We have to watch our selves: The psychodynamics of critical distance

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ABSTRACT

In a special issue that firmly addresses itself to space *and* time, we choose to discuss enacted concepts that we see lend themselves to the building of binary opposition and thinking as space *and* time become blended such that one has difficulty remembering what has happened to space in 'such a short period of time'. As such, the impetus for this paper has less to do with space or time than it does with inquiry into human relationships. That being said, we strive to learn more about space and time by looking at relationships humans have with themselves, each other and with organisations. When we say we have to "watch our selves", we at the same time, mean this in at least three different ways. In the first place, to watch our selves means to become aware of the potential space and time have as experiences that shape the way we think and comprehend our worldviews -- our psyches' spaces -- before we act to shape our worlds.

Introduction

Figure 1.1: Visions of Critical Distance
Adapted from:
www.holleyweb.com/Illusions/004.gif

More than resources that become configured as a mere 'technology', space and time have embodied existences that are implicated in the manner in which we think and comprehend our world. In an analysis of what we call 'critical distance', it will become apparent that the 'organising' of space and time has a deep seated dynamic that is largely obscured from our consciousness, yet it has a profound effect upon how we experienced the world around us, including the workplace.

Take for instance, the figure shown at the beginning of this paper. It is one widely used to make the viewers of its reflection determine their perceptions and perspectives of their self-spaces, at least at the time of viewing. If one sees only the ugly old woman, one prescribes to seeing those particular binaries in contrast to the pretty young woman, who is also illustrated. If one sees only the pretty young woman, the opposite binary sets are emphasised. It is the emphasised set of binaries that demonstrates in that space and time, the viewer's predilection of her or his imagination. However, with critical distance, there is the ability to see that the reflection itself is both ugly and pretty, old and young. This is the 'real' of the space that is reflected in that diagram. The imagined is that only the ugly or the pretty exist. If one of the binaries is imagined, self-space compression exists from the erosion of critical distance that is the ability to see that it is a diagram, a setting, of mutually constituted opposites. The outcome of the paradox is that a lack of critical distance is needed to show the

transformational properties of binaries, and what they -- together -- have become over space and time.

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> Constituted by the community, never able to escape it, the self nevertheless is able to challenge its community. It

may do so by drawing upon the resources of another tradition or upon competing strands of its own. (Alford, 1991, p. 15)

This paper also discusses bipolar opposites of space *or* time in that over time, there becomes a tendency to increase one's space over that of the other (Lapp & Carr, in press). While thinking of this phenomenon and its causes and effects, aspects of the 'megalisation' of our communities came to mind. For us, 'megalisation' is the tendency for some one or some thing to be allowed to become so large and prolific that over time, it seems to overtake 'self-space' and treat it as 'we-space'. Self-space was that aspect of self that was different from other but that was still mutually constituted with other such that self and other had a more balanced relationship and equalised space (Lapp & Carr, 2005a, 2006a, 2006b).

Baudriallard's (1976/2002) concept of "simulacrum" is similar and different to our concept of 'megalisation'. It is similar because of the connection of one taking over the other's space by creating size through:

> perfect replication where there is no 'original' and the copy [and copies] becomes almost impossible to differentiate. The production of simulacra is relatively easy, given modern techniques. Insofar as identity is increasingly dependent upon images, this means that the replication of identities, individual, corporate, institutional and political, becomes a very real possibility and problem. (Sarup, 1996, p. 100)

As such 'we-space' becomes space of the more powerful other as for instance, through "surplus powerlessness" (Lerner, 1986). Another similarity between our concept and that of Baudriallard's (1976/2002) is that he also believed that the human tendency is to live and think in terms of binaries at the expense of looking at the world and especially the parts that we, directly, have made in terms of many facets:

The great man-made simulacra pass from a universe of natural laws into a universe of forces and tensions, and today pass into a universe of structures and binary oppositions. (Baudrillard, 1976/2002, p. 57)

This paper then is an expansion of the causes and effects of simulacrum through investigation of 'megalisation' -- two terms that are mutually constituted. "Indeed, this point is one of the clear cases in which metaphysics, epistemology, and the psychology of the self intersect: as the self is not self-constituting, neither are its knowledge claims" (Alford, 1991, p. 16). The problem with thinking in and using binaries as opposed to believing they are mutually constituted, is that one becomes privileged over the other such that one has more strength (i.e. power) over the other. It is the more powerful that becomes the megalised original from which simulacra are created. Simulacra are self-space invaders because over time, they eliminate other's heterogeneous space and create homogeneity that erodes self. What we become are "cast in the image of material goods which, as in previous exchanges, begin to circulate less between inseparable partners (it is always more or less a community or a clan who exchange), and increasingly under the sign of a general equivalent" (Baudriallard, 1976/2002, p. 146). Self and other are signified by the power they have to effect homogeneity or to have other be like self.

Herein lies the paradox of critical distance. Critical distance is the space, the self-reflective space that is required to demonstrate that self and other are united. The difference between our rendition of 'megalisation' and simulacrum is that we describe the former in terms of the paradox of critical distance between binaries, including but not limited to the political economy that is effected through the psychodynamics of mirroring, a concept to which Baudrillard, himself, alludes:

From now on political economy is the

real for us, which is to say precisely that it is the sign's referential, the horizon of a defunct order whose simulation preserves it in a 'dialectical' equilibrium. It is the real, *and therefore* the imaginary, since here again the two formerly distinct categories have fused and drifted together. The code (the structural law of value) uses the systematic reactivation of political economy (the restricted market law of value) as our society's imaginary-real. Furthermore, the appearance of the restricted form of value is an attempt to obscure its radical form. (Baudriallard, 1976/2002, p. 31)

The creation of simulacra is enhanced and accelerated by mirroring, a set of psychodynamics that are said to occur during the six to 18 month period of one's life: "What happens is that the infant perceives in the image of its counterpart -- or in its own mirror image -- a form (*Gestalt*) in which it anticipates a bodily unity which it still objectively lacks…in other words, it identifies with this image" (LaPlanche & Pontalis, 1967/1988, p. 251). As in Figure 1.1, the ways in which we use space and time in our organisations have become images of ugly *or* pretty women; simulacra of binary perceptions. In our communities, they can become reflections of the megalised organisation when we have mis-placed critical distance and forget to watch our selves and our organisations, organise our space and time.

The plea in this paper is to first understand the origins and predispositions to such thinking and, at the same time, understand the alternatives that are possible in comprehending our world. In making such an appeal, we will relate psychodynamics of mirroring to the story, the reflection of Wal-Mart. First, we present the case of Wal-Mart, its growth and its impact on our communities. Then, during our second task to reveal the origins and predispositions to thinking in binary opposites, we use case study data to illustrate our points. Using the story of Wal-

Mart in conjunction with its evolution over space and time, we will show how we subsequently construct and allow others to construct our self-space such that homogeneity prevails and the critical distance to see at least two sides of the story, is negated. Finally, we will apply our discussions to a review of the impacts of mirroring and the effects of gains and losses of critical distance.

The Wal-Mart case study

Baby Wal-Mart

Wal-Mart was started in 1962 in the state of Arkansas, USA. The company grew very fast becoming, by 1985, one of the leading US retailers. By 1995, when it entered the Brazilian market, it operated four store formats in all 50 states in the USA: (1) discount stores; (2) supercenters; (3) warehouse clubs; and (4) deep discount warehouse outlets. The company's strategy was based on four pillars: (1) cost leadership; (2) customer orientation; (3) logistics; and (4) information technology. (da Rocha & Dib, 2002, p. 63)

Sam Walton was the late twentieth century's Henry Ford, argues Bob Ortega. "Walton and Wal-Mart have transformed retailing the way Henry Ford revolutionized transportation. It's easy to forget, nowadays, that Ford invented neither the car nor the assembly line. What he did was to make them the new paradigms, to make life without cars, or industrial production without assembly lines, unthinkable." Similarly, Sam Walton did not invent the deep discount store. But through his example and success, he did change the retailing paradigm -- paving the way for Staples, Borders, Toys-R-Us and others. (Anonymous, 1999, p. 22)

Walton was a real innovator…creatively adapting to chronic undercapitalization in early years; developing new modes of efficient inventory maintenance and distribution; finding markets in rural areas that other retailers had written off; understanding the potential of a retail operation based on low margins and high sales; establishing a reputation for 'everyday' low prices and fair dealing that helped save money by eviscerating the need for advertising; treating workers as 'associates' and developing an employee culture of corporate loyalty; and much more…. Walton developed these concepts and principles over a long career, and…he implemented them first in his handful of stores in Arkansas and later in his rapidly spreading national and international empire. (Anonymous, 1999, p. 22)

When he died in 1992, 'he was lauded as the most influential retailer of the century, and with good reason, for nearly every great retailer of the coming years would follow his business examples'. While the conscious efforts to maintain a cheerful workplace, Sam Walton's direct connections to employees and his sincere interest in learning from their input, and stock options for employees all help or helped to boost employee morale, at bottom most, Wal-Mart jobs are near minimum wage with very little job security. The result is high turnover and widespread job dissatisfaction. (Anonymous, 1999, p. 23)

Wal-Mart maturity

Is Wal-Mart good for America? Well, it depends upon whom you ask…. The debate has begun to spawn a mini-industry of research by economists and other academics exploring the effects of a corporate giant whose tentacles spread into nearly every corner of American society. Earlier this month, Wal-Mart jumped into the fray with what seemed to be a good-faith attempt to measure, definitively, its economic impact on U.S. consumers. It released a study by Global Insight, a Boston-based economic research firm that Wal-Mart had commissioned to conduct a year-long study addressing such issues as prices, jobs and wages…. Wal-Mart's study found that Wal-Mart has a largely positive effect on

Americans' lives, and that its low prices give consumers more buying power by holding down prices through out the economy. It also concluded that Wal-Mart jobs generally pay market-rate wages…. Against this backdrop, here's a sampling of what economists and other experts are saying about the company at the heart of the controversy. Global Insight found that Wal-Mart's presence holds down prices of consumer goods in the U.S. by 3.1 percent… Adjusting for inflation, the report says that means Americans saved $118 billion in 2004, or $402 per person, thanks to Wal-Mart…. The Global Insight study found that some local retailers shut down after Wal-Mart came to town, so other jobs were lost…. Every new Wal-Mart creates 150 - 350 new jobs but displaces anywhere from 53 to 253 existing jobs, for a net gain of 97 new jobs. Global insight didn't address the quality of those jobs -- in other words, whether the new jobs paid better or worse than the displaced ones, or had better or worse benefit packages…. A team led by David Neumark, an economist at the Public Policy Institute of California, found that Wal-Mart stores actually reduce retail employment by 2 to 4 percent in a given county…. In California…a team of urban planners compared Wal-Mart's wages and benefits with those of union supermarket workers in the San Francisco Bay Area,. They concluded that union workers received an hourly wage of $15.30, versus $9.60 for Wal-Mart workers. Adding benefits, union workers earned an equivalent of $23. 64 per hour [55% increase due to benefits also provided] almost twice the $11.95 [24% increase due to benefits provided] earned by Wal-Mart workers... On average, every new Wal-Mart worker costs a state an average of about $900 in new Medicaid costs. (Weber, 2005, pp. 1-4)

A leisurely drive through the suburban shopping districts of virtually any American city reveals the successful inroads that large mass merchandisers have made into the retail sector in the United States. At the same time, the once-thriving downtown shopping areas of many of these same cities are now rife with boarded-up retail storefronts. Unfortunately, the rise of the corporate retail superstores has come at least in part at the expense of the local, traditional, "mom-and-pop" dealers. While shoppers seem to uniformly appreciate the often lower retail prices available at the mass merchandisers, many also rue the loss of personalized customer service previously provided by friendly, local dealers. (Boyd, 1997, p. 223)

As a consumer, 'Your choice is cut down considerably if there are no independents. (McCune, 1994, pp. 10-11)

*Deservedly or not, Wal-Mart picked up the label "Merchant of Death" years ago because of its alleged impact on Main Street businesses, and bankers have long feared being "Wal-Marted" themselves…. The proximity of Wal-Mart stores to so many community bankers' markets helps bring them to mind more than others…. Wal-Mart, historically and presently, gives away little that doesn't suit its purposes. It's instructive, in trying to understand Wal-Mart and its interest in financial services, to consider how the company sees itself in the bigger picture…. In a short presentation by Jay Fitzsimmons, chief financial officer, to a Merrill Lynch retailing conference in March, Fitzsimmons had set out to explode misconceptions about the company. His first target was the idea that Wal-Mart is a retailer. Fitzsimmons insisted that the company sees itself as being in the distribution business. Another target was the perceived role of Wal-Mart as seller to its customers. Fitzsimmons says the company sees itself as customers' agent, going out into the market to find the best deals on what the customer wants…. **Credit Cards.** (Cocheo, 2003, pp. 29-37)*

Few suppliers can rebuff Wal-Mart Stores Inc. and thrive. Jim Weir did both. Soon after his company bought lawnmower maker Snapper, Inc. in 2002, Wier traveled to Wal-Mart's headquarters in Bentonville, Arkansas, recounts Charles Fishman in "The Wal-Mart Effect". Inside, the executive

landed a vice president's office so cheaply furnished that Weir had to perch on a lawn chair. His message: Snapper wasn't making money selling lawnmowers at Wal-Mart's "every-day low prices," so he planned to stop deliveries and focus on higher-end dealers. He was sacrificing almost a fifth of Snapper's business. "Once you get hooked on the volume, it's like getting hooked on cocaine," he said later. Manufacturers, workers, even Wal-Mart itself are suffering from an addiction to low prices….Americans are shopping themselves out of jobs. Less understood is how the retailer has revolutionized non-suppliers. Snapper, for example, is still building all its lawnmowers in McDonough, Ga. Yet the "Wal-Mart effect" on prices remains so pervasive that Snapper has introduced robots, lasers and computer-driven equipment, Fishman says. Productivity has tripled: 650 factory workers make more lawnmowers, leaf blowers and snow blowers than 1,200 made a decade ago. Snapper reschedules production every week to match the pace of sales. "It operates, literally, in Wal-Mart time," Fishman says….Wal-Mart's core working-class customers are struggling, squeezed by high oil prices and flattening pay scales caused partly by Wal-Mart itself". (Pressley, 2006, p. D11; see also Bianco, 2006; see also Fishman, 2006)

Reflections of Wal-Mart Overseas

Despite all claims made about the complexity and chaos of modern organisational life, this age of the ubiquitous persuader whose job it is to get people to 'show commitment', to 'buy into' the company mission and embrace its values wholeheartedly is not so different from the Middle Ages. What was formerly offered by the church is now peddled by the modern corporation in the form of 'good practice', 'quality', 'excellence' and their opposites to be driven into the darkness. But our labour no longer expresses God's will for men on earth; rather it is supposed to express the surrender of our hearts and minds to the corporation. (Piasecki, 2002, p. 21)

Not surprisingly, poor working conditions have given rise to union organizing efforts. But Wal-Mart has mostly been successful in fending them off, partly through its corporate culture of employee involvement and especially, through harassment and intimidation of union supporters. One of [Ortega's] main sources on working conditions in Guatemala was Flor de Maria Salguedo, a union organizer who helped him arrange interviews with workers making clothes for Wal-Mart as well as Kmart, Target and J.C. Penny. Salguedo's husband had been killed in a labor organizing drive. Tragically, after Ortega left Guatemala, Salguedo was kidnapped, beaten and raped. She says that one of the attackers told her, "This is what you get for messing about with the foreigners". The devastating element of Ortega's reporting is his suggestion that Wal-Mart's abuses flow quite naturally from its business strategy, and in some cases are intimately bound up with its strategy. (Anonymous, 1999, p. 23)

His [Sam Walton's] success with bigger and bigger boxes spawned the category-killer chains that continue to crush smaller businesses and to ensure that every town eventually will have exactly the same selection of books, videos, records, magazines, clothing, food, toys, hardware and everything else, not only from New York to California, but from the Yukon to Tierra del Fuego. He helped to create a society in which part-time and temporary jobs are the norm for ever-more workers. (Anonymous, 1999, p. 24)

… the enthusiasm of consumers in most retailing markets to the entry of Wal-Mart was another reason for concern. Arnold and Luthra (2000) reported from other studies that Wal-Mart conquered 25 per cent of the department store market only three years after its entry into the greater Toronto [Canada] area. In Germany, the company was called the "smiling invader" and was extremely successful in attracting customers (Mello, 1999). And although UK consumers

did not seem to be as price-sensitive as US consumers, Arnold and Fernie (2000) report that Wal-Mart's acquisition of Asda and subsequent actions were beginning to change store attributes in the UK, by increasing customers' awareness of price differences among retailers. The authors hypothesized that the "market spoiler" effect proposed by Arnold et al. (1998), by which a retailer's actions change in its own favour, consumers' perceptions of the importance of store choice attributes, could be started to occur in the UK market. (da Rocha & Dib, 2002, p. 65)

The most important element of successful change is never to let your people get offside, says Marie Gill, head of organizational development at UK supermarket Asda, which recently merged with Wal-Mart, on of the world's largest retailers. "The important thing for us was to ensure that our people understood that this takeover was a meeting of cultures", she said. "We educated them with the ethos that we were becoming part of the Wal-Mart family…. People do not usually resist change -- they resist being changed. Employees have to trust that the decisions made by the business are for the best, not only for the customers but also for the people. In Asda's case, we would not have gone ahead with the merger if it was not. The most incredible thing about the whole process is that Asda has not fundamentally changed -- the process has been more of an evolution". (Pollitt, 2004, p. 18)

Godfrey Owen, deputy chief executive of Brathay [Brathay, hired through Wal-Mart by Asda, http://www.brathay.org.uk/about_home.asp)] explained: …Change is only really viable when two organizations share some kind of synergy. The cultures of Asda and Wal-Mart were similar from the start and, as a result, their values were similar…."The programs we develop for clients at Brathay help organizations to manage change as they equip them to manage and embrace change effectively. Part of our work is to help organizations their employees to answer the *question: 'How can I be successful in a new culture'?... "It is important that when working through a change-management program that people work toward a common goal and that firms empower their employees to put them into action. If staff are not focused on the organization's objectives, the process is almost certain to fail. Our programs are designed to help to win the vital struggle for hearts and minds". (Pollitt, 2004, p. 19)*

Wal-Mart Stores Inc., which wooed cost-conscious shoppers to become the world's largest retailer, is setting its sights on deeper pockets. Readers of the September issue of Vogue magazine, which hit newsstands Tuesday, encountered eight pages of ads for the discount chain. Sandwiched between spots for high-end designers Emanuel Ungaro and Roberto Cavalli, the ads show a mom, a martial artist and other women wearing Wal-Mart clothes. Each ad lists the featured woman's "style profile" and the city where "her Wal-Mart" is located. The median annual household income of Vogue's nearly 1.2 million readers is more than $59,000. Vogue said its in-house ad agency approached Wal-Mart's media buyers. For the magazine, where a full-page ad in color goes for $104,490, it was a chance to "make something happen for the world's largest retailer," said Vogue's associate publisher, Deborah Cavanagh, who oversees the magazine's marketing. Cavanagh said the 802-page September issue - which at nearly 4 pounds is the magazine's biggest -- will reach the "change agents" of fashion, along with the masses, so it makes sense for Wal-Mart to be seen with the likes of Gucci and Louis Vuitton. (Ernest, 2005, p. 1)

Dichotomy and binary opposition

Western thought seems to be imbued with a style of thinking based upon dichotomy and binary opposition such that either a) or b) is seen first and or alone. It is common to hear people talk in terms of: right or wrong; rational or emotional; yes or no; nature or nurture;

heart or head; quality or quantity, etc. Embedded in this fundamental style of thinking, however, are not only *oppositions* but also *hierarchy*, in that the existence of such binaries suggests a struggle for predominance. If one position is right, then the other must be wrong. Hélène Cixous observed that oppositional terms are locked into a relationship of conflict and, moreover, this relationship is one in which one term must not only be repressed; but is also repressed *at the expense of the other* (1986, p. 63). Of course, when we use these opposites we often do so in a context of elevating one term while simultaneously inferring a denigration of the other.

Luce Irigaray had similarly observed that one of the principles of Western rationality is that of *non-contradiction*, where we strive to reduce ambivalence and ambiguity to an absolute minimum such that it is 'only' the other that is blamed and therefore responsible for the self: "In cases where causals show the chiasmus of *I* and *you*, they can be reduced to the same schema as the conditionals, leaving *you* the responsibility for *I*'s condition or action" (2002, p. 48, see also Whitford, 1991). In such logical -- conditional and conditioning -- systems, two propositions cannot be true simultaneously. One proposition must prevail, and the other must accordingly, be vanquished (see Carr, 1999, 2003a). Over time, we have learned that the exclusion of one, creates more space for the preferred other; and to create space and time to enjoy the preferred.

It is also that such thinking appears to abound in the field of organisation studies in terms of leadership trait theory versus contingency theories (House & Aditya, 1997; Kirkpatrick & Lock, 1991) and leadership style scales (Fiedler & Chemers, 1984). For instance, when Sam Walton, the founder and leader of Wal-Mart, first began his organisation, he was concerned with being able to portray a self-space of honesty and integrity all of the time he provided employees and external customers with affordable goods -- which meant he honestly and with integrity brought

about Wal-Mart's:

> *business model of ruthless, cut-expenses-to-the-bone efficiency [that] has come with severe costs…. (Anonymous, 1999, p. 22; see also Ortega, 1998)*

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Over time, Wal-Mart executives saw the store as not being 'enough' (i.e. read wealthy or big

enough). The reflection they saw was Wal-Mart as the ugly old woman that needed to become the best and biggest (i.e. read prettiest and youngest) of its competitors. In time, Wal-Mart became the largest corporate retailer in the world (Fernie & Arnold, 2002; Fox, 2005) by creating self-space that conquered other-space and on a global scale. In other words, Wal-Mart is falling prey to working with binaries that are reflected in their self-space mirror. One of the ways Wal-Mart continues to grow is to focus on the transformational, negative, binary that was created by the opposites mirrored in leadership trait theory and leadership style scales.

The manner in which we dichotomise the world has a deep-seated source that on the one hand, is partly explained by a psychodynamic process called *splitting* and on the other, by another psychodynamic process called *mirroring*.

The psychodynamics of splitting

Splitting is a regressive reaction where, in an attempt to minimize anxiety from a potential or actual threatening 'object' or 'idea', we may comprehend the world as comprised of 'good' or 'bad' objects. This primitive way of relating is coherently described in the work of object-relations theorist Melanie Klein (1944, 1975a, 1975b, 1975c, 1975d, 1986). Klein argued that primal interpersonal relationships are based in paradox or mutual causalities. In a kind of Manichaean world in the first years of life, Klein argued that an important initial process for the infant is to resolve ambiguity and conflict posed by the mother's breast because the breast is a good object and bad object *at the same time*. The infant *idealises* the 'good' breast and projects love onto it because through the transfer of milk, it triggers feelings of contentment that are absorbed or *introjected* by the infant: these feelings represent the mother's reassurance, which is life sustaining. It is the good breast that becomes the core around which the ego seeks to develop as if it were the grain of

sand that yields the pearl (see Klein, 1975c, pp. 178-180).

This 'good' object also confounds the infant because it inspires a degree of envy from the emphasis of the infant's need and dependence upon it. During unwanted disruptions of milk or separations from the breast, the infant experiences the good object as being outside its control, because the infant cannot have what it wants, when it wants it. Because of the undeveloped ability to understand the paradox, in the child's mind, the breast becomes simultaneously, a frustrating, terrifying, omnipotent 'bad' object that is perceived to have the *persecutorial* power to destroy both the infant *as well as* the 'good' object. Perceptions of persecution cause separation anxiety or the feeling of isolation from the life force. This anxiety becomes acute; it threatens to transform isolation into total dissolution, which becomes synonymous with the fear of 'death' (Carr, 2003b, 2003c; Carr & Lapp, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2005d; Carr & Lapp, 2006; Lapp & Carr, 2005b, 2006b).

The process of splitting has the infant identify with the 'good', which means that critical distance is at its maximum. It is at its maximum because the 'bad' breast aspect, as far as the infant is concerned, is no where to be seen or perceived. When critical distance is at its maximum, so is the difference between the binaries that creates megalisation of the infant's 'good' self-space. This also means that megalisation of what the child does not want, the 'bad' breast, is also separated to an extreme through a wide expanse of critical distance. The act of splitting removes required amounts of reflexivity needed to ensure the right amount of critical distance is available to see the unity of the binaries, at the right time. There is an inverse relationship between critical distance and reflexivity.

Even though the critical distance between 'good' and 'bad' is at its widest points, the 'bad' still lurks in the child's memory. Therefore, the less developed ego will use another defense mechanism and seek to

deny the reality of the persecutory object [or as Freud (1940/1986) terms "disavowal"]. It is then around the 'good' breast, and *what it is perceived to embody,* that development in childhood occurs. It could be that the 'good' is really a 'bad' binary object that simply makes the child feel good. In the case of *Baby Wal-Mart*, one can see that only the 'good' effects of becoming so large so fast were preferred by Wal-Mart executives *and* the store's customers. Yet, by attaining megalisation of size, efficiency (i.e. low prices) and speed, Wal-Mart also gained a great deal of power in the retail industry. The critical distance between the negative impacts of 'baby Wal-Mart's' growth and its positive was so wide that relatively speaking, there are fewer people who are aware of both the 'good' and 'bad' causes and effects of Wal-Mart's presence. People will shop at Wal-Mart as often as they can and purchase there, as much as they can. However, they will do so at the risk of losing their own self-space and differentiation as customers: "Sam Walton was the late twentieth century Henry Ford" (Anonymous, 1999, p. 22); and as employees: "…at bottom most, Wal-Mart jobs are near minimum wage with very little job security. The result is high turnover and widespread job dissatisfaction" (Anonymous, 1999, p. 23). An appropriate amount of critical distance would demonstrate that 'good' Wal-Mart customers are also 'bad' for the retail industry as a whole and 'bad' Wal-Mart customers who take a stand and leave the organisation are 'good' retail community supporters: "Wal-Mart's core working-class customers are struggling, squeezed by high oil prices and flattening pay scales caused partly by Wal-Mart itself" (Pressley, 2006, p. D11; see also Bianco, 2006). Yet, the experience of envy of the 'good' breast (i.e. because of the infant's inability to control it) is a potential and persistent source of interference in that process.

Generally, as early as the third month of life, the infant usually comes to this realisation that it both loves *and* hates the same breast, a 'condition' that Klein referred to as the *depressive* position. The depressive position

is a reflection of the types and amounts of ambiguity and ambivalence the infant is willing to accept in that situation:

> A new achievement belonging to the depressive position is the capacity to symbolize and in that way to lessen anxiety and resolve conflict. This is used in order to deal with *earlier* unresolved conflicts by symbolizing them….In the depressive position and later, symbols are formed not only of the whole destroyed and recreated object characteristic of the depressive position but also of the split object (extremely good and extremely bad) and not only of the whole object but of part objects. (Segal, 1981/1990, p. 58)

The depressive position therefore, is a transient stage of low-anxiety affectations. *Unfortunately, the rise of the corporate retail superstores has come at least in part at the expense of the local, traditional, "mom-and-pop" dealers. While shoppers seem to uniformly appreciate the often lower retail prices available at the mass merchandisers, many also rue the loss of personalised customer service previously provided by friendly, local dealers* (Boyd, 1997, p. 223)

It is also during this time that one is prone to accepting what is believed to be the 'truth' that brings into play, the position of 'seeing is believing'.

When the situation changes such that the infant requires more or different aspects of that which symbolises the 'good' breast, it is in this psychodynamic process of splitting that the child minimises conflict by attempting to maximise clarity. This again, is the very early, infantile exaggeration of differences between good and bad objects in order to eliminate 'grey' areas and to create a 'black and white picture' so part of the object becomes either all 'good' or reassuring and the other part, all 'bad' and persecutorial. Over time, self-space becomes filled with only the 'good', which through the trait of

envy, is perceived to only get better; or at least not change the space into something worse than is already perceived. At this time, it can also be that there is such a lack of critical distance that megalisation of the 'good' cannot be overcome. The 'bad' becomes etched so deeply into self-space that it can never become 'good'; but only worse. Once megalisation occurs because of splitting, it can be that the split itself defines the depressive position within the self-space so strongly that without intervention of another space to establish suitable critical distance, it never changes -- what is 'bad' is always 'bad' and what is 'good' is always 'good'. Similar to the diagram above, the depressive position becomes megalised, homogeneous and the resulting binary of the psychic transformation over time and through various stages of maturity.

Dichotomization is accompanied by generalization, distortion, concealment, manipulation of the 'facts' and a demonization of the "otherness" that poses a threat. Klein termed this as a *paranoid-schizoid position*, highlighting "the persecutory character of the anxiety and … the schizoid nature of the mechanisms at work" (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1967/1988, p. 298). Thus, it is in the earliest times of life that one becomes predisposed to thinking in terms of 'either, or'; rather than 'and', with the consequence of negating mutual causation and consideration of the whole-object *and* the whole-subject. Whilst during 'mature' development we pass through this phase, this primitive defence against anxiety is a regressive reaction that, in the sense of always being available to us and especially when situations and circumstances reflect what we 'need to be bad', the paranoid-schizoid position is never transcended. As far as Wal-Mart executives are concerned, in whatever space they create at any time, they can never be 'bad' or do any wrong:

> *Earlier this month, Wal-Mart jumped into the fray with what seemed to be a good-faith attempt to measure, definitively, its economic impact on U.S. consumers. It released a study*
> *by Global Insight, a Boston-based economic research firm that Wal-Mart had commissioned to conduct a year-long study addressing such issues as prices, jobs and wages…. Wal-Mart's study found that Wal-Mart has a largely positive effect on Americans' lives, and that its low prices give consumers more buying power by holding down prices through out the economy. It also concluded that Wal-Mart jobs generally pay market-rate wages…. Against this backdrop, here's a sampling of what economists and other experts are saying about the company at the heart of the controversy. Global Insight found that Wal-Mart's presence holds down prices of consumer goods in the U.S. by 3.1 percent… Adjusting for inflation, the report says that means Americans saved $118 billion in 2004, or $402 per person, thanks to Wal-Mart.* (Weber, 2005, pp. 1-4)

> *The Global Insight study found that some local retailers shut down after Wal-Mart came to town, so other jobs were lost…. Every new Wal-Mart creates 150 - 350 new jobs but displaces anywhere from 53 to 253 existing jobs, for a net gain of 97 new jobs. Global insight didn't address the quality of those jobs -- in other words, whether the new jobs paid better or worse than the displaced ones, or had better or worse benefit packages….* (Weber, 2005, pp. 1-4)

It has been more than a decade since Wal-Mart clients started to realise the superstore's impacts on their communities: "As a consumer, Your choice is cut down considerably if there are no independents" (McCune, 1994, pp. 10-11). Yet people still shop at the store and lend to its megalisation because of enrapture with dichotomisation of the 'good'. During times of 'maturity', what adults have learned is to become more accomplished at residing longer and in the 'same' depressive positions. This of course,

is the 'good' aspect of repression that mitigates the anxiety of feeling the 'bad' that has been remembered from childhood days' unhappy endings. The depressive position then becomes its mirror of 'believing is seeing'. This means that too much critical distance has been applied and a new binary, a new 'good-bad' or a new 'good-good' or a new 'bad-bad', has been created in that self-space. There is also an inverse relationship between excess critical distance and reflexivity. Whereas a lack of critical distance separates binaries to establish one over the other, over time, too much critical distance creates a different but new extreme:

> The dual disidentification we have called for does not therefore depend upon or involve a "liberation" emanating from either the destruction of extant or the production of new (material) spaces, but an epistemological reconfiguration of "certain spaces" and "certain identities" in terms of their meanings and associated practices. (Natter & Jones, 1997, p. 158)

The correct timing of the appropriate amount of critical distance in the right context shows the required unity of the binaries such that one is not privileged over the other.

In adulthood, the linkage of our proclivity to use binaries and to dichotomise the world with the primitive defense of splitting, was captured by Madan Sarup (1996) when he argued:

> Binary oppositions reduce the potential of difference into polar opposites: Self/Other; rational/emotional; metropolis /periphery. In binarism, one term represents the dominant centre, the other term represents the subordinate margin. The important thing about binarism is that it operates in the same way as splitting and projection: the centre expels its anxieties and contradictions onto the subordinate term. The Other often mirrors and represents what is deeply familiar to the centre, but projected out of itself. (p. 57)

Thus, we can note that part of the reason we become enchanted with the *'positive'* -- the 'good' -- is out of our fear that if we do not, we are prone to what we take to be the 'bad', or the potentially 'bad'. There are, however, other psychodynamic processes also occurring during a similar period of development that highly relate to and underscore enrapture of the positive. Above, the citation from Sarup alludes to one such process that is called *mirroring*, the psychodynamics of which we now turn.

The psychodynamics of mirroring

The psychodynamic process of mirroring is one in which figures (i.e., such as the mother) reflect back to the infant, the appropriateness of the infant's own identity and actions and, in so doing, provide an emotional basis for the infant's identity and development. There have been numerous psychoanalytic theorists who have contributed to our understanding of this process, most notably Freud (1933/1988; see also Carr, 2002), Lacan (1949/2004), Kohut (1971) and Winnicott (1971).

"Freud (1905/1977, 1933/1988) believed that 'objects are the targets towards which action or desire is directed in order to satisfy instinctual satisfaction'" (Carr & Downs, 2004, p. 353). The corollary is that it is also from this object that the inability to continue identification causes the deepest feelings of persecution and effects the most destructive behaviours through the unbridled emergence of the death instinct (Carr & Lapp, 2006; Freud, 1920/1984, 1923/1984, 1935/1986 1940/1986). The importance of Freud's originating work on narcissism, identification and introjection is so potent that it initiated and formed the basis for the works of Melanie Klein: "The Kleinian Technique is psychoanalytical and strictly based on Freudian psychoanalytic concepts" (Segal, 1981/1990, p. 3). Together, both Freud and Klein would propose that mirroring, since it arises from destructive forces, is a way to

reflect the 'bad' that has been split away by child or adult. Alternatively, other analysts view mirroring as a Freud-Kleinian inversion.

Winnicott (1971) suggested that the precursor of the mirror is the mother's face. The infant's initial communication with the mother is not just with and through the breast but, while feeding, the infant finds itself reflected in the mother's face. As Green noted, the consequences of this form of communication are that:

> The baby may see in the mother's gaze either himself or herself. If, too precociously, it is of the mother/object that he (a male infant) perceives, he cannot form the subjective object, but will prematurely evolve the object objectively perceived. The result is that he must organize a false self, as an image conforming to the mother's desire. (1993, p. 216)

The pre-verbal or un-verbalized experience of being seen by the mother is part of the infant coming to terms with what is self and what is 'other' [or as Winnicott (1971) expressed it, as the 'me' and 'not me'] -- the infant seeks to confirm its existence through their existences: I am seen thus I exist. But in the 'mirror' that is the mother, the infant experiences not just being noticed and acknowledged but also approval or disapproval. One link between splitting and mirroring is this transference such that only the 'good' within the reflection is experienced. Transference is "a process of actualisation of unconscious wishes" (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1967/1988, p. 455) to maximise pleasure and minimise displeasure (Freud, 1900/1986, 1920/1984, 1923/1984). Heinz Kohut (1971) suggested that mirroring is one of two narcissistically invested transference reactions (the other was idealizing transference). On the one hand, the infant seeks the approval of the parent in an act of both recognition and confirmation so as to confirm the infant's love of self. On the other hand, the infant seeks to be like the parent in the sense of the parent seeming to be the perfect and omnipotent 'other' (see also Jacoby, 1993). Thus, in the development of self, both these entwined dynamics are implied because such transference "reflects a dissolution of boundaries and a mingling of self-and-other" (Meissner, 2004, p. 79). It is in the interplay of self and the discovery of other that mirroring results in the person seeing the self from the outside-in that at the same time formulates perceptions of the self that become an inside-out reflection (Weiss, 1999). The paradox of transference:

> is that the maximisation of pleasure and minimisation of displeasure are wishes that need to be fulfilled by the object but are also likely to go unsatisfied because of contemporaneous needs for independence from the same object. (Carr & Lapp, 2006, p. 119)

The process of mirroring is not merely confined to the early period of development, but is an ongoing dynamic of seeking out others and environments that confirm this self-space. Using Urwin's (1984) work, Sarup (1996) determined that mirroring was the self's first false recognition of self because mirroring: a) provides a point outside the self through which self is recognised; b) gives the infant its first experience of corporeal unity, although it is an illusory one; and c) the infant is introduced into an order of imaginary relations (p. 36). Sarup (1996) explained the significance of the space that mirroring establishes by arguing that:

> There is a split between a glimpse of perfect unity and the infant's actual state of fragility. Though based on an ideal, the mirror episode gives the child an imaginary experience of what it must be like to be whole. (p. 36)

Another link between splitting and mirroring is envy, such that the child is envious of the mother's wholeness. Mirroring creates the whole-object the infant 'wants' to be -- it creates the *image-ideal* by eliminating critical distance needed to show the unity which establishes self and other as a mutually constituted whole:

> But the important point is that this form situates agency known as the ego, prior

to its social determination, in a fictional direction that will forever remain irreducible for any single individual or, rather, that will only asymptotically approach the subjects becoming, no matter how successful the dialectical synthesis by which he must resolve, as *I*, his discordance with his own reality. (Lacan, 1949/2004, p. 4)

Another connection between splitting and mirroring is that mirroring creates the signified self-space and self-subspaces of those things that are 'good' and or are 'bad'-- it establishes the infant's first mutually constituted binaries the infant recognises to cause anxiety:

> …for Lacan, this journey has a place in language and a time in the unfolding of human ontogenesis: *because* space has no meaning to a new-born human being is there no language and thus no desire either. But the moment the transition into language has been left behind, once the youngster expresses (knows) what he or she wants, it is precisely the meaning attached to space that will henceforth keep desire from being satisfied, aufgehoben. It is literal(ly) space that is separating -- me. Creating a social subject is the name of the game, not as a further trait added to a mystical cognito, but as a simultaneous, concurrent creation and alienation in(to) form. (Strohmayer, 1997, pp. 169-170)

The unfolding awareness of the unconscious dimensions of oneself can be anxiety producing and in so doing, trigger primitive defences such as splitting. In many ways it can be said that mirroring is part of an attempt to control what is unseen with what is seen, so that a body, both corporeal and knowledgeable: "flows over into a world whose schema it bears in itself but possesses this world at a distance rather than being possessed by it" (Merleau-Ponty, 1973, p. 78).

In this same psychodynamic, it has been observed that: "Parents who have inner, often unconscious, doubts about their own strength tend to demand that their children be especially courageous, independent and aggressive" (May, 1953, p. 233). Across generations of time and together -- synchronistically -- the parent self-space and child self-space represent what has become the 'best' 'we-space' needed to satisfy the unending hierarchy of desire. When parent and child want the same thing, their relationship becomes megalised such that lack of or excess critical distance keeps them 'doing' and or from 'doing' the right things at the right times. Thus, the combination of splitting and mirroring creates tradition and traits including but not limited to those related to buying (and selling) behaviours.

> It is tradition, internalized, that allows us to be responsible, accountable selves who can see a meaning in life. Traditions tell us what the human good is, how to seek it, as well as providing standards of success and failure. (Alford, 1991, p. 14)

Nowhere in the data does it say that the majority of clients will stop or even suspend some of their relationships with Wal-Mart. What the data do say is that there are some who are trying to minimise megalisation and therefore, Wal-Mart mirroring and reflections that have added so robustly to not only a North American, but to a global political economy from which there seems to be no escape:

> This moment at which the mirror stage comes to an end inaugurates, through identification with the imago of one's semblable and the drama of primordial jealousy…that will henceforth link the *I* to socially elaborated situations.
>
> It is this moment that decisively tips the whole of human knowledge…into being mediated by the other's desire, constitutes its objects in an abstract equivalence due to competition from other people, and turns the *I* into an apparatus to which every instinctual pressure constitutes a danger, even if

it corresponds to a natural maturation process. The very normalization of this maturation is henceforth dependent in man on cultural intervention…. (Lacan, 1949/2004, p. 7)

In the case study, we have seen that Wal-Mart executives had the power not only to create the store's own mirror image but also to manipulate its reflection by hiring Global Insight, by merging with the similar store, Asda, and by hiring a consultant to ensure the reflection was an exact copy of the original. This is similar to invoking needed transference to create an *image-ideal* through global recognition:

> With the mirror phase Lacan began to work with a concept of the human subject who does not have his own unity in himself, but with a subject who finds his unity only in the other, through the image in the mirror. This gives us the matrix of a fundamental dependency on the other, a relationship defined not in terms of language but in terms of image. (Sarup, 1992; see also Lacan, 1949/2004, p. 4)

The denial of this identity does in part trigger anxiety and in turn the primitive defense of splitting where anger is directed at 'bad' objects that attempt to tarnish the image such as when union organizers attempted to intervene in Wal-Mart's practices. It is Wal-Mart's trait of power through size, through megalisation, that keeps one fragile ego from succumbing to Wal-Mart's ability to rapidly change its reflection to meet its own needs that it *shows* to be the needs of its clients: "Sartre speaks of man being torn between a 'desire to be' and a 'desire to have'. For both Sartre and Lacan desire is defined in terms of a 'lack of being'" (Sarup, 1992, p. 36). "Lack of being" is precisely what Wal-Mart wants and through mirroring itself around the world that is exactly what it is achieving:

> *the 'market spoiler' effect…by which a retailer's actions change in its own favour, consumers' perceptions of the importance of store choice attributes*

[read traits], could be starting to occur in the UK market. (da Rocha & Dib, 2002, p. 65)

Wal-Mart Stores Inc., which wooed cost-conscious shoppers to become the world's largest retailer, is setting its sights on deeper pockets. Readers of the September issue of Vogue magazine, which hit newsstands Tuesday, encountered eight pages of ads for the discount chain. Sandwiched between spots for high-end designers Emanuel Ungaro and Roberto Cavalli, the ads show a mom, a martial artist and other women wearing Wal-Mart clothes. Each ad lists the featured woman's "style profile" and the city where "her Wal-Mart" is located. The median annual household income of Vogue's nearly 1.2 million readers is more than $59,000. Vogue said its in-house ad agency approached Wal-Mart's media buyers. For the magazine, where a full-page ad in color goes for $104,490, it was a chance to "make something happen for the world's largest retailer," said Vogue's associate publisher, Deborah Cavanagh, who oversees the magazine's marketing. Cavanagh said the 802-page September issue - which at nearly 4 pounds is the magazine's biggest -- will reach the "change agents" of fashion, along with the masses, so it makes sense for Wal-Mart to be seen with the likes of Gucci and Louis Vuitton. (Ernest, 2005, p. 1)

Traces of the mirroring phase in infanthood are still found in adulthood such that: a) surface appearances are more prodigious than underlying essence; b) heterogeneity is imagined over homogeneity; and c) there is a tendency to attach to the signifier, the 'looker', contingent and situational 'appropriate activities rather than what is instrumental or signified by the universality of these actions (Sarup, 1996, p. 101). During mirroring, the viewer identifies and therefore, finds happiness or perhaps 'truth' with the image it

sees. The purpose of the mirror, then, is to reflect what the viewer does not have. It can be that mirroring reinforces the reflection of self or other. Wal-Mart's advertising in Vogue now reflects that the 'common' person will look like, will mirror and will reflect the youth, beauty and vitality of the models in the magazine. In other words, it seems as though Wal-Mart is making people whole by giving them what they cannot see and therefore, what they feel they need. Wal-Mart is the mirror that is also manipulating the reflection.

In an effort to restore its image as the 'best' and 'biggest of them all, it is, ironically, the 'bad' traits of Wal-Mart that are blinding both employees and customers from seeing Wal-Mart's 'bad' traits:

> *A team led by David Neumark, an economist at the Public Policy Institute of California, found that Wal-Mart stores actually reduce retail employment by 2 to 4 percent in a given county. In California…a team of urban planners compared Wal-Mart's wages and benefits with those of union supermarket workers in the San Francisco Bay Area,. They concluded that union workers received an hourly wage of $15.30, versus $9.60 for Wal-Mart workers. Adding benefits, union workers earned an equivalent of $23. 64 per hour [55% increase due to benefits also provided] almost twice the $11.95 [24% increase due to benefits provided] earned by Wal-Mart workers... On average, every new Wal-Mart worker costs a state an average of about $900 in new Medicaid costs.* (Weber, 2005, pp. 1-4)

> *The most important element of successful change is never to let your people get offside, says Marie Gill, head of organizational development at UK supermarket Asda, which recently merged with Wal-Mart, on of the world's largest retailers. "The important thing for us was to ensure that our people understood that this*

takeover was a meeting of cultures", she said. *"We educated them with the ethos that we were becoming part of the Wal-Mart family…. People do not usually resist change -- they resist being changed. Employees have to trust that the decisions made by the business are for the best, not only for the customers but also for the people. In Asda's case, we would not have gone ahead with the merger if it was not. The most incredible thing about the whole process is that Asda has not fundamentally changed -- the process has been more of an evolution".* (Pollitt, 2004, p. 18)

> *… Change is only really viable when two organizations share some kind of synergy. The cultures of Asda and Wal-Mart were similar from the start and, as a result, their values were similar…."The programs we develop for clients at Brathay help organizations to manage change as they equip them to manage and embrace change effectively. Part of our work is to help organizations and their employees to answer the question: 'How can I be successful in a new culture'?... "It is important that when working through a change-management program that people work towards a common goal and that firms empower their employees to put them into action. If staff are not focused on the organization's objectives, the process is al most certain to fail. Our programs are designed to help to win the vital struggle for hearts and minds."* *Godfrey Owens, deputy chief executive of Brathay [Brathay, hired through Wal-Mart by Asda, is a consulting firm for people development (see* http:///www.brathay.org.uk*)].* (Pollitt, 2004, p. 19)

Through its various disguises, Wal-Mart is creating both lack and excess of critical space, which serves to establish the compression of self-space and self-time into

that of Wal-Mart's 'we-space' and 'we-time'. Wal-mart, an organisation that is also wicked, delivers perfectly sound strategy to its clients. Clients, who cannot see past Wal-Mart's traits of megalisation are bereft of needed critical distance to see that they are involved in endless reflection of only one depressive position:

His [Sam Walton's] success with bigger and bigger boxes spawned the category-killer chains that continue to crush smaller businesses and to ensure that every town eventually will have exactly the same selection of books, videos, records, magazines, clothing, food, toys, hardware and everything else, not only from New York to California, but from the Yukon to Tierra del Fuego. He helped to create a society in which part-time and temporary jobs are the norm for ever-more workers. (Anonymous, 1999, p. 24)

Sarup (1996) used Clement's (1975) proposition that said:

> Lacan's mirror state is particularly useful to Marxist cultural critique because the false recognition of self at that early stage of individual development is reactivated by the ideological fix built into a variety of cultural forms (myth, drama, film) through which the subject is inserted into conservative and spectator positions. (p. 36; see also Clement, 1975)

In this case study, the conjunction of the psychodynamic processes of splitting and mirroring, seems to confirm *self* and *other* as being locked into some oppositional (conflicting) relationship in the manner where there is *struggle* for predominance in the same space and time, which is effecting further homogeneity through time and space compression:

> Within the realms of critical geographical enquiry, debates on the postmodern still retain a strong Western orientation. This is not only specific to geography, because it has been remarked elsewhere that much

discussion of the postmodern displays the features of a customary 'Western conversation'. The themes, agents and practices of knowledge are circumscribed within the heartlands of Euro-America, and are invested with an implicit self-containing viability. At the same time, there is often little apparent awareness of the particularity of the West, and a self-contained matrix of knowledge is projected out for consumption by other worlds.

> … in an era characterized by 'time-space compression' and intensifying global imager, one might imagine that the construction and dissemination of theoretical knowledges would be increasingly globalist in nature. (Slater, 1997, p. 324)

What is not readily appreciated, but is also in the same case study, is that *self and other are not in fact separate to each other, but are mutually constituted*. Through introjection, we are some of each; but what we want to see is that we are either one or the other. By negating one, the difference between it and its other is decreased such that the other is unrecognisable thus creating critical distance -- critical distance is that space which shows self that it is both one and the other, both 'good' and 'bad'. Without critical distance, however, it is then that the 'man [sic] in the mirror' is that which is likely to be desired for self, rather than what is -- and in the case of 'bad' against 'good', what is not desired for other: "The fact is that they encountered that existential negativity whose reality is so vigorously proclaimed by the contemporary philosophy of being and nothingness" (Lacan, 1949/2004, p. 8). We have created extreme binaries of critical distance itself; and we have come to the point where megalisation has created self-spaces that are simulacra of simulacra: "The world's needs and desires have been irrevocably homogenized. This makes the multinational corporation obsolete and the global corporation absolute" (Levitt, 1983, p. 2). As one writer in our case study aptly confirmed:

Wal-Mart was started in 1962 in the state of Arkansas, USA. The company grew very fast becoming by 1985, one of the leading US retailers. By 1995, when it entered the Brazilian market, it operated four store formats in all 50 states in the USA: (1) discount stores; (2) supercenters; (3) warehouse clubs; and (4) deep discount warehouse outlets. The company's strategy was based on four pillars: (1) cost leadership; (2) customer orientation; (3) logistics; and (4) information technology. (da Rocha & Dib, 2002, p. 63)

We have to watch our selves.

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