed for sensemaking would have to be created. But individuals would have to experience their new reality for a while before being able to extract new cues and make sense out of it. So an extremely chaotic environment would make it impossible for individuals, at least for a period of time, to make sense out of their reality. However, this is a human being's need to make sense out of the reality. We need to understand what is going on around us; we need to understand what is happening. So not being able to make sense out of the reality, even for a short period of time, can be frightening and a source of anxiety.

5.3. The influence of the distant environment in decision making

The distant environment influences individuals' for it influences their sensemaking and action taking. And one can understand that a human being is afraid of chaos for a certain certainty is

needed for him to exist. A continuity in the world outside, a certain predictability. Not only because of an existential need for certainty. Human being needs to know that what is going to happen is not going to kill him or her. And sometimes, a follower creates toxicity or fosters the toxicity in a conducive environment, just because he or she wants to “earn” a little bit of control but above all because of a security need for bodily control. The need to earn a kind of small piece of certainty.

But even though we are influenced by the distant environment and the human structuration of the reality, we might be even more influenced by people around us. Indeed, we might be even more influenced by the human beings who are living around us than the by structures of the reality because human beings around us interact directly with us. And we need this interaction. This is why there is an influence of the group on us and that we agree to undergo this influence because we need to keep the interaction with the people around. This is again a matter of survival.

6. The pressure of the proximate environment

*“Personally I find that this flower is very beautiful...
And a flower alone, like this, does not make any sense!
Flowers are like people, they have to be associated.
(Bréham in Erner 2015)*

It is true, a flower reach its full potential of beautifulness when it is well associated in a beautiful floral bouquet. So are human beings. Individuality of human beings does not make any sense. We have to live among people in order to be fully ourselves, to reach our full potential of beautifulness. Aristotle thought that human being is a social animal. Individuals exist only thanks to the interaction with others. So of course, the others have a significant influence on our personality. The group has an influence on what we think, what we say, what we do and who we are. As the reader might have already guessed, this chapter will aim at understanding the pressure of the proximate environment of people, which is the pressure of the group on individuals.

6.1. Group Behaviors

‘At minimum, a group has been defined as two or more persons who are in the same ways socially or psychologically interdependent: for the satisfaction of needs, attainment of goals, or consensual validation of attitudes and values. It is to consider that such independence leads to cooperative social interaction, communication, mutual attraction and influence between individuals’ (Tajfel 2010, p.15).

The proximate environment, as the distant environment, has an influence on people. Groups exist for several reasons but if people are together, this is because they need to be together and so they need to stay together. And to stay together, they need to share some common opinions, values or beliefs. People influence each other in a group in order to keep the cohesion of the group and sometimes more than just an influence, Festinger (cited in Froger 2015) explains that

the proximate environment put pressure on individuals. In the following section, I will explain Festinger's thought in order to have a better understanding of the reasons why the group has a pressure on individuals.

6.1.1. The social reality

For Festinger (cited in Froger 2015), there are two sorts of objects, the natural and physical objects. Those objects are easy to understand, one have only to look at them to judge them. For example, I can have an opinion about the existence of a door by just looking at a door. The door is a natural object; it is easy to understand and to have an opinion on the usefulness of this object. Besides the natural objects, there are the social objects, the object, whose reality is complex. In those cases, one can have an opinion about the complex reality of these objects by looking at the others. For example, if one want to have an opinion about the homosexual marriage; one can look at somebody else for it is complicated to have an opinion by oneself. Even people with very few information can have access to information thanks to the group. It is comfortable for people to reach the truth of an object, without having to be fully informed about it. It is a way to have an opinion about the object without having to spend a lot of time and energy to understand the object, the context of the object and the consequences that this object might have in the context. By just looking at the common opinion in the group, one might "know". But having contradictories ideas within a group jeopardize the equilibrium of the group. It creates an uncomfortable feeling for people that are actually looking for the consistency of the group. Indeed, if there are divergent opinions, people of the group cannot have the idea about social objects they are looking for. This is complex; this is uncomfortable and even irritating because it can be a source of conflict. Therefore the group has a pressure on divergent individuals toward uniformity (Schachter cited in Froger 2015). And once there is no divergence of opinions anymore within the group, there are actually no opinions any more, there is a truth.

6.1.2. The locomotion of the group

As argues Crozier (2010), people need organization in order to be able to work together. They need cooperation to achieve collective goals in order to fulfill personal needs. For Festinger

(cited in Froger 2015), groups can achieve actions together only if there is unanimity of opinion. Once everybody agrees on the direction, which has to be taken, the group can move towards this direction and achieve collectively actions, which are necessary to fulfil individual needs.

Finally, individuals undergo the pressure of the proximate environment for sociological reasons. The proximate environment needs consistency, uniformity and unanimity; this is why, for its own safety, the proximate environment preserves itself from divergence. Because divergence can lead to its destruction. The experience of Schachter (cited in Froger 2015) about the cohesion and the deviance within the group shows that the group applies a pressure toward the individuals, who do not share the common opinion. If after a while the divergent individual does not conform to the opinion, he or she is excluded. The deviant member does not have a lot of choices; he or she actually has two different choices: conform to the group or being excluded from the group (and eventually find another group, which is likely to accept his or her point of view).

6.2. The conformization of individuals to the group

Henningsen & Henningsen (2015) expose two kinds of influence of the proximate environment on individuals. The first is the informational influence. The informational influence is basically the attempt of the group to convince a member of the group, who has a divergent opinion, to rally the majority, by using arguments, data, figures, schemas and so on... The aim of such an influence is to come up with the best solution possible for the group. From this point of view, the informational influence has a positive impact on the group, because it leads to better decision making, more positive impact of the decision on the group and a greater satisfaction of all the members of the group (Henningsen & Henningsen 2015). The other kind of influence is the normative influence. Kaplan (1989 cited in Henningsen & Henningsen 2015) explains the normative influence as the tendency to change one's attitude or behavior in order to belong to a group. This second influence is based on the "norm", the conformity. The choice to change one's mind to belong to the group is not based on a rational reflection but is based on the preferences of the group and the 'advantages of going along' (p.190). The normative influence

is a process of giving up one's critical point of view, one's opinion and maybe one's sensemaking power to accept the ideas, the meaning and the direction provided by the group. Because the need to belong to the group is more important than the need to develop one's own ideas. Because in some cases, belonging to the group has more advantages than standing up for one's ideas. The results of the seminal influence study of Asch (1951 cited in Andersen & Taylor 2008) shows that individuals were likely to conform to answers they disagreed with because of the pressure of the group and the willingness to belong to the group. Such an influence can have strong detrimental influence and can lead individual to foster toxicity, just because they do not want to be kicked out of the group.

6.3. Fear of being different

I think that our position toward difference is very ambiguous. On one hand, we want to find our own personality in order to be fully oneself, to be different from the neighbor. On the other hand, we want to be a little the same in order to be accepted. Being different is important in a group because it brings plurality but being too different is dangerous because it leads to exclusion as Schachter's experience shows (cited in Froger 2015). Let's take the example of clothes. When I go shopping, I like finding original and unique pieces like beautiful dresses nobody has. But in another way, I stay in the boundaries of the socially acceptable originality because I do not want to be labelled as a marginal. I want to be different and the same, just a little bit different in order to be not completely the same.

Fromm (1966) says that individuals need to be related to the world outside. They need to be connected with the others and with the world outside and that being completely alone can lead to mental disorders. Krakauer (1996) in his book 'Into the Wild' tells the true story of Christopher Johnson McCandless, who left his friends and family to travel around the U.S.A and began alone a trail in Alaska, in his search for happiness in a complete and full freedom. Free to go where he wants to go, free to be who he wants to be, free from the materialistic assets, free from the society, free from the judgement of the others, free from any relationships, free from everything which could prevent him, from one way or another, to become the one he wants to become. The project is beautiful, even poetic. Unfortunately the story has a bad end because Christopher, completely free, died alone, subject to mental hallucinations. Social links are actually crucial for individuals. We need to feel an outside outlook on who we are because

self-awareness starts in the eyes of the one in front of us. So being accepted in a group is very important and this is not so much to be physically accepted in a group but being emotionally accepted (Fromm 1966). Indeed, one can be physically in a group but feel isolated in the same time. On the other hand, one can be physically far away from one's community but still feeling connected to them by sharing emotional and intellectual material. This feeling can be observed in a class or in a family for example. A child can be a member of a class in school and a member of his or her family but feeling completely misunderstood by them. In the same time he or she can be 10 000 km away from a group of friends met on the internet, chat with them every day and feel a connection with them even if they are not physically together.

So being a part of a group and the feeling of belonging is very important for the mental and physical health of individuals. Being different could lead to an exclusion of the group, which would be a disaster. Exclusion is very hard to manage for individuals for it means different things. First, our identity, our self, the one we spent time and energy to construct, is not accepted by the group. If we want to be accepted by this group, we have to reconstruct this identity or find another group, which is ready to accept our identity. Then, exclusion is tough because the safety bubble which is constituted by the group explodes and the individual falls in a very uncomfortable position, very vulnerable and insecure. Yet, individuals needs safety or at least, to feel safe (Maslow 1943), they need to know that someone is ready to help in case the situation becomes out of control, they need to think that the community, the group will help in case they need moral or material help. Being excluded of the group, feeling completely alone and isolated can be unbearable.

6.4. The need of belonging and its influence on the perception of toxicity

As I developed with the help of different theories, people need to belong to a group for different reasons and want to belong to a group. This willingness to belong to a group at any cost has undeniably an influence on our judgement for we are ready to make concession with oneself in order to be a part of the group. In this optic, the experimental study examined by Pelletier (2012) is very interesting to understand the influence of the leader-follower membership (LMX) on the perception of leader toxicity and the intention to challenge the toxic leader. The experience has been conducted with 298 participants. The participants have been separated into two groups. One of the groups had high exchanges with the leader; they are the "in-group". The other group

had low exchanges with the leader; they are the “out-group”. The results show first of all that the perception of the toxicity of the leader is more important for the out-group than for the in-group, which means that the toxic behavior of a leader appears more toxic for the people who do not have any relationship with the leader. Or it might be better to emphasize that the leader appears as less toxic for the persons who have strong relationships with the leader, the persons who belong to the community run by this leader.

The second hypothesis supported by the experiments is that the out-group is more likely to challenge the leader than the in-group. Indeed, challenging the leader for the person of the in-group would be a threat for his privileges. On the other hand, a person of the out-group who is challenging the leader does not risk losing anything. Indeed, as an outsider, he has neither membership, nor privilege to lose.

6.5 Reflection

Human beings need to belong to a group for several existential reasons. Thus, one might be aware of the influence that the group has on one’s judgement and perception of leadership. Indeed, the group has a pressure on the individuals toward uniformity and the experiment reported by Pelletier (2012) shows that having relationship or not with the leader strongly influence our perception of toxicity, and more important, our propensity toward challenging this toxicity. But the most important is to understand that even if we undergo the pressure of the group, the decision of conformity is ours. The experiment of Asch (cited in Andersen & Taylor 2008) illustrates the pressure of the group on individual when it comes to decision making. The experiments have been conducted in group of eight persons. Participants have been told earlier that they were taking part to a vision test. The aim was to match the length of lines. The group was supposed to ‘judge a series of simple, clearly structured perceptual relations’ (Asch cited in Henle 1961, p. 223). In the eight persons of the group, seven were supposed to give wrong answers sometimes. And when these seven persons gave the wrong answer, in 75% of the cases, the eighth person gave the wrong answer too. In this experiment, the eighth individual knew that the answer given by the group was wrong, but he or she conformed to the group’s answer in order not to feel as an outsider. They knew they were wrong, but they did it anyway. Even though the group has an undeniable pressure on individual, one must understand that the individual himself or herself, decides to be shaped by the group.

In order to illustrate and better understand the pressure of the proximate environment on individuals, I will end the chapter by a case study. This case study will reveal the importance of the influence of the proximate environment when it comes to decision making.

6.6. Water Boiling in a Peruvian Village, a failed diffusion

Case Study based on secondary data. Wellin 1955

(cited in Rogers 2003, pp.1-5)

The aim of this case study based on secondary data is to illustrate, by a concrete and real example, the power of the influence of the group and the influence of the need of belonging in decision making process.

The story occurs in Peru. The public health service wanted to introduce some sanitary measures in order to improve the health of the villagers and lengthen their lives. The case is focused on the introduction of water boiling for drinking water. A two-year water-boiling campaign in a peasant village, Los Molinas, persuaded eleven housewives to boil the water they drank, out of two hundred families. Nelida was the social worker in charge of diffusing the idea of boiling water. She was helped by a doctor, giving speeches about the importance of boiling water to kill the bacteria and prevent some diseases. Nelida was also helped by the fifteen housewives, who already boiled the water in the village. Nelida was very involved in the project, she visited each families between fifteen and twenty-five times in order to persuade them to change. Only eleven families boiled water after her involvement in the village. The story focuses on two adopter of the water boiling ritual: Mrs. A and Mrs. B. and a rejecter: Mrs C.

- Mrs. A: Custom-Oriented Adopter

Mrs. A. suffers from a sinus infection. She is about forty and is called the “sickly one” in the village. She took the habit to boil a pot of water every morning that she drinks all day long. Nelida explained that ‘her motivation for boiling water is a complex local assumptions of “hot” and “cold” distinction, which means, that the adoption of boiling water by Mrs. A is based on her frames of references. In the Peruvian culture, the perception of hot and cold is opposed to the normal temperature and hot or cold drinks or food should be avoided by ill people. In this frame of reference, water is perceived as very cold, so to make it drinkable for ill people, it should be boiled. So the boiled water is associated to sickness, this is why Mrs. A. adopted the boiling water sanitary habit. But not at all with a consideration of the germs and bacteria, which are killed by this process. Indeed, the villagers of Los Molinas do not have the knowledge of

bacteria. They boiled water in order to destroy the “cold” attribute of water. And this process has a meaning in the frame of reference of sickness.

- Mrs. B, persuaded adopter

The family B came to Los Molinas a generation ago and is originally from the high Andes. The family is still oriented toward the culture of the high Andes, their birthplace is very important. Mrs. B is worried about the diseases, which could exist in lowland. And this is by playing the card of the fear of the lowland diseases that Nadila succeed in persuading Mrs. B to adopt the innovation of boiling the water before drinking it.

- Mrs. C : A Rejecter

Mrs. C represents the majority of the housewives of the village, who did not understand the importance of boiling water. Indeed, she did not understand the concept of the germ theory at all. What is a germ? An animal? But how can an animal survive in water that would draw a human being? Is it a fish? If it is a fish, there is no problem, one can eat it. How can a so small fish, than nobody can see, ear or smell, develop a disease in a grown up? The concept of germ remained blurry in Mrs. C. minds and she preferred to stick to the traditional patterns of the village. And she still believes that boiling water is for sick people.

- The adoption of the innovation by Mrs. B: a good decision for bad reasons.

First of all, as I explained, Nelida took advantage of the fear of Mrs. B to make her adopting the innovation. She did not convince Mrs. B with proper arguments, which could have led Mrs. B to understand the reason of her choice but she insisted on the fact that if she did not adopt this innovation, she would be subject to diseases. Nelida manipulated Mrs. B’s fear. From this perspective, Mrs. B adopted the innovation of boiling the water not because she really understood why it was the best solution but because she was afraid.

Secondly, she is not a real member of the group. She is seen as an outsider. ‘She will never achieve more than marginal social acceptance in the village’ (Rogers 1995, p.3). The community is not important to her because she is still more faithful to her birthplace than to her “new” village. She has nothing to lose socially, no status, no legitimacy, nothing. Accepting or rejecting the innovation of boiling water would not affect her societal status, which would remain marginal, whatever happens. She is grateful to the other “outsider”, Nelida, to teach her how to keep her family safe from the dangers of the lowlands.

Thirdly, she did not consider as role model the inhabitant of Los Molinos. They are not authority figures for Mrs. B but Nelida, as an outsider, who brings knowledge with her, becomes an authority figure. And Mrs. B wants to gain the approval of Nelida, which had for Mrs. B a higher status and legitimacy than the inhabitants of the village. She wants to gain a certain prestige through the eyes of an outsider, because she needs to feel that she is not an outsider for everyone. She found a group (here, the group of social worker), where, by accepting the innovation, she gained some recognition from the members of the group, who try to make her a role model for the other housewives of the village. She gained a certain prestige in a village, where she is nothing more than an outsider. Mrs. B eventually adopted the innovation in order to fulfil her need of belonging because belonging to a group is very one of the prime factor of motivation (Maslow 1943). This adoption does not mean that she belongs physically to a new group for she is still living in Los Molinos, but she is at least finally emotionally accepted by someone which is the most important (Fromm 1966).

- The rejection of Mrs. C because of the adoption of Mrs. A and Mrs. B

Mrs. C rejected the boiling water, because as explained earlier, boiling water is considered to be linked to illness. Indeed, that is why Mrs. A, who was chronically ill, adopted the innovation. And Mrs. C, contrary to Mrs. B, has a social status to keep. She belongs to the community of Los Molinos and if the other members of the community of Los Molinos do not adopt the innovation of boiling water, Mrs C. should not adopt it either, because this is not what is considered as the right thing to do according to the tradition of the community. Once again, the need of belonging to a group has been stronger than reflection about the real meaning of the innovation. When people follow an idea in order to conform to the norm, this is what is called by Kaplan (cited in Henningsen and Henningsen 2015) the normative influence. This influence is not a good one because it does not help people to make a better decision but make people following based on the advantages to belong to a group.

- The reasons of the failure of the diffusion of innovation

Nelida did not focus her energy in making socially respected housewives adopting the innovation. She took as role model, two housewives, who were not considered as persons who have an authority in the decision making in the village. One of them was sick; the other one was an outsider. Rogers (2003) explains that once the well-integrated persons adopt an innovation, the others are likely to follow. Indeed, these persons represent authority, knowledge, prestige and so on... They are the 'norm' people want to conform with and they

are likely to have the right opinion, which, once adopted by everyone, would become the Truth. If Mrs C. would have adopted the innovation, whereas the leader of the community did not, she would have pretended to be able to have an opinion about a social reality, which is a complex object (Festinger cited in Froger 2015) by herself. There are two possible consequences to such an action. Or she would have been considered as “in the wrong”, maybe mocked or in the worst case, rejected of the community. Or she would have succeeded in convincing the other villagers and she would have gain in prestige. But in this case, Mrs. C did not adopt the innovation, she conformed to the traditions. Certainly because it was more important to her to belong to the community of Los Molinos than accepting the norms of outsiders to kill animals, which cannot even be seen.

- Conclusion

In this case study, one can observe the process of diffusion of innovation. Or rather the non-diffusion of an innovation. One understands that most of the people, who adopted the innovation, did it for wrong reasons. They did it because of a wrong understanding of the true reasons of the boiling water, they were afraid or they wanted to gain prestige. In the same way, the person who did not adopt the innovation did it for bad reason too. They did it because the one who adopted the innovation were not a part of the group, or because the authority figures of the community conformed to the tradition of the village. In both cases, the bad reason of their decision making is the pressure of the group. People’s need of belonging to a group and to conform to this group is more important than an innovation which could improve people’s health. The conformization is important if people want to be part of the group (Henningesen and Henningesen 2015) and in this case, people made decision influenced only by their need of belonging to a group, without really considering the innovation at stake. Here the case is not morally questionable or unethical. On the contrary, social workers wanted to increase the quality of the health of the villager of Los Molinos. But one understands that the propagation of an innovation with morally questionable purposes must have known the same evolution. Because none of the persons, who took a decision in this case, took it by taking into account raw data and a truly understanding of the mechanisms and the purpose of the innovation. They all took a decision because of the pressure of the group and the need to belong to the community.

In the chapter 4, I gave a thorough description of what could be a conducive environment. Then in the chapter 5, I gave my understanding of the influence of the distant environment on individuals and in the chapter 6; I explained that the proximate environment had a pressure on individuals toward conformity.

Sometimes, the environment is conducive and blinds people. Sometimes, people are not blinded, understand the meaning of their actions, disagree, and still follow. Indeed, what makes them following is the pressure of the environment. Whatever the distant or the proximate environment, both have a pressure, which triggers complex psychological and sociological mechanisms in individuals and make them follow. But I do not think it is enough to understand the following mechanisms, or if is enough, this is too easy to finish by saying that we are following because we are under pressure. Following remains a personal choice and being under pressure makes the choice more difficult not inexistent. But freeing oneself from the pressure of the environment is above all freeing oneself and making us free individuals. It looks amazing on the paper, but it is not as easy as it appears to be fully free. It might be even frightening...

7. The Existential Fear of Freedom

Man, so long as he remains free, has no more constant and agonizing anxiety than find as quickly as possible someone to worship

Fyodor Dostoevsky

A lot of philosophers argue that human beings are anxious of freedom. The existentialism of Sartre for example suggests that human beings are free by nature and that they are anxious of their own freedom. Likewise, Fromm (1966) argues that men have an existential fear of freedom. On one hand, human beings are always looking for freedom, fighting for freedom and even dying for it. There were and still are a lot of wars in the History which show this hunger for freedom. Men have been fighting against slavery, fascism, authoritarianism or all kind of political regime which limits or have limited freedom. On the other hand, being completely free is frightening because a limited frame, even if it means a limited freedom, provides safety. Indeed, Fromm (1966, p.x) explains how a complete freedom, let men 'isolated and, thereby, anxious and powerless', for freedom let a huge empty space in human's mind that they have to fill out by constructing themselves. And by constructing themselves I mean that they have to work on building their identity, they have to define who they are.

7.1. The fear of losing one's identity

7.1.1. What is identity?

- An existential question

Identity is very complex. Identity is basically the answer to the question "who am I?" So it might appear as very personal in a first place but it is actually a social question because identity is partly a social construction. There would be no question of identity if one lived alone on the

Earth. But one does not live alone. There are more than seven billion human beings on the Earth so identity is more than ever a hot question. Who am I among these seven billion persons? What does define me? So the identity question is always related to the other, to the group. Furthermore, identity is made of choices. The clothes we wear, the habits we develop, the food we buy (or not), the neighborhood we settle down,... all these kind of choices constitute our identity because they show to the other people and to oneself who one chose to be and to which kind of group one want to belong.

Who am I? I am a French girl, I have had a Christian education, I am small, I like cuisine, I also like meeting with my friend but I do not like clubs, I study economics and management and so on... There are two groups of answers to the question of identity. There is a part of my identity, which is related to the other, so this is my social identity. The other part of my identity is more personal, this is my personal identity (Tajfel 2010). So the identity is personally as well as socially constructed. And one cannot avoid one to privilege the other. The identity is the interaction of both personal preferences and social choices and there is no end to this construction. Indeed, Tajfel (2010) explains that there is no beginning and no end to the construction of the identity; this is a never-ending ongoing process.

o The interrelation of identity and environment

Layder (1994 cited in Collinson 2003, p.528) says that the post-structuralist's thought 'suggest that people's lives are inextricably interwoven with the social world around them'. Indeed, people live in society so one cannot be oneself by being oneself for and only for oneself. One is oneself with the others-selves. Giddens (1979 cited in Collinson 2003) adds that "society" and "individuals" cannot be put apart.

The first environment where individuals develop their sense of selves is the family. Indeed, Giddens (1979 cited in Collinson 2003, p.528) says that 'people are embedded in social relations from birth and throughout their lives'. This is the first group of people in which human beings evolve and since the early beginning, this group provides us a sense of identity. For children, family provides the first idea of self-identity. Froger (2015) says: "You [me, Esther] are a girl. When you were a child, you did not have the sense of the other immediately, it came after some months. Then, you realized that there were other people who looked like you but who were not you. You got this idea of distanciation. Then you realized that you were more like your mother, because people told you so. So you started looking at your mother to learn

how to be a girl. So the first step of constructing identity is the imitation of the persons around you”.

The family is the first proximate environment experienced by children. Then, they go to school, to sport centers, to music school and so on... And they experience new social milieus, which help them to define who they are by developing their preferences. As explains Tajfel (2010), when individuals chose a group of socialization, they are not looking for affinities with the persons of the group but are looking for themselves. The real question is who am I? We are likely to go along with people, who are similar to the one we think we are. I think that in the process of socialization, the question we ask ourselves when it comes to choose a group to belong to is more “Who would I like to become?”, more than “Who am I?”. Because if one is searching for one’s identity, one cannot answer really the question “Who am I?”

Finally, identity is a process, which relies on a succession of choices. These choices are supposed to define us, to define who we are, by imitating or following the persons who, in our mind, are like us. We are likely to follow people who seem to be close to the image one has of oneself. Or we imitate, or follow, the persons we would like to become, the ones, who have remarkable traits of personality which are important to us. This is very close to process of becoming the follower of a leader, isn’t it? I could reasonably say that constructing one’s identity relies on a following process, for identity is based on differentiation, as well as on an imitation game.

7.1.2. The danger of freedom for one’s identity

Fromm (1966) explains that in the Middle-Age for instance, freedom was limited. Indeed, the existence was very static, the chance to move geographically was limited, and the chance to move socially was even more limited. That is the reason individuals, since the moment they were born, knew what they were supposed to do and where they were supposed to do so. They knew who they were and who they were expected to be for the others. They knew which place they were supposed to take if they wanted to be a part of the community. So even if they were not free, they felt safe. Maybe not physically safe because the Middle-age was not the most bright and safe and healthy period of History, but at least socially safe. The man (and the women) of the Middle-Age knew who he was without having to ask so many questions. For Fromm (1966), capitalism destroyed this reassuring order by giving to the man an enormous freedom. Indeed, the emergence of this new society provides to the individual a huge freedom, Fromm (1966) says that capitalism demystified the society, freed individuals from the bondages

of the nature and set up a social and political freedom. Of course, it depends on the place of birth on the Earth; it is obvious that a child born in the U.S.A is much freer than a little Bangladeshi . But even if there are some limitations, freedom brought with capitalism in Western societies is obvious. The status of someone is not fixed by birth any more, it is to be reached. For example, my mother is a nurse and my father is a train technician, but it does not mean that I will become a nurse and my brother a train technician. But whatever our choices, we will have to work for it, we are free to become whoever we want to be and in the other hand, we do not have this ‘safety net’ anymore to become who our parents are. This is amazing and frightening, we have to work to discover who we are and to build our identity. Identity is not to be received anymore but is to be built. And this is complicated. What if I do not succeed in becoming someone? What if the one I become is not accepted by the group? What if I do never find who I can be? All these identity questions are existential questions for human beings and they are brought by the complete freedom they are facing in our modern societies because the rising freedom is a qualitative freedom. What is at stake here is the ‘growth of an active, critical, responsible self’ (Fromm 1966, p. 93). So the growing of a qualitative freedom as explained by Fromm (1966) is a freedom where individuals are isolated, facing alone their existential fear of identity. In this freedom, they have to be critical toward the environment for they have to choose who they want to be. And they have to fight for it.

Knowing oneself, or becoming oneself, is a long process and even a never-ending process. Someone who does not strongly know who he or she is becomes a susceptible follower because he or she becomes more likely to follow the group, whatever the actions of the group. Because as I said earlier, following a leader, or a group is an easy way to “find oneself” and the risk is to follow, even if one does not really believe in the ideas of the person or the group. It is a reassuring process. As Tajfel (2010) explains, one cannot avoid the influence of the group on our identity construction for the social identity is as important as the personal identity in the process of identity construction. But the risk is to surrender one’s power to spend time and energy to construct one’s personal identity and developing only a social identity. An identity which would be an imitation of the identity of some persons of the group, or at least an imitation of some parts of the identity of some persons of the group. Indeed, someone who is constructing his or her identity by identifying himself or herself to the others and only to the others will be disposed to follow the group, even when his or her core values are in contradiction with the leader’s one (or with the leading group). Because refusing to follow at a very particular moment is denying one part of one’s identity. This is a threat for human beings because if one understand the search for one’s identity as one of the ultimate goals of the human existence, the tiny

possibility to lose one part of what we spend one's entire life to construct is frightening. This is going one step back in the journey of the existence (even several steps back, depending on the implication in this particular group). So in some cases, human beings just prefer to fool themselves, following a trend they do not particularly identify to and ease the identity construction to avoid having the feeling of having missed an important step in their lives.

7.2. Identity, leadership and group process

As identity, leadership is a group process. Leadership is a group process, a social construction where the question of identity is central. Hogg (2001 cited in Collinson 2006) argues that the acknowledgement of the leader as a prototype of the group identity is a sinequanone condition to the leadership process and that followers become followers when they identify themselves to the leader. Here, the idea of a shared identity is obvious. As explain Haslam and Platow (2001 cited in Collinson 2006, p.180), 'the very possibility of leadership depends upon the existence or creation of a shared group identity'

The post-structuralists emphasize the complexity of identity. Individuals are not identity-consistent for self-identity is constructed by multiple identities. These identities can be complementary but they can also be paradoxical and contradict each other. But individuals are looking for a consistent identity because the multiplicity of identities is complex to deal with and provides a feeling of insecurity. This feeling of insecurity is reinforced by the fact that today's societies are more and more characterized by freedom of choice, meaning that the identity is no longer given from the beginning but 'has to be recursively earned and achieved'. This is finally an ultimate goal to construct one's identity and to become the one we want to, or we are able to, become. Sennett and Cobb (1977 cited in Collinson 2006) explain how such a society can create a 'doubt about the self' in American manual worker and a fear of a weathering of their identity. Frank Rosario for instance has been an interviewee of Sennett and Cobb (1977) explains that he comes from a manual worker family and became his carreer as a manual worker. He respects manual work more than office work because manual work is for him 'real work' (p. 21). But he chose to evolve in his career and became an office worker which is not 'real work' for him (p. 21). He chose to do a job he despises in order to get more recognition from the others because office work is highly valued in our modern societies. This created a struggle in Frank's mind a doubt about his identity. He had the feeling that he wanted to belong

to a community he did not really belong to just in order to gain recognition and respect. In the same time, he did something he did not like to be respected by the others. This situation brought by modern societies, led Frank to undergo a struggle about this identity. And it is complicated to deal with this struggle alone. Facing our existential troubles of identity alone, facing oneself, is complicated and sometimes even impossible. This is why eventually; following a leader is a way to reassuring one's identity as well as a way to ease the process of identity defining.

7.3. Sartre's existentialism

7.3.1. A philosophy of Freedom

For Sartre (1970), the existentialism is a philosophy, which suggests that human beings become human beings by their actions. There is no determinism to human existence for there is no god, nothing in the universe, which defines us beforehand. Human being is the master of his or her own destiny. This philosophy claims that we are constructing ourselves the way we want, without any predetermination, so the construction of our identity, our selves, is based on the choices we made before taking actions. For Sartre being human beings is based on what we do, outside of our actions, we are nothing.

7.3.2. A philosophy of Responsibility

Sartre (1970) explains that if there is nothing, which determines human condition and that human beings are what they do and not what they think to be, human beings are responsible for whom they become. Moreover, what does one individual engages the whole humanity. Sartre (1970) says that each individual is the entire humanity, which means that the actions taken by an individual are what this individual wishes for the entire humanity. Otherwise he or she should not do it.

7.3.3. A philosophy which let an empty space for anxiousness

The book 'L'existentialisme est un humanisme' is actually the transcript of a conference given by Jean-Paul Sartre in 1945 to explain what is really his vision of existentialism and to contradict the criticisms made by the Catholics and the Marxists. Indeed, a lot of criticisms have been made against Sartre's vision of existentialism, which is an atheist version of existentialism. And I understand that his version can be a little bit frightening. As he explains (Sartre, 1970), the non-existence of God, or any kind of predeterminism is a source of anxiousness for human beings. He says, 'Human beings are condemned to be free' (p.39). The very word "condemned" is meaningful for he emphasize that freedom is a burden for human beings. For Sartre (1970), human beings are anxious of the nothingness and death. Indeed, there is no God, there is nothing above us, who can, in a way or another, take care of us and be responsible for the good progress of our lives. Then, as there is no god and no predeterminism, we are responsible for whom we are. There is nobody else to blame but us. He says 'what people want, is some weak people or heroes predetermined by birth' (p.55). In this sentence, he means that this would reassuring that some of us are born as losers, and some others as heroes, because it would means that it is not our fault if we became a coward. Because it is God's fault. Or the universe's. Or something else's but not ours. Arendt (2006) also shares this point of view about humanity. Individuals do not want to be responsible for their actions; this is why they follow leader, even evil leader. It is a way to free oneself from the heavy burden of responsibility. And finally, in front of this absence of God and this total freedom, the only certainty of individuals is death. The only inevitable thing, which is a complete certainty, is that we are going to die. Sartre (1970) explains that this certainty is source of anxiousness. Lipmann-Blumen (cited in Riggio, Chaleff & Lipman-Blumen 2008) says that the existential angst of individuals, beyond of the certainty of death, comes from uncertainty of their condition.

7.4. Following to downsize our existential fears

7.4.1 Material assets as an insurance for identity

I already explained that identity was a personal as well as a social construction. Identity is also a matter of what we are born with (or without) and what we chose to acquire. We chose to acquire and develop certain trait of personality, skills and preferences. So identity is also a matter of what we have (or do not have). Identity is existential and material.

In order to have rewards, one must work for it. Freud (cited in Fromm 1966, p.8) says that originally, everyone works for oneself but as we are a lot, we have to work together. Collaboration is just a way to work together to achieve personal goals. The fuel of collaboration is an individualistic purpose. So are working individuals in a capitalist environment. The boss needs employees to produce goods and the employee needs the boss because he or she provides a job, which enables him or her to earn money. They both need each other and they both work together in order to achieve a common goal, create value, which is a way to satisfy individualistic purpose: maximize one's own gain. This dynamic is very important. Fromm (1966) argues that individuals are afraid of freedom, that freedom have made individuals 'anxious and powerless' (p.x). He argues further that they are two ways to overcome isolation and insecurity: property and success.

The first 'safety net' is property. Property is a way to show to the other who we are, who we chose to be. One interesting example is clothes. Clothes themselves are not important, they are just clothes, and one can lose them or ruin them... But what is important when one choose clothes is the message behind it. Because clothes send a message. For example a man with a well-adjusted and very expensive suit is saying "today is an important day" or "I am the kind of man who is always perfectly dressed for every day is an important day". In every case, his suit sends a message on who he chose to be (at least at this very moment). One other great example is Harley Davidson. The world famous motorbike brand had some difficulties in the 80s, but one employee had the idea to create a community around Harley Davidson. Every owner of a Harley in the world is the member of this community, which is frequently meetings, gathering, doing trips together... all kind of events are organized. "I have met some people who became very good friends. I consider some of them like my family" says a customer (Meissonier 2014). In this case, having a Harley Davidson is a way to claim who we are and to "buy" a right to belong to a community one would like to belong to. Property is so important because it helps us to define who we are and reconstruct the group, the solid community, which is important for individuals to be who they can be. In this way, property downsizes our existential fears. And to be able to get property, one must earn money.

This is not a secret, people work in organizations to earn money. These people work collectively because they need one another to achieve personal goals in order to fulfil personal needs (Freud cited in Fromm 1966, p.8). Money is the way to buy material assets, which, as I already explained, is a way to reassuring one's identity. So following a leader in an organizational context is not a willingness to construct one's identity by following someone one would like to be like. But this is a way to earn enough money to buy the necessary assets to reassure one's

identity out of the organizational context. So when one follows a leader one disagrees with in an enterprise, this is as if this person were agree to renounce for a while to his or her identity, in order to claim harder but later, who he or she wants to become. In the interviews I conducted, I wanted to know why, in organizational context, people still followed even when they disagreed. And the answer was unanimous, people need to earn money. In this world, in the system we are living in, one need to earn money because the job that some people have, is just a way to get money in order to be able to accomplish themselves out of the professional environment.

7.4.2. Social achievement to reach immortality

Fromm (1966) also talked about prestige. Prestige is earned when people are admired by other people. People reach prestige when the society recognizes that the choices of life an individual made have been remarkable. Prestige is when one's identity is recognized and admired by the society. There are different ways to reach prestige but the most common way to reach prestige in our modern societies is through one's professional position. Someone who is important has an important job. When one have an important job which implies high responsibilities and that the momentum given thanks to this role is benefic for the society, thus people admire this person, who is important for the community, responsible, wise, clever, and so on... It is closed to the process of following to get reward but in the case of prestige, the reward is not material. So it might be even more solid. Because prestige becomes an integral part of individuals, this is even more related to their personality. Cohen et al. (2004) explain that as the only certainty of people is death, they try during their lives to reach symbolic immortality or even literal immortality (life after death). Symbolic immortality is to be reached in this world. For this purpose, human beings make children, but they also hoard fortunes or try to do something, which remain forever like a book or a song or whatever masterpiece... But these actions can lead people to follow at any cost. Indeed, in the recent economic scandal, the aim was to make money, even more money... even such a scandalous amount of money that nobody could spend in an entire life. Some leaders, who get money in such scandals, would need several lives to reasonably spend this money. These leaders crossed the lines, and involved susceptible followers with them, to reach a kind of symbolic immortality. But this example might be a wrong choice of example because the leaders, who were responsible for fraudulent business,

actually reached a kind of immortality, on the front pages of the newspapers when they went to jail.

7.5. The dangers of this dynamic

We, human beings, are free by nature. I believe in this freedom for what we are is determined by what we chose to do. But this is frightening for it means that we have to construct our identity, that we are entirely responsible for our actions and that we have to face alone the certainty of death. And we are afraid, we are afraid of freedom because we are afraid not to be able to construct our identity, we are afraid to be entirely responsible for our actions, and even more for the consequences of our actions and we are more than everything afraid to die. So we lie to ourselves to be a little bit less afraid. Lipman-Blumen (cited in Riggio, Chaleff & Lipman-Blumen 2008) says that individuals live in illusion to deal with their existential angst. So in order to blur ourselves, we follow groups, we follow leaders, sometimes blindly, because this is easy and reassuring and comfortable. And we buy things, because this is easy too, and reassuring too. This is as we would like to convince ourselves that, by convincing the others, we are the ones we think we are. Our existential fear of freedom might be a danger for it might blind our critical judgement and influence our decision making in the opposite way of what we would think is the right way.

Being afraid is fine, this is normal to be afraid of certain things but this fear should not prevent us from doing anything. Once again, stopping my reflection here would be too easy, it would be acknowledging that fear is an absolute obstacle to everything and that because we are afraid; it is ok to stay passive. It would be acknowledging that fear is an insurmountable obstacle. And I disagree with this. It is true that it takes courage to overcome our fears but this is not impossible, this is just complicated and frightening. A lot of people are afraid of the plane for example and they overcome it, and they take the plane. Fear is an easy excuse to passivity. And courageous people do not get stuck because of their fears.

8. Human being... a coward?

'The ethical person chooses the moral course of actions, regardless of personal sacrifice'

Lantos (1999 cited in April et al. 2010, p.156)

8.1. Standing up for one's opinion: endanger oneself

Standing up for one's ideas requires courage. This is what explains Chaleff in his book *The courageous follower* (2009). It takes courage to give one's opinion against the common trend and dare the power of the leader for it takes courage to challenge, it takes courage to assume the responsibility, and it takes courage to be right and even more to be wrong.

First of all, resisting the influence of the distant environment is challenging. As I argued earlier, the influence of the distant environment is crucial for the understanding of the reality. The distant environment is filled by a set of cues, which are the basis of sensemaking (Weick 1995). Acknowledging that some of these cues are not valid anymore is frightening. This is acknowledging that the sense one gave to these cues in a first place is wrong and made us doing the wrong things. This is introducing a piece of chaos in the calm and reassuring flow of experiences which constitute our existence. And we are afraid of chaos. By questioning a part of the reality as we constructed it, this is acknowledging that a part of our experiences are based on a questionable reality. And this is accepting the fact that, if one wants to do the right things in the future, one should re-give a sense to new cues. One should re-make sense to the flow of raw data out there (Weick 2001).

Then, resisting the influence of the group may be even more frightening. Indeed, as the experience of Schachter (cited in Froger, 2015) explains, if an individual do not conform to the opinion of the group, he is excluded from this group for the deviance jeopardize the very existence of the group. Being excluded of the group is tough to handle for human beings for we are constantly looking for recognition through the eyes of the others. And being completely alone and free from any kind of relation even leads to mental disorders (Krakauer 1996).

Standing up for one's ideas endangers the safe nest of human beings for it confronts us directly to our existential fears. And we have a lot of existential fears. We are afraid of chaos, we are

afraid of being rejected, we are afraid to be free, to be responsible and to die. Finally, it seems that human beings are afraid of the entirety of life. But we are living, so we have to deal with life and the existential fears brought with the gift of being a human being.

8.2. Need for security and safety, Maslow

In 'A theory of Human motivation' (1943), Maslow explains that people's motivation can be classified in a range of needs. These needs have to be fulfilled for a person to feel motivated and motivation is one determinant of human behavior. Maslow (1943) classifies the human needs as such: the 'physiological' needs, the safety needs, the love needs, the esteem needs and the need for self-actualization. By physiological needs, we are talking about nutrition, air, basic shelter and clothes, everything which is required for the normal performance of the body. They are supposed to be met in a first place because this is a matter of survival. Once the physiological needs are fulfilled, the safety needs are what dominate human's motivation. It means that individuals need to feel in security in a safe environment because insecurity is perceived as a threat to well-being. The third need is the need of love or the need of belongingness. Maslow (1943) argues that once the two first needs are met, finding a place in a group is the individual ultimate goal. The fourth need is the esteem needs. An individual needs to have a positive self-appreciation and self-image in order to be self-confident about his or her identity. This need considers also the need of reputation and prestige. The last need of the Maslow's Theory of motivation is the need for self-actualization. This is the desire to go beyond when all the other needs are fulfilled, this is what an individuals does to fulfill is existence as a human being, this is 'the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming' (Maslow 1943, p. 382). I am particularly interested in the need of safety. This is the second need of the Maslow's Theory and the first which is not absolutely required to survive. Maslow (1943, p. 378) explains that a 'healthy, normal, fortunate adult in our culture' should not feel endanger. However, he notices that the need for safety can be observed in the very preference for stability, known and routine, as emphasized by Giddens (1995). Indeed, Giddens (1995) says that a certain routine is needed for human beings to find continuity in their identity, like a red line in their life for them to know who they are and what to do in a given situation. Maslow (1943) furthermore argues that religions or philosophies are related to this need for safety. Indeed, they give a consistent and coherent meaning to the enormous and chaotic experience of the universe. Without these points of reference, generators of meaning,

the universe (everything around us) is ‘perceived to be hostile, overwhelming and threatening’ (ibid, p.379). Weick (2001, pp.8-9) explains that the world is a flow of continuous information, ongoing and instable and sometimes contradictory. But the cue which creates at a very particular moment the reflex of making sense out of something helps human mind to find, at least for a short period of time, stability in this unstable flow of experiences. It helps to reach a feeling of security and control. Such cues are suggested by a leader, whose role is to give sense out of this ongoing flow of raw data and by accepting the cues, the followers consider it as meaningful and make sense to the environment, the experiences of the outside, the universe (Weick 1995). By considering the leader as a sense-giver as Weick (1995) suggests, one can say that the one who helps individuals to feel safe by giving them a reasonable meaning to the overwhelming flow of experiences is this leader.

One can reasonably conclude that people choose to follow a leader to feel safe, to be in control and to understand what is going on out there because they are afraid of chaos.

Another interesting point is that the very nature of human beings is likely to consider the outside world – the distant environment – as instable and threatening. So the first relationship which exists between the individuals and the distant environment is not a peaceful relationship but is based on fear and distrust. In opposition, the first relationship with the primary environment is reassuring because one makes the experience of human being, which makes sense to us in a first place because one already experienced human beings through the experience of oneself.

8.3. Different mechanisms to stay in the comfort zone

As it takes courage to stand up for one’s ideas for it makes human beings face some of their existential fears, some of us developed mechanisms to stay in a zone of comfort and cope with toxicity. Webster, Brough & Daly (2014) conducted a survey on 76 randomly selected participants, who experienced toxicity in the work place. They developed in a second time a scale of the follower’s coping strategies. Among other results, they found out that 17% of the interrogated persons were reframing the environment by developing an accommodation strategy and 30% by becoming submissive to the direction. Moreover, 93% of the person interrogated simply avoided contact, at a moment or another, by bypassing the leader, ignoring the leader or just leaving the company. These results are important and problematic in the same time. It shows that most of us ‘flight’ or ‘freeze’ as say Webster, Brough & Daly (2014) but we

do not fight. Uhl-Bien & Carsten (2007) argue that there are two kinds of passive responses: silence and obedience. They report the results of the experience on silence of France & Miliken (cited in Uhl-Bien & Carsten 2007), which show that 85% of the participants did not report the problem, even if they felt it was important. They remained silence because they thought it was futile to report and it would be just a way to be viewed as a troublemaker, or they did not want to destroy their professional relationships or being punished. The obedience behavior has been experimented and well discussed in the Milgram experiment, which showed that people blindly obey the command if the orders are given by an authority, who has an expertise that the individual does not have. Uhl-Bien & Carsten (2007) name moral distress the feeling of people when they face a situation, where morality is questionable. The moral distress is what feels a person who does not do the right things because of internal weaknesses or external constraints. This distress is important for it is the starting point of the elaboration of an active or a passive response. Unfortunately, according to Webster, Brough & Daly findings (2014), the majority of people are more likely to elaborate a passive response. We are playing ostriches, burying our heads in the sand and praying for the situation to get better. Or simply building some physical or psychological structures in order to make it bearable. This kind of behavior can actually only let the toxicity grow. 'When witnesses or recipient of the leader's destructive actions are reluctant to confront a toxic leader, they may be, in essence, enabling the leader to continue his or her toxic agenda' (Pelletier 2012, p.412). Indeed, doing nothing, being passive, hoping that somebody else would stand up and fight is just a way to avoid being responsible for one's choice, while enabling toxicity to spread up. Uhl-Bien & Carsten (2007, p.191) argue that the internal 'weaknesses or failures or external constraints and barriers' are the reasons of the followers' moral distress. These are the reasons why people do not dare to stand up for their ideas, or simply to stand up for ethics. Nevertheless, some people do. Some people do stand up for what they think is right, they dare to stand up against power and authority, they take the risk to lose their job or to be excluded of the group, because they do not want to remain passive and silent. Even if I said that the results of the experiment of Webster, Brough and Daly (2014), were problematic for the rate of passivity is extremely high, I cannot deny the small percentage of people who want to solve the problem by using direct communication. Chaleff (2009) call them the courageous followers. The courageous followers (Chaleff 2009) are the ones who stand up for their ideas and suggest alternatives instead of being constantly criticizing. The courageous followers take the same risks and face the same losses. Nevertheless, their consideration of ethics is more important than their loyalty toward the power. Chaleff (2009) emphasizes that our societies celebrate the great heroes, the ones who stand up publicly and

save the world against the villain. These heroes are praised and glorified. But the courageous followers are everyday heroes. They stand up against what they think is wrong but they are not rewarded by glory. Actually, they have everything to lose, their job, their reputation and so on.... They are the true heroes of our societies.

8.4. Consideration of ethics

8.4.1. What is ethics?

'Ethics is about what is just (system of morals), discerning what is right or wrong in order to achieve distributive justice (discernment and choice), and is about defining the practices and rules, written and unwritten, which inform responsible conduct and behavior between individuals and groups in order to maintain the common good (rules of conduct)' (April et al. 2010, p. 152). Ethics is not about following the rules; it is about doing what one think is right. It is based on the knowledge of the Good, the common good. And this is precisely why it is sometimes complicated to act ethically. One must think about the consequences of our actions on one's life but above all on the other's life, for ethics is about the 'common good' (April et al. 2010, p.152). Following the rules is easy, it is written and it does not require thinking too much. It just requires following the group and acting as the other are expected us to act. Acting ethically is to dare defying the rules sometimes because the rules are not always favorable to the common good.

8.4.2. One hundred shades of grey

'For most people, the black and the white, right and wrong decisions are easily made. It is the shades of grey that make the right things to do difficult to distinguish' (Copeland 2004 cited in April et al. 2010, p.156). As a matter of fact, it is easy to distinguish the right from the wrong, the bright side from the dark side. But this kind of Manichean vision of life exists only in the movies and life is much more complex and the line between good and bad is tiny, moveable and permeable that good people can be tempted to cross. Furthermore, philosophers distinguish utilitarianism and deontological ethics. Utilitarianism is the belief that morality is based on the outcomes of the actions; whereas deontological ethic is based on the belief that ethic is following the moral rules. As an example, I would like to use the discourse of one of the

interviewee (P275) of April et al. (2010) ‘One of the driving force behind my ambition to succeed is to be able to provide for my mom, siblings and children what I never had. In the quest of this, I sometimes lose sight of the bigger picture and adopt a bottom-line mentality’ (p.162). P275 is likely to cross the line if it is to serve his purpose to provide for his family. He could act in an ethically questionable manner in order to provide for the good of other persons. From a merely utilitarianism point of view, this man is pursuing ethics for the outcomes of his actions would be good for the others. Nevertheless, from a deontological consideration of ethics, this man would cross the line, so his actions would be considered as ethically wrong. So finally, ethics is doing what is considered to be the right thing to do. Is the utilitarianism consideration of ethics better than the deontological view of ethics? No, there is no better ethic. As far as I am concerned, I value utilitarianism. I believe in crossing the line for what I think is good. For instance, I am a real defendant of the animal cause and I support the pirate actions of the association See Shepherd. The members of See Shepherd are regularly attacking Japanese boats, whose ship crew kills whales in the Arctic Ocean. By their actions, they endanger their lives and the lives of the others to defend a higher purpose. I also support the association L214, which is fighting for animal well-being by conducting some ecological terrorist actions. And even if the action itself is questionable, the purpose, the aim of what they are doing is more important to me than what is moral for the society. I do not agree in a lot of things in our socio-economic system. So I do not follow if I consider that this is not the right thing to do. And if it means crossing the line of ethics, I am ready to cross it

8.5. Human being: a rational animal

There are different theories about the decision making of human beings and all involve an analysis of what is to gain and what is to lose. In economics the ‘homo economicus’ is considered to be rational and to take his or her decision in order to maximize the possible outcomes under the constraints of the environment. Human beings balance the pros and the cons, by trying to measuring the outcomes. But as considered by the mathematical theory of Bernoulli, human beings take also decision according to their values and beliefs. They do not maximize their profit at any costs but they maximize their utility. The Bernoulli’s function is assuming a decision process based on finding a balance among profit, economical constraints, and values and believes. Unfortunately, most of the time, the weight of ethics in the decisional

balance is light compared to the weight of reward, social recognition, social identity and our existential fears.

But no matter the pressure of the environment and the weight of our existential fears, following remains a personal choice and I will end this chapter by a case study which shows the courage of some followers.

8.6. Case Study: Crossing the line, a matter a personal choice

A case study of obedience in a psychiatric hospital, created out of primary data.

The goal of this case study is to show that a conducive environment and a toxic boss can lead certain people to cross the line. But certain people only. And finally, crossing the line or being ethical, beyond the social pressure and the personal fears, is a matter of personal choice.

The interviewee is Armen Alaverdian, 25, Nurse in a psychiatric hospital in Paris. The interview has been conducted face to face the 10th of April, and continued by Skype the 25th of April.

In this hospital, Armen's superior, Sandrine, is very authoritarian. "She is almighty. She assumes that she is always right. All kind of questioning is very bad perceived. She takes everything very personally. But when we (the nurse staff) make some remarks, this is on her job, not on her." So this managerial style and her character engenders a very unhealthy working environment. Armen says that an important part of the staff stopped asking questions or showing disagreement because "she makes people pay for the slightest wrong step".

Line crossing

There are patients who are hospitalized "under contract". They are for most of them, dangerous patients for themselves or for the others. And when they escape from the hospital, they have to report the escape to the police. Indeed, they could be dangerous for themselves, hurt themselves and might commit suicide. And they could also hurt the others. One night, a patient escaped. This patient escapes very often and goes always at his father's place. He is dangerous because he sometimes threaten his father with a gun. When the medical staff realized that he escaped, it was morning and so they just went to his father place to take him back. After this incident, Sandrine, the responsible of the service, asked the person in charge to report in the medical file of the patient a permission to go out and not an escape. Because declaring an escape after the patient has been taken back would be acknowledging a failure in the surveillance system of the hospital, which his supposed to take care of potentially dangerous patients. So the employee reported a permission to go out. The problem is that this is a lie, which here, has no consequences for the patient, but which prevent from increasing the security system of the hospital. But the employee who reported that did it because 'he wanted to have the peace'.

People are not afraid of her, but they know that this boss “makes people pay for the slightest false move’, so they obey in order to keep a peaceful working environment.

In this case, the environment is not toxic yet. However, they all know that they are working for a boss who is likely to make it toxic. Employees cross the line in order to keep a livable working environment. The conductivity of this environment lies in the fact that the environment is likely to become toxic at the slightest protest or disagreement. This is why normal people cross the line, and are likely to take responsibilities for immoral behavior.

Nevertheless, in spite of the conductivity of the environment, people’s behavior remains people’s choices. They chose to cross the line or not. In the end of the interview, Armen explained that the boss knows the people who might cross the line. So she asks to “weak people”, who just want to keep a smooth working environment, when she needs to cross the line. Armen told me that he would never do such a thing. He says “she knows that I would never cross the line for her. So she makes insidious remarks every day. But I do not really pay attention to that. I would never engage my responsibility for her; this is my responsibility and the patient’s safety”.

However, the hierarchy in a hospital is very important. Indeed, nurses have to obey the nurse in chief and all the nurses have to obey doctors. Because doctors are the ones who know and their decision should not be questioned. But Armen is strong enough to say no and to support the consequences of his no. And he deals with it because he is aware that this is his decisions. He stands up for his ideas and disobeys the authority when needed. He is what Zimbardo (2008) would call an “every day Hero”.

9. Toxicity in a Medical Center

This case study is based on primary data. The goal of this case is illustrate the system as a whole. It won't cover every point developed in the thesis for it is a real story and not a story made up in order to validate the system. This is a story, which illustrates quite well the major points I wanted to understand in my thesis and, which gives a clear picture of the complexity of the psychological and sociological mechanisms in the obedience and following processes.

This case has been made from the interview of Marie-Colette Michelle, 57, social coordinator. The interview has been possible through a Skype. The medial center is taking care of persons with brain damages. The structure of the enterprise is pyramidal with a director, a vice directors, team managers and the medical staff. Marie-Colette is a team manager and manages a dozen of persons. She describes the vice-director as a toxic manager for several reasons. Indeed, his management style and his personality are very authoritarian. The consequences are not as toxic as in the Enron case, but they are toxic enough to make the work environment heavy for everyone. Marie-Colette says that "his authoritarian management creates fear. He is like the police on the side of the high way. Instead of driving at 200 km/h, you drive at 150, just because you are afraid of the possible consequences." In this interview, I gathered enough qualitative information to build a case study, which gives an understanding of the toxicity mechanism. This case connects a lot of dots that I talked about in my thesis. This is interesting to see how everything can be related and that this is the relation of all this things which maintain toxicity.

An environment which values titles

The medical world is traditionally not an environment of shared leadership. Shared leadership is "broadly sharing power and influence among a set of individuals rather than centralizing it in the hands of a single individual who acts in the clear role of a dominant superior." (Pearce, Manz & Sims 2009, p. 234). In other words, this is sharing the power which is in opposition to the traditional structures of leadership. Actually, in the medical world, the power is centralized

and there is a clear definition of the hierarchy of the roles. This is a very pyramidal organization, where the superior, usually the doctors, give orders because in the collective imaginary of care giving, the doctors are the ones who know more than the others. The doctors studied a very long time, between 8 and 12 years and even more, depending on their specialty. That is why they are the ones in charge, they know how to diagnosis, they know how to cure, they have a great knowledge. Then comes the nurses, they studied 3 years (in France). They do not know everything but they have still a lot of knowledge about diseases and patients. They know how to fix problems and they are here to execute the doctor's orders. Then there are the caregivers. In France, the study period to become a caregiver is one year. So in the pyramid of a hospital, they are the ones who know less, they are just here to do the job that nurses do not have time to do. In such a structure, caregivers obey to nurses, who obey to doctors, who obey to specialized doctors. And there is no possible discussion, everyone should be at one's place and do not discuss the orders because the life of the patient is at stake and that the one who give order is the one who knows better. This is basically the culture of every hospital, based on centuries of practice.

The vice-director: a toxic manager who loves his title.

The vice-director used to have Marie-Colette's job. Few years ago, he had exams to become director but failed and reached "only" the vice-director position. Marie-Colette has the feeling that he is actually afraid that she could take his place. And if not, in anyways, he likes his title, he likes having power on people. One part of his toxicity comes actually from his position as a vice-director for he thinks that being authoritarian is the only way to be respected. Furthermore, beyond being authoritarian toward people, he does not accept any comment, neither from the staff, nor from his superior, because he does not like contradiction or questioning. "He is toxic because he is narrow-minded. He does not know how to adapt, so he imposes".

Of course his authoritarian management style does not come only from his title. He has a conducive personality. He is probably someone who is authoritarian in general or the complete opposite maybe, one cannot know. But of course, I cannot say that he is authoritarian because he is completely into his role of "little chef". But on the other hand, one cannot deny the experience of the prisoners and the guardian of Banks and Zimbardo (1973). This vice-director is toxic partly because of his title because he believes that the title gives respect and power. 'He can say "I am the chief, so shut up". And he ends the dialogue by putting forward his title'. In

this case, in this enterprise, with this person, the title of vice-director and the meaning given to the title by the vice-president himself, has a very important role in the establishment of toxicity. And the employees do not question his decision because they are used to work in an environment where the position is very important and is associated with obedience. As the Stanford prison experiment showed, the 'prisoners' were also very influenced by their position and became more and more passive and submitted to the 'guardians' (Haney, Banks & Zimbardo 1973).

A fragmented environment

The medical center is a socio-medical center. So there is a social team and a medical team. These two worlds are quite separated; there is a line between them. Marie-Colette explains that she is a social manager but she does not have access to all the information concerning a patient because of the doctor-patient confidentiality. This is normal to have some hidden information but there is some information that the social team need to better adapt their activities to a patient. The doctor-patient confidentiality is the basis of the ethics of doctors but the information could be shared in a better way in order to place the need and the well-being of the patient at the center of the activities. There is a problem in the circulation of the information, which is due to the fragmentation of the work environment. Everybody is doing one's job without looking at the overall picture of the organization. Such environment is a conducive environment for it decreases people's awareness of the meaning of their action (Tsang 2002).

The staff: a passive team

I started the interviews with the belief that a toxic leader can create a toxic environment. Or, in the complete opposite, a great solidarity among people of the staff who support each other in front of the evil boss. And in the medical structure, there are both cases. On one hand, the members of the management team are united against the vice president and have a counter-power. His toxicity creates team cohesion. In the other hand, the members of the staff, which are numerous superior, are passive. There is no cohesion among the staff-members to commonly disagree an order, when this order should be discussed. Indeed, members of the staff are passive and passively obey orders. Why?

- An alliance game

The word “alliance” came recurrently during the interview. This word “alliance” belongs to the semantic field of the war, which is interesting when it comes in an organizational discussion. It really translates that in my interviewee’s mind, enterprise is like a battle field. One has to have the right allies at the right moment to get what one’s want to. So she explained me that the vice-president creates “alliances” with the staff members. These “alliances” are constituted by daily routine facilitation. Their schedule is better, they can have the holidays when they prefer... some small agreements like that. And this, in return, allows the vice-director to enjoy a greater power because the role of this alliance is to support each other. So if the staff members want to keep their privileges, they should better not talk. ‘There are good carrots for good donkeys’ Marie-Colette says. I think I might explain this French expression her. In France, we are used to say that donkeys are stubborn and the move on only if they want or if they can see the reward coming. And the favorite reward for a donkey is a carrot (at least in the French imaginary). This expression means that people do not follow because they want to follow for an ideological reason but because they want to get the reward. People want to have the good carrot.

- A passive culture

In this medical center, people are not encouraged to reflect, to think and give their ideas for improvement. The director does not foster and encourage new ideas. And the former director was even worse, he did not listen to anybody, he imposed constantly. He is, what Wiseman and McKeown (2010) call ‘a diminisher’. Indeed, he does not create an organizational climate, which fosters common thinking and reflexivity. So it has been a long time that personal reflection has been despised and avoided. The psychologist, who was working in the medical structure, has been fired recently because she was “disturbing”. Indeed, she had a lot of ideas and with Marie-Colette; they created groups of reflection in order to involve the staff and make them come up with interesting ideas. But the psychologist was very much into criticism, and she did not hesitate to question everything and to question the management. Too much in Marie-Colette’s opinion. The psychologist has been fired because her short-term contract has not been renewed as it would have been. But nor the director, neither the vice-director liked her. She was too rebellious against the system, she was too straight-forward, she was not afraid enough of the direction. So she had to quit. Meanwhile, her departure was very symbolic of the behavior to adopt. The ones who are too much against the system as it is are not welcomed. So it is the culture to not reflect or at least, not to tell one’s contradictory reflection. And the psychologist departure was almost a cultural artifact to reinforce this culture. In spite of the departure of the rebellious psychologist, the passivity remains to be understood because the majority of the staff

has long-term contracts. They cannot lose their jobs. But the majority of the staff thinks “this is like that, this is the system”. Here is one interesting example of the counter-anthropomorphism of Milgram (cited in Reggio, Challef & Lipman-Blumen 2008) or, what is called the reification by Giddens (1995). People put the culture beyond all possible control of human behavior even if this would be very simple to change thing. It is obvious that human beings, if they want, can just change the system and establish new frames. But it may destroy the apparent order. “This is a broken team. So until now, there is no movement. There are a lot of people who don’t know what this is to defend them”. So passivity is a matter of culture and a matter of counter-anthropomorphism. But this is also a matter of personality. Beyond all the “excuses” of the culture and the believed immobility of this culture, people just do not want to stand up for their ideas, they are not the courageous followers of Chaleff (2009), they are the ones who stay in a critical state of mind and hide them beyond the well-established structures of the enterprise.

- The pressure of the environment and the fear of chaos

The vice-president, the “source” of toxicity, is a person who does not want to be questioned. He does not want to change either, he said during a meeting “Don’t try to change me. I won’t change”. I asked my interviewee to speculate a little bit by asking her what she thinks would be the vice-director reaction if everybody stood up against him. She thinks that he would not change. Of courses, as he said “Don’t try to change me. I won’t change”. He does not want to change at all. So he would keep his position and the situation would lead to a conflict. So finally, if people follow even if they disagree, this is because it is easier like that, it makes things smooth and livable.

Moreover, Marie-Colette explains that the employees do not want to jeopardize what they have. The structure has quite a lot of money, which is a chance according to the context. The handicap they take care of is not very known, the medical center is very small and the majority of the medical structures are suffering from a lack of resources. But they are not. They have a lot of resources. So they are afraid to lose it and to be bought by a bigger structure and lose their independence. For the moment, the medical center has always had considerable funds; the staff has never known financial restrictions. Thus in a way, there are also afraid of what they do not know. A part of their inertia comes from the anxiety of the uncertainty.

A passivity which leads to unethical actions ... or not

According to Marie-Colette, there are two levels of unethical behaviors. The first level is a lack of ethic from the direction to the staff. In this case, the staff is the victim. Then, there is the unethical behavior toward patients. In this case, the staff is acting with a lack of ethic.

- The employees as victims of the lack of ethics

One example of the lack of ethic toward the staff members is when the psychologist has been terminated. She learnt that she would not have a renewal of her contract during a weekly meeting, in front of all the managers. She did not have a prior announcement of the bad news. This is not ethical from the director to “throw” bad news just like that, during a working meeting; this is a lack of respect of the employee and her right to privacy. In this case, they have been a few to react and openly manifest their disagreement toward this kind of consideration of the employees. But once again, the majority of the attendees to the meeting did not say anything. Because it is “the system, it is like that and it has always been like that”.

- The employee as perpetrator of unethical behavior

At another level, there is also unethical behavior toward patients. “They do not hesitate to cross the line”. One of the patients of the center is in wheelchair, she cannot walk, and she cannot talk. She used to be a very free person, crossing the country by riding a horse. After an operation fail, she became a prisoner of her body. She obviously does not want to live anymore and she expresses it by not taking her medicines. To make her take the pills, the staff does not hesitate to hide it in the food. Marie-Colette explains that this is in contradiction with the patient ethics. She should have the right to decide for herself and to make her own choices. But she also says that this is very common in France, this is the very conception of medicine. ‘The other does not know and when one is a doctor, one knows for the other. This is a very ancient ethic of the caregiving.’ This is the way it works, the ethics of the medicine world. Nevertheless, Marie-Colette acknowledges that the caregivers do think that they act unethically; they want the best for their patient, “even if they lag two decades behind”. So in the case of the ethics questioning toward patients, there is a questioning of ethic itself. The caregivers have a utilitarianist vision of ethics, they are doing everything possible in order to accomplish what they think is the right thing to do (April et al. 2010). Marie-Colette has a deontological vision of the ethics because she considers that the caregivers cross the line by forcing the patient to take the pills, even if

she understands their purpose and their vision of the ethics. Both of the opinions are defensible from an ethical point of view.

An every-day heroine, which lost her job

Chaleff (2009) says that the courageous follower is the one who stand up for his or her ideas and who question in a constructive way the leaders' decisions. The psychologist did not hesitate to speak up when she wanted to. She questioned the power and she wanted to move the lines with Marie-Colette. And together, they succeeded because some of the people they trained to shared leadership want to be trained now in order to achieve higher position. Some people who have been encouraged to speak up, to propose ideas and to criticize the established patters want to reach higher position, 'because they realized that they were able' says my interviewee. Marie-Colette and the psychologist succeeded in moving the lines by reaching the minds. But the psychologist was irreverent toward the leaders and she lost her job. She has been a heroine by speaking up, as suggests by Chaleff (2009), but her heroine role has been short cut because she has been fired and now, she cannot be a change maker anymore. The remaining heroine is Marie-Colette, the one who speaks up with restrain but who speaks up anyway and succeeds in keeping a leading position. Being in line but not completely in line is finally the only way to be a long-term change maker.

A possible detoxification thanks to reflection

The environment is toxic because it is fragmented, intoxicated by a toxic manager and the passive team does not do anything to overcome the difficulties. Nevertheless, Marie-Colette emphasizes that the real cause of toxicity in the medical structure is the lack of reflection. Indeed, she says that there is no leader, who would act like a guide by fostering reflection and creative thinking. A leader, who would encourage expending the boundaries of the box. Indeed, the creator of the center was a very paternalistic boss, who was very authoritarian and took all the decisions. Then, a new director came and even if she thinks she is acting as an instigator of collaborative leadership, she is not. And there is of course a lack of leadership. There is no leader as manager of meaning (Gardner 1995). But I really think that blaming the environment or the boss is easy. It is easy because everybody could pause, take a deep breath, think about the situation and connect the dots. This is the real problem of toxicity, in this enterprise and in

a lot of others. Everybody thinks about oneself as an isolated human being and think about one's actions as isolated too. As everything we are and we do (or do not do) would have no consequence at all on the world around and that the world, which is turning around, should not interfere our actions. The only thing, which could lead to a real and deep detoxification, would be to connect the dots. And there is no need of anything else but one's willingness to do it.

Reflection

At the top, we have an authoritarian vice president, who is the source of the toxicity. On the bottom, we have the majority of the staff, which is passive. There are many reasons to passivity. In a first place, people are culturally passive, but then, they are also afraid to lose what they have if they dare authority. They could lose something. They could also win everything. But this is uncertain, so this is a source of anxiety. And in the end, the pressure of the economic environment wins over their possible embryo of willing to stand up for their ideas. There is also a difference of opinions about ethics, which creates tensions. This case shows, how the toxicity emerging from the vice president is relayed and maintain by the employees. These employees maintain toxicity, not by being toxic, but by staying passive. The environment has a pressure on their behavior and wins against their possible whistleblowing behavior. Because the pressure of the environment is not just a pressure, it triggers psychological mechanism, in this case, the fear of uncertainty. And this enables the maintenance of the system as a whole, which maintains, and maybe even foster, toxicity. But the very simple fact to think about the situation in its context does not happen. Nobody but my interviewee try to think about the enterprise in its context and to see the team as a whole. Everybody is working for oneself and is considering the medical center as a closed bubble. Nobody try to connect the dots. And this is toxic.

Conclusion

The toxic Triangle of Padilla et al. (2007) is very interesting because it shows and explains that toxicity in organizational milieus comes from the complex interactions of a conducive environment, susceptible followers, and a toxic leader. Nevertheless, I focused on two elements only of the Toxic Triangle (Padilla et al. 2007). Indeed, even if the source of toxicity may be the leader, the maintenance of this toxicity is a follower's job. And I wanted to know why. Why do the majority of people in an organization stay passive whereas they have the power of the crowd? We are the majority; if we do not follow toxic leaders, the source of toxicity just disappears. But we still follow, and we still complain about toxic leaders. So I focused my investigations on the interaction between the environment and the followers to understand the maintenance of toxicity. First of all, there are some environmental and situational states, which are conducive because they are likely to decrease follower's reflexivity about the meaning of their actions. Such environments blind people to the consequences of their actions and to the meaning of these actions. In an instable environment for instance, people want to have things done, so they are ready to give up with a part of their sensemaking power to a strong leader. In a fragmented environment, people concentrate their energy in having done what they are doing, without raising their head to see what happens in the big machine. People are just doing their job in a reified system. In the end, this is the system and this is like that. Nobody can change it; nobody should change it because it works. So what we are doing in the system is deprived from any kind of reflexivity. This is the system, this is like that, everyone does and has always done things like it in the system. Why should we question it?

Then, in the logic of the system, I focused my intention on the relationship between the environment and the followers. And I found out that this relationship was not neutral. From this point, to better understand the mechanisms of the relationship exerted by the environment on followers, I separated the environment in two parts: the distant environment and the proximate environment. This separation made me understand that the relationship between these two parts of the environment and the followers were not a peaceful relationship at all. First of all, the distant environment influences the way we perceive cues and thus, the information we constructed out of these cues (Weick 1995). In this way, toxicity can be underestimated if the environment is idyllic. But sometimes, people realize the toxicity and keep on following it. In

this case, this is not a matter of influence of the distant environment but this is due to the pressure of the proximate environment. Indeed, the proximate environment, the group, acts as a lobby on individual toward uniformity. And we, human beings, are likely to succumb to the pressure of the group for one of our existential fears is to be alone because of the rejection of the group. Actually, I did not classify the susceptible followers as did Padilla et al. (2007), who argue that some traits of followers as the non-satisfaction of the needs or the ambition make some followers susceptible. I agree. I agree that some of us, because of their personal psychological characteristics, are more likely to maintain toxicity in an organizational milieu. Nevertheless, in the system I recreated, every one of us is susceptible to become a susceptible follower. Indeed, the environment can be conducive or not, it always has a pressure on human beings, which triggers our existential fears. And this is because it is complicated to deal with it, that people often prefer to follow the group, get in line and stay passive. Indeed, following the group is a way to reassure our belonging feeling and our identity in the same time. We follow the group because the first environment is reassuring and because the distant environment is frightening. Then, obeying orders to get rewards is a way to buy a piece of immortality. Ethics is definitely important, but in the balance of choice making, ethics often have a light weight compared to money, group belonging, community feeling, identity reassuring and calm keeping.

This is true that it takes courage to stand up for one's idea because this is renouncing to a part of the calmness of the routine, taking a marginal position, defying authority and maybe, losing one's job and status. Yes, Human being is a coward in the sense that he or she prefers to take decisions he or she disagree with, because it is easier to deal with consciousness than with existential fears. We, human beings, we are coward because we are naive. We think that obeying all kind of orders, even the vilest ones, in order to accumulate material assets, friends, reach a high social status and a high prestige, is a way to escape our human condition and earn a piece of immortality, as if we could defy death with a title or a beautiful car. The courageous followers, the ones who do not fear to stand up for their ideas, are the ones who are not afraid to make a wrong decision. Sometime, disobedience is rewarded by good consequences and actual change making. In this case, individuals can be proud of them. Sometimes, this is a mistake, and a least, it makes good stories to tell. But when I think about it, the only way to be remembered and earn a piece of immortality for the ones who want it, is exactly the contrary of getting in line. Human beings remember remarkable facts, the History remembers remarkable actions. When it comes to conformity and obedience, the only interested persons are the

psychologists, the sociologists, some philosophers and the master thesis writers like me. But the history books do not, such people, “the good donkeys” as said one of my interviewee, are completely forgotten.

Lipman-Blumen (cited in Riggio, Chaleff & Lipman-blumen 2008) said that the existential angst comes from the uncertainty of human’s condition. And the uncertainty is related to anxiety (Erikson cited in Giddens 1995). And, yes, if I put everything in a nutshell, we are real chickens. The only way to become the courageous followers of Chaleff (2009) would be to enjoy the mess as would say my dear professor Philippe Daudi. But we are afraid, we are afraid of identity issues, freedom, chaos, uncertainty and death. Basically, we are afraid of everything which adds the spices into our existence. And we follow in order to downsize our fears but also because it is an easy way to downsize these fears. So we are also lazy. We are lazy chickens.

Finally, the toxic leaders can be the source of toxicity because of their behavior or because they failed in creating an environment likely to foster reflection and encourage their followers to think about the meaning of their actions. But I think that blaming the leader is too easy. Indeed, every one of us has the capacity to think. Aristotle wrote that our capacity to reflect is what differentiates human beings from animals. Everybody has the capacity to think and to reflect on the meaning of ones actions. But it would mean that we are responsible for our own actions as argued by Sartre. And we are afraid to be responsible too. So it easy to displace the responsibility on the leader and make him or her responsible for the meaning of what we do. But if we do not think about the meaning of our actions, this is denying a part of our humanity if I follow Aristotle’s thought. However, it might be what human beings are looking for finally, not to embrace the entirety of their humanity because being fully human is complicated and requires a lot of energy, this is frightening, exhausting and sometimes, we are lazy cowards.

Further Discussion

In an organizational context, the very act of following is motivated by money. All my interviewees underlined the facts that even if they do not always agree or if they are not satisfied by what they are doing, they still follow because they do not want to lose their job or rather than their job, they cannot afford to lose their incomes. As Coluche (a French humorist) once said: “people don’t need a job, they need money”. So they sometimes accept unethical behavior because it is a sinequanone condition for them to keep their job. It would be interesting to conduct a study on order to define the breaking point between money and ethics. It would be

interesting to know until where people are ready to follow an unethical path and where is the point where ethics get a heaviest weight than money.

Furthermore, as I said in a first place in my methodology chapter, the focus of the system and its limitation can be discussed. Indeed, my focus was on two elements of the toxic triangle of Padilla et al. (2007). So another focus could bring some more answers. By focusing on the leader and the environment for example, one could better understand how the environment influences the decision making of the leader and how the decision of the leader, as well as his or her personality and management style become the environment in a second time. And this may have other implications in the study of follower. Another focus could be put on the interaction between followers and the leader and it would bring more information about the following process on a psychological point of view. Indeed, the personality of the leader is very important and a lot of studies have been done to emphasize the attraction of charismatic leaders (eg. Griffith et al. 2014; Samnani & Parbudyal 2013; Bedell-Aver et al. 2009; Kempster & Parry 2014). This attraction of strong personae could emphasize the understanding of the psychological mechanisms of the following process and bring new insights to the deeper understanding of the Toxic Triangle of Padilla et al. (2007)

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