

**A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR
CONSTRUCTIVE INTERPERSONAL LEADERSHIP
RELATIONS IN KNOWLEDGE-BASED
ORGANISATIONS**

by

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submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY

in the subject

COMMUNICATION

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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October 2018

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A theoretical framework for constructive interpersonal leadership relations in knowledge-based organisations

I declare that the above thesis is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



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23 October 2018

Date

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I dedicate this thesis to my Immortal Beloved, and thank the following people who made a significant contribution to this study:

- My supervisor, Professor Rachel Barker
- The participants for giving of their time, expertise and experiences
- My family, friends and colleagues for their support.

The financial assistance of the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences, in collaboration with the South African Humanities Deans Association towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the NIHSS and SAHUDA.

ABSTRACT

In this qualitative study, the research objective was to present a theoretical framework for the phenomenon of interpersonal leadership relations (denoting both the dyadic relationship between two leader/followers and the leadership communication taking place in the dyad) in knowledge-based organisational contexts.

It is posited that the interpersonal leader-follower dyad (LFD) may be viewed from a systems theory perspective as a system consisting of two system parts (individuals). These individuals are labelled 'leader/followers' to emphasise their mutual interdependence, and to indicate that these roles may be interchangeable, based on the knowledge needs in a particular situation (in line with the tenets of shared leadership). The dyadic system is influenced by its environment, the organisational context. However, the primary focus of this study is on interpersonal leadership communication as symbolic interaction between the leader/followers in the LFD. These three systemic levels are represented as major themes in the model resulting from this study: Theme 1 – an organisational environment that supports constructive interpersonal leadership relations (ILR); Theme 2 – symbolic interaction in the LFD; and Theme 3 – personal attributes that enhance ILR.

The data were collected from two convenience samples. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants in Sample 1, while questionnaires were used to collect data from Sample 2. In both cases, thematic analysis was used to analyse and interpret the data.

The major contribution of the study is the resulting theoretical framework of ILR, which comprises a theoretically based definition of ILR; a generic model of ILR; and current guidelines for fostering constructive ILR in knowledge-based contexts, with reference to the three systemic levels.

The following definition was phrased based on the study: *Constructive interpersonal leadership relations (ILR) in a knowledge-based organisational context is a dyadic process of symbolic communication between two expert leader/followers who mutually influence each other and share meaning to strengthen their relationship and to collaboratively transfer and apply knowledge to achieve organisational goals.*

In terms of the environment, it was found that organisational leaders should actively model and promote the following: a collaborative leadership concept, workplace spirituality, cultural inclusivity, and adaptation to advancing communication technologies.

Regarding symbolic interaction in the LFD, the following communication practices were found to be central to constructive ILR: active listening, supporting followers as unique individuals, respectful communication, considering followers' input, facilitating constructive redefinition of the other leader/follower's self, role-taking (taking the perspective of the other leader/follower's role), awareness of attribution, conflict management through non-threatening, respectful and preferably face-to-face discussion, facilitating a sense of meaning or purpose at work for the other leader/follower, and fostering constructive relationship properties such as trust. It was found that ILR may produce system outputs into the organisation that contribute to the organisational culture and climate, job performance, employee morale and engagement, and staff retention.

Personal attributes were organised into personal values and competencies that support ILR. The most important personal values were identified as honesty, love or supportiveness, respect, relationships or engagement, trust, and professional excellence. Essential competencies were identified as listening skills, emotional communication competencies (particularly self-awareness, self-reflection and attending to others' emotions), engagement skills, conflict management skills, and multicultural competency (including generational skills).

Key terms: interpersonal leadership relations (ILR); interpersonal leadership communication (ILC); leadership; interpersonal communication; leader/follower; knowledge-based organisations; environment that enhances interpersonal leadership relations; leader/follower traits that enhance interpersonal leadership relations; leader-follower dyad; symbolic interaction

OPSOMMING

In hierdie kwalitatiewe studie word 'n teoretiese raamwerk voorgelê vir die verskynsel 'interpersoonlike leierskapsverhoudings' (verwysende na beide die diadiese verhouding tussen twee leier/volgelinge en die leierskapskommunikasie wat in die diade plaasvind) in kennisgebaseerde organisatoriese kontekste.

Die uitgangspunt is dat die interpersoonlike leier-volgelinge-diade (LVD) vanuit 'n sisteemteoretiese perspektief beskou kan word as 'n sisteem wat uit twee sisteemdele (individue) bestaan. Hierdie individue word 'leier/volgelinge' genoem om hulle wedersydse interafhanklikheid te beklemtoon; en om aan te toon dat hierdie rolle uitruilbaar mag wees, afhangende van die kennisbehoefte in 'n gegewe situasie (met verwysing na die teorie van gedeelde leierskap). As 'n sisteem word die LVD ook deur die omringende omgewing of organisatoriese konteks beïnvloed. Die primêre fokus van hierdie studie is egter op interpersoonlike leierskapskommunikasie as simboliese interaksie tussen die leier/volgelinge in die LVD. Hierdie drie sistemiese vlakke word in hierdie studie deur die hooftemas in die studie verteenwoordig en ook as sulks in die voortvloeiende model uitgebeeld: Tema 1 – 'n organisatoriese omgewing wat konstruktiewe interpersoonlike leierskapsverhoudings (ILV) ondersteun; Tema 2 – simboliese interaksie in die LVD; en Tema 3 – persoonlike eienskappe wat ILV bevorder.

Die teoretiese raamwerk van ILV bestaan uit die volgende: 'n teoreties gefundeerde definisie van ILV; 'n generiese model van ILV; en 'n raamwerk van huidige riglyne vir die kweek van konstruktiewe ILV in kennisgebaseerde kontekste, met verwysing na die drie sistemiese vlakke van omgewing, diade en individuele leier/volgelinge.

Die volgende definisie is op grond van die navorsingsresultate geformuleer: *Konstruktiewe interpersoonlike leierskapsverhoudings (ILV) in 'n kennisgebaseerde organisatoriese konteks is 'n diadiese proses van simboliese kommunikasie tussen twee kundige leier/volgelinge wat mekaar wedersydse beïnvloed en betekenis deel om hulle verhouding te versterk en kennis samewerkend oor te dra en aan te wend om organisatoriese doelwitte te bereik.*

In terme van die organisatoriese omgewing is bevind dat organisatoriese leiers, veral senior leiers, die volgende aktief moet modelleer en bevorder in die organisasie: 'n samewerkende leierskapskonsep, spiritualiteit in die werkplek, kulturele insluiting, en aanpassing by vooruitgang in kommunikasietegnologie.

Met verwysing na simboliese interaksie in die LVD is die volgende praktyke bevind as sentraal tot konstruktiewe ILV: aktiewe luistergedrag, die ondersteuning van volgelinge as unieke individue, respekvolle kommunikasie, die inagneming van volgelinge se insette, die fasilitering van die konstruktiewe herdefiniëring van die ander leier/volgeling se self, rol-inneming (die inneem van die rolperspektief van die ander leier/volgeling), bewustheid van attribusie, die bestuur van konflik deur nie-bedreigende, respekvolle en – waar moontlik – aangesig-tot-aangesig bespreking, die fasilitering van 'n sin van doel of betekenis by die werk vir die ander leier/volgeling, en die kweek van konstruktiewe verhoudingseienskappe (vertroue, uitruilbare leier/volgeling-rolle en wedersydse invloed is geïdentifiseer as belangrik). Dit is ook bevind dat ILV sisteemuitsette in die organisasie mag genereer wat bydra tot die organisatoriese kultuur en klimaat, werkprestasie, werknemers se moreel en betrokkenheid, en personeelbehoud.

Persoonlike eienskappe is verdeel in waardes en vaardighede wat ILV ondersteun. Die belangrikste waardes is geïdentifiseer as eerlikheid, liefde, respek, verhoudings, vertroue, en professionele uitnemendheid. Die volgende vaardighede is geïdentifiseer as noodsaaklik: luistervaardighede, emosionele kommunikasievaardighede (met spesifieke verwysing na selfbewussyn, selfrefleksie en aandag aan ander se emosies), betrekkingvaardighede, konflikbestuursvaardighede, en multi-kulturele vaardighede (wat generasievaardighede insluit).

Die data is ingesamel uit twee gerieflikheidsteekproewe. Indiepte-, semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude is gevoer met Steekproef 1 (kundiges op gebiede verwant aan ILV in kennisgebaseerde kontekste), terwyl vraelyste gebruik is om data te verkry by Steekproef 2 (leier/vogelinge in kennisgebaseerde kontekste). Tematiese ontleding is in beide gevalle gebruik om die data te ontleed en te interpreteer.

Sleutelwoorde: interpersoonlike leierskapsverhoudings (ILV); interpersoonlike leierskapskommunikasie; interpersoonlike kommunikasie; leier/vogeling; kennisgebaseerde organisasies; 'n omgewing wat interpersoonlike leierskapsverhoudings ondersteun; leier/vogeling-eienskappe wat interpersoonlike leierskapsverhoudings bevorder; leier-vogeling-diade; simboliese interaksie

MANWELEDZO

Kha iyi ngudo ya u tandula 'qualitative', ndivho ya tshoqo isio yo vha u netshedza mutheo wa thiyori kha sia la vhushaka ha vhangaphand a vhukati ha vhatu (zwine zwa amba vhushaka ha tshumisano vhukati ha vhangaphand a/vhatevheli vhavhili na vhudavhidzani kha vhangaphand a vhune ha khou bvelela nga kha tshumisano yeneyo) kha nyimele ya tshiimiswa yo ditikaho nga divho.

Zwo sumbedziswa uri tshumisano ya murangaphand a-mutevheli vhukati ha vhatu (leader-follower dyad (LFD)) i nga lavheleswa u bva kha sia la sisiteme ya thiyori sa sisiteme ine ya vha na zwipid a zwivhili (vhatu). Vhatu avha vha vhidzwa 'vhangaphand a/vhatevheli' hu u itela u khwathisedza u ditika havho nga muwe, na u sumbedza uri mishumo iyi i nga imelelana, zwo ditika nga tshoqo ea dza nyimele yeneyo. (zwi tshi tevhedza vhatevheli vha vhangaphand a uvho). Sisiteme ya tshumisano i tshuwedzwa nga nyimele yayo, nyimele ya tshiimiswa. Fhedzisa zwa ndeme kha ngudo iyi ndi nga vhudavhidzani ha vhangaphand a vhukati ha vhatu sa tshiga tsha tshumisano vhukati ha vhangaphand a/vhatevheli kha LFD. Maga aya mararu a sisiteme a imelelwa nga tshoqo khulwane kha ndila yo livhisaho kha ngudo iyi: Tshoqo 1 – mupo/nyimele ya tshiimiswa i tshuwedzaho vhushaka ha vhangaphand a vhu vhezaho vhukati ha vhatu (interpersonal leadership relations (ILR)); Tshoqo 2 – Tshiga tsha tshumisano kha LFD; na Tshoqo 3 – Vhuvha ha muthu vhune ha konisa ILR.

Data yo kuvhanganywa u bva kha sambula dzine dza vha dza tsinisa. Mbudzi dzo tshand avhuwaho, dzi sa langiho kufhindulele kha vhavhudziswa dzo itwa hu na vhadzheneli kha Sambula ya u thoma (1), ngeno khwesheya dzo shumiswa u kuvhanganya data kha Sambula 2. Kha nyimele dzothe ho shumiswa tshathuvho i re na vhushaka na tshoqo u itela u tshathuvha na u tshutshedza data.

Zwine ngudo iyi ya vhezisa khazwo ndi mvelelo ya mutheo wa thiyori wa ILR, ine ya vha na tshutshedzo yo ditikaho nga thiyori ya ILR, ndila ya u angaredza ya ILR; na tshumbandila dza zwino u itela mbuelo ya ILR kha nyimele yo ditikaho nga divho, zwo lavhelesa kha maga a sisiteme.

Ṭhalutshedzo i tevhelaho yo vhekanywa zwi ḡ itika nga ngudo: *Vhushaka ha vharangaphandḡ a Vhuvhedzaho vhukati ha vhathu (ILR) kha nyimele ya tshiimiswa yo ḡ itikaho nga nḡ ivho ndi maitele a tshumisano ya tshiga tsha vhudavhidzani vhukati ha vharangaphandḡ a/vhatevheli vha re na nḡ ivho vhane vha ṭuṭuwedzana na u kovhekana zwine zwa amba u itela u khwaṭḡhisa vhushaka havho khathihi na u fhirisa na u shumisa nḡ ivho u itela u zwikelela zwipikwa zwa tshiimiswa.*

Zwi tshi ya nga nyimele, zwo wanala uri vharangaphandḡ a vha tshiimiswa vha tea u vhumba na u ṭuṭuwedza zwi tevhelaho: muhumbulo wa tshumisano kha vharangaphandḡ a, zwa tshimuya mushumoni, u katela zwa mvelele, na u ṭanganedza u shumiswa ha thekhinoḡodzhi ya vhudavhidzani.

Maelana na tshumisano nga tshiga kha LFD, maitele a vhudavhidzani a tevhelaho a wanala a one a ndeme kha ILR ire na mbuelo: u thetshesela nga vhuronwane, u tikedza vhatevheli hu na kupfesesele kwa uri vhathu vho fhambana, vhudavhidzani ha ṭhonifho, u dzhiela nṭha mihumbulo ya vhatevheli, u ṭuṭuwedza u ṭhalutshedza nga nḡ ila yo fhambanaho i vhuedzaho ya vhañ we vharangaphandḡ a/vhatevheli vha shumaho u ya nga vhone vhañ e, u dzhia dzhenelela (u vhona nga nḡ ila ine vhañ we vharangaphandḡ a/vhatevheli vha vona ngayo), u tangnedza nḡ ivho, ndaulo ya phambano nga kha nyambedzano i sa shushedziho, ya ṭhonifho, nga maandḡ a nga nyambedzano vhathu vho livhana zwifhaṭḡuwo, u ṭuṭuwedza nḡ ivho ya ṭhalutshedzo kana ndivho ya mushumo kha vhañ we vharangaphandḡ a/vhatevheli, u ṭuṭuwedza zwithu zwi fhaṭḡaho vhushaka vhu vhuedzaho u fana na u fulufhedzana. Zwo tumbulwa uri ILR i bveledza sisitḡeme ya mvelelo u vha tshiimiswa tshine tsha dzhenelela kha mvelele na vhuḡ ipfi, kushumele kwa mushumo, u ṭuṭuwedzea na u dzhenelela ha vhashumi, nauri vhashumi vha sa ṭuwe.

U ṭanganedzea ha muthu zwo vhekanywa zwi tshi ya nga mikhwa ya muthu ene muñ e na vhukoni zwine zwa tikedza ILR. Mikhwa ya muthu ya ndemesa yo topolwa sa u fulufhedzea, lufuno, ṭhonifho kana u dzhenelela, fulufhelo, na vhukoni kha zwa phurofeshinaḡa. Vhukoni ha ndeme ho sumbedzwa sa vhukoni ha u thetshesela, vhukoni ha vhudavhidzani ha muhumbulo (nga maandḡ a u ḡ idḡ ivha, u ḡ ilingulula/sedzulusa na u dzhiela nzhele vhuḡ ipfi ha vhañ we vhathu), vhukoni ha u dzhenelela, vhukoni ha ndaulo ya phambano, na vhukoni ha u dzhenelela kha mvelele nnzhi (zwi tshi katela vhukoni ha zwa murafho).

Maipfi a ndeme: vhushaka ha vhangaphand a vhukati ha vathu (ILR); Vhudavhidzani ha vhangaphand a vhukati ha vathu (ILC); Vhangaphand a; Vhudavhidzani vhukati ha vathu; mhangaphand a/mutevheli; zwiimiswa zwo d itikaho nga nd ivho; nyimele ine ya alusa vhushaka ha vhangaphand a vhukati ha vathu; zwi alusi zwa mhangaphand a/mutevheli; zwine zwa alusa vhushaka ha vhangaphand a vhukati ha vathu; tshumisano ya mhangaphand a-mutevheli; tshiga tsha tshumisano

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION	19
1.1 Introduction	19
1.2 Context of the study	19
1.2.1 Purpose of the study.....	19
1.2.2 Background of the study.....	20
1.2.3 Relevance of the topic.....	22
1.3 Conceptualisation of key terms	24
1.3.1 Knowledge workers	24
1.3.2 Knowledge-based contexts	24
1.3.3 Leadership.....	25
1.3.4 Leader.....	26
1.3.5 Follower	27
1.3.6 Leader/follower	27
1.3.7 Interpersonal leadership communication (ILC).....	28
1.3.8 Leader-follower dyad (LFD).....	30
1.3.9 Interpersonal leadership relations (ILR)	30
1.4 Type of study	31
1.4.1 Research paradigm: interpretivist.....	31
1.4.2 Research design (qualitative).....	33
1.4.3 Type of research (basic, exploratory and descriptive).....	34
1.4.4 Research problem	35
1.4.5 Research questions.....	36
1.4.6 Research objectives	37
1.5 Conclusion and exposition of chapters	38
CHAPTER 2: THE SYSTEMS THEORY AS A METATHEORY	40
2.1 Introduction	40
2.2 General origin and nature of the systems theory	40
2.3 Qualities of systems	43
2.3.1 Wholeness and interdependence	43
2.3.2 Hierarchy	45
2.3.3 Self-regulation and control.....	46
2.3.4 Interchange with the environment	47
2.3.5 Balance.....	55
2.3.6 Change and adaptability.....	55
2.3.7 Equifinality	56
2.4 Critique of the systems theory	57

2.5	Conclusion	59
CHAPTER 3: SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM AS A METATHEORY		61
3.1	Introduction	61
3.2	Origin and nature of symbolic interactionism	61
3.3	Symbolic interaction	64
3.4	Meaning	66
3.5	The nature of selfhood	68
3.6	Critique of symbolic interactionism	69
3.6.1	Empirical value	69
3.6.2	Scope.....	70
3.6.3	Determinism.....	70
3.6.4	View of meaning	71
3.7	Conclusion	71
CHAPTER 4: THEORIES OF LEADERSHIP		73
4.1	Introduction	73
4.2	The leadership trait approach.....	73
4.2.1	Description.....	73
4.2.2	Critique	74
4.2.3	Relevance to this study	75
4.3	Behavioural or leadership style approaches	75
4.3.1	Description.....	75
4.3.2	Critique	76
4.3.3	Relevance to this study	77
4.4	The contingency or situational approach	77
4.4.1	Description.....	77
4.4.2	Critique	79
4.4.3	Relevance to this study	79
4.5	Emergent or informal leadership	79
4.5.1	Description.....	79
4.5.2	Critique	80
4.5.3	Relevance to this study	81
4.6	Servant leadership	81
4.6.1	Description.....	81
4.6.2	Critique	83
4.6.3	Relevance to this study	83
4.7	Leader-member exchange theory.....	83

4.7.1	Description.....	83
4.7.2	Critique	84
4.7.3	Relevance to this study	84
4.8	The New Leadership movement.....	84
4.8.1	Description.....	84
4.8.2	Critique	93
4.8.3	Relevance to this study	94
4.9	Authentic leadership.....	95
4.9.1	Description.....	95
4.9.2	Critique	96
4.9.3	Relevance to this study	96
4.10	Relational leadership theory.....	97
4.10.1	Description.....	97
4.10.2	Critique	99
4.10.3	Relevance to this study	100
4.11	Shared leadership.....	101
4.11.1	Description.....	101
4.11.2	Critique	103
4.11.3	Relevance to this study	104
4.12	Spiritual leadership.....	104
4.12.1	Description.....	104
4.12.2	Critique	105
4.12.3	Relevance to this study	106
4.13	Summary of the leadership perspectives.....	107
4.14	Conclusion	109

CHAPTER 5: THEORIES OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION FROM A LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVE.....111

5.1	Introduction	111
5.2	Social constructionism.....	111
5.2.1	Description.....	111
5.2.2	Critique	113
5.2.3	Relevance to this study	114
5.3	Watzlawick, Beavin Bavelas and Jackson's axioms of relational communication.....	114
5.3.1	Description.....	114
5.3.2	Critique	119
5.3.3	Relevance to this study	120
5.4	Attribution theory.....	121
5.4.1	Description.....	121

5.4.2	Critique	125
5.4.3	Relevance to this study	126
5.5	Rokeach's comprehensive theory of change (beliefs, attitudes and values)	126
5.5.1	Description	126
5.5.2	Critique	129
5.5.3	Relevance to this study	130
5.6	Summary of the interpersonal communication perspectives on leadership	130
5.7	Conclusion	132

CHAPTER 6: EXISTING ILR-RELATED MODELS AND A PRELIMINARY THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ILR 134

6.1	Introduction	134
6.2	Barrett's leadership communication framework	134
6.2.1	Core communication	135
6.2.2	Managerial communication	136
6.2.3	Corporate communication	136
6.2.4	Relevance to this study	137
6.3	Mitchell's conceptual framework of leadership communication skills	137
6.3.1	Relevance to this study	140
6.4	Hackman and Johnson's communication perspective on leadership	141
6.4.1	Willingness to communicate	141
6.4.2	Storytelling as leadership	142
6.4.3	Emotional communication competencies	142
6.4.4	Leaders as impression managers	143
6.4.5	Relevance to this study	144
6.5	Johansson, Miller and Hamrin's 'communicative leadership'	144
6.5.1	Four central leader communication behaviours	145
6.5.2	Eight foundational principles of communicative leadership	146
6.5.3	A theoretically grounded definition of a communicative leader	148
6.5.4	Communicative leadership and hierarchical levels	148
6.5.5	Relevance to this study	149
6.6	A preliminary conceptual framework for iLR	150
6.6.1	Preliminary definition of ILR	150
6.6.2	Preliminary model of ILR	150
6.7	Conclusion	152

CHAPTER 7: METHODOLOGY 154

7.1	Introduction	154
7.2	Unit of analysis	154

7.3	Population parameters	155
7.3.1	Population 1: Individuals with expert ILR-related knowledge	155
7.3.2	Population 2: Individual interpersonal leader/followers	155
7.4	Sampling: Non-probability sampling	156
7.4.1	Purposive sampling	157
7.4.2	Convenience sampling	157
7.4.3	Sampling criteria	158
7.4.4	Recruitment	161
7.5	Data collection method: Triangulation	163
7.5.1	Semi-structured in-depth interviews	163
7.5.2	Questionnaires.....	169
7.6	Data analysis and interpretation method: Qualitative content analysis	176
7.6.1	Thematic analysis	177
7.6.2	Coding	178
7.6.3	Data saturation	186
7.7	Trustworthiness.....	187
7.7.1	Credibility	188
7.7.2	Transferability	191
7.7.3	Dependability	192
7.7.4	Confirmability	192
7.8	Ethical considerations	193
7.8.1	Ethical clearance	193
7.8.2	Informed consent	194
7.8.3	Confidentiality	194
7.8.4	Avoiding harm.....	195
7.8.5	Avoiding plagiarism	196
7.9	Conclusion	196

CHAPTER 8: RESULTS IN TERMS OF ENVIRONMENTAL INPUTS INTO THE LEADER-FOLLOWER DYAD.....199

8.1	Introduction	199
8.2	A shift towards collaboration.....	200
8.2.1	A shift from hierarchy to transparency (new subtheme).....	200
8.2.2	A shift from control to empowerment (new subtheme).....	203
8.2.3	A shift from autocratic leadership to collaborative leadership (new subtheme) .	204
8.2.4	A shift from an individual focus to a team approach (new subtheme).....	206
8.3	Advances in communication technology.....	206
8.3.1	Virtual work	207
8.3.2	The impact of social media on the workplace (new subtheme)	208
8.4	Cultural diversity in the workplace	209

8.5	Leadership concept.....	210
8.5.1	Shared leadership.....	210
8.5.2	Spiritual leadership (workplace spirituality)	211
8.5.3	Autocratic leadership as least conducive to ILR (new subtheme).....	218
8.6	Synopsis of Theme 1.....	224
8.7	Conclusion	225

CHAPTER 9: RESULTS IN TERMS OF SYMBOLIC INTERACTION IN THE LEADER-FOLLOWER DYAD.....227

9.1	Introduction	227
9.2	The LFD as the locus of interpersonal leadership.....	227
9.3	Relational communication in the LFD	228
9.3.1	Destructive ILC behaviours (new subtheme)	229
9.3.2	Constructive ILC behaviours (new subtheme)	235
9.3.3	Destructive ILC compared to constructive ILC	245
9.4	(Re)definition of self through ILR.....	246
9.4.1	Personal growth or fresh perspectives (new subtheme)	247
9.4.2	Enhanced self-confidence or feeling appreciated (new subtheme)	247
9.4.3	Insight into personal strengths and weaknesses (new subtheme).....	248
9.4.4	No influence (new subtheme).....	249
9.5	Attribution in the leader-follower dyad	249
9.6	Role-taking in the leader-follower dyad	252
9.7	Maintaining system balance in the LFD.....	253
9.7.1	Non-threatening, face-to-face discussion.....	255
9.7.2	Being submissive.....	256
9.7.3	Avoidance or withdrawal.....	256
9.7.4	Cooperatively investing in maintaining balance (systems theory).....	257
9.8	Meaning and purpose through ILR	257
9.8.1	Sense of making a difference (new subtheme).....	258
9.8.2	Professional growth (new subtheme).....	259
9.8.3	Personal growth (new subtheme).....	260
9.8.4	Feeling appreciated or respected.....	260
9.9	Emergent properties of the LFD	261
9.9.1	Trust (new subtheme).....	262
9.9.2	Roles (shared leadership)	263
9.9.3	Mutual influence (systems theory and organic leadership theory)	263
9.10	System outputs into the organisation (systems theory).....	264
9.10.1	Organisational climate and culture	265
9.10.2	Employee morale and engagement.....	266

9.10.3	Job performance.....	266
9.10.4	Staff retention	268
9.10.5	Synopsis of Theme 2 (symbolic interaction in the LFD).....	269
9.11	Conclusion	270

CHAPTER 10: RESULTS IN TERMS OF LEADER/FOLLOWER ATTRIBUTES..273

10.1	Introduction	273
10.2	Values.....	273
10.2.1	Honesty (new subtheme).....	274
10.2.2	Love, care or support (new subtheme).....	275
10.2.3	Respect (new subtheme).....	276
10.2.4	Engagement, relationships or communication (new subtheme)	276
10.2.5	Trust (new subtheme).....	277
10.2.6	Professional excellence (new subtheme).....	278
10.2.7	Shared values and beliefs (new subtheme)	278
10.3	Competencies	279
10.3.1	Listening skills.....	280
10.3.2	Emotional communication competencies	281
10.3.3	Engagement skills (new subtheme).....	284
10.3.4	Conflict management.....	286
10.3.5	Multicultural competence	287
10.3.6	Synopsis of Theme 3.....	288
10.4	Synopsis of key constructs across major themes	290
10.5	Conclusion	292

CHAPTER 11: PRESENTATION OF A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ILR 293

11.1	Introduction	293
11.2	A theoretically based definition of constructive interpersonal leadership relations	294
11.3	A general model of ILR.....	295
11.4	An organisational environment that supports ILR	296
11.4.1	A collaborative leadership concept.....	298
11.4.2	Workplace spirituality.....	302
11.4.3	Cultural inclusivity	303
11.4.4	Adapting to advancing communication technology	304
11.5	Constructive interpersonal leadership relations	304
11.5.1	Active listening.....	307
11.5.2	Supporting followers as unique individuals	307

11.5.3	Respectful communication	308
11.5.4	Considering followers' input.....	308
11.5.5	Facilitating constructive redefinition of the other leader/follower's self	309
11.5.6	Facilitating a sense of meaning or purpose.....	310
11.5.7	Role-taking.....	310
11.5.8	Awareness of attribution	311
11.5.9	Conflict management in the LFD.....	311
11.5.10	Fostering constructive relationship properties.....	312
11.5.11	Producing constructive system outputs into the organisation	313
11.6	Leader/follower attributes that enhance ILR	314
11.6.1	Values.....	315
11.6.2	Competencies.....	318
11.7	Conclusion	321
CHAPTER 12: CONCLUDING REMARKS		322
12.1	Introduction	322
12.2	Contributions of the study.....	322
12.2.1	Major theoretical contribution: a theoretical framework for ILR.....	322
12.2.2	Other theoretical contributions.....	325
12.2.3	Contribution to knowledge in practice.....	326
12.3	Limitations of the study.....	326
12.4	Recommendations for further research	327
12.5	Conclusion	328
REFERENCES		332
APPENDICES		381
Appendix A: interview schedule (consent form and questions)		382
	Invitation to participate in research study	382
	Interview procedures.....	382
	Confidentiality.....	382
	Risk and discomfort	383
	Potential benefits of this study	383
	Consent to participate in this study	383
	Interview guidelines	384
	Interview questions	384
Appendix B: questionnaire (Consent form and questions)		387
	Invitation to participate in research study	387
	Questionnaire procedures.....	387

Confidentiality.....	387
Risk and discomfort	388
Possible benefits of this study.....	388
Consent to participate in this study	388
Questionnaire guidelines	389
Questions.....	389
Appendix C: Application for ethical clearance.....	394
Appendix D: Confirmability survey	399
Email invitation to participants	399
Survey questions.....	399

LIST OF FIGURES	PAGE
Figure 4.1 Barsh, Cranston and Craske’s Model of Centred Leadership	92
Figure 5.1 Kelley and Michela’s model of attribution research	123
Figure 6.1 Barrett’s leadership communication framework	135
Figure 6.2 Preliminary model of interpersonal leadership relations	151
Figure 7.1 Duration of participants’ LFDs (Sample 2)	174
Figure 7.2 Participants’ roles in the LFD (Sample 2)	175
Figure 7.3 Participants’ ages (Sample 2)	175
Figure 7.4 Data saturation (interviews)	186
Figure 7.5 Data saturation (questionnaires)	187
Figure 7.6 Participants’ evaluation of the research results	189
Figure 8.1 Synopsis of Theme 1 (environmental inputs)	224
Figure 9.1 Symbolic interaction in the leader-follower dyad	269
Figure 10.1 Leader/follower attributes that enhance ILR	289
Figure 10.2 Key constructs occurring across major themes	290
Figure 11.1 General model of interpersonal leadership relations	295

LIST OF TABLES	PAGE	
Table 4.1	Leadership perspectives relevant to this study	108
Table 5.1	Interpersonal communication perspectives relevant to this study	131
Table 6.1	Adaptation of Mitchell's conceptual framework of leadership communication skills	138
Table 7.1	Summary of non-probability sampling criteria for this study	159
Table 7.2	Themes and questions for interviews (macro-perspective)	167
Table 7.3	Qualifications and experience of interviewees	169
Table 7.4	Themes and questions for questionnaires (micro-perspective)	172
Table 7.5	Pre-coded categories for thematic analysis	179
Table 9.1	Destructive interpersonal leadership communication	229
Table 9.2	Constructive interpersonal leadership communication	235
Table 9.3	Constructive verbal and nonverbal communication behaviours	244
Table 9.4	Destructive ILC compared to constructive ILC	245
Table 9.5	(Re)definition of self through interpersonal leadership relations	246
Table 9.6	Examples of participants' attributions	250
Table 9.7	Participants' attributions by type of explanation	252
Table 9.8	Participants' approaches to conflict resolution	254
Table 9.9	How ILR contributes to meaning or purpose	258
Table 9.10	Common emergent properties in the leader-follower dyad	261
Table 10.1	Leader/follower values, attitudes and beliefs that enhance ILR	274
Table 10.2	Key constructs occurring across major themes	291
Table 11.1	An organisational climate that supports constructive ILR	296
Table 11.2	Constructive interpersonal leadership relations	305
Table 11.3	Leader/followers attributes that enhance ILR	314

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves as an orientation to the study, with particular reference to the context of the study, conceptualisation of key terms, and a description of the type of study.

1.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

In this section, the context of the study is discussed in terms of its purpose, background and relevance.

1.2.1 Purpose of the study

It is posited that a strong link exists between good leadership and good communication at all levels of leadership. According to Riggio and Lee (2007), decades of research on leadership demonstrate that emotional and interpersonal competencies are essential for leader effectiveness. Gentry and Sparks (2012) examined whether certain leadership competencies are considered across countries as important for success in organisations, regardless of cultural differences. Their findings demonstrate that the competencies of resourcefulness, change management and building and mending relationships are universally valued. In a study of 110 managers, Testa and Sipe (2012) identified 20 important competency categories which could broadly be resorted under 'business savvy', 'people savvy' and 'self savvy'. In their resultant model, interpersonal communication is included under 'people savvy'.

However, despite the evident relationship between leadership and communication in the literature, this connection has not been formally and widely conceptualised, particularly at the interpersonal level. The purpose of this study was therefore to develop a deep understanding of interpersonal communication as part of interpersonal leadership (henceforth termed 'interpersonal leadership communication'), specifically in knowledge-based organisational contexts. To this end, flowing from the literature review and the results of this study, a theoretical framework was developed for interpersonal leadership communication in knowledge-based contexts.

1.2.2 Background of the study

Compared to other disciplines such as the natural sciences, leadership as a scientific field of study is relatively new. Interest in leadership first developed in the mid-1800s, with an emphasis on its role in production (Pearce & Conger 2003). The systematic social scientific study of leadership began in the 1930s (House & Aditya 1997:409).

According to Bartol and Zhang (2007), leadership development traditionally focused on building intrapersonal competencies; yet effective leadership requires interpersonal capabilities associated with dyadic relationships (particularly relevant for the focus of this study) and relational capabilities associated with relationship patterns within networks. These enable leaders to accrue human, social and system capital that enhances career success. Balkundi and Kilduff (2007) identified the following three types of networks that can contribute to leader effectiveness: the ties directly surrounding leaders (the type that is most relevant to this study); the pattern of direct and indirect relationships within which leaders are embedded in their own organisation; and the inter-organisational linkages formed by leaders across organisations.

De Vries, Bakker-Pieper and Oostenveld (2010) stated that one of the core elements of leadership is a leader's interpersonal communication style. According to Tannenbaum, Weschler and Massarik (2013:28), a leader should select those communication tools from his/her repertoire that are likely to "strike the right chord" in the follower's personality make-up, resulting in changed attitudes and behaviour in line with the desired goal". The degree to which the selected behaviours are successful in moving the follower towards the specified goal is then a measure of leadership effectiveness (Tannenbaum *et al* 2013:34).

These arguments demonstrate the importance of interpersonal leadership, and also the central role of communication in interpersonal leadership. However, although leadership and communication respectively have been defined and conceptualised extensively, it seems that leadership communication has not been researched and conceptualised adequately. A preliminary overview of existing literature on the topic that included the vast number of electronic resources of Monash University, the University of South Africa (UNISA) and the Internet search engine Google Scholar revealed the following: the link between leadership and communication is well established – communication is at the very least considered an integral leadership tool (De Vries *et al* 2010; Men 2011; Whitworth 2011), while a number of authors view leadership as essentially communication (Hackman & Johnson 2013; Hoffman 2013; Tannenbaum *et al* 2013; Zulch 2014); leadership has been researched extensively, but mainly quantitatively; relative to the plethora of leadership research and also communication research,

'leadership communication' is addressed infrequently and often superficially; where leadership communication is addressed, it is mostly at a strategic organisational level or inclusive of a variety of leadership contexts, and does not focus on interpersonal leadership communication specifically. For example, Barrett (2006:389) defines her "original concept of leadership communication" as follows:

Leadership communication is the controlled, purposeful transfer of meaning by which leaders influence a single person, a group, an organisation, or a community. Leadership communication uses the full range of communication skills and resources to overcome interferences and to create and deliver messages that guide, direct, motivate, or inspire others to action. Leadership communication consists of layered, expanding skills from core strategy development and effective writing and speaking to the use of these skills in more complex organizational situations.

It is posited that a global trend towards knowledge work also has an influence on how leadership is viewed and practised, with appropriate communication taking an even more central role in this context. Dalkir (2017:2) and Serrat (2017) state that a large percentage of contemporary employees worldwide are knowledge workers, who have "different aspirations from the hierarchy-conscious personnel of the past; they are also mobile and they do leave" (Serrat 2017:285). Consequently, recruiting but especially retaining talented knowledge workers is challenging.

Thus, knowledge workers should be managed as assets and partners. As they are naturally dedicated and perform best when they are empowered to optimise their deepest skills, they need not be managed to work harder or more skilfully. Rather, managers should remove obstacles to their performance and channel their efforts into areas that will contribute towards organisational goals. Therefore, managing knowledge workers should be a process of influence. Managers should establish a culture, structure and leadership style in which they can flourish, and accommodate their preferred ways of working. In addition, managing knowledge workers requires that leaders also act as good followers and team players. One measure of a leader's effectiveness in influencing knowledge workers' performance is the quality of the relationships that s/he creates (Serrat 2017:285-287).

Given the above, a knowledge gap was deemed to exist in the subject area of interpersonal leadership communication, particularly with reference to leading knowledge workers. A need for an in-depth (qualitative) understanding of the topic was identified.

1.2.3 Relevance of the topic

It is argued that the research topic of this study is highly relevant, both in general and also specifically in expanding knowledge in the communication discipline, as discussed below.

1.2.3.1 General rationale for the study

Leadership is a salient topic in contemporary times, given the volatility of global events (Northouse 2018:xvii). In recent years, there has been a proliferation of leadership research, resulting in various leadership theories (Dinh, Lord, Gardner, Meuser, Liden & Hu 2014). Research points to the importance of leadership to society in general and to business success, organisational health and employee wellbeing in particular. Blake, Leach, Robbins, Pike and Needleman (2013) found a significant relationship between leadership and employees' intention to leave the organisation. According to Piccolo, Greenbaum, Den Hartog and Folger (2010), ethical leadership enhances subordinates' perception of the significance of their tasks, their motivation to perform their tasks, and their job performance. Alban-Metcalfe and Alimo-Metcalfe (2013) posited that a leader's behaviour can significantly affect staff attitudes and wellbeing.

Research also demonstrates that communication is central to the phenomenon of leadership. For instance, Hackman and Johnson (2013:21) state:

... leadership is first, and foremost, a communication-based activity. Leaders spend much of their time shaping messages that are then presented to a variety of follower, constituent, and stakeholder groups. It is also true that the more leadership responsibility one has, the more one's job focuses on communication.

Leaders at different hierarchical levels in the organisation facilitate top-down communication to employees and the upward communication of employees' opinions to top management (Men 2011; Whitworth 2011). However, employees prefer their direct supervisors as a source of organisational information, lending supervisors more credibility than senior executives (Whitworth 2011). It is therefore suggested that employees prefer to communicate with the manager closest to themselves in the organisational hierarchy, where communication is of a more direct, interpersonal nature.

Given this central role of communication in leadership, the study of leadership communication is important. Moreover, examining the interpersonal level of leadership within the organisation is essential for the following reasons: the fastest growing organisational unit is the team

(Pearce & Conger 2003), and team leadership requires interpersonal communication; in traditional pyramid-shaped organisational hierarchies, there is typically a larger number of formally appointed leaders at the team level (supervisors and team leaders) – engaging in mostly interpersonal leadership – than there are middle managers and senior managers who may also or primarily be involved in leadership at an organisational or even external level; interpersonal leadership is included in every other level of leadership (for example, an executive leader must concern him/herself not only with strategic leadership matters, but also with interpersonal leadership in relating with peers, colleagues at other organisational levels and even external stakeholders); and increased knowledge and application of constructive interpersonal leadership relations may contribute to a competitive advantage over rival organisations competing for similar expert employees.

1.2.3.2 *Relevance to the discipline of communication*

According to Wood (2013:2), the field of communication has a long intellectual history, dating back to ancient Greece 2,000 years ago. Since then, it has expanded to include various kinds of interaction such as organisational communication. In recent years, interest in interpersonal communication has expanded, making it one of the most vibrant areas of the discipline. Existing theory and research in the field demonstrate that interpersonal communication affects individual identity and influences personal, social and professional relationships. Its central role in people's lives causes it to intersect with other disciplines relating to human behaviour; therefore, research in interpersonal communication draws from and adds to disciplines such as psychology, business and sociology.

Hoffman (2013) views leadership communication as “the beginning of leadership” and states furthermore:

Without effective communication you cannot lead or manage effectively.

When you merge leadership and communication, you have the most potent of communication skills.

It is thus argued that ‘interpersonal leadership relations’, as interpersonal communication and relationships with a leadership function in the workplace, is an important specialisation area of the broader discipline of communication, worthy of further examination, analysis and recognition. Specifically, it is contended that the theoretical framework constituted in this study will contribute to the recognition of interpersonal leadership relations as a sub-discipline of communication.

1.3 CONCEPTUALISATION OF KEY TERMS

For the purpose of this study, a number of key terms were identified and are conceptualised below in terms of their meanings in the context of this study, based on the literature review.

1.3.1 Knowledge workers

Knowledge is generally viewed as one of the most important organisational resources in regard to performance (Ma & Yu 2010; Wang & Noe 2010). Knowledge work can be defined as work that produces and transfers knowledge, involves intellectual skills such as manipulation or abstraction, is primarily non-routine and creative, and requires a blend of theoretical and technical knowledge and formal education (Jarrahi & Thomson 2017:1077). In contrast to the more mechanistic forms of work practised in earlier eras, most knowledge work is project-rather than function-based (Jarrahi & Thomson 2017:1074).

According to Serrat (2017:285), knowledge workers are employed because of their knowledge of a subject matter, rather than their ability to perform manual labour. Much of their outputs are intangible, analytic, creative, and often digital (Jarrahi & Thomson 2017:1073). For the purpose of this study, 'knowledge workers' is defined as follows: *Knowledge workers are professional experts who produce, integrate and share specialist knowledge and ideas as their primary contribution to the organisation.*

1.3.2 Knowledge-based contexts

According to Dalkir (2017:2) and Goffee and Jones (2013), labour-intensive manufacturing organisations have largely given way to knowledge-based organisations, where sustainable advancement depends on the collective knowledge of the organisation and the efficient application thereof. According to Indriati, Tjakraatmadja, Rudito and Thoha (2016:25), in a "knowledge-based economy era", knowledge is critical for the capacity and future sustainability of many organisations.

Organisations must therefore learn how to create and share new knowledge, to connect ideas and skill (Goffee & Jones 2013). Examples of knowledge-based organisations include universities (Indriati *et al* 2016) and social services (Hjelte & Westerberg, 2014). For the purpose of this study, 'knowledge-based contexts' are thus defined as follows: *Knowledge-based contexts are organisations or organisational departments that rely primarily on the creation and sharing of knowledge by knowledge workers.*

1.3.3 Leadership

Social scientists are continuously reformulating the concept of leadership (Tannenbaum *et al* 2013:22). In the general sense, leadership is viewed as social influence (Barge 2009:593) towards a common goal (Northouse 2018:7). Traditionally, leadership was viewed as occurring when the appointed leader influences group or member behaviour by directing or coordinating activities connected with group tasks in the organisational context (Andriessen & Drenth 1998:323). More recently, the role of the follower has gained more recognition. This approach focuses on the personal needs of the follower, and views the most effective leader as the one who satisfies his/her followers' needs to the greatest extent (Tannenbaum *et al* 2013:23). Northouse (2018:7) states that leadership occurs interactively between leaders and followers.

According to (Pearce 2007:355), in the contemporary knowledge economy “we can no longer rely on simple notions of top-down, command-and-control leadership, based on the idea that workers are merely interchangeable drones”. Therefore, leadership is currently viewed as “partnership between leaders and group members, including a sharing of leadership responsibility” (DuBrin 2013:4), where the relationship between the leader and the people being led is central. For example, research suggests “having good relationships with group members is a major success factor for the three top positions in large organisations” (DuBrin 2013:5). From a communication perspective, leadership is a co-created, contextual process of communication that leads to progression on important tasks (Barge 2009:593).

Pearce and Conger (2003:xii) contend that the fastest growing organisational unit is cross-functional teams. In these teams, there may or may not be a formally appointed leader, but the leadership role tends to shift according to situational demands for specific knowledge and expertise; leadership is based more on team needs and interpersonal influence than on hierarchical position; and team members are treated as peers. This kind of “shared leadership” is not limited to junior levels in organisations, but is increasingly needed even at executive level because of the complexity of modern-day organisations and their environments. Pearce and Conger (2003:1) define shared leadership as a dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organisational goals or both. This influence process often involves peer or lateral influence and at other times involves upward or downward hierarchical influence.

Tannenbaum *et al* (2013:24) define leadership as “interpersonal influence, exercised in situation and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of specified goals”. Seen from this view, leadership is a process or function, rather than an exclusive trait or role. Tannenbaum *et al* (2013:25) state:

The subordinate often influences the superior... In any given relationship, the roles of the influencer and the influencee often shift from one person to the other... Thus, the leader role is one which is rarely taken continuously by one individual, even under specific conditions with the same persons... The essence of leadership is interpersonal influence, involving the influencer in an attempt to affect the behaviour of the influencee through communication.

Since the leader role from this perspective is not necessarily formal, this view is consistent with shared leadership. The presence of other people with their accompanying values, beliefs and behaviour is considered a complex of situational variables that contribute to the context. The situation includes those aspects of the objective context that influence the attitudes or behaviours (consciously or unconsciously) of the individuals in the influence relationship (Tannenbaum *et al* 2013:26). Tannenbaum *et al* (2013:27) limit their definition of leadership to interpersonal influence through communication. Therefore, although physical coercion does constitute a form of influence, the authors do not consider it leadership, since it does not employ symbolic means. On the other hand, they do include in their definition threats and other means of coercion that may be conveyed through communication.

Leadership is not synonymous with management (DuBrin 2013:5), but managers have a leadership responsibility (Zulch 2014). Although both leadership and management involve influence, leadership focuses on constructive change, while management is about planning, organising and controlling strategic activities in the organisation (DuBrin 2013; Northouse 2018:7). Leadership “deals with the interpersonal aspects of a manager’s job... with change, inspiration, motivation and influence” (DuBrin 2013:5) and depends on the leader, group members and situational factors (DuBrin 2013:10). For the purpose of this study, therefore, ‘leadership’ is defined as follows: *Leadership is interpersonal influence through (symbolic) communication towards a relational or functional goal.*

1.3.4 Leader

According to Tannenbaum *et al* (2013:24), leadership always involves attempts by a leader (influencer) to affect (influence) the behaviour of a follower (influencee) or followers in a situation. This definition does not confine the leader role to those who have been formally appointed as such, or those whose influence is based on others’ voluntary consent. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, ‘leader’ is conceptualised as follows: *A leader is an individual who is currently or usually influencing another person through communication towards a relational or functional goal.*

1.3.5 Follower

Tannenbaum *et al* (2013:24) state that a follower is the influencee whose behaviour is influenced through communication towards a relational or functional goal. Thus, for the purpose of this study, 'follower' is defined as follows: *A follower is a person who is currently or usually being influenced through communication towards a specific relational or functional goal.*

1.3.6 Leader/follower

Whereas specific areas of this study necessitate the separate use of the terms 'leader' and follower', the concept of 'leader/follower' is introduced very deliberately. While some authors (for example, Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995) have long held the belief that followers are partners with leaders in leadership, the term 'follower' has often been associated with traits such as passivity and dependence (Raffo 2013), or being "slow" and "easily influenced" (Sy 2010). However, interest in active followership is growing (Hopton 2014). Howell and Shamir (2005:97) posited that followers play an "active role in constructing the leadership relationship, empowering the leader and influencing his or her behaviour, and ultimately determining the consequences of the leadership relationship". From the previous discussion in this chapter, it is posited that knowledge workers are such active followers. Malakyan (2014:8) asserts that no one can lead everyone in every situation effectively, and states furthermore:

In other words, someone leading all of the time seems to be ineffective and unnatural. Subsequently, the positional leader may allow others to lead, which may prove to be more effective and efficient. Thus, if one is not and cannot be a leader at all times in all situations, then the concept of a 'leader' as a noun does not exist and seems rather a myth. The mythical concept of a 'leader' results in dangerous and toxic leaders obsessed by its fictitious glory and fame.

Malakyan (2014:11) suggests a leader-follower trade (LFT) approach, where leadership and followership are viewed as "somewhat separate" but interchangeable and equally valuable human functions, and defines the LFT approach as follows:

Leadership-followership processes occur in relationships and leading-following functions are exchangeable behaviours in human relationships. Thus, leaders and followers trade their functions from leader to follower and from follower to leader in order to develop their intrapersonal perspectives, foster interpersonal relationships, and maximise mutual effectiveness.

From the perspective of the LFT approach, influence between leaders and followers is always mutual (Malakyan 2014:11), a notion also reflected in the concept of shared leadership discussed earlier in this chapter. In addition, the focus of this study is the interpersonal context (as opposed to broader organisational contexts that may involve a large number of people in more indirect communication). Thus, 'leader/follower' refers to contexts where an individual is communicating interpersonally with the person directly above or below him/her in the organisational hierarchy. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, 'leader/follower' is conceptualised as follows: *A leader/follower is an individual who, as the situation requires, may alternatively lead or follow another individual in an interpersonal process of mutual influence towards a relational or functional goal.*

1.3.7 Interpersonal leadership communication (ILC)

As discussed above, no theoretically based definition of interpersonal leadership communication appears to exist. Thus, for the purpose of discussion in this document, the phenomenon was initially conceptualised by combining definitions of interpersonal communication and leadership. McDermott (2009b:547-548) posits that communication scholars concur that interpersonal communication (IPC) takes place between individuals in relationships, and summarises a list of criteria that various researchers have added to this broad definition. These criteria do not definitively qualify or disqualify a phenomenon as interpersonal communication, but should rather be used to determine the *degree* to which an interaction is interpersonal.

The criteria for IPC include the following: number of people (IPC is generally viewed as communication between two people, but three to five participants may be considered IPC if all of them take part in a single conversation); channel or media (IPC requires some form of immediacy, best provided by a face-to-face context, although other media such as email also present opportunities for communication in the moment); feedback (the ability to respond to the other participant increases the quality of communication and renders it more interpersonal); privacy (communication that takes place in the presence of many other people is less intimate; therefore, more private communication is more interpersonal); goal (when participants communicate not only about a shared task, but are more interested in their own and other participants' identities and the relationship itself, communication is more interpersonal); relationship type and stage (if the participants in an interaction are interchangeable, communication is less interpersonal; conversely, if they are in an established relationship, communication between them is more interpersonal); knowledge (the better the communicators know each other and can predict each other's responses, the more

interpersonal the communication is); and mutual influence (the more mutual influence exists, the more interpersonal the communication is).

These criteria provide valuable guidelines for what may be considered interpersonal leadership communication within the organisation. Of particular relevance are the following: the small number of communication participants, which is a focus of this study; the face-to-face or mediated but relatively immediate medium, which is posited as a requirement for interpersonal leadership communication; feedback, which is in line with various contemporary leadership models (discussed in Chapter 4); and mutual influence, which flows from feedback and is also in line with many contemporary leadership models. It could be argued that the criteria of privacy, a goal beyond the shared task, the permanence and maturity of the relationship and participants' knowledge of each other are likely to be limited in a workplace setting. However, they were not specifically excluded from this research. All of these criteria were indeed discovered to be of some importance in this study.

West and Turner (2011:10) define interpersonal communication as “the process of message transaction between people to create and sustain shared meaning”. In this definition, ‘process’ denotes an on-going, vibrant, ever-changing activity; ‘message transaction’ refers to the simultaneous exchange of verbal and nonverbal messages; and ‘shared meaning’ denotes attributing similar personal meanings to a message.

Louw and Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014:4) define interpersonal communication as “a functional, dynamic, and transactional process whereby two or more individuals deliberately try to create and share meaning by sending and interpreting verbal and nonverbal messages”. Thus, interpersonal communication is functional, serving particular functions depending on the context (for instance, an influence function); it is dynamic, since it is in a perpetual state of flux; it is transactional in the sense that it is a two-way, mutual phenomenon; it is a process that is circular and ongoing; and its object is to share meaning, which requires communication participants to deliberately strive to understand each other’s messages (Louw & Du Plooy-Cilliers 2014:4, 6-7).

From the above discussion and for the purpose of this study, interpersonal leadership communication is defined and abbreviated as follows: *Interpersonal leadership communication (ILC) is symbolic interaction between two to five leader/followers to share meaning and mutually influence each other at a relational level and a functional level.*

1.3.8 Leader-follower dyad (LFD)

Watzlawick, Beavin Bavelas and Jackson (1967/2011:111) described ongoing dyadic relationships (long-lasting relationships that are important to both partners, including some professional relationships) as open systems. Thus, the leader-follower dyad is an open system, to the extent that it is ongoing, and is important to both partners – at least professionally, but possibly also socially. A closed system does not interact with its environment, and consequently moves towards internal chaos and ultimately disintegration.

As discussed above, Malakyan (2014) proposed a shift in leadership paradigm from the traditional emphasis on the leader to a leader-follower dynamic, as illustrated in his leader-follower trade (LFT) approach. In LFT, leadership effectiveness thus relates to the leader-follower dyad. In the dyad, the leader and the follower seek effectiveness together, and effectiveness equally depends on both of them. Thus their mutual attitudes would likely regulate effective leadership and followership in the dyad. Furthermore, such effectiveness in the leader-follower dyad is the condition for maximum effectiveness in the department or organisation (Malakyan 2014:11).

Whereas interpersonal leadership communication may take place between a maximum of five people, the focus of this study is the leader-follower dyad between two employees who are directly linked in the organisational hierarchy. Examples are the relationships between a team leader or supervisor and a team member, between a manager and a departmental member, and also between the chief executive officer and the senior leader reporting directly to him/her.

Based on the above, 'leader-follower dyad' is thus conceptualised and abbreviated as follows: *The leader-follower dyad (LFD) is a relatively enduring professional relationship between two leader/followers who work closely together and regularly engage in interpersonal leadership communication.*

1.3.9 Interpersonal leadership relations (ILR)

Because they are so strongly interrelated, the terms 'leader-follower dyad (LFD)' and 'interpersonal leadership communication (ILC)' are often used in conjunction in this study. In such cases, for the sake of brevity, the term 'interpersonal leadership relations' is used. ILR (as opposed to ILC) was also chosen as the focus for this research, for the following reasons: to reflect the tenet of relational leadership (part of the theoretical framework of this study, as discussed in Chapter 4) that the relationship (not the leader or follower) is the locus of leadership; to portray leadership communication between leader/followers as a process rather

than an isolated event; and to denote that, in this study, ILC is thus explored in the context of existing leader-follower dyads, as opposed to fleeting interactions.

Interpersonal leadership relations is thus defined and abbreviated as follows for the purpose of this study: *Interpersonal leadership relations (ILR) refers to both the dyadic relationship and the associated interpersonal leadership communication between two leader/followers.*

1.4 TYPE OF STUDY

In this section, the type of study is described in terms of its research paradigm (interpretivist), research approach (qualitative), type of research (basic, exploratory and descriptive), and the research problem, questions and goals.

1.4.1 Research paradigm: interpretivist

A research tradition is a collection of assumptions that guide researchers' theoretical viewpoints and methods in approaching the phenomenon under study (Du Plooy 2009). This study adheres to the interpretivist research tradition. The interpretivist view of the world posits that there are multiple realities and that knowledge (understanding of reality) is contextual and ever-changing. Interpretivists view the individual and society as mutually interdependent, where one cannot be understood without studying the other; however, they can be separated for the purpose of analysis (Kroeze 2012; Scotland 2012).

Understanding of the meanings generated by human interaction is essential to an understanding of the social world. Therefore, interpretivist researchers explore the meanings that people glean from phenomena in their everyday contexts (O'Donoghue 2007:16-17). The objective of interpretivist research is richness and depth of data; therefore it is advisable to limit the scope of such a study (Collis & Hussey 2014:154).

Within the interpretivist paradigm, this study specifically follows a phenomenological approach. According to Bazeley (2013), phenomenology aims to identify the 'essence' of a phenomenon through an individual's experience thereof. Originally, phenomenology sought objective description through first-person experience. However, contemporary interpretive phenomenologists have developed a more subjective (psychological) approach in which they seek to understand a particular 'lived experience', assuming that it has already been the subject of reflection and feeling by the experiencing person. Thus, the researcher attempts to make sense of the participant making sense of his/her own experience.

A particular 'lived experience' consists of many confluent elements. While the actor (experiencing person) is in the stream of action, these elements are undifferentiated. Only when the actor steps out of action and reflectively reconstructs the constitutive elements of that lived experience, those elements become 'phenomena' (Seidman 2013). In this study, participants' reconstructions of their lived experiences of ILR in knowledge-based contexts were of particular interest.

The ontological and epistemological positions of the interpretivist tradition are discussed below, with reference to this study.

1.4.1.1 Ontological position

Ontology is "the philosophical study of being, existence and reality", addressing whether or not entities can be said to exist (Cassell 2015:10). Interpretivists do not deny the existence of an external reality (Willis 2007), but view reality as subjective (Kelliher 2005:123), shaped through social constructions such as language. Because meaning is generated internally (cognitively) and not externally to a person, different people will construct varying meanings from the same phenomenon. As a result, each person's perception of reality is unique to that individual (Krauss 2005:762).

While objectivist social researchers view social phenomena as objective entities that have a reality external to social actors, constructivists consider social entities as social constructions created through the actions and perceptions of social actors (Bryman & Bell 2015:32). Therefore, constructivists acknowledge multiple realities. Some constructivists accept that there is a pre-existing real world that provides a basis for people's perceptions, although it has no meaning until conscious minds engage with it. Others argue that reality is purely created or constructed by minds, through discourse. For all constructivists, knowledge is constructed rather than received or discovered, and people's concepts, beliefs and theories about the objects and experiences with which they engage will be continually modified in the light of new experience (Bazeley 2013). Constructivists, therefore, study how or why people construct meanings in particular contexts (Charmaz 2014).

This study was executed from a constructivist viewpoint, to examine how interpersonal leader/followers construct meanings in a knowledge-based organisational contexts. The assumption underlying the study is that such an organisational context presents a pre-existing reality that forms the basis of the research participants' perceptions, but that participants create meanings from that reality by engaging cognitively with it.

1.4.1.2 *Epistemological position*

Epistemology is the study of how knowledge is created and validated. The interpretivist research tradition emphasises social interaction as the foundation for knowledge. Researchers use their skills as human beings to gain insight into how other people make sense of their world. Knowledge is thus constructed through negotiation and is context-specific (O'Donoghue 2007:9-10).

Researchers who take an objectivist approach to epistemology seek to explain and predict by searching for regularities and causal relationships, avoiding contaminating the research setting. Researchers who take a subjectivist or constructionist approach assume that they do not have a privileged vantage point, but that all people make sense of the world in different ways and researchers can only report their own interpretations (Cassell 2015). In this tradition, researchers cultivate an in-depth understanding of how people interpret events and create meanings in a particular social setting, by viewing the setting from their perspective and describing their subjective communication (Neuman 2006:102; Wimmer & Dominick 2011). They must observe, reflect on and interpret participants' behaviour within the context, while simultaneously reflecting on personal interpretations and experiences (Neuman 2006:102). The constructivist position is based on the argument that, as a researcher obtains data from the phenomenon, the inquiry changes both the researcher and the subject. Therefore, knowledge depends on the context (Krauss 2005). Thus, different researchers will interpret the social reality they are studying in various ways.

In this study, a constructionist epistemological stance was taken, where participants' subjective communication about their experiences of interpersonal leadership communication in knowledge-based organisational contexts was examined. It was assumed that the researcher would engage subjectively with the research problem, and that other researchers would not necessarily study the phenomenon or interpret the results in an identical manner.

1.4.2 Research design (qualitative)

The research design for this study is qualitative. Qualitative research is an umbrella term for a variety of research approaches that focus on the qualities of phenomena more than their quantity (Bazeley 2013). Qualitative data are normally transient, understood only within context, and are associated with an interpretivist methodology, in contrast to quantitative data, which are normally precise, can be captured at various points in time and in different contexts, and are associated with a positivist methodology (Collis & Hussey 2014:130).

A qualitative approach is suitable for examining the distinguishing characteristics of individuals, groups, organisations, settings, events or messages (Du Plooy 2009:88). Qualitative researchers focus on observing, describing, interpreting and analysing the ways in which people experience, act on, or think about themselves and the world around them (Bazeley 2013; Denzin & Lincoln 2005:3). They aim to explore areas where limited knowledge is available and/or to describe themes, attitudes, behaviours and relationships pertaining to the units under study. The method of reasoning is frequently inductive, starting with observation of the subject based on certain assumptions, and ending with a description of what was observed, or a theory that explains what was observed (Du Plooy 2009:88).

Qualitative research provides for in-depth examination of issues, contexts and problems, using detailed and rich data. It is not limited to rigidly defined variables and provides more freedom for a study to unfold naturally. This flexibility is useful in examining complex questions not feasible through quantitative approaches and in exploring new areas of research and developing new theories (Ary, Cheser Jacobs, Sorensen Irvine and Walker 2018:379). Qualitative research can be seen as more pragmatic than quantitative designs, allowing for the exploration of new, unexpected data and, consequently, richer analysis (Locke, Silverman & Spirduso 2010). It uses smaller samples from more specific populations, rendering the results context-specific (Berg 2001; Rossman & Rallis 2003; Weinberg 2002).

Therefore, because interpersonal leadership communication is a largely unexplored topic in communication research, a qualitative approach was deemed suitable for this study, to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon.

1.4.3 Type of research (basic, exploratory and descriptive)

The type of research employed in this study is basic, exploratory and descriptive, as discussed below.

1.4.3.1 Basic research

The study is a form of basic research, which expands essential knowledge of the social world (Neuman 2006). Basic research is not intended to solve immediate problems, but may provide the foundation for future applied research studies (Blanche, Durheim & Painter 2006), or may be used to support or contradict theories about social events and relationships. Most major advances in knowledge can be attributed to basic research (Neuman 2006:26).

This study constitutes basic research, because it expands current knowledge of ILR in knowledge-based contexts through a theoretical framework of the phenomenon, but does not directly solve an immediate problem.

1.4.3.2 *Exploratory and descriptive research*

Exploratory research questions are typically developed when, for instance, not much is known about a particular phenomenon, or there is not enough theory available to provide a theoretical framework. Exploratory research often relies on qualitative approaches to data gathering, such as interviews. It is usually flexible in nature, and the results are typically not generalisable to the population (Sekaran & Bougie 2016:43).

This study is exploratory, because it explored ILR in knowledge-based contexts, a concept that is largely unknown in the communication discipline. While there are ample theories on related phenomena such as leadership and interpersonal communication, theories on leadership communication are very limited, and theories on interpersonal leadership relations could not be found.

One of the purposes of descriptive research is describing the characteristics of events or relationships between phenomena as precisely as possible (Du Plooy 2009:51). This is done to enhance understanding of a social phenomenon – frequently, an area where important variables and concepts have already been identified (Sim & Wright 2000:19). While key concepts have been amply identified and described for related phenomena such as leadership and interpersonal communication, ILR has not been conceptualised. Thus, this study is descriptive, in providing an in-depth description of participants' lived experience as interpersonal leader/followers, and in providing a theoretical framework for ILR in knowledge-based contexts.

1.4.4 Research problem

The research problem is the specific problem or issue that is the focus of the research (Collis & Hussey 2014:98). According to Ary *et al* (2018), the research problem should hold deep interest for the researcher, and formulating the problem begins with identifying a general topic or issue about which the researcher wants to know more.

As discussed in this chapter, leadership in organisational contexts has been researched extensively, and the integral importance of communication to leadership has been argued. It has also been contended that interpersonal leadership is an important and pervasive aspect

of leadership in knowledge-based contexts; therefore, it can be assumed that an in-depth understanding of ILR is essential. However, the literature review for this study revealed very little research on ILR. Thus, there is currently scant theoretical understanding of the topic.

Furthermore, leadership is generally studied within business or management schools, while it is recognised that communication is an integral or even constitutive element of leadership. It can therefore be argued that leadership should also be studied from a social science or humanities perspective, and interpersonal leadership relations should gain recognition as a sub-discipline of communication.

The central research problem for this study can hence be summarised as follows:

The phenomenon of interpersonal leadership relations (ILR) has not been adequately researched, understood and conceptualised as a prevalent aspect of leadership in knowledge-based contexts, and has not been recognised as a sub-discipline of communication.

The research sub-problems may be formulated as follows:

- 1) *There seems to be no theoretically based definition for ILR.*
- 2) *Limited knowledge exists of the kind of organisational environment that enhances ILR.*
- 3) *Interpersonal leader/followers' typical experiences of ILR in knowledge-based contexts have not been adequately described.*
- 4) *Knowledge of how individual leader/follower attributes can enhance ILR in knowledge-based contexts is limited and inadequately organised.*

1.4.5 Research questions

Creswell and Poth (2018:137) recommend that researchers encapsulate their study in “a single, overarching central question and several sub-questions”. According to Collis and Hussey (2014:106), the criteria for a good research question are less clear in interpretivist studies than in positivist studies, due to the importance of the interaction between the researcher and the research subject in interpretivist research. It is usual to begin the research questions with ‘what’ or ‘how’ and to avoid terms associated with positivism, such as ‘cause’, ‘relationship’ or ‘association’. In this study, the research problem was addressed by seeking an answer to the following central research question:

How can the theoretical constructs for interpersonal leadership relations (ILR) in knowledge-based organisational contexts be organised into a theoretical framework?

To this end, the following research sub-questions were formulated in support of the central research question:

- 1) *How can ILR be defined?*
- 2) *What aspects of an organisational environment enhance ILR?*
- 3) *How do interpersonal leader/followers experience instances of ILR that typically occur in their knowledge-based organisational contexts?*
- 4) *What individual leader/follower attributes enhance ILR?*

1.4.6 Research objectives

A research objective is “a statement of research direction and focus, which will be used as the main guide in arranging the entire discussion of the research results” (Ramdhani & Ramdhani 2014:4). To guide the focus and direction of this study, the primary research objective was formulated as follows, in line with the central research problem and research question:

To develop a theoretical framework for ‘interpersonal leadership relations’ (ILR) in knowledge-based organisational contexts.

This goal was further refined into the following secondary research objectives:

- 1) *To formulate a theoretically based definition of interpersonal leadership relations in knowledge-based organisational contexts*
- 2) *To identify and describe the aspects of an organisational environment that enhance ILR*
- 3) *To describe interpersonal leader/followers’ experiences of ILR in knowledge-based contexts*
- 4) *To identify and describe the individual leader/follower attributes that enhance ILR.*

1.5 CONCLUSION AND EXPOSITION OF CHAPTERS

In this chapter, the *context of the study* was discussed in terms of its purpose, background and relevance. The purpose of the study was to develop a theoretical framework for ILR in knowledge-based contexts. In terms of the background of the study, it was argued that, while there is a proliferation of research on leadership, very little research on ILR exists. It was also posited that an increasing number of people worldwide are working in knowledge-based contexts. Thus, the importance of exploring ILR in such contexts is growing. Regarding the relevance of the study, it was argued that communication is a central aspect of leadership, which is considered a very important topic in the organisational context. In addition, it was posited that ILR is of sufficient importance to workplace dynamics that it could be recognised as a sub-discipline of communication.

The following *key terms* were also conceptualised in this chapter: knowledge workers, knowledge-based contexts, leadership, leader, follower, leader/follower, interpersonal leadership communication (ILC), leader-follower dyad (LFD) and interpersonal leadership relations (ILR).

The *type of study* was described in terms of the research paradigm (interpretive and phenomenological), the research design (qualitative), the type of research (basic, exploratory and descriptive), the research problems, the research questions, and the research objectives.

In the subsequent chapters, the following aspects of the study are covered:

Chapter 2 explores the systems theory as a metatheory of this study.

Chapter 3 details symbolic interactionism as a metatheory of this study.

Chapter 4 constitutes an overview of existing leadership theories, with specific reference to models that contributed to the theoretical foundation of this study.

Chapter 5 comprises theories of interpersonal communication that were deemed relevant to the theoretical foundation of this study.

Chapter 6 outlines existing theories and models relating to interpersonal leadership communication, and presents a preliminary model of ILR based on the literature review, from which the study was executed.

Chapter 7 details the research methodology in terms of the unit of analysis, population parameters, data collection and analysis methods, trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

Chapter 8 describes the results of this study in terms of Theme 1 – environmental inputs into the LFD.

Chapter 9 details the results of the study in terms of Theme 2 – symbolic interaction in the LFD.

Chapter 10 provides a description of the results of the study in terms of Theme 3 – leader/follower traits that enhance ILR.

Chapter 11 proposes a theoretical framework for ILR, based on the findings.

Chapter 12, in conclusion, covers the contributions and limitations of this study, with recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2: THE SYSTEMS THEORY AS A METATHEORY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

When embarking on a new study, a researcher should use a literature review to examine the existing scholarship in the foundational disciplines of the study (Babbie & Mouton 2001:87). In Chapters 2-6, the theoretical foundation for this study based on current literature is presented in terms of the following: the systems theory and symbolic interactionism as metatheories of this study; theories of leadership; theories of interpersonal communication; and existing leadership communication models that are relevant to this study.

The systems theory was selected as a metatheory because it was deemed a relevant macro-lens through which to examine interpersonal leadership relations (ILR). It facilitates an emphasis on the interdependent interaction between the leader/followers in a leader-follower dyad (LFD), simultaneously highlighting the influence of the organisational and broader business environment within which the dyad exists. Finally, it also allows for some exploration of individual leader/follower attributes that may influence ILR. In this chapter, the systems theory is discussed with reference to the following: its general origin and nature; specific qualities of systems; and a critique of the theory. Its relevance to this study is discussed throughout this chapter, and summarised in the conclusion.

2.2 GENERAL ORIGIN AND NATURE OF THE SYSTEMS THEORY

The systems theory first emerged in the 1940s as cybernetics and information theory (Ashby 1956; Wiener 1950). Von Bertalanffy (1950; 1955; 1962), originally a biologist, used the systems theory to create a set of general principles that could be applied to any discipline, calling his approach the general systems theory, and describing a system as dynamic interaction between many variables (Von Bertalanffy 1967:67). Von Bertalanffy (1968) defined an 'open system' as one that exchanges input and output with its environment.

The Palo Alto Group, a group of therapists led by Paul Watzlawick, established a movement of relationship research that focused not on individual characteristics, but on interaction patterns to examine how a relationship is defined. Watzlawick *et al* (1967/2011) posited that human interaction could be viewed as a system that can be described using the general systems theory. They regarded an interactional system as two or more communicators in the process of defining the nature of their relationship.

Watzlawick *et al* (1967/2011:111) described dyadic relationships (long-lasting relationships that are important to both partners, including some professional relationships) as open systems. By contrast, a closed system does not interact with its environment, and consequently moves towards internal chaos and ultimately disintegration (Angelopulo 2002; Walby 2007). It is posited that the LFD is an open system, to the extent that it is ongoing, and is important to both partners – at least professionally, but possibly also socially. Ackoff (1969:332) defined a system as any physical or conceptual entity that comprises interdependent parts. Similarly, Von Bertalanffy (1973:38) emphasised the “interrelation” of system elements.

An increase in systems research in the communication field (Almaney 1974; Grunig 1975; Katz & Kahn 1978; Monge 1982) occurred in the 1970s and 1980s. Martin and O'Connor (1989) defined a social system as a system that consists of at least two people, who – through interaction – create emergent properties that become part of the system, influencing its future dynamics. These emergent properties are social products such as the following: roles, norms and values; goals; shared experiences, vocabulary, viewpoints and memories; and power patterns. They affect system members' perceptions, behaviours, and interaction patterns.

Examining system dynamics, then, is the key to understanding the system. In open social systems, interactions are continuously taking place between system parts, between the system and its parts, between systems, and between systems and their environments (Martin & O'Connor 1989). Similarly, Schneider and Bauer (2007) describe social systems as multi-layered phenomena, in which interaction between actors in subsystems result in phenomena emerging at higher levels. In interacting, leader/followers should understand and respond to their particular context and employ the capabilities that it requires (Turnbull James & Ladkin 2008).

In this study, the focus is on ILR. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the LFD is viewed as the system under examination. It is viewed as a social system within which the members of the dyad (leader/followers) interact, creating emergent properties that affect their future interactions and thus the system (LFD) itself. The interaction between leader/followers and the resulting emergent properties will be explored in this study.

All systems involve the following: elements (or objects), attributes, internal relationships; and the environment. Elements are the parts or variables of a system and may be physical, abstract, or both (Littlejohn 2009). These elements constitute the smallest parts needed for meaningful examination of a particular system (Dekkers 2017:19). In the case of the LFD, the elements are the two leader/followers who constitute this small system. Attributes are the traits of the objects and of the system as a whole (Dekkers 2017:23). In the case of the LFD,

'attributes' would thus refer to the traits of each leader/follower, and also the traits of the dyadic relationship itself. The LFD may comprise any number of attributes that are the result of interaction within the relational system (Littlejohn 2009). Part of the purpose of this study is to explore and describe the attributes of the LFD and its elements (leader/followers in the dyad).

Internal relationships in a system refer to the patterns of interaction between the objects, which is a central aspect of systems (Littlejohn 2009). In the context of this study, these internal relationships between the leader/followers in the dyad comprises various aspects of ILR. The environment of a system consists of external influences that affect the system (Littlejohn 2009; Dekkers 2017:20) but are outside of the control of the system (West Churchman 1979:35-37). In the context of this study, the environment would comprise aspects of the organisation as a whole, and also the broader social, political, economic and technological contexts within which the LFD functions. Important aspects of this environment are explored in subsequent sections of this chapter.

According to Winkler (2010), interpersonal leadership is a context-bound social and cultural phenomenon that cannot be separated from the dynamics of the social system (dyad) in which it is embedded. From this perspective, good interpersonal leadership is that which enhances the viability of the dyadic system. The following characterises a viable leader/follower dyad: those affected by the dyad (e.g. other members of the department encompassing the dyad) are reasonably satisfied with what the dyad produces; the dyad performs more capably over time; and both leader/followers derive at least as much personal fulfilment and learning as frustration from being part of and working within the dyad.

Any leader/follower (with or without a formal leadership role) who contributes to critical system functions is therefore exercising leadership. No leader/follower is solely responsible for leadership; nor is there a single preferable leadership strategy or style. Excellent leadership, then, is not the sum of a leader's knowledge and skill, and cannot be understood merely by labelling these capabilities (for example, 'social intelligence'). Rather, s/he possesses a "finely honed sense of timing – knowing without deliberately thinking about it when to act and when to wait" (Hackman 2010:116). For example, leadership is not about a general competence such as communication, but the ability to perceive "what kind of conversation is needed and who should be invited to that conversation" (Turnbull James 2011:18).

Systems principles underlie the communication as constitutive of organisations (CCO) perspectives of Cooren, Khun, Cornelissen and Clark (2011) and Schoeneborn (2011), followed by Brummans, Cooren, Robichaud and Taylor (2014). According to Dekkers

(2017:269), communication as a discipline has benefitted greatly from systems approaches to research.

2.3 QUALITIES OF SYSTEMS

In the previous section, ongoing dyads such as the LFD were identified as open systems. All open systems possess the qualities of wholeness and interdependence, hierarchy, self-regulation and control, interchange with the environment, balance, change and adaptability, and equifinality (Asencio-Guillén & Navío-Marco 2018; Dekkers 2017; Littlejohn 2002; Marinopoulou 2017). These are discussed below, providing insight into the nature of the LFD.

2.3.1 Wholeness and interdependence

Wholeness, or holism, is at the core of the systems theory, implying that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Almaney 1974; Angelopulo 2002; Bausch 2001; Hammond 2003; Katz & Kahn 1978; Kurtyka 2005; Littlejohn & Foss 2008; Louw & Du Plooy-Cilliers 2014; Mulej 2007; Samoilenko 2008; Skyttner 2001; Von Bertalanffy 1968; Wadsworth 2007; Walby 2007; Watzlawick *et al* 1967/2011). Thus, wholeness in the LFD leads to synergy, defined by Northouse (2018:324) as “the group energy created from two or more people working together, which creates an outcome that is different from and better than the sum of the individual contributions”.

Wholeness means that all system elements have relationships with all other elements in the system. These relationships affect all the elements involved (Martin & O'Connor 1989) and could lead to instability in the system (Dekkers 2017:27). The principle of wholeness contradicts the notion of a linear relationship between system parts – for instance, that Leader/follower A influences Leader/follower B, but not vice versa (Watzlawick *et al* 1967/2011:107). A sequence of behaviours in interaction is interdependent and circular, where an apparent response becomes a stimulus for the next event. Viewing A's behaviour as the cause of B's, ignores the effect of B's response on A's subsequent behaviour. The parts of a system are interdependent, creating a whole that cannot be attained by an isolated part (Littlejohn 2009). Thus, leader/followers mutually influence one another (Teven 2007), mutually contributing to the dynamic, interactive nature of the ILR through which they influence each other (Steele & Plenty 2015).

Dekkers (2017:24) and Hitchins (1992:79-80) note that an interrelationship only exists when elements have some mutual influence, changing at least one of the system properties. Thus,

to understand the properties of a particular system, one should study the structure of the system – that is, all interrelationships between elements (Dekkers 2017:24), reflected by aspects such as power hierarchy and communication (Wilson 1990:70). According to Rumsey (2013:1), leadership communication cannot be fully understood from a single perspective; therefore, the leader/followers, context, and the interactions among all these elements must be explored. For this reason, the influence of the environment was also explored in this study. In addition, two samples were drawn to examine ILR from different perspectives.

A complex system in particular may possess properties that apply only to the whole and are meaningless in terms of individual system parts (Checkland & Scholes 1990:18-19). These are called emergent properties of the system and elevate the system from a grouping of elements to a “level of self-being” (Dekkers 2017:25). Consequently, when one examines a system by distinguishing its elements in a reductionist approach, the occurrence and role of emergent properties may be missed (Angelopulo 2002; Dekkers 2017; Kurtyka 2005; Mulej 2007; Samoilenko 2008; Skyttner 2001; Wadsworth 2007; Walby 2007). Thus, if the LFD is viewed as a system, examining ILR cannot focus on the leader or the follower, but must explore the interaction between them. Also, while this study presents a theoretical framework that can be applied to ILR in general, it cannot claim to provide a ‘template’ for ILR in all LFDs.

Every system is unique due to the distinctive interactions that take place between its elements (Littlejohn 2009). Therefore, the elements in interactional systems should be viewed not as individuals, but as “persons-communicating-with-other-persons” (Watzlawick *et al* 1967/2011:102). Any system element is always constrained by its dependence on other elements (Littlejohn 2002). For instance, if Leader/follower A fails to provide essential information to Leader/follower B in the dyad, B is unable to complete his/her own task that depends on that information.

Wholeness and interdependence is the most essential quality of a system. Several of the other system qualities, such as self-regulation, are really extensions of this quality (Littlejohn 2002). The strength of the systems theory is its emphasis on interrelationships and interaction over individual attributes. Therefore, it aids exploration of communication as a process rather than an object (Littlejohn 2009). In light of this, it would be short-sighted to view interpersonal leadership communication (ILC) as unidirectional influence from the leader to the follower. Thus, the emphasis in this study is on ILR as a process, instead of on individual behaviour or overemphasising the leader’s role at the expense of the follower’s role.

From a systems perspective, social systems can only be understood by focusing on the whole, as the parts have meaning and relevance only in relation to the whole. Therefore, the systems

theory emphasises synthesis over analysis as a means of understanding a system. Whereas analysis deconstructs wholes into elemental parts, synthesis organises interrelated parts into complex wholes. Without synthesis, it is difficult to discover or understand the emergent properties of the system. Martin and O'Connor (1989) state that a reductionist (purely analytical) approach distorts reality, distracting from appropriate levels of concern, and ignoring the role of emergent properties. By contrast, identifying the emergent properties that guide leader/followers' behaviour in the LFD can offer insight into the dyad. This may be challenging, since emergent properties are not always observable, and may even be denied by system members.

From an antireductionist (synthetic) perspective, a system should be studied in stages, in the following order: examining the environment of the system; exploring the system as an entity in itself; and studying the system parts. Attention should be paid to the dynamic relationships within and between these realms throughout the process (Martin & O'Connor 1989). In this study, the data were indeed collected and analysed in these stages.

2.3.2 Hierarchy

The systems theory describes different levels of systems: systems, subsystems and suprasystems (Angelopulo 2002; Bausch 2001; Skyttner 2001; Walby 2007). A subsystem is a smaller grouping of elements within the system that retains the same relationships between these elements (Dekkers 2017:26; Littlejohn 2002). A system is usually embedded within larger systems, called suprasystems (Littlejohn 2002; 2009). Hierarchy is this arrangement of systems within systems (Martin & O'Connor 1989).

Because individual members belong to more than one group (Watzlawick *et al* 1967/2011:104), communication flows between groups and binds them together in a larger system. In the LFD, the system elements (leader/followers in the dyad) are also its subsystems, each a complex network of values, thoughts, beliefs, emotions and behaviours. These subsystems are linked through communication (Asencio-Guillén & Navío-Marco 2018:30).

The LFD is embedded in an organisational department as a suprasystem, which in turn is embedded within an even larger system, the organisation. The encapsulating systems at the top of this hierarchy are more complex, while lower-level systems are simpler and more mechanistic in nature. Higher-level systems tend to influence lower-level systems directly, while lower-level systems do not possess an equal influence on higher-level systems (Angelopulo 2002; Bausch 2001; Samoilenko 2008; Skyttner 2001; Wadsworth 2007; Walby 2007).

Due to interdependence, all systems in a suprasystem have to cooperate towards shared goals. Because of their stronger downward influence on lower-level systems, higher-level systems in the hierarchy are responsible for defining these goals and the behaviours that will accomplish them (Angelopulo 2002; Bausch 2001; Samoilenko 2008; Skyttner 2001; Wadsworth 2007; Walby 2007).

The LFD dyad has fluid, socially constructed boundaries, and influence and is influenced by its environments (Putnam & Stohl 1990; Putnam, Stohl & Baker 2012). The dyad processes input from the environment through communication, and creates solutions that influence the larger system and feed back to influence the dyad itself. An organisation is thus a network of systems interlinked through communication pathways (Littlejohn 2009). Weick (2009:5) states:

The resulting network of multiple, overlapping, loosely connected conversations, spread across time and distance, collectively preserves patterns of understanding that are more complicated than any one node can reproduce. The distributed organisation literally does not know what it knows until macro-actors articulate it. This ongoing articulation gives voice to the collectivity and enables interconnected conversations and conversationalists to see what they have said, to understand what it might mean, and to learn who they might be.

This view emphasises the constitutive nature of communication. ILC contributes to ‘creating’ the dyad and ultimately the organisation. Systems should not be studied separately from their social and temporal contexts (Littlejohn 2009). In examining ILR, whereas the focus is interpersonal, the context of the organisation and the mutual influence between the dyad and the organisation must be considered.

2.3.3 Self-regulation and control

West Churchman (1979:29) defines a system as “a set of parts coordinated to accomplish a set of goals”. As an open social system, the LFD is purposeful and goal-directed. Its purpose is remaining viable, while goal-direction refers to its self-regulating, self-organising nature. Being neither state-determined (controlled by its initial condition) nor determined by its environments, the LFD is (within its contextual limits) in control of itself, rarely acting randomly (Martin & O’Connor 1989). It “keeps producing itself in terms of new structures and fundamental functions, but also, on account of its own complexity, allows a variety of differentiations to exist and even change or innovate” (Marinopoulou 2017:113). Although the goals of the LFD are not necessarily clear to observers, logical or consensual, the dyad will

act in predictable ways to achieve desired goals or states. The goals of the dyad can be inferred by studying the actions of the dyad (Martin & O'Connor 1989).

As a self-directed system, the LFD operates according to internal rules – a set of values towards which the dyad strives and in terms of which leader/followers make decisions in the dyad. Conflicting goals are common, even in well-integrated dyads. Because of various contextual pressures, a dyad may pursue certain goals, regardless of an individual leader/follower's values and preferences. This emphasises the importance of inferring dyadic goals from examining dyadic behaviour, rather than individual leader/followers (Martin & O'Connor 1989). In this study the focus is on ILR, while individual traits also receive attention.

Every system exercises self-regulation, channelling its outputs of the system towards desired goals. Lower-level systems have relatively simple goals, while those of higher-level systems are more complex (Angelopulo 2002; Bausch 2001; Skyttner 2001). In addition, high-level systems set parameters within which lower-level systems have to operate (Samoilenko 2008; Skyttner 2001; Wadsworth 2007; Walby 2007).

2.3.4 Interchange with the environment

For a system to remain part of its environment, it has to adapt constantly to changes in that environment. If it fails to respond to such changes, it could enter a state of entropy, which is disorder and disintegration (Angelopulo 2002; Bausch 2001; Samoilenko 2008; Skyttner 2001; Wadsworth 2007; Walby 2007), and become a closed system that will eventually die (Bridges 2009). The system is structurally oriented by its environment, and cannot exist without it (Luhmann 1995). The environment strongly influences the system (Dekkers 2017:22).

In social systems theory, 'complexity' is an important concept, referring to the number of elements in a system and its environment, and to the relationships between those elements. Complexity increases with the number of elements and their connections. Social systems are always less complex than their environments (Luhmann 1995; Schneider, Wickert & Marti 2017:185).

Social systems emphasise aspects of their environment that are deemed crucial to their survival and operational efficiency, ignoring irrelevant aspects (Schneider *et al* 2017; Schreyögg & Steinmann 1987). If the complexity differential between a social system and its environment becomes too large (where the environment is too complex relative to the system), however, the inability of the system to respond sufficiently to the environment (Duncan 1972) compromises its survival. The business environment changes constantly (Emery & Trist 1965)

– along with shifting economic, technological, physical and political conditions (Child & Rodrigues 2011). Therefore, systems (such as the LFD) within that environment need to continuously scan the environment (Aguilar 1967) for new information, developments and trends (Daft & Weick 1984; Tushman & Nadler 1978) that may affect their survival, and maintain sufficient complexity to remain viable (Miles & Snow 1978; 1984; Schneider *et al* 2017:186). A system with a greater variety of potential actions is able to respond to more environmental complexity (Ashby 1956; Galunic & Eisenhardt 1994; Luhmann 1995; Schneider *et al* 2017:187).

It is posited that, as an open system, the LFD continuously exchanges inputs and outputs with other systems and the environment. Therefore, it is able to change, sometimes fundamentally. The LFD is thus influenced by environmental inputs, and also produces outputs that affect the team, department and the organisation. Potential contemporary influences are examined below, to provide insight into the interchange of the LFD with its environment.

2.3.4.1 Inputs from the environment into the leader/follower dyad

Input is energy (Katz & Kahn 1966:23) or information that the systems imports from its environment. The LFD is potentially influenced by macro-environmental inputs (flowing from, for example, the age of collaboration, technological advances and globalisation) and micro-environmental inputs (such as generational differences in the workforce and the prevailing leadership concept in the organisation). The following potential environmental inputs into the LFD are discussed below: the age of collaboration; advancing communication technology; cultural diversity; and the organisational leadership concept.

Firstly, the *age of collaboration* has fundamentally changed the ways in which organisations operate. During the last 150 years, organisations have transformed through three phases, based on social and technological conditions: competition, cooperation and collaboration. In the age of competition, leaders believed it was important to acquire, own and control resources, particularly the organisation's knowledge. Competition – with external organisations but also internally between business units – was a central part of business (Snow 2015), based on the underlying belief that strong competition leads to the best economic results (Porter 1990).

Organisations coped with competition by optimally using their combination of capabilities and resources and avoiding threats from other organisations. Internally, some reward systems reinforced competition between units and individuals. Organisation members, therefore, had to judge carefully when to compete and when to cooperate, and when and where to share information. Members and organisations acted out of self-interest, seeking to maximise their

return on investment. Organisation members expected others to adhere to organisational rules, and trusted them only to the degree that they did so (Snow 2015).

In the age of cooperation, leaders believed that the organisation did not need to own all its resources, but could access external resources by connecting with other organisations. Cooperation took place when people helped each other to achieve mutually beneficial results that could not be attained alone. Organisational members were still motivated extrinsically (by the benefits they anticipated from cooperation) and therefore acted out of self-interest, but shared information and made decisions differently to competitive environments. Usually, trust was based on a contract and had to be reassessed regularly (Snow 2015).

According to Powell, Koput and Smith-Doerr (1996), in industries where knowledge is complex and expanding, the locus of innovation extends beyond a single organisation. To benefit from such knowledge, many organisations now engage in various forms of collaboration. Collaboration succeeds when competent, mature people value their relationship as much as their own interest, and treat each other fairly. The mutual commitment to each other's interests reduces the need for constant monitoring of trust. Collaboration makes more knowledge, resources and markets available (Snow 2015).

The age of collaboration has caused a global proliferation of communication, financial and logistics services that link collaborating parties (Stabell & Fjeldstad 1998), creating cost-effective avenues for exchange and innovation. However, this also makes global business more complex, and the need to respond rapidly to environmental changes puts pressure on traditional organisation hierarchies as the main mechanisms of control and coordination. In particular, hierarchical structures impose filters and delays on interactions between collaborating (internal or external) partners.

By contrast, in collaborative relationships, control and coordination are based on direct exchanges between organisational members. Members dynamically self-organise into collaborative relationships and make decisions locally on matters such as goals and the use of resources. This is a major departure from previous organisational forms (Snow 2015). Organisational leaders, then, must emphasise collaboration instead of competition, and must communicate in line with that value. Zulch (2014) found that successful leadership communication require the development of trust, collaboration and teamwork. According to Miles, Miles, Snow, Blomqvist and Rocha (2009), multi-actor collaboration is essential to solve complex organisational problems and continuously adapt to evolving environments. Schneider *et al* (2017:183) posit that collaboration among organisations is becoming increasingly important in complex and pluralistic environments.

Secondly, Men (2014) states that *advancing communication technology* is changing the nature of internal organisational communication, which includes ILC. Giuliano (1982) first coined the term 'virtual office', which was also used by Kern (1983) and which led to related terms (Mowshowitz 1994) such as 'virtual teams'. Virtual teams are groups of people who collaborate closely even though they may be separated by time, space and organisational barriers, facilitated by technologies such as video conferencing, collaborative software and Internet/intranet systems. A virtual team is usually a cross-functional team that is formed for a specific purpose. How members interact, defines the team as 'virtual' (Johnson, Heimann & O'Neil 2001). With advances in information and communication technologies, an increasing number of people across the world are performing virtual work as part of their weekly routine, and workforces have increasingly become dispersed (Neufeld, Wan & Fang 2010).

Developing community among people who work at a distance from each other and who may be from different cultures is an organisational challenge (Johnson *et al* 2001). Of necessity, interaction between co-workers and supervisors is limited (Zhang 2016), and employees in virtual offices fear being overlooked for being less visible, particularly in the consideration for rewards (Kurland & Bailey 1999). Virtual employees also believe that their supervisors perceive them as less committed to their tasks than regular employees (Marshall, Michaels & Mulki 2007). White, Vanc and Stafford (2010) found that employees prefer to communicate with managers face to face, rather than through mediated communication (e.g. email). Although many employees find email convenient, it is low in information richness and is not optimal for the purpose of influence.

The notion of media richness was conceptualised by Daft and Lengel (1984; 1986), who proposed that media could be categorised on a richness continuum, in terms of four characteristics: immediacy of feedback; the presence of both verbal and nonverbal cues; natural (conversational) language; and personal focus (directing messages to a specific individual). On this continuum, face-to-face communication is the richest medium, and optimal for communicating complex information. Announcements, reports and posters are lean and impersonal media, while emails and telephone calls are in the midrange (Daft & Lengel 1984).

However, in a survey of 41 leaders and 138 followers, Neufeld *et al* (2010) found that physical distance did not affect leader performance or communication effectiveness, as judged by followers. They suggest that these findings may be the result of deep relational familiarity between these leaders and followers over a period of time, with several synchronous or asynchronous interactions per week. The authors posit that learning the nuances of organisational culture and managerial norms over time may negate the impact of physical distance on perceptions of leadership.

From the above, it is clear that contemporary interpersonal leader/followers will likely be exposed to some degree of virtual teamwork and need to be able to adapt to related challenges, with particular reference to interacting and relationship building with other team members.

Thirdly, globalisation and advancing technology lead to greater *cultural diversity* in the workplace. Steers, Nardon and Sanchez-Runde (2013:13-14) define globalisation as the inescapable integration of markets, capital, nations and technologies that enables people, corporations, and countries to connect around the world faster, further, more deeply and more cheaply than ever before. Globalisation puts pressure on organisations for change and competitiveness. In this context, leaders have to understand the dynamic environment and be able to foster mutually advantageous interpersonal relationships with culturally diverse people across the world. The global economy presents new realities to businesses, and understanding different cultural values and communication practices is more essential than ever before (Aritz & Walker 2014).

Due to declining transportation and telecommunications costs, together with the proliferation of computers and Internet connections, organisations can now build global workflow platforms. These platforms can divide up almost any job and outsource its components to skilled knowledge workers around the globe, based on skill and cost. Wireless technology makes it possible to work anywhere and anytime. However, more important than access to the technology, is the leader's ability to use it to foster relationships that serve the organisation's interests (Steers *et al* 2013). Perruci (2014) posits that norms for leader and follower conduct are partially defined by culture; for example, Western cultures favour leaders as hero figures, separate from the rest, leading from the front, while some collectivist cultures view leaders as facilitators, leading quietly from behind.

It can thus be argued that, due to globalisation, advancing communication technology and the increasing prevalence of virtual work (Jarrahi & Thomson 2017; Olson & Olson 2014; Sørensen 2014; Zhang 2016), leader/followers are more interconnected across geographical and cultural borders than ever before (Burman & Shastri 2016; Ciolfi & De Carvalho 2014; Czarniawska 2014). Therefore, cultural diversity has increased in many organisations, resulting in a greater need for multicultural competence in the workplace (Chamorro-Premuzic & Sanger 2016; Groves, Feyerherm & Gu 2015; Steers *et al* 2013).

Multicultural competence is the capacity to work successfully across cultures. More than mere politeness or empathy, it is harnessing cultural diversity to achieve organisational goals. Multicultural competence includes the following elements: curiosity; sensitivity to and

appreciation of diversity; willingness to reconsider boundaries and to adapt; the ability to place current events in historical and future contexts; acceptance of complexity, contradiction and change; intuitive decision-making and moderate risk-taking; a focus on continuous improvement; a long-term perspective on plans, activities and results; and a systems perspective, seeking out interdependencies (Steers *et al* 2013).

While a leader should carefully avoid alienating the local culture (Flynn, Castellanos & Flores-Andrade 2018), s/he should keep in mind that s/he was probably appointed to liaise with the local team because of his/her personal strengths as a leader, which are also partially rooted in culture (Chamorro-Premuzic & Sanger 2016). To serve the best interest of followers and the organisation, s/he must therefore maintain a fine balance between alienating and overconforming to the local culture. S/he should gain acceptance and make the necessary connections before making changes. Effective interpersonal leaders understand the constraints of the local culture – what can be changed and what cannot – and function within those constraints (Steers *et al* 2013; Symons 2018).

For the purpose of this study, where an individual's culture is not the focus, the term 'culture' is used very broadly, in line with Hofstede's (1994:5) definition of culture as "the collective programming of the mind" that distinguishes one group of people from another. Similarly, Spencer-Oatey (2008:3) described culture as a set of "assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions" that are shared by a group of people, which influences members' behaviour and their interpretations of others' behaviour.

Hofstede (1991:10) posited that an individual belongs to several groups and categories of people simultaneously, involving several levels of culture, including a generational level, separating grandparents from parents, and parents from children. Avruch (1998:17-18) concurred with this view, stating that individuals are organised in many different and cross-cutting groups, each being a potential container for culture. Therefore, in line with these views, generational differences are considered part of cultural differences for the purpose of this study.

Lyons and Kuron (2014) critically reviewed research evidence of generational differences in a variety of work-related variables. They found modest evidence that relationship-focused leadership (characterised by interpersonal dependability, support and trust) is more preferable to successive generations, while task-focused leadership (including, for instance, personal credibility, competence and foresight) is less preferable. Younger generations seem to prefer leaders who create a working environment conducive to individual fulfilment rather than those focused on the task and organisational success. Modest evidence was also found of a trend

toward leader behaviours focusing more on individual success than on the performance of the group. These findings underscore the importance for interpersonal leaders communicating with young followers to focus on the relationship level of communication – not merely the content level. This should demonstrate interest in the individual (and not the task alone), and build relationships from which tasks may effectively be executed.

Fourthly, one of the many ways an LFD is influenced by its organisational environment is through the '*leadership concept*'. This refers to the unconscious embedded assumptions about leadership in the culture of every organisation, which shape the way organisational members perceive, enact and evaluate leadership (Turnbull James 2011). Probert and Turnbull James (2011) suggest that renewing the organisation's leadership concept is the most important part of leadership development.

However, this is not a simple task. For instance, Huffington, James and Armstrong (2004) argue that a shift to distributed leadership requires not only a mind-set change in the concept of leadership and an understanding of the tasks of leaders at various levels, but also a renewed understanding of the emotional challenges facing leaders in these settings. Changing the leadership concept heightens feelings of vulnerability, simultaneously removing the apparent, if illusory, protection afforded by more traditional hierarchical structures (Turnbull James 2011). It can thus be argued that, unless change is actively pursued, an organisation's leadership concept has a self-preserving or self-perpetuating nature. In this study, then, it was deemed important to account for leadership concept in the proposed theoretical framework.

2.3.4.2 Outputs of the leader/follower dyad into the organisation

While the leader/follower dyad receives inputs from its environment, it also produces outputs that influence the environment. Various studies link leadership communication to important aspects of the organisation's functioning and performance, such as organisational culture, communication satisfaction, job satisfaction, employee engagement and job performance. These are briefly discussed below.

Firstly, leadership at all levels of an organisation directly or indirectly influences the *organisational culture, climate and communication* (Yukl 2006). Different leadership types, promoting different styles and communication channels to communicate with followers, constitute a large part of internal communication systems (Whitworth 2011). Harold and Holtz (2015) found that employees who work under passive managers (who avoid workplace problems and related decisions) are more likely to encounter workplace incivility and behave in an uncivil manner themselves. Experiencing incivility, in turn, may cause employee

withdrawal (Sliter, Sliter & Jex 2012), which undermines organisational success (Harold & Holtz 2015). Porath and Pearson (2013) found that at least 25% of employees who behaved uncivilly did so because they saw their managers behaving uncivilly.

Secondly, leaders' communication competence is important for followers' *communication satisfaction* (Miles, Patrick & King 1996; Steele and Plenty 2015). Steele and Plenty (2015:299) define employee *communication satisfaction* as the degree to which communication fulfils the employee's task and relational needs in the workplace. Low employee communication satisfaction causes low employee commitment, higher absenteeism, increased staff turnover and reduced productivity (Hargie, Tourish & Wilson 2002).

Thirdly, follower *job satisfaction*, defined by Burman and Shastri (2016:1537) as the pleasurable emotion arising from the perception that one's job provides what one considers as important, is influenced by ILR (Abu Bhakar, Dilbeck & McCroskey 2010; Alharbi 2017; Mikkelsen, York & Arritola 2015; Porter, Wrench & Hoskinson 2007; Richmond & McCroskey 2000; Steele & Plenty 2015; Wrench & Hoskinson 2007). According to Men (2014), leaders' use of face-to-face channels leads to more follower satisfaction, and satisfied employees are more likely to commit to a long-term relationship with the organisation. Burman and Shastri (2016) found that job satisfaction plays a central role in employees' performance and productivity, and is strongly related to staff turnover in an organisation.

Fourthly, it is posited that ILR influences *employee morale and engagement* in the organisation. A leader's communication competence, quality, styles and channels can affect employees' attitudes and behaviour (Shaffer 2000). Leader/follower communication is the most important factor influencing employee morale (Teven 2007), affecting employee commitment to the organisation (Abu Bhakar *et al* 2010) and job performance (Bakker & Bal 2010). Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001) consider engagement as the opposite of burnout. According to Schaufeli, Bakker and Salanova (2006), engaged employees demonstrate the following three behaviour categories at work: vigour (energy, resilience, and willingness and persistence when faced with challenges); dedication (a sense of significance, inspiration, pride and challenge in work); and absorption (involvement in work, characterised by a loss of a sense of time and an unwillingness to stop when working).

Engaged employees are more likely to remain with the organisation, communicate positively about it, and help it perform more effectively (Mishra, Boynton & Mishra 2014:187-188; Quirke 2008:102). Pounsford (2007) found that ILC such as storytelling and coaching resulted in greater employee engagement, trust in the organisation and higher revenue due to increased customer satisfaction. According to Korte and Wynne (1996), staff turnover is the result of

weakened leader/follower relationships, due to a decline in ILC. Mishra *et al* (2014) found that face-to-face communication reduces staff turnover and fosters a sense of community among employees.

Fifthly, apart from the indirect influence of ILR on job performance, Pourbarkhordari, Zhou and Pourkarimi (2016) found that individual-focused transformational leadership and employee work engagement were significantly related to *job performance*. According to Carson, Tesluk and Marrone (2007), shared leadership predicts team performance as rated by clients, while Wong and Laschinger (2013) found a link between authentic leadership and follower job performance. Other researchers who found a relationship between ILR and job performance include Martin, Rich and Gayle (2004) and Mayfield and Mayfield (2010).

2.3.5 Balance

The environment can constitute a turbulent context (with social, political and economic change) within which the system attempts to survive and thrive. Turbulence in the environment usually demands change in the system that distracts from its mission (Bridges 2009). Whereas an open system does experience some deviation and change, it can only tolerate so much before it starts to deteriorate. Therefore, the system must be able to detect when it is going out of balance, and make adjustments to return its structure to a relatively stable state of balance or equilibrium (Angelopulo 2002; Bausch 2001; Littlejohn 2002; Samoilenko 2008; Skyttner 2001; Wadsworth 2007; Walby 2007).

A complex, living system such as the LFD will move through cycles of equilibrium and adaptation (Littlejohn 2009). An example of deviation could be that Leader/follower A goes on leave, leaving Leader/follower B to perform A's duties in addition to his/her own. While B may be able to do this in the short term, the LFD goes out of balance and has to adjust, for instance by co-opting the aid of a third person, or through A's return to work. Leaders should constantly scan the environment for changes (Bridges 2009) that will affect the LFD, such as the inputs described under Item 2.3.4.1 above.

2.3.6 Change and adaptability

All systems tend towards entropy. Because closed systems do not import new inputs, they decompose rapidly. Open systems, however, can use diverse inputs to acquire new knowledge and skills, to develop more sophisticated structures to cope with complexity, and to formulate new goals (Martin & O'Connor 1989). This helps them to adapt and resist entropy (Asencio-

Guillén & Navío-Marco 2018:28), an ability that is called negative entropy or negentropy. Open systems possess varying degrees of negentropy, based on the availability of inputs, and how they are utilised in the system. Because social systems do not naturally tend toward order and harmony, system members must proactively cooperate and invest energy, time and commitment to create and maintain these qualities (Martin & O'Connor 1989).

Social systems continuously experience conflict, disruption and stress. In active systems (in which activity frequently occurs) change is more probable; therefore, they have great potential for learning and growth. Northouse (2018:322) defines conflict as “a felt struggle between two or more interdependent individuals over perceived incompatible differences in beliefs, values, and goals, or over differences in desires for esteem, control, and connectedness”. Conflict between system members can have positive results such as mutual understanding and role clarification, and is usually not an indication of dysfunction (Martin & O'Connor 1989).

Whereas a system needs balance to survive, it also needs the ability to change, which implies going out of balance temporarily (Martin & O'Connor 1989). Burns and DeVillé (2017:13) state that a social system, through internal processes and by interacting with its environment, acquires new properties that result in its evolution. In the LFD, Leader/follower A may, for instance, move to a remote location, making regular face-to-face communication impractical. The dyad (system) will have to adjust to this change and find other means of communication that can still sustain the dyad.

In an organisation, permanence is an illusion that is not easily maintained (Weick 1976). Employees contribute to the illusion through practices such as long-term planning and behaving as if formal reporting relationships were stable. However, failing to maintain some of these fictions does not dissolve the organisation (Weick 2009). Weick (2009:7), proposes that referring to ‘organising’ – “an emergent unpredictable order” – instead of ‘organisation’ is more useful. It acknowledges that coordination and interdependence in the organisation are unstable and must constantly be re-accomplished. It also reduces people’s discontent created by “futile clinging to the impermanent as if it were permanent”. Reorganising, then, is not the result of strategic failure, but of the inevitable rhythms and patterns beyond personal agency.

2.3.7 Equifinality

Adaptable systems can achieve the same goal in various environmental conditions, processing inputs in different ways to produce its output. This is the system quality of equifinality (Littlejohn 2002). Revisiting the earlier example of one of the dyadic members being in a remote location, if the LFD (system) is adaptable, dyadic members should be able to share knowledge, make

decisions and maintain a relationship through mediated communication (for instance, videoconferencing) as they did through face-to-face communication.

Because of equifinality, analysing how individuals influence each other in interaction should focus less on the origin or the result of the relationship and rather more on the process of interaction (Watzlawick *et al* 1967/2011). The system, then, is “its own best explanation, and the study of its present organisation the appropriate methodology” (Watzlawick *et al* 1967/2011:110). Hence, in this study, ILR was explored with a primary focus on interaction, rather than the individual origins (the respective leader/followers) or the results of interaction.

2.4 CRITIQUE OF THE SYSTEMS THEORY

The systems theory has been both commended and criticised in several regards. The systems theory is viewed as an influential tradition in communication (Littlejohn 2002:52), being the first theory to describe the relationships within and between systems (Luhmann 2008; Von Bertalanffy 1972; Walby 2007). It provides useful logic and common vocabulary that can be meaningfully applied to a variety of fields and topics (Littlejohn 2002). Pouvreau (2014) states that any shortcomings in the work of Von Bertalanffy (1950; 1955; 1962; 1967; 1968) were well complemented by the work of Klir (1969; 1985; 1988), Rapoport (1963; 1970; 1974) and Rosen (1977; 1979; 1991), and concludes that general systems theory is relevant for contemporary research.

However, Delia (1977) asserts that the systems theory cannot be a generally applicable framework as well as explain specific real-world events at the same time. In this study, it is posited that it is possible and perhaps even likely that the same set of principles can be applied both generally and specifically; therefore, there was no objection to the systems theory on this account. The theoretical framework resulting from this study includes both a generic model and a more specific framework that provides a picture of current ILR trends.

Critics regard the various (and at times conflicting) approaches that are all labelled under ‘systems theory’ as confusing (Bahg 1990). However, proponents maintain that the systems theory is a variety of related tools that can be applied in many useful ways, and that the wide applicability of notions such as wholeness and interdependence demonstrates the strength of the approach (Littlejohn 2002). Pouvreau (2014) concurs that the plural used in the designation ‘systems’ expresses an awareness of multiple systemic approaches that form part of ‘general systems theory’. In addition, systems theories of communication are quite specific, illuminate concrete experiences, are consistent and mutually supportive, and possess a common

vocabulary that creates coherence (Littlejohn 2002). Therefore, the systems theory can be appropriately and meaningfully applied to ILR in this study.

Delia (1977) criticised the systems theory for positing similarities between very dissimilar events and disciplines that ought to require different explanations. Fisher (1978:196) claimed that the systems theory is not a theory at all, but “a loosely organised and highly abstract set of principles”, while Cushman (1977) objected that it is too general to provide substantive questions for investigation. However, Baker (1975) maintained that, whereas system ideas may initially appear abstract, if properly applied they can be of great practical relevance in the management processes of almost any organisation. Martin and O'Connor (1989) state that knowledge is indeed transferrable between social systems; thus, learning about one social system provides insight into other social systems.

According to Von Bertalanffy (1962), the systems theory, while enhancing scholarly thinking, does not explain why phenomena occur as they do. Searight and Merkel (1991) argue that researchers applying the systems theory may overlook significant problems that are ignored by system principles, for instance intrapersonal problems. Yet, for the purpose of this study, it is posited that most theories do not answer the question of ‘why’ phenomena occur, and that this question may not even be answerable at all. However, examining ‘how’ phenomena occur is another angle from which a phenomenon can be explained, and it is argued that the systems theory has strength in this regard, particularly with reference to the qualitative nature of this study. Dekkers (2017:293) claims that systems concepts can be used to analyse research findings, particularly in qualitative research. Littlejohn (2002) states that much of communication theory assumes a systems approach, without labelling it as such. It is argued that the systems theory can contribute significantly towards answering the research questions in this study.

Schneider and Bauer (2007) implied that, due to the high level of interdependence in social systems, the systems theory has very little ability to predict the future state of a system. Similarly, it can suggest potential scenarios, but cannot suggest the best course of action. In this regard, it should be noted that the aim of this study is not to predict future behaviour, but to describe current views and experiences of ILR. In this regard, Asencio-Guillén and Navío-Marco (2018:27) note that the systems perspective is useful in understanding complex phenomena, in contrast with linear and analytical approaches that break the object of study into smaller parts, ignoring the complex relations between them. Hatch (2018:37) concurs that systems theory is used by many contemporary theorists to solve high-order problems. Schelbe, Randolph, Yelick, Cheatham and Groton (2018) found that the systems theory played

an important role in identifying intervention components in a particular social support programme.

In this study, the systems theory – as any theory applied in a research study – is regarded as a particular lens through which a phenomenon is examined. In and of its nature, the systems theory is applicable to a wide range of phenomena. This does not imply that these phenomena may not be viewed through different lenses, with different results. For the present study, the systems theory is considered to provide a relevant metatheory within which ILR may be examined.

Berger (1977) claimed that the systems theory overcomplicates essentially simple events, and some versions of the systems theory have been criticised for being highly abstract and complex (Morgner & King 2017). However, Baker (1975:30) posited that the basic concepts of the systems theory are relatively simple, “although not too simple to be relevant to the immense complexity of real life”. It is posited that social systems are relatively complex, being influenced by a large number of intrapersonal, interpersonal and societal variables. For the purpose of this study, then, the systems theory presents a relatively simple framework with which to understand complex social phenomena. It is suggested that ILR may have been overlooked and oversimplified in the past and that the systems theory may aid in describing how this complex phenomenon occurs in contemporary knowledge-based organisational contexts.

2.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the systems theory was presented as a metatheory for this study. The systems approach to communication developed from the multidisciplinary ‘general systems theory’ that was later applied to social systems. The following system qualities were discussed: wholeness and interdependence, hierarchy, self-regulation and control, interchange with the environment, balance, change and adaptability, and equifinality.

Of these, wholeness and interdependence was highlighted as the central quality of open social systems, which emphasises the importance of interaction and interdependence in the LFD. Under ‘interchange with the environment’, important inputs from the contemporary business environment that could potentially affect the LFD were described, namely the age of collaboration, technological advances and virtual teams, increased cultural diversity due to globalisation, and the organisational leadership concept. These warrant examination in this study.

Finally, a critique of the systems theory was done. Although the systems theory has weaknesses, they do not impede the objectives of this study. The systems theory, with particular reference to its emphasis on interdependence between leader/followers, rather than on individuals, was found to be an appropriate and meaningful lens through which to examine ILR. Furthermore, it demonstrates the importance of environmental influences, but at the same time allows for exploration of element attributes (individual leader/follower traits).

In the next chapter, symbolic interactionism is discussed as the second of the two metatheories of this study.

CHAPTER 3: SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM AS A METATHEORY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the systems theory was discussed as the first metatheory for this study. In this chapter, symbolic interactionism is introduced as the second metatheory, to supplement the systems theory. While the systems theory provides a macro-perspective on the leader/follower dyad (LFD), ranging from the elements in the system to the encompassing environment, symbolic interactionism is a micro-theory that emphasises the role and importance of interpersonal communication – in this context, interpersonal leadership communication (ILC).

In the subsequent sections, the following aspects of symbolic interactionism are explored: its origin and nature; symbolic interaction, meaning and the nature of selfhood as key features of the theory; and a critique of the theory.

3.2 ORIGIN AND NATURE OF SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

Symbolic interactionism (SI) originated when the work of American psychologists Charles S Peirce, William James and John Dewey was applied to the study of social life by American sociologists Charles H Cooley, WI Thomas and George Herbert Mead. Mead is credited as the founder of the perspective, but died before publishing a book on the subject. It was Herbert Blumer, one of his students, who first articulated Mead's ideas into a cohesive theory and named it 'symbolic interactionism' (Carter & Fuller 2015:2; Crable 2009b:945; Louw & Du Plooy-Cilliers 2014:71).

SI is a micro-level theory that describes how repeated interaction between individuals creates and maintains society. At the time of its inception, society and the individual were viewed as separate (Meltzer & Petras 1970) and sociological views were predominantly positivist. Society was examined from the "top down" – how macro-level social structures affect individuals. By contrast, symbolic interactionists studied society from the "bottom up" – how micro-level interpersonal encounters affect society (Carter & Fuller 2015:1). Mead's (1934) work laid the foundation for other communication theories, and has profoundly influenced the communication field, particularly qualitative, interpretive scholars in interpersonal communication (Crable 2009b:945). Because ILC is a form of interpersonal communication, it

is posited that symbolic interactionism is a useful theory to incorporate into the theoretical framework for this study.

SI springs from Mead's (1934) concept of the social act, a complete unit of conduct that begins with an impulse and involves perception, interpretation, mental rehearsal, consideration of alternatives, and consummation. Fundamentally, it consists of three interrelated parts: an initial gesture from one individual, another individual's response to that gesture, and a result. Meaning, then, is located in the relationship of all three (Woodward 1996).

Early SI was divided into two schools – the Chicago School and the Iowa School. The Chicago School, led by Blumer (1962; 1969/1998), continued in the tradition of Mead's work. Blumer believed that humans could not be studied in the same manner as things, but that researchers ought to empathise with subjects and enter their experience. Avoiding quantitative approaches, the Chicago School emphasised research methods such as life histories, case studies, nondirective interviews and participant observation. The Chicago School viewed people as creative and free to define situations in unpredictable ways. They viewed self and society as processes, not structures, and believed that to freeze the process would be to lose the essence of social relationships. The Iowa School, led by Manford Kuhn and Carl Couch, followed a more scientific approach, operationalising interactionist concepts and using objective methods (Meltzer & Petras 1970; 1972). This study draws from the approach of the Chicago School, particularly in the choice of qualitative methods in the interpretivist tradition (as discussed in Chapter 1).

The basic tenets of these two schools have been adopted by many subsequent social scientists (Fine 1993), some of whom incorporated ideas from other disciplines (Littlejohn 2002:145). For instance, SI has framed studies of how groups coordinate their actions, how emotions are understood and managed, how reality is constructed, how self is created, how large social structures are established, and how public policy can be influenced (Fine 1993).

Blumer (1962) considered social acts (as performed by social 'actors') central, positing that social structures exist as a result of interaction between individuals. Thus, society is not a structure, but a process (Collins 1994), changing constantly (Lal 1995). For both Mead (1934) and Blumer (1962; 1969/1998), social institutions are 'social habits' occurring in specific situations that are common to the actors involved in the situation.

Blumer's view of SI rests on three premises (Blumer 1969/1998; McDermott 2009b:548): people (labelled 'actors') behave towards people and events based on the meanings those objects have for them – objects being physical (things), social (people) and abstract (ideas); actors derive the meaning of objects from social interaction, specifically conversations, within

a given socio-cultural context; and actors constantly create and recreate meanings through their interpretive processes during interpersonal communication. Thus, meaning is not intrinsic to an object; rather, people form meanings for an object through what they do with it (Blumer 1969/1998).

According to Charmaz (1980; 2014), Blumer's first premise asserts that meaning-making precedes action, oversimplifying a fundamental assumption of SI. Instead, the author suggests, people construct new meanings or reconfirm past meanings through acting. Problematic actions and events interrupt the expected flow of experience and therefore result in reassessment.

Charmaz (1980; 2014) also posits that, while Blumer implies that social actors constantly converse with themselves as they interpret their situations, social life is largely routine and does not constantly require scrutiny. All human connections occur in a web of affiliations, through which people learn routine meanings and practices. As life becomes routine, people engage less in conscious inner conversation to interpret their situations. They tend to maintain their meanings and behaviour, unless their habitual responses no longer resolve problematic situations (Charmaz 1980) or unless they face new, unanticipated opportunities. A problematic situation develops when an individual encounters one of the following: s/he is torn between conflicting desires or demands; his/her current responses do not resolve the situation; or the problem extends beyond his/her existing norms (Charmaz 2014).

According to Charmaz (2014), symbolic interactionists believe that how people view their situations and how they name objects influences what they know, how they know it, and how they act in response. Thus, people act according to their definition of the situation. People interpret situations by defining and naming them. Thus, they use naming to categorise, evaluate, respond to and frame their relationship with objects, events or people. Names are rarely neutral; naming a phenomenon typically implies an evaluation of it. Both naming and evaluating are founded in experience, and renaming an object implies changing one's relationship to it, which subsequently involves revising behaviour and may change social identity. Renaming oneself as a certain type of person can constitute significant changes in one's self-concept, beliefs and behaviours (Charmaz 2014). In this study, it was of central interest how leader/followers defined and named their interpersonal leadership experiences.

In essence, "symbolic interactionism is the study of how people construct their realities through symbolic processes" (Louw & Du Plooy-Cilliers 2014:71). Below, the following concepts which are central to these processes are discussed: the concept of symbolic interaction, meaning, and selfhood.

3.3 SYMBOLIC INTERACTION

Symbolic interaction is central to human social existence, providing the foundation for individual consciousness and social formations. Symbolic interactionists reject the stimulus-response model of human behaviour, which portrays human interaction as causal chains, where each communicator's behaviour elicits a response from the other. Rather, interaction is viewed as a dynamic process of role-taking and coordination, where one actor's behaviour is inextricably linked to the other's response, and to the entire interaction (Crable 2009b:945-946).

Individuals behave according to the meanings they ascribe to situations (Carter & Fuller 2015:2; McDermott 2009b:548). Thus, any interaction involves ongoing mutual orientation. At its very simplest level, Mead (1934) describes this as the conversation of gestures, comparable to how animals communicate through behaviour. A gesture is an initial movement in another person's presence – not yet a social act in itself, but indicating future action. The other actor responds with his/her own gesture, and so forth. Importantly, each actor uses his/her interpretation of the other's gesture to construct his/her own subsequent gesture. In this manner, one actor's gesture may significantly change the other's entire behaviour. Human interaction is unique in that it typically involves the higher-level use of significant symbols to construct and deconstruct behaviour (Crable 2009b:946).

An actor's significant gesture requires the other to select from various potential meanings to establish what future action is implied by the gesture. Thus, human communication comprises indication (a significant gesture) and interpretation (the meaning that the other actor attaches to the gesture, with particular reference to the future action it suggests to him/her). Based on his/her interpretation, the second actor constructs a new indication, and thus the process of coordinated behaviour continues (Crable 2009b:946).

Watzlawick *et al* (1967/2011:113) claim that communication has a limiting effect in interactional systems. The authors posit that every message exchange becomes part of that particular interpersonal context and limits the number of possible subsequent behaviours, similar to how a particular move in a game alters the course of the game and limits the possibilities for further moves. In this perspective on communication, the entire relationship is affected. Even if the receiver rejects the sender's message, it nevertheless constitutes a response that demonstrates involvement, if only in defining the relationship. (Watzlawick *et al* 1967/2011:114) state:

... in every communication, the participants offer to each other definitions of their relationship, or, more forcefully stated, each seeks to determine the

nature of the relationship. Similarly, each responds with his definition of the relationship, which may confirm, reject, or modify that of the other. ... If the process did not stabilise, the wide variations and unwieldiness, not to mention the inefficiency of redefining the relationship with every exchange, would lead to runaway and dissolution of the relationship.

The joint action of a group of actors, such as the LFD, comprises a network of interactions. In advanced societies, most group action follows recurrent, stable patterns with shared, established meanings for participants. The prevalence and stability of these patterns and meanings have led scholars to erroneously view them as structures, forgetting their communication origins (Blumer 1969/1998). The macro-aspects of society are never actually witnessed, but exist in and through individuals' behaviour in micro-situations (Ellis 1999:xii). "It is the social process in group life that creates and upholds the rules, not the rules that create and uphold group life" (Blumer 1969/1998:19).

Even repetitive group patterns are not permanent. Each event begins anew with individual action. Distant actors may be interlinked in diverse ways, but "a network of an institution does not function automatically because of some inner dynamics or system requirements: it functions because people at different points do something, and what they do is a result of how they define the situation in which they are called on to act" (Blumer 1969/1998:19). Group life requires the cooperative behaviours of group members. To cooperate, people must understand one another's intentions, particularly with regard to future action. Thus, cooperation consists of 'reading' other people's action and intentions and responding in an appropriate way (Littlejohn 2002:147).

In this 'reading' of intentions, role taking stands central. Because an indication predicts both the actor's own and the other actor's future conduct, the indication demonstrates the actor's perception of the social context. Thus, an indication necessitates taking the role of the other actor to perceive the situation and the indication from the other actor's point of view. Similarly, adopting the perspective of the first actor is necessary for the second actor to fully understand the significance of the original gesture. Through this delicate coordination, social reality is produced communally (Crable 2009b:946). Littlejohn (2002:147) notes, "We can imagine what it is like to receive our own messages, and we can empathise with the listener and take the listener's role, mentally completing the other's response".

Several implications for this study flow from this section. Firstly, ILC cannot be viewed as a linear event; rather, it is a dynamic process within which messages cannot be separated from previous messages, from the entire interaction as a whole, or even from the relationship. This

reinforces the notions of wholeness and interdependence encompassed in the systems theory (discussed in Chapter 2).

A noteworthy implication for this study is that each significant symbol that a leader/follower communicates, limits the range of possible responses by the other member of the LFD. This affects not only communication patterns, which tend to become repetitive over time, but the definition of the relationship as a whole. It was thus posited that an LFD would be defined through the communication patterns between the leader/followers in the dyad. From the systems perspective discussed in Chapter 2, the influence goes even further as an output into the suprasystem (department) and environment (organisation).

What this section on SI further contributes, is the importance of role taking (viewing the situation and the intended message from the other leader/follower's perspective) in conveying and interpreting meaning. All of these arguments point towards the importance of examining the *interaction* in ILC, rather than the behaviour of an individual leader/follower. Consequently, in this study the main emphasis was on the symbolic interaction in the LFD, although other aspects of ILR were also examined.

3.4 MEANING

Contrary to theories locating meaning in the human mind or in objects, SI holds that meanings originate from social interaction. From this perspective, people are actors who interact in an already meaningful symbolic world, where meanings are social agreements about the use of words (Crabbe 2009b:946). Symbolic interactionists examine how individuals make sense of their world from their unique subjective perspective. Thus, they are more interested in subjective meaning than objective structure – that is, how the repeated, meaningful interactions between people define the nature of society (Carter & Fuller 2015:1), producing the reality to which it responds (Crabbe 2009b:947). Therefore, meanings are social products that are generated and employed in human interaction. Communication is thus viewed as central to social life (Crabbe 2009a:622), creating a symbolic reality in which meaning is always shifting and ambiguous (Louw & Du Plooy-Cilliers 2014:71).

People's use of language and significant symbols to communicate with one another is central to SI (Carter & Fuller 2015:1). Rejecting the referential view of language, symbolic interactionists consider the meaning of a word not as the object it refers to (House 1977a), but as the response it evokes (Crabbe 2009a:622). Thus, the meaning of a phenomenon can only be established within a specific symbolic interaction (Crabbe 2009b:947).

Individuals learn the appropriate meanings for navigating their environment by learning a language and learning the socially approved meanings for objects through social interaction with other actors (Crabbe 2009b:947), particularly their primary groups (Lal 1995). They use language to construct meaning, present themselves, and employ symbols to create society (McDermott 2009b:548).

People make decisions and behave in line with their subjective interpretations of their situations, considering and defining relevant objects and actions in the situation (Lal 1995). Understanding the meaning of an object is therefore not to possess an accurate, pre-existing concept of it, but to know how to behave towards it and to draw it into one's own future conduct (Crabbe 2009a:622). Thus, a meaning is an actor's behavioural relationship with an object, whether the object is animate or inanimate, concrete or abstract, or static or dynamic. If an object is unfamiliar, or the actor finds it difficult to interpret it, it is merely because the actor struggles to categorise it into a behavioural pattern (Crabbe 2009b:947).

According to SI, human behaviour is a response to other people's behaviour, but not directly. Symbolic interaction requires cognitive processing (thinking and reflecting) – human beings interpret one another's behaviour, and respond to the meaning they have ascribed to that behaviour (Blumer 1969/1998). The meaning of another person's behaviour is the future action s/he will take. Interactional participants share meaning to the extent that they fluently coordinate their behaviour with reference to one another and their shared context (Crabbe 2009a:622). In interpretation, the actor internally "selects, checks, suspends, regroup, and transforms the meanings in light of the situation in which he is placed and the direction of his actions" (Blumer 1969/1998:5). Communication can only take place through sharing the meaning of the symbols that people use. Mead (1934) refers to a gesture with shared meaning as a significant symbol.

In SI, 'mind' is also not purely psychological. Rather, it is viewed as a social activity; and 'minding' (a verb) is considered a more appropriate description than 'mind' (a noun). Minding takes place when an actor's unreflective behaviour is interrupted and s/he has to pause and interpret the situation to determine what alternative behaviours will create the desired future. In doing so, the actor relies on others, since his/her minding draws from the collection of meanings that social interaction has provided him/her (Crabbe 2009b:947).

Related to the present study, this section suggests that meaning is not located in the words that the leader/follower uses, but flows from the interaction between dyadic members, with specific reference to the response it evokes. For the leader/follower, understanding the meaning of the other member's message is to know how to behave in response to it. This

understanding is likely to increase with the duration of the leader/follower relationship. For this reason, Sample 2 in this study consisted of leader/followers who had been in a particular LFD for a period of at least a year.

3.5 THE NATURE OF SELFHOOD

From the SI perspective, communication is not a simple exchange of messages between pre-existing individuals. Rather, selves are created and recreated through communication (Crabbe 2009b). In Mead's (1934) view of SI, a child's own 'self' can only develop once the child has formed the notion of social objects (Joas 1997:107). Possessing a self – being able to reflect on one's own behaviour – differentiates human beings from other creatures. Being human thus involves both consciousness and self-consciousness. Therefore, symbolic interactionists distinguish between two aspects of the self (Crabbe 2009b): the self-as-process, or Mead's (1934) *I*, and the self-as-object, or Mead's (1934) *me*.

A person is born with a self-as-process (Crabbe 2009b:947). Often impulsive and undirected, the *I* is a person's immediate, spontaneous response to social situations (Louw & Du Plooy-Cilliers 2014:71). Every social act begins with an impulse from the *I* as the driving force, and becomes directed by the *me* (Littlejohn 2002:148). The self-as-object is not present at birth, but develops through communication and socialisation into a specific language. Sometimes dubbed the 'socialised other', it comprises the individual's behaviour adaptations based on other people's expectations and responses (Crabbe 2009b:947; Louw & Du Plooy-Cilliers 2014:71).

On the one hand, the self-as-object (*me*) is similar to other objects in an actor's reality. It is not purely individual, because it is created by applying significant symbols to one's own behaviour during communication with significant others (the people closest to the individual). Yet it is also a unique object, because the actor has to step outside him/herself and view it as if from the outside (Crabbe 2009b:947). The self-as-process (*I*) is influenced by the socially created *me*: the *I* responds to the *me*'s directions, but is not determined by them. This tension between individual behaviour and social expectations is negotiated through communication as people create and recreate their shared social realities (Crabbe 2009b:948).

According to symbolic interactionists, meaning only arises when the actor has to consider his/her own action. This can only be the case during interaction, when an actor's behaviour receives an immediate response from another, evoking self-reflective attentiveness in the original actor because s/he is aware that s/he is influencing another person's behaviour (Joas

1997:104). Mead (1934) uses the concept of role to explain how a person's self-image results from his/her internal representation of others' responses to him/her. When s/he interprets others' responses, s/he assumes their roles. In this manner, one plays various roles that become part of one's social environment. One can only be aware of another individual as a self if one has played his/her role, or the role of a type with which one identifies him/her for the purpose of interaction (Joas 1997:110). Significant others have a major impact on an individual's self-image, because they are influential in his/her life (Littlejohn 2002:147).

The above demonstrates that, from the SI perspective, people are essentially social beings. Individual identity, rather than given, is an emerging social product (Crable 2009a:622; Denzin 1992). According to Mead (1934), people do not reflect on themselves and their relationships only some of the time. Rather, they constantly engage in mindful action, employing symbols and negotiating the meaning of situations.

This section implies that the leader/follower's self is created and recreated through interaction with the other dyadic member (as well as other interactions with other individuals). While not the central focus of this study, it was deemed worthy of inclusion. Also relevant to this study is the tension between a leader/follower's individual impulses on the one hand, and social expectations of behaviour on the other hand. In this research, 'social expectations' refer to the nature of the surrounding business environment in general, but more particularly the cultural norms of the organisation within which the LFD exists. These cultural norms also form part of the organisational environment, which was discussed in Chapter 2 and was examined in this study.

3.6 CRITIQUE OF SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

Four major criticisms have been raised against SI, as discussed below.

3.6.1 Empirical value

Lofland (1970) claimed that the concepts of SI cannot be translated into observable, researchable units, questioning the appropriateness of SI to understand everyday behaviour in depth. However, Littlejohn (2002) maintains that this criticism refers to the vague notions of early interactionism and is less valid in terms of contemporary interactionism. Plummer (2000) holds that several significant studies have failed to acknowledge their very apparent roots in symbolic interactionism. For the purpose of this study, it is argued that SI constitutes a suitable

metatheory for examining ILR and is, in addition, complemented by the systems theory as a metatheory.

3.6.2 Scope

Some critics consider SI to be limited in scope, ignoring important psychological variables (such as a person's emotions) on one end and societal variables (such as social structures) on the other (Littlejohn 2002). While this objection may be partially founded regarding SI in general, several theories associated with interactionist thinking have included a much wider range of concepts, such as the social construction of emotions, values and morality (Meltzer & Herman 1990; Scheff 1990).

Moreover, whereas early interactionism may have paid little attention to social structure, subsequent interactionists have demonstrated the value of SI in, for instance, researching power (Hall 1980; Musolf 1992). Furthermore, although Anthony Giddens does not present himself as an interactionist, his work incorporates SI concepts. His structuration theory (Banks & Riley 1993; Giddens 1976; Giddens 1977a; Giddens 1977b), which includes the effect of social structures on individuals, counters this particular criticism against SI.

Baldwin (1986) posits that SI combines both micro-social and macro-social perspectives, and concludes that Mead's contribution is much more substantial than is generally acknowledged. Hall (1987) states that SI comprises various interactive layers at different scales of interactions and groups. For the purpose of this study, it is agreed that SI combines micro-social and macro-social aspects, while having a stronger micro-social focus. Furthermore, combined with the systems theory, which includes a strong macro-social focus, SI is a useful metatheory for this study.

3.6.3 Determinism

Mainstream SI emphasises people's capacity to seek goals and to redefine situations; yet, the notion of the social creation of meaning suggests a kind of determinism. Thus, if the group creates meaning through interaction, the individual is compelled to view the world in those predetermined ways (Littlejohn 2002). However, Blumer (1969/1998) explains that, in the SI perspective, social structures such as culture set conditions for action, without determining action. In this study, SI is not viewed as deterministic. It is agreed with Blumer that social structures (in this case, the organisation and the broader business environment) set conditions for interaction between interpersonal leader/followers, but do not determine the nature of ILR.

3.6.4 View of meaning

Classical SI has been criticised for taking a naively cooperative view of meaning and self, where meanings – including the concept of self – emerge seemingly effortlessly from interaction, and social life is essentially cooperative (Katovich & Reese 1993). However, subsequent interactionists have done much to broaden the view of self, meaning and action in social life (Chesebro 1994; Stewart, 1995).

This criticism was noted for the purpose of this study; thus, meanings were not viewed as effortless or purely cooperative, and obstacles to the negotiation of meaning were examined.

3.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, SI was discussed in terms of its origin, major tenets, and strengths and weaknesses. *Originating* mainly from the work of George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer, SI revolutionised the sociological paradigm of the time, examining society from the interpersonal (micro) level upwards. Some of the key concepts of SI are symbolic interaction, meaning and the self.

From the literature, *symbolic interaction* was defined as a dynamic, coordinated process, where a leader/follower's communication cannot be separated from the other's, or from the interaction as a whole. Leader/followers behave according to the meanings they ascribe to situations, and the messages they exchange become part of the context of the relationship, affecting all future interactions.

From the SI perspective, *meanings* are social products that are generated through interaction. Thus, the meaning of a word is not the object to which it refers, but the response it evokes in a specific symbolic interaction. Interacting leader/followers share meaning to the extent that they coordinate their behaviour in relation to each other and the context. Thus, symbolic interactionists do not view 'mind' as primarily psychological, but rather as social. They prefer to describe the concept as 'minding' (a verb), which occurs when a leader/follower pauses to interpret a situation to decide on a behaviour that will create the desired result. In *minding*, s/he draws from the collective meanings that s/he has learned through social interaction.

Regarding the *nature of selfhood*, symbolic interactionists view people as social beings whose individual identities are emerging social products. The SI perspective includes two aspects of the self: the self-as-process (the *I*), and the self-as-object (the *me*). A person is born with an *I*, his/her spontaneous response to social situations. The self-as-object develops through social

interaction, constitutes behaviour adaptations based on social expectations, and directs the / . People constantly reflect on themselves and their relationships, engaging in mindful, symbolic action and negotiating meanings.

The implications of SI for this study are as follows: ILC is symbolic interaction, where meaning depends on how each leader/follower interprets the other's behaviour; meaning is co-created by leader/followers, is influenced by the context of the particular LFD, and can change over time; ILC contributes to creating and modifying the organisation as a social institution; the identities of the leader/followers are social products that are influenced by various relationships and interactions, including the LFD itself. In light of these implications, an examination of ILC cannot focus on the leader, to the exclusion of the follower and the context, but must focus on the symbolic interaction between leader/followers.

Some weaknesses of SI were noted in this chapter. However, it is argued that most of them do not impede this study – either because they occurred more in classical interactionism than in contemporary versions, because they have been refuted by other scholars, or because SI is complemented by the systems theory as another metatheory of this study. The criticism that SI depicts meaning making as too effortless and cooperative was noted; therefore this study included an examination of obstacles to sharing of meaning. Hence, it was posited that SI is a useful theory in general, and flexible yet specific enough to aid in examining ILC. In areas where SI is weak, for instance in being relatively inattentive to psychological and societal variables, the systems theory has complementary strengths. Thus, together, these two theories provide a solid and useful theoretical foundation for this study.

Building on the broad foundation of the two metatheories of this study, theories of leadership will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: THEORIES OF LEADERSHIP

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter and the subsequent two chapters, the theoretical foundation for this study is expanded from the two metatheories that were discussed in the previous two chapters. This chapter addresses theories of leadership. Leadership is a much researched subject field, and over time, scholarly perspectives have changed significantly. This chapter presents a broad chronological overview of the most important of these since the 1940s, providing a brief critique of each and illuminating its relevance to this study. Most of these theoretical perspectives are not formalised theories as such, but rather broad approaches to leadership. The chapter concludes with a summary of the most relevant leadership perspectives for this study.

4.2 THE LEADERSHIP TRAIT APPROACH

4.2.1 Description

Early leadership research had a psychological approach, focusing on the leader as a person, based on the assumption that leaders possess extraordinary personal attributes or abilities that distinguish them from other people (Stogdill 1948). Research was devoted to identifying these innate traits. For example, Stogdill (1974) found that the qualities of achievement orientation, adaptability, assertiveness, cleverness, cooperativeness, dependability, dominance, energy, organisational and speaking skills, persuasiveness, responsibility, self-confidence, social skills and stress tolerance were essential to leadership.

According to DuBrin (2013:38), the trait approach has re-emerged recently, with a focus on task-related personality traits such as emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management); flexibility and adaptability; internal locus of control; courage; and passion. Summarising from decades of trait research, Northouse (2013) identifies the following as important leader traits: intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity and sociability.

According to Zaccaro, LaPort and José (2013:14-16), leaders must have cognitive, social and self-motivational skills. Cognitive skills include the following traits that are necessary for maintaining a healthy leader-follower dyad (LFD): complex problem-solving skills, creativity, cognitive complexity, and tolerance of ambiguity. Social requisites are agreeableness,

behavioural flexibility, communication skills, cultural intelligence and cross-cultural skills, emotional intelligence, extraversion, interpersonal perceptiveness, self-monitoring skills, social intelligence, and systems perceptiveness. Self-motivational traits are achievement motivation, core self-concept, dominance, emotional stability, energy, motivation to lead, need for power, and stress tolerance.

According to Hackman and Johnson (2013:30-31), leaders and followers must be able to integrate emotion and cognition, by doing the following: perceiving and expressing emotion; attending to others' emotions; employing appropriate emotion to facilitate the rational activities of thinking, decision-making and goal achievement; analysing emotional information and employing emotional knowledge (for example, labelling one's own emotions and understanding how they may influence the situation); and regulating emotion (creating desirable emotions in oneself and others).

Northouse (2018:325) defines a trait as "a distinguishing personal quality that is often inherited", such as intelligence, charisma or determination. The trait approach, then, is the theoretical approach to leadership that emphasises innate personal characteristics. Early trait theories are also dubbed the 'Great Man' theories, as leadership was considered a male domain, was associated with a mythical, heroic sense of destiny, and focused on the traits of social, political and military leaders who were considered great at that stage in history (Northouse 2018:322).

4.2.2 Critique

Northouse (2013) considers the following as strengths of the trait approach: it appeals to the intuitive notion that a leader is an extraordinary person; it is supported by more quantity and quality of research than any other leadership approach; its focus on a single aspect of leadership (the leader), while also a limitation, facilitates deeper insight into how leader traits relate to the process of leadership; and it serves as a benchmark for leaders, for instance through personality assessments that identify leader strengths and weaknesses.

However, there is little scholarly consensus on universal leader traits or their usefulness (Northouse 2013; Tannenbaum, Weschler & Massarik 2013:22-23). Studies have not produced convincing evidence for the influence of traits on leadership emergence (Winkler 2010). In addition, trait theories fail to explain why all people possessing such qualities do not become leaders (Northouse 2013). Fletcher and Kaeufer (2003), Gronn (2002; 2003) and Seers, Keller and Wilkerson (2003) contend that the heroic model does not accurately represent leadership realities.

4.2.3 Relevance to this study

For the purpose of this study, it is agreed that the trait approach does not fully and accurately represent leadership. Hence, it has little relevance to this study, which focuses on interpersonal leadership relations (ILR), rather than the traits of the individual leader/follower. However, since the systems theory – one of the metatheories of this study – includes individual leader/follower attributes, ideal leader traits did receive some attention in this study.

4.3 BEHAVIOURAL OR LEADERSHIP STYLE APPROACHES

4.3.1 Description

Behavioural theories emphasise the leader's style of behaviour, which is considered relatively stable between contexts. They originate from the work of Lewin, Lippitt and White (1939), who identified the autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles.

Autocratic leaders keep followers under rigid control by regulating procedures. They emphasise role distinctions (and thus power distance) between themselves and followers, many believing that people without direct supervision will be unproductive. *Democratic leaders* communicate supportively, facilitating interaction between leaders and followers. They involve followers in determining goals and procedures. Rather than being intimidated by follower suggestions, they view these as improving the quality of decisions. In the *laissez-faire* style, the leader abdicates responsibility, withdrawing from followers and offering little guidance.

Katz and Kahn (1960) distinguished between the *production-oriented* and the *employee-oriented* leadership styles. Production-oriented leaders emphasise production and technical matters, considering followers as tools to get the work done. By contrast, employee-oriented leaders emphasise training and motivating employees, taking an interest in them as individual human beings. While an employee-oriented leader employs various methods from one context to the next, s/he works towards supportive personal relationships with team members.

Stogdill (1963) developed the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire, according to which vital behavioural dimensions of leaders were measured and categorised as initiating structure (whereby leaders organise work roles and communication structures); and consideration (whereby leaders establish positive working relationships and mutual trust and respect).

Research findings indicate the following about laissez-faire leadership: it is characterised by delayed decisions, lack of feedback, and lack of involvement in motivating followers or satisfying their needs (Bass & Avolio 1990); it negatively influences followers' job satisfaction (Judge & Piccolo 2004); it is associated with role ambiguity and conflict, conflicts with co-workers, and bullying at work (Skogstad, Einarsen, Torsheim, Aasland & Hetland 2007); it relates negatively to leader effectiveness, followers' satisfaction with the leader, and commitment to the organisation (Bučiūnienė & Škudienė 2008); and it causes followers to feel isolated (Loi, Mao & Ngo 2009).

According to Hackman (2010:40-41), the autocratic style typically produces high productivity, but leads to greater hostility and discontent and lower commitment, creativity and independence in followers. The democratic leadership style results in high productivity and increases follower satisfaction, commitment and cohesion. However, it is time-consuming and cumbersome in large groups. While the laissez-faire style may afford followers great freedom and autonomy, and provide guidance and support on request, this style is often detrimental to employee productivity, job satisfaction and team cohesion (Hackman 2010:41-42).

DeRue, Nahrgang, Wellman and Humphrey (2011) linked laissez-faire leadership to personality traits that are not typically associated with effective leadership. Buch, Martinsen and Kuvaas (2015) found that laissez-faire leadership is not merely a lack of leadership, but rather a form of destructive leadership that fails to meet followers' legitimate expectations. Furthermore, Merrill (2015) posited that this leadership style promotes an organisational culture of blame. By contrast, democratic leadership is characterised by open dialogue and participative decision making, where followers are given responsibility and accountability. Leader-follower relationships are used to improve the quality of systems and processes, rather than finding fault with followers (Alharbi 2017).

4.3.2 Critique

Behavioural theories often rely on abstract definitions of behavioural types that are difficult to identify (Yukl 1989). Bolden and Gosling (2006) fault competency frameworks of leadership for prescribing leader behaviours that were effective in the past, without considering their relevance for subsequent contexts. Current leadership research focuses on understanding and describing leadership, rather than recommending specific leader behaviour (Yukl 2006).

According to Winkler (2010), no single leadership style has proven to be universally effective, although a relationship approach seems to produce improvement more often. Many studies assume rather than demonstrate that leadership style affects performance and satisfaction,

while the converse is possible. Furthermore, it is challenging to isolate leadership style effects from contributing situational factors. Some studies also measure group response to a leader, averaging follower assessments of the leader, instead of accounting for different leader behaviour towards different followers. Leadership-style approaches are also criticised for neglecting the leadership context, not addressing values adequately, and disregarding informal leadership, whereby leaders emerge outside of the formal organisational structure (Gill 2011). This erroneously implies that individual behaviour is independent of that of others and of the context (Turnbull James 2011:10).

4.3.3 Relevance to this study

The leadership style approach could have some value for this study, because different styles do seem to get different results, and it is suggested that the autocratic and laissez-faire style styles should not be used in interpersonal leadership. However, according to this approach, leadership style is relatively stable for an individual leader, and thus difficult to change. In this study, leadership style is not considered to be such a fixed notion; nor is the style approach viewed as a complete explanation of leadership, because of its focus on the leader (while in this research the main emphasis is on the interaction between leader/followers). Hence, it was argued that the style approach to leadership has very little relevance to this study.

4.4 THE CONTINGENCY OR SITUATIONAL APPROACH

4.4.1 Description

Proponents of the contingency or situational approach suggest that there is no single preferable leadership style or set of traits, but that leaders possess a set of attributes and behavioural styles which they can adapt to specific followers or situations. In Fiedler's (1964) contingency theory, leadership effectiveness results from the match between the leader's preferred style (categorised into task-orientation or, by contrast, people-orientation) and followers' receptiveness to this style within the context.

Scholars building on Fiedler's contingency theory viewed the leader's role as directing followers' efforts toward work goals, clarifying the paths by which to achieve them and rewarding followers for achieving them. The resulting path-goal leadership theory describes four styles – directive, supportive, participative or achievement-oriented – that leaders may employ according to the work situation and employees' needs (House 1971). Vroom and

Yetton (1973) proposed that the leader's decision-making style (e.g. autocratic, democratic or consultative) ought to suit the demands of the context, particularly the complexity of the task and the proficiency of the followers.

Thus, the contingency theories present leadership as more adaptive and contextual than the trait or behavioural theories (Glynn & DeJordy 2010), being concerned with the appropriateness of different leadership styles in various contexts by matching leaders' personal traits to the situation (Müller & Turner 2010). For instance, Yang, Wu, Wang and Chin (2010) posit that leaders use different leadership styles in various phases of project life cycles.

In the choice of leadership style, follower motivation is an important factor to consider. A follower's motivation hinges on his/her perception of whether the effort would result in good performance, whether the good performance would earn a material or psychological reward, and how valuable that reward would be to him or her. Situational factors influencing follower performance and satisfaction are followers' personal traits and contextual factors (Gill 2011).

The central assumption of these theories, then, is that leaders do not function in isolation, but within a physical and socio-cultural context (Tannenbaum *et al* 2013:23), requiring them to adapt their leadership style to followers' needs and other situational requirements, even within the same project. Situationists do not ignore leader traits, but seek to identify them in situations with common elements. They emphasise the need to support followers in developing new skills and confidence in their work (Northouse 2013).

Zulch (2014) noted that selecting the most appropriate leadership style for a particular situation requires the ability to assess situations accurately and applying relevant communication approaches. Lynch (2015) proposed that the situational leader assess the follower's professional effectiveness through a partnering process and employ the leadership style necessary to develop the follower towards higher performance.

In a study based on the Person-Centred Situational Leadership Framework of Lynch, McCormack and McCance (2011) in which the researchers combined aspects of situational and transformational leadership, Lynch, McCance, McCormack and Brown (2017) identified the following core transformational leadership practices that a situational leader should employ: connecting with the follower's essence of being; aligning behaviour with the vision; balancing a focus on compliance with person-centeredness; relating with the follower in the present moment; intentionally motivating the follower; listening with the heart; and creating unity through collaboration, appreciation and trust.

4.4.2 Critique

The contingency theories contributed the notion that a leadership style that is effective in one context will not necessarily produce results in another (Gill 2011). Whereas most leadership theories are purely descriptive, the contingency approach offers some useful prescriptive guidelines for leadership behaviour in various contexts. For example, it specifies that leaders should employ a directing style for guiding followers with low competence (Northouse 2013).

Several criticisms to this approach have been raised: the contexts examined are restricted to the leader's own work situation or immediate subordinates; it is complex and difficult to apply; it does not adequately explain how leadership may depend on organisational environments, including societal norms, cultural differences and demographic diversity (Glynn & DeJordy 2010:124); it fails to explain how leadership styles may vary according to organisational level; it fails to clarify how leaders can alter their style; it does not address the leadership activities of gathering and interpreting information, social networking and strategic decision making (Gill 2011); it does not adequately explain how follower commitment and competence translate to different development levels; the manner in which leader style is matched with follower development levels is questionable; and it fails to explain how demographics such as age and gender influence the prescriptions of the model (Northouse 2013).

4.4.3 Relevance to this study

The emphasis of this approach on context has some value for this study, because it links to the importance of the environment for ILR discussed in Chapter 2. However, while this approach does consider the role of the follower (which earlier approaches did not), the follower is viewed as primarily passive as opposed to being an active participant in creating meaning and defining the LFD. It is thus argued that this approach has limited value for this study, which views the follower as an active participant in ILR.

4.5 EMERGENT OR INFORMAL LEADERSHIP

4.5.1 Description

Crockett (1955) asserted that, in organised groups, the officially designated leaders are not always the 'real' leaders. Particularly if the appointed leader fails to perform central leadership functions, other individuals who 'fill the gap' as leaders may be termed 'emergent leaders'. In

an analysis of 72 business and government organisations, he found that emergent leaders came to the fore where designated leaders did not perform adequately; emerged where cliques existed and motivation congruence was low; were high-ranking and possessed expertise; were very motivated; and were considered needed in the group by followers.

In terms of informal influence in the organisation, authors such as Ibarra (1993) distinguished between instrumental (goal-oriented) ties and expressive ties (where the relationship itself is a goal). Informal instrumental ties arise from work roles and encompass the exchange of task-related resources such as advice (Carson, Tesluk & Marrone 2007; Fombrun 1982; Ibarra 1993; Krackhardt & Hanson 1993; Sorrentino & Field 1986). Followers seek advice from those whom they consider to possess high status (Cook & Whitmeyer 1992) and as being well connected to other departments in the organisation (Thye 2000).

Informal expressive ties involve friendship and social support, where individuals support one another and demonstrate that others are valued and appreciated. Expressive ties are less bound to work roles and formal structures (Ibarra 1993). Social support involves emotional support and socialisation in difficult situations (Lazega & Pattison 1999) and is often perceived as more readily available than advice (Uzzi 1996). It has a vital influence on communication (Brass 1984; Ingram & Roberts 2000). By providing support, individuals are more likely to be recognised as leaders (Seers *et al* 2003).

The emergent leadership approach thus proposes that leaders may emerge who possess the traits and abilities to meet the needs of a team or organisation at a specific time (Gill 2011), and that influence relationships emerge over time among leader/followers (Contractor, DeChurch, Carson, Carter & Keegan 2012). The emergent leader, then, is the person who becomes a leader in leaderless contexts (Bryman 2013). According to White, Currie and Lockett (2016), informal leadership networks, while they can support formal leadership and the organisation, can also weaken the authority of formal leaders in organisations where there is a disconnection between formal and informal leadership.

4.5.2 Critique

There is relatively little enquiry into informal leadership in organisations – possibly because of an exclusive focus on leadership positions and a preoccupation with leadership effectiveness. Researchers have been particularly concerned with personal and behavioural factors that distinguish effective leaders from ineffective leaders, where ‘effectiveness’ generally denotes group productivity and follower satisfaction and involvement. Because informal leadership is

relatively idiosyncratic and not always directed to official organisation goals, it appears irrelevant to leadership effectiveness (Bryman 2013:8).

Therefore, it is argued that informal leadership has been neglected in research; specifically in terms of the following: how it is established and maintained; the role of lateral leadership between positional equals (Bryman 2013:8); and the influence of informal networks on support and advice (White *et al* 2016).

4.5.3 Relevance to this study

Emergent leadership is aligned with the philosophical foundation of this study, portraying leadership as not necessarily linked to formal hierarchical positions and adding the notion of lateral leadership. Emergent leadership is also in line with symbolic interactionism in that it emerges through interpersonal interaction and derives meaning from interacting individuals, rather than formal social structures. However, emergent leadership was not specifically examined in this study, as Sample 2 was limited to formal leader-follower relationships.

4.6 SERVANT LEADERSHIP

4.6.1 Description

Greenleaf (1970) coined the term 'servant leadership', emphasising the transcendence of self-interest as a core characteristic. A servant leader does not merely consider the benefit of the organisation, but is committed to the well-being of followers (Greenleaf 1977). Greenleaf (1977) highlighted the servant leader's moral motivation to serve, but emphasised that servant leadership is not servitude and that servant leaders should also show initiative, take risks and demonstrate ownership for action. Greenleaf (2002:7) described servant leaders as follows:

The servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions.

The paradoxical blend of humble service and effective action was also present in the ensuing work of Dennis and Bocarnea (2005), Russell (2001), Van Dierendonck (2011), Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011), and Van Dierendonck and Patterson (2015). Russell and

Stone (2002) distinguished between functional attributes (including appreciation for others' service, empowerment, honesty, mentorship, service orientation, trustworthiness and vision); and accompany attributes of servant leadership (such as communication skills, competence, credibility, encouragement of others, being a teacher, and being a delegator). Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) referred to altruistic calling (a deep desire to positively influence other people's lives, and selfless efforts to meet followers' needs) and stewardship (ensuring that responsible action is taken towards a greater purpose).

Spears (2004) found that the central attributes of a servant leader are awareness, building community, commitment, conceptualisation, empathy, foresight, healing, listening, persuasion and stewardship. Joseph and Winston (2005) noted that followers who experienced servant leadership had higher trust in their leaders and their organisation. Washington, Sutton and Field (2006) associated servant leadership with increased perceptions of leader competence, empathy and integrity. Agreeableness did not play a significant role, implying that one does not have to be agreeable to be a servant leader. Some empirical research has demonstrated a positive relationship between servant leadership and followers' job satisfaction, caring for other's safety, and organisational commitment (Avolio, Walumbwa & Weber 2009).

In a review of servant leadership, Van Dierendonck (2011) identified six key servant leader behaviours: empowering followers (nurturing a sense of personal power and a proactive attitude in followers); humility (putting the leader's own abilities and achievements in perspective and seeking contributions from followers); authenticity (expressing the leader's true inner self); interpersonal acceptance (having empathy with others and demonstrating concern for them, despite personal offences); providing direction (shaping the work to follower abilities and needs, and creating appropriate measures of accountability; and stewardship (assuming a caretaker's accountability and prioritising service over self-interest and control).

According to Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011), servant leaders recognise their own limitations and actively seek others' contributions to complement those limitations. The authors also found that servant leadership potentially enhances follower engagement. Related to servant leadership, aspects such as empowerment (Tuckey, Bakker & Dollard 2012) and humility (Owens, Johnson & Mitchell 2013) were strongly associated with engagement.

Sousa and Van Dierendonck (2017) similarly found that servant leadership positively influenced follower engagement. They further posited that the combination of humility and action in servant leadership is most powerful in enhancing engagement in senior leaders in the organisational hierarchy. By contrast, for lower-level operational leaders, the action aspect may be sufficient to generate engagement.

4.6.2 Critique

According to Avolio *et al* (2009), servant leadership has been measured on various scales, based on different definitions; therefore, measuring servant leadership consistently remains challenging. Future research should explore how servant leaders' personal values differ from those of other leadership conceptualisations, for instance transformational leadership.

4.6.3 Relevance to this study

From a systems perspective, the characteristics of servant leaders may be applied broadly to this study as attributes of the individual leader/followers (elements) in the LFD (system). However, because it does not present the notion of interdependence (systems theory) or the notion of meaning-making through interaction (symbolic interactionism) that are highlighted in the metatheories of this study, servant leadership is not a central feature of this study.

4.7 LEADER-MEMBER EXCHANGE THEORY

4.7.1 Description

Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory developed from vertical dyad linkage theory and originated from the writings of Dansereau, Cashman and Graen (1973), Dansereau, Graen and Haga (1975), Graen (1976), and Liden and Graen (1980). LMX theory posits that leaders develop individual LMX relationships with each follower (Graen, Liden & Hoel 1982), varying from low-quality economic exchange relationships to high-quality social exchange relationships (Bernerth & Walker 2009; Walumbwa, Cropanzano & Goldman 2011; Wayne, Coyle-Shapiro, Eisenberger, Liden, Rousseau & Shore 2009). When followers are similar to leaders, leaders will give them more attention, responsibility and rewards. Conversely, when followers are dissimilar to leaders, leaders will give them less attention and manage by formal rules (Graen *et al* 1982). High-quality LMX relationships generate positive results for leaders, followers, teams and organisations (Graen & Uhl-Bien 1995).

Leader-member exchanges are affected by communication frequency (Kacmar, Witt, Zivnuska & Gully 2003). Relational foundations and leaders' methods of influence are central to this approach, as is the ability to interpret and adapt to the changing business environment (Mayo & Nohria 2005). LMX constitutes the role-making processes between a leader and follower, and the resulting exchange relationship (Yukl 2006:117).

In high-quality leader-member exchanges, roles are negotiated that transcend followers' employment contract and allow them entry to the in-group. Followers in low LMX with leaders commonly adhere to formal role definitions and constitute the out-group. High-quality exchanges result in more rewards, support, information sharing and career advancement for followers (Yukl 2006). According to Madlock, Martin, Bogdan and Ervin (2007), communication apprehension in followers generally results in lower-quality LMX relationships.

Glynn and DeJordy (2010:125) posit that, in the LMX perspective, leaders vary their behavioural styles according to the situation, and when their leadership is appropriate to the contingencies of the context, it is more likely to effect the intended change. Schuh, Zhang, Morgeson, Tian and Van Dick (2018) found that LMX influences follower behaviour, and moreover how supervisors evaluate followers' innovative behaviour.

4.7.2 Critique

Gill (2011) commends LMX theory because it emphasises the leader-follower relationship, individual uniqueness and treating followers according to their needs. However, he criticises LMX theory for: appearing to support the notion of privileged groups in organisations, which negates fairness; not explaining how high-quality exchanges develop or how LMX exchanges may be measured; and not sufficiently describing specific leadership behaviours that create high-quality relationships.

4.7.3 Relevance to this study

LMX has some relevance for this study, due to its focus on the LFD. However, because it considers the leader and follower roles as distinct and fixed, and because of its emphasis on the leader's methods of influence, rather than the interaction between leader and follower, it was not used in this study.

4.8 THE NEW LEADERSHIP MOVEMENT

4.8.1 Description

The New Leadership movement (also called new-genre leadership or the neocharismatic theories of leadership) developed from the trait, behavioural and situational theories and consists of theories of change, influence and charisma. These theories regard the leader as a

change agent, and leadership as an interaction between group members that often restructures the situation and individual perceptions and expectations (Glynn & DeJordy 2010). The New Leadership movement includes the charismatic, transactional and transformational, visionary, organic, pragmatic and centred leadership approaches (Gill 2011). These are discussed below.

4.8.1.1 *Charismatic leadership*

In his classic work on charisma, Weber (1947) described it as a set of extraordinary personal qualities and a process of commitment and influence, contrary to traditional bureaucracy. Leadership, then, is a social relationship between a leader and a follower that results from charisma. The charismatic leadership theory originated when House (1977b) revised charismatic leadership literature. This theoretical framework included the characteristics, behaviour, effects and determinants of charismatic leadership. Charismatic leaders influence followers through individual characteristics such as a need to influence others, dominance, self-security, and strong moral convictions. In terms of behaviours, they act as role models, express strongly moral ideologies, and encourage followers' task-oriented motives through appreciation or power.

Two conditions favour the development of charismatic leadership: a crisis situation, and the opportunity to express an ideological goal. House (1977b) asserts that a charismatic leader increases follower commitment, motivation and performance through, amongst others, developing their trust in his/her beliefs, involving them emotionally in the mission, or convincing followers that they can add value to the goal.

Boal and Bryson (1987) and Conger and Kanungo (1987) expanded House's (1977) concept with a focus on attribution, positing that charisma is not a personal trait, but is attributed to a leader. This attribution is influenced by: the discrepancy between the current situation and the leader's vision; the use of creative methods for change; a realistic appraisal of relevant resources and limitations; and the articulation and impression management used to inspire followers towards the vision (Conger & Kanungo 1987; 1988).

Shamir, House and Arthur (1993) noted that effects on followers' self-concept are central to charismatic leadership. By connecting followers' self-concept to the mission, a charismatic leader can heighten the intrinsic value of followers' efforts. Steyrer (1998) conceptualised a model with four types of charismatic leaders – the hero, the father, the saviour and the king – attributed by followers to leaders, based on the latter's behaviour.

House, Delbecq and Taris (1998) pointed to problematic connotations to the term 'charismatic', such as 'charming', 'attractive', and 'macho', and 'sexually appealing'. They renamed their approach 'value-based leadership', defining it as a relationship between a leader and one or more followers based on shared strongly internalised ideological values (House *et al* 1998:2). Value-based leaders instil ideological values in followers by articulating a vision of a better future to which followers believe they are morally entitled. Thus, leaders empower and guide followers towards a moral vision (Jordan 1998), employing ideological values such as: a challenging or rewarding work environment; fairness; freedom from control; and high-quality service. The leader should articulate an emotionally compelling vision in line with the collective follower identity (House *et al* 1998).

House and Hanges (2004) argue that culture predicts organisational practices and leader attributes and behaviours that are most pervasive, acceptable, and effective in the organisation. Societal and organisational culture influence how people share implicit theories of leadership, resulting in 'culturally endorsed implicit leadership theories'. Howell and Shamir (2005) conceptualise charisma as a relationship that is co-created by leaders and followers. They posit that followers form different types of charismatic leadership with a leader, based on their self-concept clarity (a clear, consistent concept of self that guides behaviour). Followers with low self-concept clarity are open to influence from charismatic leaders providing direction, identifying with them, which results in a personalised charismatic relationship. Conversely, followers with high self-concept clarity are drawn to leaders who link goals and required behaviour to central aspects of the followers' self-concept, resulting in a socialised charismatic relationship.

Glynn and DeJordy (2010:125) state that, from the charismatic perspective, leadership charisma is a leader's personal ability to influence followers in profound, extraordinary, and transformative ways. Exceptional leaders are often perceived as charismatic, in that they draw and inspire followers. Charismatic leadership is found at all levels in the organisation, though most often at the top (Gill 2011). While leaders commonly influence followers' emotions (Van Knippenberg & Van Kleef 2016), charismatic leaders evoke specific emotions in followers through rhetoric, symbolism and appeals to values, harnessing those emotions towards their goals (Antonakis, Bastardoz, Jacquart & Shamir 2016).

More recently, Sy, Horton and Riggio (2018) posited that charismatic leadership is a cyclical process of five steps: the leader elicits highly motivating emotions from followers; followers experience the relevant emotions, with their physiological, cognitive and behavioural effects; the leader channels these emotions to motivate followers to act towards desired goals; followers produce the desired action; and followers' actions lead to goal success or failure, but

also in relational outcomes such as positive emotion and trust, which empower the leader to repeat the emotion-eliciting cycle.

4.8.1.2 *Transactional and transformational leadership*

This theoretical perspective comprises a variety of conceptualisations by different scholars. In this section, Burns' 'transforming leadership', Bass' transactional-transformational paradigm, Bass and Avolio's Full Range Leadership Model, and Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe's Engaging Transformational Leadership are discussed.

Burns (1978) suggested that leaders practise either transforming or transactional leadership. He defined *transforming leadership* as a creative form of interaction between leaders and followers who mutually influence one another's perceptions and behaviour. Transforming leaders are sensitive to their followers' needs, helping them to advance, to transform into leaders, and finally to guide their former mentors. Transactional leadership, on the other hand, rests on making mutually beneficial (but calculating) arrangements with followers. Transactional leaders mediate among groups, reconciling their demands and building consensus. Because followers can be apathetic, transactional leaders must work hard to draw their followers together and mobilise them. In so doing, transactional leaders may inspire even inefficient organisations toward innovation.

The central difference between transactional and transforming leaders is that the latter do not attend to followers' needs merely to accomplish their own goals, but to experience mutually beneficial transformation and to enable followers to realise their higher-order needs. Whereas transactional leadership emphasises instrumental values such as loyalty, transformational leadership emphasises prosocial values such as liberty, justice and equality (Burns 1978).

Building on Burns' (1978) work, Bass (1985; 1998) put forward a theoretical approach labelled the '*transactional-transformational paradigm*'. For Bass (1985), however, transformational leadership is helping followers to perform better, through complementary methods from charismatic motivation to individualised consideration. Bass (1985) defined transactional leadership as allotting punishments and rewards. He argued that various methods of transactional leadership differ in effectiveness: leaders using contingent rewards are more effective than those using non-contingent rewards; leaders using non-contingent rewards are more effective than those using contingent punishment; leaders using contingent punishment are more effective than those using non-contingent punishment; leaders using non-contingent punishment are more effective than those using management by exception; and *laissez-faire* management is the least effective.

For Bass (1985), transformational leaders are different from transactional leaders in their ability to motivate followers. He suggests that transformational leaders may significantly improve followers' performance if they achieve three related objectives: increasing followers' understanding of the importance of desired outcomes; persuading followers to pursue collective goals beyond their self-interest; and changing or expanding followers' needs.

Burns' (1978) ideas and Bass' (1985; 1998) extensive empirical research led to Bass and Avolio (1994)'s *Full Range Leadership Model* (FRLM). The model describes a full range of influencing styles from 'non-leadership' to powerful transformational leadership behaviours. In this model, *laissez-faire* leadership is non-transactional leadership. These leaders use no particular leadership style, and avoid taking a stance, dealing with problems, intervening and following up on issues. Transactional leaders practise management-by-exception and contingent reward. In passive management-by-exception, the leader sets performance objectives and standards but intervenes and responds to problems reluctantly and reactively. Active management-by-exception comprises enforcing rules and procedures, and monitoring for and correcting problems and errors. When using contingent reward, a leader sets performance objectives and standards, provides feedback, and rewards performance that meets expectations (Bass & Avolio 1994).

Beyond this 'transaction' with followers, transformational leaders in the FRLM model motivate followers to transcend their own self-interest for the greater collective good. Transformational leaders nurture empowerment, motivation and morality in followers, using one or more of the following: individualised consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and idealised influence. Individualised consideration comprises listening actively to identify followers' needs and concerns; providing suitable opportunities to learn with the leader's support; delegating tasks to develop employees; providing constructive feedback; and coaching followers. In intellectual stimulation, leaders question the status quo, present new ideas to followers and challenge them to higher levels of thinking. Inspirational motivation includes aspects such as clarifying the company vision, inspiring followers to perform, and aligning individual and organisational needs. Idealised influence includes expressing confidence in the vision of the organisation, exhibiting commitment in pursuing objectives and gaining followers' trust (Bass & Avolio 1994).

According to Bass and Avolio (1994), transformational leadership powerfully enhances most traditional leadership behaviours. Transformational leaders change followers' perceptions, resulting in more follower effort, satisfaction and productivity. The FRLM encompasses two related competencies: whether the leader can intentionally employ the full range of leadership styles (transactional and transformational behaviours); and the frequency and balance with

which the leader exercises the repertoire of styles over time. Both competencies are central to fostering satisfaction, effort and efficiency among followers and associates.

Engaging Transformational Leadership originated from the United Kingdom and was proposed by Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe (2001) who distinguished between 'distant' leadership (top-level managers) and 'close' or 'nearby' leadership (immediate superiors), and developed a measurement instrument for their model. They found that distant leaders were characterised by traits such as ideological orientation, sense of mission, courage, rhetorical expression, and little regard for personal criticism. By contrast, nearby leaders were characterised by sociability and openness; consideration of others; a sense of humour, a high level of specific expertise; and intelligence or wisdom.

More recent research indicates that transformational leadership promotes the following: caring, empowering, inspirational, interactive and visionary communication (Hackman & Johnson 2004); job satisfaction (Mahmoud 2008; Negussie & Demissie 2013); organisational commitment (Brewer, Kovner, Djukic, Fatehi, Greene, Chacko & Yang 2016; Mahmoud 2008); organisational support (Mahmoud 2008); higher levels of motivation and morality in both leaders and followers (Gill 2011); and social identity (Cheng, Bartram, Karimi & Leggat 2016). According to Ahmad, Adi, Noor, Rahman and Yushuang (2013), transformational leadership enhances job satisfaction more than transactional leadership does, while Manning (2016) found that both transactional and transformation leadership positively influenced follower engagement.

Neufeld, Wan and Fang (2010) found that leaders who were perceived by followers as demonstrating strong leadership behaviours (either transformational or transactional) were also viewed as engaging in effective communication behaviours. Transformational leaders have a concern for their followers, empower them to think independently and creatively, and raise their self-efficacy, self-worth, self-confidence, competence, autonomy and risk taking (Gill 2011). Rowold and Heinitz (2007) maintain that transformational leadership enriches transactional leadership, while Negussie and Demissie (2013) and El Dahshan, Youssef, Aljouaid, Babkeir and Hassan (2017) found that followers prefer transformational leadership over transactional leadership.

Men (2014) posited that followers of transformational leaders were more likely to perceive organisational communication as symmetrical (open, two-way, responsive to employee concerns, collaborative, and fostering dialogue and mutual understanding). Followers felt more satisfied when they perceived their leaders as interactive, visionary, creative, inspiring and

empowering – that is, transformational. Such followers experienced power balance instead of control or manipulation.

4.8.1.3 *Visionary leadership*

Visionary leadership (Bass 1985; 1998; Burns 1978; Conger & Kanungo 1987) added leaders' vision and employees' emotional involvement to the study of organisational leadership. The premise is that visionary leaders can create the impression that they are competent and have a vision for success. Followers are expected to respond with enthusiasm and commitment to the leader's goals, and may even be recruited because they share the vision. According to Bass (1985; 1998), the visionary transformational leader motivates followers to perform beyond regular expectations.

In the visionary leadership paradigm, leaders use the collaborative decision-making style by sharing problems with followers, by seeking consensus. Visionary leaders empower their followers, recognising that followers need power to work towards a shared vision. Followers' commitment results from the influence of the leaders' charisma and the shared vision, and followers and leaders jointly control the organisation. Visionary leadership requires skilled, knowledgeable followers who are drawn to the leader's vision, share it, and are able to contribute towards its realisation (Avery 2004:39). Visionary leadership inspires followers with a shared vision of the future (Müller & Turner 2010). Visionary leaders are usually quite visible in an organisation, often speaking publicly, holding frequent meetings and issuing written communication that motivates and guides followers (Zulch 2014).

4.8.1.4 *Organic leadership*

The theoretical approach of organic leadership conceptualised by Drath (2001) and developed further by Avery (2004) departs from a formal distinction between leaders and followers. This approach encompasses reciprocal actions, where team members collaborate using the authority and power they have, other than position power. They interactively determine what makes sense, how to adapt to change, and what is a useful direction. Organic organisations usually have multiple leaders. This is valuable, because the organisational issues in heterogeneous, dynamic environments are too complex to be understood and managed by a select few leaders (Avery 2004).

Organic leadership fosters self-control and self-organisation, where employees have a clear sense of purpose and autonomy. It encompasses mutual agreement on decision-making style, where decisions need not be unanimous but can be based on consensus. As a result, followers

have a high degree of power. Accountability and responsibility are similarly shared (Avery 2004).

Followers' commitment depends on generally shared values and visions, a robust culture, and a highly complex technical system. Operations are mostly self-organising and unpredictable, and control occurs through group dynamics. Organic leadership is highly suitable for professional and knowledge workers in dynamic contexts. It relies on attracting highly trained, knowledgeable, self-controlling employees (Avery 2004). Members are trusted to make decisions and solve problems in the interest of the organisation (Feng Ling & Avery 2008:72).

Organic leadership allows employees with varying expertise to emerge as leaders, rather than being appointed. There may even be no formal leader, and the interaction of organisational members can act as a form of leadership, integrated by a shared vision and values. The organic approach replaces conventional concepts of control and hierarchy with trust, acceptance of change, and respect for diversity in the organisation (Gill 2011).

4.8.1.5 Pragmatic leadership

The assumption of pragmatic leadership is that effective leadership is not always concerned with organisational transformation, which may be unnecessary or even undesirable at times. However, even at such times, transformational leadership may still be useful to safeguard organisational values. According to Mumford and Van Doorn (2001), exceptional leaders may take a problem-solving approach, given their knowledge of contextual problems. They present the pragmatic leadership theory as an alternative to charismatic leadership: while charismatic leadership depends on an individual leader's vision and persuasion, pragmatic leadership constitutes innovation for the common benefit, based on the mutual interests of the parties involved. Pragmatic leadership is especially characterised by the following: appeals to common interests and values; demonstration projects; effective communication; influence through social elites; and technical and social innovation.

According to Bedell-Avers, Hunter, Angie, Eubanks and Mumford (2009:301), pragmatic leaders deal with daily challenges in a "straight forward, practical manner", based on principles and experience. Milad (2017) posits that pragmatic leaders balance efficiency and context, coaching followers to perform to their best ability.

4.8.1.6 Centred leadership

Barsh, Cranston and Craske (2008) proposed a model of centred leadership based on interviews with leaders, academic literature reviews, client workshops, and global surveys. The model is illustrated in Figure 4.1 below.

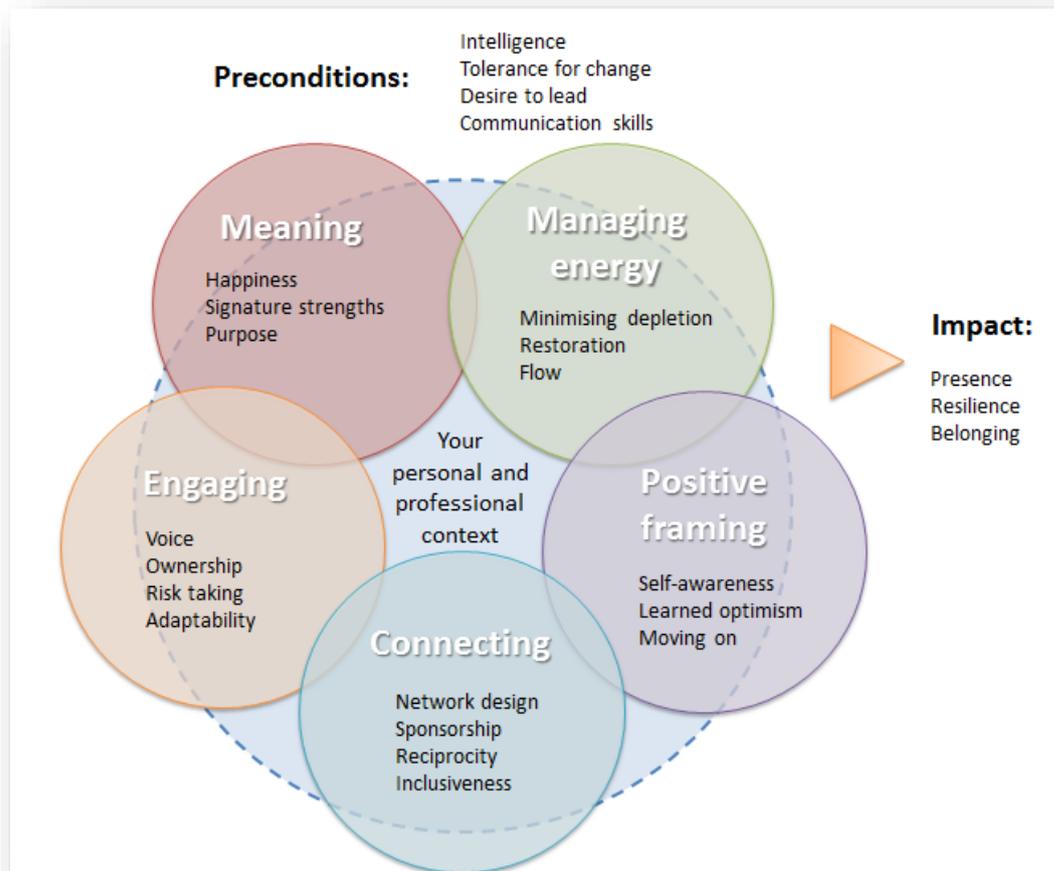


Figure 4.1: Barsh, Cranston and Craske's Model of Centred Leadership

Claiming that the model is valid across regions, cultures, hierarchical positions and gender, Barsh *et al* (2008) identify five capabilities encompassed in centred leadership: meaning (permeating life and work with meaning, related to unique personal strengths, purpose and happiness); positive framing (framing the world optimistically, associated with self-awareness, learned optimism and resilience); connecting (managing complex communication networks, associated with network design, sponsorship, reciprocity and inclusiveness); engaging (engaging with risk, fear and opportunity, and encouraging followers to act, associated with voice, ownership, risk taking and adaptability); and managing energy (sustaining personal

energy and commitment – physical, mental and emotional – and helping followers to do the same).

Barsh *et al* (2008) found that all these capabilities were essential to how leaders viewed their own leadership performance and their general satisfaction with life. Preconditions for centred leadership are intelligence, tolerance for change, desire to lead, and communication skills. The impact of centred leadership is manifested in presence, resilience and belonging.

4.8.2 Critique

The New Leadership theories have been commended in several regards. Specifically, the following views have been expressed: transactional leadership is a legitimate approach (Downton 1973); transactional and transformational leadership do acknowledge leadership as a reciprocal social exchange between leader and follower (Bryman 2013). In addition, transformational leadership provides followers in technologically advanced, knowledge-based organisations with essential intellectual stimulation and contributes the establishment of structure, the visionary aspect of leadership, followers' emotional involvement and development to pre-existing leadership scholarship (Gill 2011); uncritical acceptance of transformational leadership has led to limited views of leadership; transformational leadership has some conceptual and methodological weaknesses (Hutchinson & Jackson 2013); and it is the most influential and popular contemporary approach to leadership (Tal & Gordon 2017).

Transformational leadership and charismatic leadership also highlight followers' emotional responses to leaders' communication, the symbolic aspects of leader behaviour, and meaning (Yukl 1999; 2006), while the FRLM is supported by a meta-analysis of 87 relevant studies (Judge & Piccolo 2004). Charismatic leadership is an important construct in both academic and practitioner literatures (Banks, Engemann, Williams, Gooty, Davis McCauley & Medaugh 2017).

The New Leadership theories have also been widely criticised, for instance in the following views: transactional leadership does not adhere to the standards for true leadership (Burns 1978); transformational leadership is not universally applicable (Antonakis, Avolio & Sivasubramaniam 2003); is less preferable than authentic leadership (Avolio 2005; Avolio & Gardner 2005); overemphasises the leader's role in transformation; and the FRLM pays insufficient attention to vision (Gill 2011).

Furthermore, the transformational and charismatic theories remain leader-centred, overstate the universality of certain leader attributes for all situations, fail to explain how leaders influence

followers, and which contextual variables may determine the appropriateness of transformational leadership (Yukl 1999; 2006) and assume that the leader will lead all the group members towards particular goals (Gronn 1999; Yukl 1999). The transactional-transformational model is narrowly managerialist (Bryman 2013), in that it focuses on follower performance (Burns 2003); and Burns' (1978; 2003) and Bass' (1985; 1998) concepts of transformational leadership differ so substantially that they cannot be viewed as a single theory (Khanin 2007).

In addition, followers often have unrealistic expectations of visionary leaders, resulting in disappointment if those expectations are not fulfilled; followers may also become too dependent on visionary leaders, who are seen to be in control of situations; and innovation may be inhibited if followers are hesitant to disagree with a visionary leader (Nadler & Tuschman 1990).

Charismatic leadership has been criticised for its conceptualisation (Banks *et al* 2017; Sy *et al* 2018; Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013) and measurement (Banks *et al* 2017), which raises questions about its usefulness in understanding leadership; while charisma has been presented as a multidimensional construct, a parsimonious model has not been developed that explains how those dimensions combined produce charismatic effects, or why they should be considered as a single concept (Van Knippenberg & Sitkin 2013).

With the exception of the organic model, the New Leadership theories are criticised for focusing on the individual rather than the entire organisation, and for failing to account for distributed leadership. In addition, the New Leadership does not explain how the organisational vision and mission may be effectively established, or how values, culture and strategy relate to leadership (Gill 2011).

4.8.3 Relevance to this study

It is posited that most of the New Leadership approaches are irrelevant to this study, primarily because they are too leader-centred. Specifically, it is agreed that the transactional approach does not meet the standards for true leadership, because it is too instrumental. Although charismatic leadership is not particularly relevant to this study, House and Hanges' (2004) notion of 'culturally endorsed implicit leadership theories' embedded in the organisation by organisational and societal cultures is noteworthy, because it relates to the systems theory – specifically the 'leadership concept' discussed as an input from the organisation (environment) affecting the LFD.

Organic leadership is considered to be of particular relevance to this study, in that it demonstrates great similarity with the systems theory, and includes some notions of symbolic interactionism. Specific examples are the following: the lack of formal distinction between leader and follower; its view of leader/followers as interacting partners in sense-making; its suitability for professional and knowledge workers in dynamic contexts; control through factors such as peer pressure and shared values; and interaction between members as a form of leadership (which relates to the symbolic interactionist notion of communication creating relationships and structures, rather than vice versa).

4.9 AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP

4.9.1 Description

The concept of authentic leadership originated from writings on transformational leadership. For instance, Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) distinguished between authentic transformational leaders and pseudo-transformational leaders. Luthans and Avolio (2003) introduced the concept of authentic leadership development, integrating Avolio's (1999) work on life-span leadership development with Luthans' (2002) work on positive organisational behaviour. Luthans and Avolio (2003:243) defined authentic leadership as a process that draws from personal capacities and a highly developed organisational context, and engenders greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviours in leaders and followers, resulting in positive self-development.

George (2003) popularised the concept in the general practice community, positing that purpose, values, heart, relationships and self-discipline are central traits of authentic leaders. Avolio *et al* 2004:4, 15) described authentic leaders as highly aware of their own mind-sets and behaviour, and viewed by others as self-aware, mindful of their context, confident, resilient and moral. Authentic leaders enhance their own and followers' awareness of values or morals, creating a relational foundation for sustainable performance. According to Cooper, Scandura and Schriesheim (2005), authentic leadership theory is multi-dimensional, comprising traits, behaviours, contexts and attributions.

Goffee and Jones (2006) state that the first element of authentic leadership is consistency between words and deeds. Leaders cannot persuade followers to do something if they do not set an example. Secondly, an authentic leader demonstrates coherence between various roles. While it is necessary to play different roles in different contexts, an authentic leader's roles share a common ingredient – the true self – that unites the different roles. This

consistency derives from comfort with self, which is arguably the aspect of authenticity that is most challenging to attain. Leaders who want to reveal to others who they are, must possess self-knowledge *and* have the ability to self-disclose. Some leaders, especially introverted leaders, know themselves well but fail to communicate this effectively to followers. This is exacerbated by the greater speed of contemporary organisations, and thus the pace at which leaders have to make an impact. Similarly, other leaders' efforts at self-disclosure are disadvantaged by a lack of self-knowledge. They communicate a seemingly false image, and are perceived as inauthentic.

Avolio *et al* (2009) summarises four components of authentic leadership that are generally acknowledged in literature: balanced processing (objectively analysing relevant data before making a decision); internalised moral perspective (self-regulating one's behaviour by internal moral standards); relational transparency (presenting one's authentic self by appropriately sharing information and feelings); and self-awareness (demonstrating understanding of one's strengths, weaknesses, and the way one makes sense of the world).

In more recent research, authentic leadership was found to positively influence the following: followers' job satisfaction and job performance (Wong & Laschinger 2013); trust between followers, leaders and the organisation (McCabe & Sambrook 2014); organisational climate (Nelson, Boudrias, Brunet, Morin, De Civita, Savoie & Alderson 2014); structural empowerment, and indirectly job satisfaction (Laschinger & Fida 2015); and follower creativity (Malik, Dhar & Handa 2016).

4.9.2 Critique

Cooper *et al* (2005) question authentic leadership scholars' supposition that the 'true self' that authentic leaders discover through self-awareness is an ethical self. Price (2003:67) suggests that leaders may behave unethically precisely because they are blinded by their own values and may make exceptions of themselves on the grounds that their leadership is authentic.

4.9.3 Relevance to this study

While authenticity is deemed an attractive concept, authentic leadership has little relevance to this study, because it focuses on the leader instead of the leader/follower relationship. In addition, it presents the authentic self of the leader as having an internal origin, whereas symbolic interactionism as a metatheory of this study presents the self as at least partially created through social interaction.

4.10 RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP THEORY

4.10.1 Description

While the more traditional perspectives (such as the trait approach) view leaders as independent agents, the relational approach recognises that organisational phenomena exist in interdependent relationships where multiple meanings constantly emerge (Bradbury & Lichtenstein 2000:252). Transcending one-directional or even mutual leader/follower connections, the relational approach acknowledges leadership “wherever it occurs” and functions as a dynamic system incorporating leadership, contextual and organisational aspects (Hunt & Dodge 2000:448).

While both the entity and the relational approaches regard leadership as a social process, they define ‘process’ differently. The entity approach views leadership processes as centred in individuals’ thought processes as they interact with others. The relational approach views people and organisations as multiple ongoing constructions that are made in interaction, rather than being the makers of interaction (Hosking 2000). Drath (2001) uses the term ‘relational’ to present leadership as a social construction developing from the rich interdependent connections of organisations and their members. Osborn, Hunt and Jauch (2002) note that, in the constructionist relational view, leadership is contextual.

Goffee and Jones (2006) also view leadership as a social construct that is recreated by the relationships between leaders and followers. If leadership is a relationship, there can be no universal leadership traits, because what is effective for one leader will not be effective for the next. Leaders should discover which aspects of themselves they can deploy in a leadership context. Through their interactions, effective leaders use their personal leadership assets to reframe the context they inherited. They do so not merely for their own benefit, but to the advantage of their followers; this forms the foundation for the leadership relationship. Effective leaders, then, are not mere combinations of desirable traits; they actively and mutually nurture and engage in a complex, fragile web of relationships.

Followers expect their leaders to create feelings of excitement, belonging and personal significance for them. Above all, they seek authentic leaders. Without authenticity, significant trust cannot exist. Leadership does not take place in isolation; authenticity must be demonstrated within a *context*. Effective leaders interpret the context and respond accordingly, adding value by displaying a subtle blend of authenticity on the one hand and adaptation on

the other; and of individuality on the one hand and conformity on the other (Goffee & Jones 2006).

From knowing themselves and the context, effective leaders manage relationships by balancing between closeness (displaying affection, empathy, loyalty and warmth) and distance (focusing on work goals and managing follower performance), without resorting to formal hierarchy. This requires good communication. Effective leaders note how followers perceive them, construct compelling narratives about themselves and their contexts, and employ communication channels that work well for them personally. They understand the pace and rhythm of their organisation and its implication for leadership communication (Goffee & Jones 2006).

From the relational perspective, leader-follower roles are neither formal nor predetermined, but people are regarded as consciously acting individuals who exert mutual influence, based on their own and common interests. Thus, there is no clear distinction between leader and follower. Leadership is the result of various interactions between group members and is as such rather unpredictable (Winkler 2010). Furthermore, the relationship – and not the leader – is the essence of leadership (Gill 2011).

Uhl-Bien (2011) suggests that, while the entity perspective on relational leadership focuses on individuals and adopts a variable-based approach, the relational perspective focuses on the processes of social construction through which notions of leadership develop. Thus, 'knowing' is relating, while relating constitutes ongoing meaning making. Meaning is never final – it is always in the process of making, while being constrained by the socio-cultural context. It starts with processes, within which people and leadership are then created.

Leader/followers' actions and interactions both generate the social reality and are influenced by it. People construct and name the context, drawing on and negotiating shared agreements as events unfold and as they interpret and frame their experience. "Precisely because people make sense of the world only through interactions with their environment and others in it, it is the emerging, mutually constituted relationships between leaders, followers, and situation that provide the conditions for leadership to happen" (Uhl-Bien, Maslyn & Ospina 2012:319).

According to Hackman and Johnson (2013), leaders and followers are relational partners who play complementary roles. While leaders exert more influence and take more responsibility for the group, followers are more involved in implementing plans. Most people shift daily between leadership and followership functions. Thus, a group member is not a leader or a follower, but rather a leader/follower. Effective leadership, then, is based on service, not hierarchy.

Similarly, Goffee and Jones (2013:208) assert that leadership is contextual, relational and non-hierarchical, and that the proper object of leadership study is the relationship between the leaders and the led. They contend that there are increasing numbers of 'clever' followers in knowledge-based organisations, who distinguish themselves by generating value disproportionate to the organisational resources available to them. Intellectual capital – knowledge that is of business value to the organisation (Dalkir 2017:3), for example, trademarks, software and ideas – is now a key source of value, and organisations depend increasingly on this small but growing number of 'clever' people. In such organisations, the balance between leaders and followers shifts dramatically. The leader is no longer automatically and exclusively in the foreground or the key source of organisational commitment, and the distinction between leaders and followers is increasingly vague. Many employees alternate between leading and following, albeit with varying degrees of comfort (Goffee & Jones 2013).

Far from being acolytes, 'clever' employees demand time, resources and recognition, and may not be explicitly grateful for these. They need organisations but remain wary of them – rendering the implicit psychological contract even more fragile than before. Leaders are tasked with making their organisations as attractive as possible to these followers who can add substantial value to their organisations. Rather than expressing their own authenticity, leaders should foster authenticity to flower in their clever followers, largely through the task (Goffee & Jones 2013).

According to Stephens and Carmeli (2018:273), contemporary innovations often arise from collaborative creative processes occurring in flatter organisational hierarchies; therefore, it is important to understand address how individuals, regardless of hierarchical position, directly influence one another's creativity. The authors consider relational leadership as the most applicable theoretical approach in these flatter, more communal contexts, since it describes how leadership emerges in relational dynamics across the organisation. Leadership is socially constructed across the hierarchy as individuals assume leader or follower identities and or are not validated as such. This perspective that creativity can be fostered by mutually co-constructed interactions, rather than through the top-down influence of positional leaders on followers, stands in contrast to much of the earlier work on leadership theories and creativity.

4.10.2 Critique

The benefit of a constructionist approach to relational leadership is the ability to explore shared patterns of meaning-making and coordinated leadership behaviour, the relational processes

that comprise relational leadership practice and link relational leadership to the challenges of organising in contemporary contexts, and the conditions and mechanisms by which systems and networks of relations produce different forms of leadership in different contexts (Uhl-Bien *et al* 2012).

However, Drath (2001) states that, because the term 'relational leadership' is relatively new, its meaning is still underdeveloped. Uhl-Bien *et al* (2012) also note that future research in this area should focus less on why relationships are important and how they relate to organisational variables, and more on how they emerge and function in organisational contexts. Another challenge is to move the lens of examination from the individual to capture the relational. To achieve this, relational scholars must expand their paradigms to grasp relationality. Uhl-Bien *et al* (2012) also call for a multi-theoretical lens on relationship leadership, with dialogue among scholars from fields other than leadership. In the latter regard, the authors specifically mention communication as an obvious possibility.

4.10.3 Relevance to this study

Relational leadership theory focuses on the relationship between leader/followers as the focal point of meaning and of leadership, which coincides with the key emphasis of this study. The constructionist perspective echoes the tenets of symbolic interaction, a metatheory of this study, while its emphasis on context and the interdependence between leader/followers relate to the systems theory, the other metatheory of this study. Relational leadership thus formed a central aspect of the theoretical foundation of this study.

In addition, the emergence of 'clever' employees, and their influence on the leadership relationship, is considered noteworthy for this study with its focus on knowledge-based organisational contexts. In this regard, Stephens and Carmeli's (2018) notion that relational leadership is applicable to the fostering of creative work in flatter organisational hierarchies is important, since creativity – the creation of new knowledge – is central in knowledge-based contexts. Finally, the call of Uhl-Bien *et al* (2012) for the involvement of other scholarly fields such as communication in examining relational leadership is encouraging, since it forms part of the objectives of this study.

4.11 SHARED LEADERSHIP

4.11.1 Description

Pearce and Conger (2003:1) describe shared leadership as dynamic, interactive influence among group members with the goal of leading one another to achieve collective goals. This process often involves peer (lateral) influence and at other times involves upward or downward hierarchical influence. Cross-functional teams are the fastest growing organisational unit. In these teams, whether or not there is a formally appointed leader, leadership roles often shift, based on contextual needs for particular knowledge and skills. Thus, leadership is based more on team needs than on hierarchical position, and team members are considered equals. These influence and learning processes transform organisational norms and practices. The complexity of modern-day organisations and their environments increasingly necessitates shared leadership, even at the executive organisational level. It benefits the organisation, because senior leaders may not have access to adequate information to make effective decisions in a complex, dynamic environment (Pearce & Conger 2003).

Shared leadership, also called 'distributed', 'collective' or 'pluralised' leadership, is one of the post-heroic approaches to leadership. Its view of the leader role as shifting and not dependent on formal position, differentiates it from the notion of the heroic leader portrayed in more traditional, individualistic models of leadership (Fletcher & Kaeufer 2003), such as the trait approach discussed in this chapter. Fletcher (2004:650) states:

... postheroic leadership re-envision the 'who' and 'where' of leadership by focusing on the need to distribute the tasks and responsibilities of leadership up, down, and across the hierarchy. It re-envision the 'what' of leadership by articulating leadership as a social process that occurs in and through human interactions, and it articulates the 'how' of leadership by focusing on the more mutual, less hierarchical leadership practices and skills needed to engage in collaborative, collective learning. It is generally recognised that this shift – from individual to collective, from control to learning, from 'self' to 'self-in-relation', and from power over to power with – is a paradigm shift in what it means to be a positional leader.

According to Day, Gronn and Salas (2004), shared leadership is emergent, developing dynamically during the lifespan of a team and varying according to team dynamics. Pearce (2004:48) describe shared leadership as a "simultaneous, ongoing, mutual influence process within a team that is characterised by 'serial emergence' of official as well as unofficial leaders".

O'Connor (2004:423) notes that when shared leadership is a property of the whole system (not of individuals), leadership effectiveness results from the relationships among organisational members, rather than from any single leader.

Goffee and Jones (2006) maintain that the prevailing misconception that people in senior organisational positions are leaders has precluded an understanding of the true nature of leadership. They argue that the qualities that promote individuals to the top of large organisations are often not leadership traits, but factors such as personal ambition, political acumen, duration of employment or nepotism. They found that advanced organisations have leaders at all levels. While an organisational title may lend hierarchical authority, such authority is “neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition” for leadership (Goffee & Jones 2006:13).

Whereas hierarchical leadership depends on the knowledge of the individual leader, shared leadership draws from collective wisdom. Instead of the top-down influence of vertical leadership, shared leadership constitutes a collaborative process (Ensley, Hmieleski & Pearce 2006:220). This contradicts early leadership approaches focusing on leaders’ competencies, behaviours and values, where employees were viewed as “interchangeable drones” (Pearce 2007:355). Avolio *et al* (2009) state that they discover more shared leadership in organisations as hierarchical levels are removed and team-based structures are established. They argue that shared leadership is important in knowledge-based contexts, where organisations operate cross-culturally.

Friedrich, Vessey, Schuelke, Ruark and Mumford (2009) developed a framework for collective leadership that emphasises the application of leader and team expertise in networks. In their framework, collective leadership comprises three core constructs: networks are the channels through which communication is enacted; in addition to leaders’ personal networks, the network among team members is vital for collective leadership; collective leadership thus comprises exchange behaviours across formal and informal networks.

Turnbull James (2011) contends that traditional, simplistic views of top-down leadership must be expanded to meet complex organisational needs in the contemporary knowledge economy. Many complex leadership issues cannot be addressed by a single leader, even at the highest organisational level. Because post-heroic leadership involves multiple actors who assume both formal and informal leadership roles and share leadership by collaborating across organisational boundaries, leadership is distributed away from the senior hierarchical positions to many levels. However, shared leadership entails more than a greater number of leaders, or leaders at many hierarchical levels. It manifests as new practices and innovations. The emphasis is on connectedness within the organisation, and change in organisational

processes. Thus, leadership development ‘in context’, more than helping individual leaders adapt to a specific locale, requires people from that locale to collaborate to learn to lead together (Turnbull James 2011).

Other scholarship suggests the following on shared leadership: leader and follower roles are flexible as opposed to defined or static (Kramer & Crespy 2011), and a single individual may be labelled ‘leader’ in one context, but ‘follower’ in another situation involving the same people (Turnbull James 2011), with some individuals who lead never obtaining the label of ‘leader’ (DuBrin 2013). Shared leadership is dynamic and occurs collectively through multiple team and network channels, in which communication (Kramer & Crespy 2011) and interpersonal relationships are central (DuBrin 2013). It is shaped by the subtle, complex dynamics of both formal and informal interactions (Denis, Langley & Sergi 2012).

In addition, shared leadership has been said to replace competition and ‘silo thinking’ with collaboration, is more egalitarian than traditional leadership, can take place from the bottom up in the organisation hierarchy (Turnbull James 2011), and is thus disbursed throughout the organisation (Northouse 2013). Leadership is thus a partnership between leaders and followers (DuBrin 2013) who share accountability. Employees may co-create new knowledge, instead of merely implementing plans devised by top management (Turnbull James 2011). Shared leadership contributes to both individual and team creativity, through knowledge sharing (Gu, Chen, Huang, Liu & Huang 2016). For this leadership model to be effective, organisations must encourage and support spontaneous collaborations (Turnbull James 2011).

4.11.2 Critique

Pearce and Conger (2003) note that future studies of shared leadership should examine moderators such as cultural values, task interdependence, task competence, task complexity, and the team life cycle. Carson *et al* (2007) criticise proponents of shared leadership for disagreement on its definition. They suggest that greater attention be paid to task competence in the team, complexity of tasks, task interdependence, the team’s life cycle, and how external team leaders affect the team’s self-direction and share in leadership.

Carson *et al* (2007:1222) also propose that future studies explore the type of team environment that facilitates shared leadership, positing that the context comprises three dimensions that could potentially support more shared leadership: shared purpose (where team members have similar understandings of and work towards collective goals); social support (team members’ efforts to support one another emotionally and psychologically, making team members feel

valued); and voice (the degree to which team members can influence how the team reaches its goals). Friedrich *et al* (2009:955) posit that a number of studies on shared leadership are conceptual, and stress the need to further examine connections and the flow of information in social networks.

4.11.3 Relevance to this study

Shared leadership is very relevant for the kind of organisations that are the domain of this study, namely knowledge-based organisations. As was discussed, interpersonal relationships between leaders and their followers (a particular focus of this study) are very important in shared leadership. That, together with the emphasis on interdependence and interchangeability of leader/follower roles, as well as the importance of the organisation in embedding and affirming shared leadership in the organisation, relates strongly with the systems theory, one of the metatheories of this study.

It is agreed that contemporary views of leadership (at least in knowledge-based organisations) should focus less on individual leaders and formal leadership positions, and more on collaborative approaches that shift with contextual demands. Shared leadership focuses largely on teams, and in that respect is less useful for this study, which focuses on dyadic interaction between leader/followers. However, the notion of a dynamic network of shifting leader/follower relations may, for the purpose of this study, be viewed as the immediate suprasystem within which dyadic interpersonal leadership communication takes place.

4.12 SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

4.12.1 Description

Spiritual leadership theory (SLT) was developed from Giacalone and Jurkiewicz's (2003:13) definition of workplace spirituality as an organisational culture of values that "promotes employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected in a way that provides feelings of compassion and joy". In this view, employees have unique spirits and seek to fulfil their spiritual need for transcendence and community at work.

Fry (2003:711) defines spiritual leadership as the values, attitudes and behaviours required to motivate oneself and other people towards a sense of spiritual well-being through calling and

membership. This entails creating a vision through which leaders and followers can experience that life has meaning and that they are making a difference. It also requires establishing an altruistic organisational culture in which leaders and followers have a sense of community, feel understood and appreciated, and feel sincere care and appreciation for themselves and others. Fry (2003:727) states that spiritual leadership creates “a sense of fusion among the four fundamental forces of human existence (body, mind, heart, and spirit)”, which motivates people to perform well, increases their organisational commitment, and gives them a sense of personal joy and peace. From an overview of diverse definitions of spirituality applied to spiritual leadership, Dent, Higgins and Wharff (2005) listed the most common elements as a search for meaning, an inner connection, creativity, energy, reflection, sacredness and transformation.

Research demonstrates that spiritual practices are associated with leadership effectiveness (Reave 2005) and that, in organisations where employees’ spiritual needs are met and aligned with organisational values, levels of employee commitment and productivity, and customer satisfaction are higher (Dushon & Plowman 2005; Fry, Vitucci & Cedillo 2005).

A sense of transcendence (or calling) and social connection are fundamental to SLT, a leadership theory designed to create an intrinsically motivated, learning organisation. As employees go about their daily tasks through belief in a compelling vision, they experience a sense of calling and of making a difference, which results in the sense that life has meaning. Followers’ hope/faith in the organisational vision keeps them focused on the future and creates the desire and expectation that intrinsically motivate them to work towards the vision. In pursuit of this common vision, followers receive altruistic love from the organisation and give it in return, creating a sense of membership (being understood and appreciated) and countering anxiety relating to, for instance, jealousy, selfishness and failure (Fry & Matherly 2006).

In other research, the following was found in relation to spiritual leadership: it involves acknowledging followers as ‘whole beings’; it promotes individuals’ self-awareness, inner peace and stress and depression management; it encourages honesty and reduces selfishness (Honiball, Geldenhuys & Mayer 2014); it is linked to job satisfaction (Van der Walt & De Klerk 2014); it explores how leaders use membership, values, and a sense of calling to motivate followers (Northouse 2018:324).

4.12.2 Critique

The following criticisms of SLT have been expressed: it demonstrates typical characteristics of developing paradigms, including disagreement on a definition of workplace spirituality (Dent,

Higgins & Wharff 2005). For instance, there are two schools of thought in spiritual leadership – one defining spirituality in the theological sense, and the other emphasising how a leader creates inner motivation in followers to enhance workplace spirituality. Given the disagreement on definitions of ‘spirituality’ and ‘leadership’, measuring these constructs are challenging (Avolio *et al* 2009). SLT uses outdated or flawed approaches to spirituality, touching on theories of spirituality without fully developing or reconciling them. While spiritual leadership contributes creatively to leadership research, a more recent and sophisticated understanding of spirituality is required for spiritual leadership theory to endure wider academic scrutiny (Benefiel 2005)

By contrast, SLT has been lauded for the following contributions: it contains elements previously lacking in leadership scholarship, for example leaders’ and followers’ sense of calling, and altruistic love in organisational cultures (Fry 2003); whereas people’s physical and psychological dimensions at work have been thoroughly researched, spiritual leadership addresses the spiritual dimension, which has been neglected. Spirituality plays a significant role in the workplace, and in the 21st century in particular, organisations must incorporate it to enhance employees’ work experience (Van der Walt & De Klerk 2014).

4.12.3 Relevance to this study

It is argued that spirituality is an important aspect of being human and of leadership (Smith & Louw 2007). Goffee and Jones (2006:27) and Gill (2011) concur that, while classical views of leadership – such as those of Barnard (1968) and Selznick (1984) – emphasised the capacity of leadership to infuse purpose and meaning in followers’ lives, contemporary leadership scholarship largely neglects the spiritual aspect of human existence (particularly the need for meaning) in favour of economic performance (Glynn & DeJordy 2010:119-120). Podolny, Khurana and Hill-Popper (2005:1) deem this shift problematic; Goffee and Jones (2006:27) hold that an overemphasis on the ends at the expense of the means erodes the moral dimension of leadership. Podolny, Khurana and Besharov (2010:69) suggest that the importance of leadership to organisational life be measured by its capacity to infuse purpose and meaning into the organisation. According to Glynn and DeJordy (2010:142), *how* this takes place is an underdeveloped and potentially fruitful area of leadership scholarship.

In terms of the metatheories of this study – the systems theory and symbolic interactionism – the focus of this study is the LFD, which may include spirituality but is not limited to it. Therefore, SLT in its entirety is not a central focus of this research. However, given the above discussion, the potential role of meaning and purpose in ILR was explored.

4.13 SUMMARY OF THE LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVES

Simple views of the general validity of traits, behaviours or styles cannot fully explain leadership dynamics (Winkler 2010; Yukl 2006). No leadership theory or model has provided a comprehensive explanation of leadership. Many reflect only one philosophical viewpoint or are based on limited, even biased research, explaining limited aspects of leadership and operating as self-fulfilling prophecies (Gill 2011). The results of extensive empirical research remain inconclusive and even contradictory (Gill 2011; Yukl 1989).

Leadership research seems to lack the cumulative theory building of other social sciences. The wide variety of approaches leans to the prediction of performance, neglecting the more abstract facets of leadership (Glynn & DeJordy 2010). These separate tracks (cognitive, behavioural, emotional, moral and spiritual) into which leadership scholarship seems to be divided, remains a weakness thereof, failing to produce a coherent view. The few theories that do combine different tracks, do so superficially. Leadership as a process and the role of context in leadership have been largely neglected (Gill 2011).

In a meta-analysis of empirical leadership studies published in three prominent organisational behaviour journals, Glynn & DeJordy (2010) found that behavioural theories were cited most often (in 44% of the abstracts), followed by contingency (27%), dyadic (18%), trait (17%) and meaning-based perspectives (11%). They found a scarcity of studies on leadership meaning-making, whereas leadership performance appeared in nearly half of the studies.

Centred leadership is one of the few theories that contribute in this regard, through its proposed leadership capability of meaning (infusing work with meaning, based on personal strengths, purpose and happiness). Spiritual leadership emphasises the concept of meaning, and is therefore of particular relevance in this regard. Hackman's (2010:109) view that, in a viable social system, individual members derive at least as much personal fulfilment and learning as frustration from their work within the system, is also relevant in this context.

In light of the above critique, this study makes a contribution in terms of the more abstract qualities of ILR. Specifically, it includes the meaning aspect of spiritual leadership in response to this weakness in contemporary leadership theory.

The relative relevance of each perspective to this study is outlined in Table 4.1. In the header row of the table, the metatheories for this study are summarised in relation to this study. In each column, four leadership perspectives from this chapter are summarised in order of relevance to the metatheory above in the context of this study.

Table 4.1: Leadership perspectives relevant to this study

<p>The systems theory</p> <p>The LFD is a system that consists of interdependent parts (two leader/followers) who, by interacting, create a unique whole that comprises more than the two individuals. The LFD exists within suprasystems and a greater environment that both influence and are influenced by the interaction in the dyad.</p>	<p>Symbolic interactionism</p> <p>The members of the leader/follower dyad communicate symbolically with each other, sharing meaning about their tasks, but also about their relationship. Although this process is affected by pre-existing societal, organisational and relational norms, it also creates the dyad itself and the social structures within which it is embedded.</p>
<p>Constructionist relational leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader/followers are interdependent • The role of the context is emphasised • Interpersonal leadership is a system with leadership, organisational and environmental aspects • There are rich, interdependent connections between the organisation and its leader/follower members • Leaders should balance authenticity and adaptation in the context 	<p>Constructionist relational leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader/followers create shared patterns of meaning-making, from which multiple meanings continuously emerge • Leader/follower relationships (not leaders) are the locus of meaning and leadership • Leadership is a social construct created through leader/follower relationships • There is no clear distinction between leader and follower; both are consciously acting and mutually influencing each other
<p>Organic leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader/followers are interdependent, sharing responsibility and accountability • Control is exerted through group dynamics (not formal structures) • Interpersonal leadership occurs in a dynamic environment, requiring adaptation 	<p>Organic leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reciprocal actions between leader/followers are a focal point • Leader/followers are interacting partners in sense-making • Interaction is a form of leadership
<p>Shared leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader/followers are interdependent • There is a dynamic network of shifting leader/follower relations 	<p>Shared leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader/follower roles are interchangeable • Collaborative interpersonal relationships are central
<p>Spiritual leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared values and meaningful purposes foster connections between leader/followers 	<p>Spiritual leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through interaction, leader/followers redefine shared values and meaningful purposes

From Table 4.1, it can be seen that constructionist relational leadership is the most relevant leadership perspective to this study, both from a systems approach and a symbolic

interactionist approach. Closely related to relational leadership are organic leadership and shared leadership. Spiritual leadership was included not for its relevance to the metatheories of this study (although relevance can be demonstrated, as in Table 4.1) but to facilitate examining of its 'meaning' element in the context of interpersonal leadership communication.

4.14 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented an overview of the major leadership theories since the 1940s: the leadership trait approach, the behavioural or leadership style approach, the situational approach, emergent leadership, servant leadership, leader-member exchange theory, the New Leadership movement, authentic leadership, relational leadership, shared leadership and spiritual leadership.

The *leadership trait approach* views leaders as possessing relatively unique, innate qualities that distinguish them from other people. It is criticised for being too leader-centred and for not offering a conclusive list of leadership traits.

In the *behavioural or leadership style approach*, leaders are viewed to have relatively stable leadership styles, for instance the autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire styles. Studies have demonstrated that some of these styles are more effective than others. This approach is also very leader-centred, and does not account for different contexts.

By contrast, the *situational approach* does consider the context, which is its main strength. From this perspective, leadership styles are not stable; rather, leaders can select different approaches according to the demands of the situation and follower needs.

Emergent leadership recognises that not all influential leaders in an organisation are formally appointed in managerial positions. In this view, an individual (with or without a formal leadership role) may step forward as a leader when the situation demands it.

From the *servant leadership* perspective, a leader transcends his/her self-interest to serve the interests of followers. This kind of leadership tends to enhance followers' trust in their leaders. Key servant leader behaviours include empowerment of followers, humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, providing direction, and stewardship.

Leader-member exchange theory emphasises the dyadic exchanges and resultant relationships that a leader establishes with each of his/her followers. When the leader perceives a follower to be very similar to him/herself, high-quality exchanges result in a role

definition for the follower that transcends his/her job description. By contrast, if the follower is perceived to be dissimilar to the leader, exchanges are relatively formal and low-quality, remaining within the limits of formal role definitions and job descriptions.

The *New Leadership* movement comprises leadership theories of influence, vision and charisma, such as the charismatic, transactional and transformational, visionary, organic, pragmatic and centred leadership approaches. Whereas all of these perspectives have added value to leadership scholarship in various ways, most of them – excepting organic leadership – are faulted for too narrow a focus and for not acknowledging shared leadership.

Authentic leadership emphasises the leader's authenticity, and – in recent versions – the leader's ability to elicit authenticity in his/her followers. Authentic leaders are confident, resilient, moral, highly aware of their own mind-sets and behaviour, and mindful of their context.

Relational leadership places the emphasis on the interdependent relationship between the leader and the follower. In the relational or constructionist approach to relational leadership, which is favoured in this study, meaning is viewed as being constantly created and renegotiated in interaction between leader/followers.

Shared leadership acknowledges that the leadership role may be shared simultaneously or consecutively by various team members, depending on the context and regardless of formal leadership designations. It is a post-heroic leadership approach that stands in contrast to traditional perspectives that viewed leaders as special, unique or heroic.

In *spiritual leadership*, employees are viewed as unique spiritual beings with a need for transcendence and community at work. Spiritual leadership entails creating a meaningful vision and establishing an altruistic organisational culture that fosters a sense of community.

Finally, the leadership perspectives most relevant to the two metatheories of this study (the systems theory and symbolic interactionism), were identified as follows: constructionist relational leadership (where the LFD is viewed as a system in which leader/followers create patterns of meaning-making); organic leadership (where leader/followers are viewed as interdependent partners in sense-making); shared leadership (which assumes a dynamic network of shifting leader/follower relations); and spiritual leadership (which, for the purpose of this study, contributes primarily the importance of higher meaning in work and thus for ILR).

In this chapter, leadership theories were examined in terms of their relevance to the metatheories. In the following chapter, relevant interpersonal communication theories are explored.

CHAPTER 5: THEORIES OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION FROM A LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, an overview was given of the main theoretical perspectives on leadership. Since interpersonal leadership communication (ILC) is a form of interpersonal communication, the latter needs to be examined. The systems theory has a long tradition of application to communication studies, particularly in the area of organisational communication, and was discussed as the first metatheory of this study. Symbolic interactionism is considered a communication theory and was discussed as the second metatheory. Hence, these two theories will not be revisited in this chapter.

Fairhurst (2007) distinguishes between two primary conceptualisations of leadership communication: leadership psychology and discursive leadership. Leadership psychology emphasises the personal, social and structural variables that affect communication, while the context is viewed as relatively stable. In the discursive approach, communication is viewed as a creative force that socially constructs identities, groups, organisations and societies.

It is posited that Fairhurst's (2007) discourse view reflects the essence of symbolic interactionism. Hence, this study follows a discursive view of ILC. Within this broad perspective, the following theoretical perspectives are described, critiqued and their relevance to the present study substantiated in the sections below: the social construction of reality; the basic axioms of relational communication; attribution theory; and Rokeach's comprehensive theory of change. The chapter concludes with a summary of how these theories relate to this study, with specific reference to its metatheories.

5.2 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

5.2.1 Description

Social constructionism, or the social construction of reality, developed from Mead's (1934) interactionist approach to communication. It was articulated by Goffman (1959), Berger and Luckmann (1961; 1966) and Schutz (1967), based on the notion that reality is not an external, objective phenomenon, but is constructed through interaction between people. In this view, all

aspects of reality are socially constructed, including the self (Goffman 1959; Harré 1979; 1984; Harré & Secord 1972) and emotions (Averill 1980a; 1980b; 1986; Harré 1986).

Another aspect of reality that is socially constructed is accounts (explaining or justifying one's behaviour) as a way of constructing reality (McLaughlin, Cody & Rosenstein 1983a; McLaughlin, Cody & O'Hair 1983b). In any event of failure, the participants want to control the meaning for that event. An account that reframes the event enables them to save face and to preserve the relevant relationship (Buttny 1985). For example, if a follower has neglected to perform a certain task, s/he may explain to his/her leader that s/he failed to complete the task because s/he was working on other, more urgent projects.

People are constantly making sense of their experiences. The meanings that communication participants assign to an event are closely linked to the language that they use to account for the event. Although communicators have the power to act, they are also constrained by the rules of action. When these rules are broken, communicators are expected to explain their actions. Consequently, people often plan their actions in terms of how they will explain them subsequently; thus, accounts shape behaviour before it occurs (Shotter 1989).

The relationship between communication (interacting and making accounts) and the experience of reality forms a circle: communication determines how reality is experienced, and the experience of reality influences communication (Shotter 1989). For instance, in most workplaces, all team members must attend team meetings. Every time that a team member attends a team meeting, or make an account to explain why s/he cannot do so, the 'reality' of how team meetings work, is reinforced. This reality, in turn, influences how people interpret communication in that context, for example if a team member comes late or fails to give an account for his/her absence from the meeting.

Social constructivism does not relate to people's outward behavioural response to their inner experiences, but to the relationships between people. People express their moral realities (including rights, duties, privileges and obligations) in and through communication. They must be able "to account, not only for their actions, but also for themselves, i.e. who and what they are" (Shotter 1989:152).

Pearce (1989) stated that examining how a particular phenomenon is constructed through human interaction, is taking the 'communication perspective'. Most aspects of human experience can be viewed from the communication perspective, by studying the resource-practice loop. Resources are the building blocks that people use to build a reality, for instance ideas, values, meanings and institutions. Practices are what people do, for example

expressions and behaviours. Resources and practices are closely connected and interdependent; they cannot be separated.

There are many versions of social constructionism (Krippendorff 1993; Pearce 1992; 1995), but most of them share the following assumptions: people make voluntary communication choices within the constraints of the social environment; knowledge is not objective, but is discovered through interaction; and people derive meanings based on the social context. Collin (1997:2-3) states that “our perception of the material world is affected by the way we *think* or *talk* about it, by our *consensus* about its nature, by the way we *explain* it to each other, and by the *concepts* we use to grasp it”.

Similarly, whereas Jacobs, Kemeny and Manzi (2016:3) acknowledge the existence of an objective material world, the authors emphasise that people gain access to it through language and discourse. Social ‘facts’ are therefore subject to diverse interpretations. The version of social constructionism inspired by symbolic interactionism emphasises social process rather than static structures. Research efforts therefore focus on the whole and on contextualising social situations (Jacobs *et al* 2016:6).

5.2.2 Critique

Ellis (1995; 1999) contests the notion of the social construction of reality, arguing that communication can only occur if people assume that they live in a pre-existing world and are thus communicating about the same thing. This argument is founded on semantic realism and coherentism (Littlejohn 2002). Semantic realism purports that words have standard meanings that remain relatively stable, allowing people to understand one another across contexts. Scientific realism assumes a reality apart from human understanding thereof (a notion that is summarily rejected by social constructionists), whereas semantic realism considers meaning itself as real, but related to an objective reality in that the structure of meaning depends on the structure of reality. According to the coherentist argument, meanings must be verifiable in experience (what people say has to relate to something beyond what they say). For instance, an object has meaning because it can be seen and touched. This does not guarantee perfect sharing of meaning, but provides a clear sense of reality as a guideline for understanding and rationality in human interaction.

With regard to this criticism, social constructionists do not deny that an object can exist apart from social construction (Jacobs *et al* 2016:6). However, the issue is “how it is seen, what it is, and how it relates to other objects in the person’s experience” (Littlejohn 2002:182). People create the meaning of an object within a context that is rich in social meanings. Hence, an

object cannot be meaningful apart from social interaction, and its meaning may differ widely between cultures (Littlejohn 2002).

Bostrom and Donohew (1992) and Sigman (1992) question how generalisable knowledge can be created if reality is socially constructed and communication is context-bound. However, Penman (1992) notes that communication theory should not be judged in terms of whether it establishes standard criteria, but on the grounds of its usefulness and whether it enriches human experience.

5.2.3 Relevance to this study

It is posited that social constructionism has much potential for enriching understanding of interpersonal leadership relations (ILR) within the leader/follower dyad (LFD), and the social realities that are constructed through it. Social constructionism is strongly related to symbolic interactionism. It is also linked to the systems theory, in that from the latter perspective each LFD is holistic (the dyad being more than the sum of its parts) because of the unique social realities that are constructed through ILC in the dyad. Social constructionism is therefore considered to be very relevant to this study.

5.3 WATZLAWICK, BEAVIN BAVELAS AND JACKSON'S AXIOMS OF RELATIONAL COMMUNICATION

5.3.1 Description

The Palo Alto Group is a group of researchers who were named after their geographical location – Palo Alto, California in the United States of America. Basing their research on the work of Bateson (1958), the group comprised Gregory Bateson himself, as well as Janet Beavin Bavelas, Don Jackson, Carlos Sluzki, Paul Watzlawick and John Weakland (Escudero 2009). Watzlawick *et al* (1967/2011) strongly influenced the study of interpersonal communication, viewing relationship as systems within which people create and recreate interaction patterns. Their focus on communication in relational systems presented an alternative perspective on communication to the traditional view, which emphasised communicators' intrapersonal traits.

Watzlawick *et al* (1967/2011) considered the content of interaction as less important than its relationship aspect. An examination of interpersonal leadership communication, then, would

have to look beyond an exchange of messages, to the relationship within which communication takes place and towards which communication contributes. Similarly, Bateson (1972) argued that when two individuals are interacting, they not only communicate about a particular subject, but also about their relationship.

Burgoon and Hale (1984:194) posited that relational messages are both “primary themes for relational discourse and... the dimensions along which partners interpret and define their interpersonal relationships”. These messages, then, provide a structure for interpreting communication, but also for guiding future behaviour in a specific relationship (Burgoon & Hale 1984; Dillard, Solomon & Samp 1996).

Dominance and intimacy are the most important constructs in relational communication constructs (Dillard, Solomon & Palmer 1999; Mikkelsen, Sloan & Hesse 2017; Solomon, Dillard, & Anderson 2002). Dominance can be defined as a person’s attempt to regulate another’s behaviour (Burgoon, Johnson & Koch 1998; Dillard *et al* 1999). It comprises the dimensions of influence, conversational control, poise, panache, and self-assurance (Burgoon *et al* 1009; Burgoon & Dunbar 2000). Intimacy can be described as the degree of positive regard one person has for another (Burgoon & Le Poire 1999; Dillard *et al* 1999; Mikkelsen *et al* 2017), and includes the dimensions of affection/involvement, similarity/depth and receptivity/trust (Burgoon & Hale 1987).

According to Burgoon *et al* (1984), relational communication has been used to analyse both verbal and nonverbal messages and has been applied to various types of relationships and contexts, such as marriages (Ben-Ari & Lavee, 2007; Kelley & Burgoon, 1991), romantic relationships (McLaren, Solomon & Priem 2012), parent-child relationships (McLaren & Pederson 2014), mediated communication (Ramirez, Sumner, Fleuriet & Cole 2015; Walther 1994), instructional communication (Rudick & Golsan 2014) and health care (Siminoff & Step 2011).

Contemporary relational communication theory encompasses a variety of approaches, most of which share the following assumptions: relationships are always inextricably bound to communication; the nature of relationships is determined by the communication between its members; relationships are mostly defined implicitly, not explicitly; and relationships change over time through negotiation by its members (Montgomery 1992).

Watzlawick *et al* (1967/2011) presented five tentative axioms of relational communication that constituted the centre of their theoretical perspective: one cannot *not* communicate; every interaction involves content messages and relationship messages; communicators punctuate or organise interaction into meaningful patterns; people use both digital and analogic codes in

communicating; and communicators may interact in symmetrical or complementary ways. These will be described briefly below.

5.3.1.1 *Axiom 1: One cannot not communicate*

According to Axiom 1, one cannot *not* communicate (Dainton & Zelley 2017; Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson 2017): “activity or inactivity, words or silence all have message value: they influence others and these others, in turn, cannot *not* respond to these communications and are thus themselves communicating” (Watzlawick *et al* 1967/2011:49). This means that any observable behaviour in the presence of another person potentially communicates about the relationship. It also means that the absence of a particular behaviour can communicate. Hence, communication occurs when meaning is received (Watzlawick *et al* 1967/2011). For instance, if a leader does not acknowledge a follower’s presence as the follower enters the room, it can communicate to the follower that s/he is not important to the leader.

Bavelas (1992) subsequently reviewed this axiom, distinguishing between nonverbal behaviour and nonverbal communication. She posited that nonverbal behaviour is non-communicative, because there is no sender-receiver relationship and there is no shared code, even if an observer makes inferences from such behaviour. She considers the original axiom to have a receiver bias, because it ascribes communicative intent to all behaviour that is deemed communication by the receiver. However, Miller (2002) maintains that, regardless of the revision, the major argument of the axiom – that meaning is inferred from various communication behaviours in relational systems – remains central to the relational approach. This axiom emphasises the social context of communication (Escudero 2009).

5.3.1.2 *Axiom 2: Communication has a content level and a relationship level*

Axiom 2 states that “every communication has a content and a relational aspect such that the latter classifies the former and is therefore metacommunication” (Watzlawick *et al* 1967/2011:54). Thus, every interaction contains content messages (information) and relationship messages, or ‘commentary’ on a relationship level (Dainton & Zelley 2017; Watzlawick *et al* 1967/2011), imposing behaviour (Watzlawick *et al* 2017). For instance, if Leader/follower A tells Leader/follower B to review a report, the content level of the message is the literal instruction, while at a relationship level, the implication is that A has the authority to give instructions to B.

Relationship messages are based on assertions such as ‘this is how I see myself’, ‘this is how I see you’, and ‘this is how I see you seeing me’. However, they are seldom formulated

consciously or intentionally. Indeed, the healthier a relationship, the more relational messages seem to recede into the background; by contrast, unhealthy relationships are dominated by contention about the nature of the relationship, at the expense of the content level of communication (Watzlawick *et al* 1967/2011; Watzlawick *et al* 2017).

Ruesch and Bateson (1968) state that every term or inflection of voice that conveys aspects such as respect or contempt, or condescension or dependency, makes a statement about the relationship between individuals. However, a relationship is not defined by a single individual, but rather by the nature of the ongoing communication between the individuals in the relationship. Therefore, analysing relational communication necessitates a focus on the relationship between messages (Parks 1977). Burgoon and Hale (1984) and Burgoon, Buller, Hale and DeTurck (1984) identified four aspects of relational communication that are typically conveyed: emotional arousal, composure and formality; intimacy and similarity; immediacy (liking or attraction); and dominance-submission.

The relational level is the higher level of meaning, where communicators “offer definitions of self in relation to other and simultaneously co-produce the patterns that characterise their relationship” (Rogers 2009:834). This metacommunication (generally defined as communication about communication) can be implicit or explicit (Leeds-Hurwitz 2009). An example of an explicit relational message is, “Did you mean to embarrass me?” An example of an implicit relational message is jokingly saying to someone, “You are fired!” where the relational meaning negates the content meaning. Whereas content meaning is the literal meaning of communication, relational meaning is the implications of the message for the relationship (Wood 2016).

5.3.1.3 *Axiom 3: Communicators punctuate interaction into meaningful patterns*

According to Axiom 3, communicators punctuate interaction sequences to make sense of them (Watzlawick *et al* 1967/2011), organising them into causes and effects (Dainton & Zelle 2017). Certain behaviours are then perceived to be a response to other behaviours. Hence, behaviours are punctuated into larger patterns, which aids in interpreting the entire interaction. This grouping is mostly a matter of personal perception, and participants will not necessarily punctuate their interaction in the same way (Watzlawick *et al* 1967/2011). Thus, Leader/follower A may think she is responding to Leader/follower B’s behaviour, while B views his own behaviour as a response to A. Hence, A and B have different meanings for the interaction.

Two individuals' punctuation of the same interaction can be widely different (Dainton & Zelley 2017), and many relationship problems are caused by disagreement on punctuating certain events (Watzlawick *et al* 2017) and, particularly, people's inability to metacommunicate about how they respectively organise their interaction (Watzlawick *et al* 1967/2011). Ultimately, punctuations of interactions may be transferred to the relationship as a whole (Miller 2002).

5.3.1.4 *Axiom 4: Interaction entails digital and analogic codes*

Axiom 4 states that relational communication entails both digital and analogic codes (Dainton & Zelley 2017; Watzlawick *et al* 1967/2011). Digital codes are arbitrary, for the sign has no intrinsic relation to the referent. For example, if one leader/follower refers to a 'meeting', there is no apparent connection between the word and the event to which it refers. Language is the most common digital code in human communication. By contrast, analogic signs can resemble the referent or be part of what is signified. Most analogic signs in human communication are nonverbal (Watzlawick *et al* 1967/2011). For instance, a map of the organisation's premises partially resembles the premises, and a leader/follower's voice raised in anger does not only signify the anger, but is part of the emotional response itself.

Digital signs are discreet, which means that they are either uttered or not uttered. A word can be uttered but not partially uttered, because a partial utterance no longer constitutes the word. By contrast, analogic signs are continuous, possessing degrees of intensity or longevity (Watzlawick *et al* 1967/2011). For example, a facial expression of anger can vary on a continuum between no expression and extreme facial distortion.

In ongoing communication, digital and analogic codes blend (Watzlawick *et al* 1967/2011). For instance, a word (digital sign) can be uttered loudly or softly (analogic sign). However, they typically serve different functions. Digital signs have fairly precise meanings, and thus communicate the content aspect of the message. Analogic signs have rich connotations and usually convey the relationship aspect of the message (Watzlawick *et al* 1967/2011).

5.3.1.5 *Axiom 5: Communicators interact in symmetrical or complementary patterns*

According to Axiom 5, "all communicational interchanges are either symmetrical or complementary, depending on whether they are based on equality or difference" (Watzlawick *et al* 1967/2011:70). A symmetrical interaction (Dainton & Zelley 2017) results from equality or mirroring, where communicators behave similarly. When the communicators behave in opposing but interdependent ways, their relationship is complementary (Dainton & Zelley 2017; Watzlawick *et al* 1967/2011). For example, two leader/followers communicate symmetrically

when they are both trying to dominate a conversation by speaking. If one is speaking and the other one is content to listen, they are behaving in a complementary manner. A symmetrical or complementary relationship then develops through interaction that becomes ritualised over time (Escudero 2009).

Symmetry in relationships can be categorised into three types: competitive symmetry, submissive symmetry and neutralised symmetry. In competitive symmetry, both communicators send messages that assert relational definition, whereas in submissive symmetry, they convey messages that seek or accept relational definition. In neutralised symmetry, relational definition is minimised or levelled out by both communicators (Millar & Rogers 1976).

A high degree of competitive symmetry seems to bring division between relationship participants, where joint activities decrease and individuals more frequently act alone. Conflict often takes place more frequently and openly. Participants may hesitate to dissolve the relationship, fearing that the other participant will interpret it as a sign of weakness. Interactions with a high degree of competitive symmetry may also contain a high number of threatening and intimidating messages. Such messages aim to lower the other participant's status, while binding him/her to the relational definition presented (Lederer & Jackson 1968).

5.3.2 Critique

The relational perspective on communication made a significant contribution to the field of interpersonal communication by focusing on the relational or transactional aspects of communication. As such, it provides predictions and explanations of various interpersonal aspects (Parks 1977). Littlejohn (2002) asserts that relational communication theory contributes a focus on process and development, is an important field of study, and provides a great deal of insight despite its shortcomings. According to Dainton and Zelle (2017), the axioms of relational communication provide explanations for miscommunication.

However, Motley (1990) finds the first axiom of relational communication (one cannot not communicate) confusing. Wilmot (1980) refers to confusion about metacommunication, which seems to have several definitions, while Bochner and Krueger (1979:203) describes it as "muddled and confusing".

According to (Parks 1977), complementary exchanges have received more scholarly attention than symmetrical exchanges, and research on the precursors and results of complementarity is rare and poorly integrated. In addition, the nonverbal aspects of relational communication

can be developed further, in light of the common belief that most relational messages are nonverbal (Beels & Feuber 1969; Jackson 1965; Lederer & Jackson 1968; Watzlawick *et al* 1967/2011). In addition, (Parks 1977) proposed that more attention be given to the role of power and influence in relational communication, and contexts other than the family, including business relationships. Notably, this study explores the LFD within the organisation (that is, a business relationship).

5.3.3 Relevance to this study

For the purpose of this study, it is agreed that the five axioms of relational communication do not provide a complete and consistent explanation of relational communication. However, a relational communication perspective is highly relevant to this study with its emphasis on, amongst others, relational leadership within a systems and symbolic interactionist perspective. The five axioms are helpful in examining interpersonal leadership communication, with Axioms 2 and 3 being highly relevant, and Axioms 1, 4 and 5 being moderately relevant to this study.

Axiom 2 (every interaction involves content and relational messages) is highly relevant because the relational aspect of communication is central to this study, particularly from a symbolic interactionist viewpoint, where it is posited that leader/followers in the LFD constantly define and redefine their relationship through communication.

Axiom 3 (communicators punctuate or organise interaction into meaningful patterns) is highly relevant because this punctuation is integral to defining a relationship. If Member A of the leader/follower dyad views the Member B's aloof behaviour as a response to A's behaviour (rather than a stimulus for A's behaviour), the meaning of the interaction and of the relationship changes significantly for A.

Axiom 1 (one cannot not communicate) is moderately relevant to this study. For the purpose of this study, it is not viewed as valid in the strictest sense, because symbolic interactionism (a metatheory of this study) emphasises deliberate communication and sharing of meaning, and the interdependence between system parts described in the systems theory (the other metatheory of this study) underlines the mutuality of ILR. However, Axiom 1 implies that an action or non-action can be interpreted by the receiver as having meaning, and such perceptions – whether accurate or not – do have consequences for how the receiver will define the relationship.

Axiom 4 (people use both digital and analogic codes in communicating) is moderately relevant to this study, because it posits that an examination of ILC should include nonverbal as well as verbal communication aspects.

Axiom 5 (communicators may interact in symmetrical or complementary ways) is moderately relevant to this study, because it suggests that leader/follower interactions can either be symmetrical or complementary, and that such patterns may be reinforced over time. This was not a particular focus of this study.

5.4 ATTRIBUTION THEORY

5.4.1 Description

Attribution theory is rooted in social psychology, originating from the research of Heider (1958), Jones and Davis (1965) and Kelley (1967). According to this perspective, people seek to understand observed events (including their own and others' behaviour) by attributing them to specific causes. These attributions reduce ambiguity in social situations, helping people to order, interpret and respond appropriately to social stimuli.

Heider (1958) proposed that attributions develop in three steps: observing behaviour; determining whether the behaviour is deliberate; and categorising the behaviour as internally or externally motivated. He noted several kinds of causal attributions, such as the following: situational causes (being affected by the environment); personal effects (personal influences); ability (capacity to perform an action); effort (attempting to perform an action); desire (wanting to perform an action); sentiment (feeling like performing an action); belonging (going along with something); obligation (feeling one ought to perform an action); and permission (being allowed to perform an action). The relationship between observable behaviour and attributed cause is not necessarily a single connection; several behaviours may be attributed to one cause, or one behaviour may be attributed to a variety of causes. People then seek to resolve such ambiguities during interaction, while also taking into account the context.

Heider (1958:120-121) stated that “attributions and cognitions are influenced by the mere subjective forces of needs and wishes as well as by the more objective evidence presented in the raw material”. Attribution is affected by personal psychology, including a person's ‘meanings’, which enable him/her to integrate perceptions into patterns that will aid in making sense of reality. Because people have a need for consistency, their attributions become integrated and consistent – that is, they attribute new actions to causes in line with previous

beliefs and perceptions (Heider, 1958). For instance, Leader/follower A may believe Leader/follower B to be highly competent. When B performs a particular task very well, A then attributes B's performance to competence (as opposed to, for instance, luck). People have different ways of establishing patterns and resolving ambiguities; Heider (1958) calls these 'perceptual styles'.

Jones and Davis (1965), Jones and McGillis (1976) and Kelley (1967) emphasised the influence of beliefs, sets, and the integration of information in attribution. Beckman (1970) found that actors in and observers of an interaction may attribute achievement behaviour to different causes, and that people make more ego-enhancing attributions when they are directly involved in the success and failure of others.

Kelley (1971) posited that there are three general principles guiding people's attributions: consensus (how other people would behave in the same circumstances); consistency (whether the actor being observed usually behaves similarly in comparable situations); and distinctiveness (variations in the actor's behaviour across situations). Frieze and Weiner (1971) found that, in attributing success or failure to causes, people differ greatly in terms of the information that they use, and how they organise that information.

Jones and Nisbett (1971) posited that people tend to attribute their own behaviour to external causes, while ascribing others' behaviour to personal traits. They suggested that effort may be perceived as a stable trait in judgments of others, but an unstable trait in self-judgments. Kelley (1972) found that the more extreme the behaviour that is interpreted, the more likely the attributor will assume multiple causes. When an observer has empathy with an actor's perspective in a situation, s/he tends to make similar attributions to the actor's (Regan & Totten 1975).

Berscheid, Graziano, Monson and Dermer (1976) found that an individual's attribution may be influenced by the target person: the greater the latter's power to reward and punish the attributor, the more important it is for the attributor to understand the target person's behaviour, and thus the more motivated s/he is to engage in attribution. Ross (1977) referred to attributors' tendency to underestimate the influence of situational factors and overestimate that of personal traits as the 'fundamental attribution error'.

Reviewing attribution work, Kelley and Michela (1980) distinguished between the terms 'attribution theory' (analyses of various factors affecting perceived causation) and 'attributional theories' (analyses of the consequences of attributions), positing that causal attributions play a central role in both types of theories. This summary is depicted in Figure 5.1.

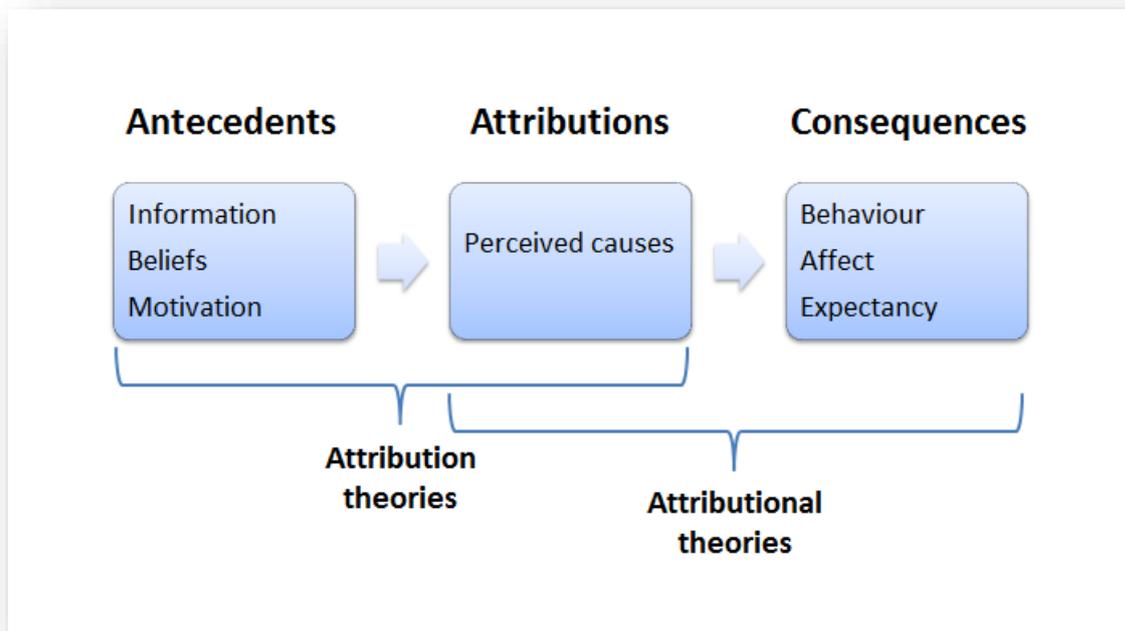


Figure 5.1: Kelley and Michela's model of attribution research

Sillars (1980a; 1980b) found that attributions strongly influence conflict resolution strategies. Attributing self-blame or perceiving the other party as cooperative led to more cooperative strategies. By contrast, attributing blame or negative personality traits to the other party led to competitive strategies. Due to the fundamental attribution error, both parties blamed the other for the conflict, perceiving themselves as merely responding to it.

People tend to accept more causal responsibility for their positive than for their negative results. Presumably, this is due to a desire to protect their self-regard (Greenwald 1980). Weary (1980) suggested that self-enhancing attributions for success are influenced by and maintain positive emotions, and self-protective attributions are influenced by and lessen strongly negative emotions.

Von Baeyer, Sherk and Zanna (1981) reported that stereotyped attributions about men and women may affect communication by causing participants to confirm the stereotypes through their behaviour. For example, female job applicants who believed they were being interviewed by a male holding traditional views of women, provided more traditional answers during the interview than did applicants who believed the interviewer held non-traditional views of women. Snyder and Gangestad (1981) and Skrypnek and Snyder (1982) examined how people test their hypotheses about others through interaction with them. They found that such hypothesis-

testing strategies may channel and restrict communication in ways that cause the target person to provide some behavioural confirmation for the attributor's hypothesis.

Kelley (1983) proposed that central events are interpreted in terms of a perceived causal structure that has direction (past to future), extent (proximal-distal), patterning (simple-complex), components of varying stability-instability, both actual and potential features, and various types of causes. He emphasised the need to study attribution in social contexts, particularly in interpersonal communication, where attribution often occurs. According to Harvey and Weary (1984), attribution scholars typically assume that attributions directly influence social interaction. Hence, the attributor is influenced or enabled to take action through the attribution process. If a person violates a social norm (expected behaviour for a given situation), observers tend to make internal attributions. In the absence of situational cues, observers tend to make dispositional attributions (McDermott 2009a).

Attribution theory may be applied to leadership in two ways: followers attribute certain leadership qualities to the leader, based on observing the leader's behaviour; and leaders attribute reasons to followers' behaviour, based on observing followers' behaviour (Winkler 2010). The trigger event preceding an attribution is often unanticipated and ambiguous, and occurs rapidly (Douglas, Kiewitz, Martinko, Harvey, Kim & Chun 2008). An example is an emotional outburst, such as an outburst of anger (Smith 2000; Tangney, Stuewig & Mashek 2007), which is an intense and very common emotion in the workplace (Gibson & Callister 2010; Lazarus & Cohen-Charash 2001).

Interpersonal attribution thus begins with observing another leader/follower's outburst (Hoover-Dempsey, Plas & Wallston 1986; Weiner 2000; 2014). The observer then determines the valence of the behaviour – whether the outburst represents a positive or negative situation for the actor (Becker, Conroy, Djurdjevic & Gross 2018; Weiner 1985). Next, the observer would explore the causes of the outburst (Harvey, Madison, Martinko, Crook, & Crook 2014). The attribution dimensions most relevant to an emotional outburst in the workplace are locus, controllability, and intentionality (Becker *et al* 2018; Harvey *et al* 2014). According to Dasborough and Ashkanasy (2002), locus (Kelley & Michela, 1980; Weiner, 1985) denotes whether the outburst is attributed to internal causes (e.g. the actor's short temper) or external causes (e.g. a frustrating situation). Controllability (Becker *et al* 2018; Rudolph, Roesch, Greitemeyer & Weiner 2004; Weiner, 1985) refers to whether the cause of the outburst is seen to be under the actor's control (e.g. poorly communicated instructions by the actor) and thus could have been avoided (Vingerhoets & Scheirs 2000), or outside the actor's control (e.g. too much pressure). Intentionality refers to whether the outburst is intentional – for example, using

the outburst to intimidate, or unintentional – for example, the leader/follower was suddenly overcome by an intensely felt emotion (Dasborough & Ashkanasy 2002).

Finally, the particular combination of locus, controllability, and intentionality evokes specific emotional responses in the observer (Hareli 2014; Kelley & Michela 1980; Lazarus 1991; Weiner 1985; Weiner 2014). For instance, attributions of controllability and intentionality have been linked to decreased compassion with the actor (Betancourt 1990; Betancourt & Blair 1992). In turn, these emotional responses influence the observer's future attitudes and behaviours towards the actor (Becker *et al* 2018; Frijda, 1986; Hareli & Parkinson 2008; Hareli & Rafaeli 2008; Van Kleef, Van den Berg & Heerdink 2015; Weiner 1985), and thus influence the LFD (Campos, Walle, Dahl & Main 2011; Fischer & Manstead 2008; Keltner & Haidt 1999; Smith 2000; Tiedens 2001). Behavioural responses often occur in the short term, while the relational consequences of attributions may become evident in the longer term (Fischer & LaFrance 2015; Hoover-Dempsey *et al* 1986).

5.4.2 Critique

Harvey and Weary (1984) maintained that attribution theory is a highly fertile area of scholarship, covering a wide array of disciplines. They suggested further research on, for instance, how cognitive and motivational systems co-influence attribution, and how attribution occurs in dyads and other social systems.

Buss (1978) argued that the terms 'cause' and 'reason' used in attribution theory are not adequately distinguished from each other. He proposed that 'causes' refer to the necessary conditions for a behaviour, and 'reason' refer to the purpose of a behaviour. Harré (1981) and Harris and Harvey (1981) noted several issues and controversies in attribution theory, including a lack of consensus on key terms, and a lack of evidence in certain domains of attribution scholarship. However, this controversy may also reflect the appeal and vitality of the field (Harvey & Weary 1984). Harvey and Weary (1984), Kelley and Michela (1980) and Ostrom (1981) viewed available attribution theory as fragmented, needing synthesis.

Becker *et al* (2018) maintain that attribution theory provides a rich explanation for social attribution and highlights response emotion development, which was previously neglected in organisational research (Martinko, Harvey & Dasborough 2011). Becker *et al* (2018:128) further hold that one of the contributions of the theory is providing a clear account of how interpersonal attributions result in behaviours and outcomes in organisations. It also explains how observing an emotion expression evokes emotional responses in the observer that result in outcomes for the actor (Becker *et al* 2018:131).

5.4.3 Relevance to this study

Attribution theory is relevant to this study, specifically in terms of symbolic interactionism (one of the metatheories of this study), where leader/followers continuously make sense of each other's behaviour, share meaning and redefine their relationship. Attribution theory presents attribution (attributing causes to their own and each other's behaviour) as one of the factors that influence these processes. From the body of research discussed above, it is clear that attributions influence social interaction. Hence, it was posited that attribution influences ILR and that, in turn, the historical context of the LFD influence attributions made within the dyad.

Attribution theory is also relevant to this study in terms of the systems theory, according to which it was posited that leader/followers in the LFD are interdependent, and their interaction affects each individual and the dyad (system) as a whole. Therefore, it was postulated that leader/followers attribute causes to each other's behaviour that affect their ILR.

5.5 ROKEACH'S COMPREHENSIVE THEORY OF CHANGE (BELIEFS, ATTITUDES AND VALUES)

5.5.1 Description

Social psychologist and consistency theorist Milton Rokeach (1969; 1973) proposed that an individuals' behaviour is guided by a system of beliefs, attitudes and values. Beliefs are the statements that people make about self and reality. They may be general or specific, and are organised in the psychological system in terms of centrality to the ego. At the core of the system are central beliefs, which are established and are not easily changed. The periphery of the system comprises numerous insignificant beliefs that are easily changeable. When central beliefs do change, they have a greater impact on the psychological system, affecting other values, beliefs and attitudes.

Attitudes are groups of beliefs about an object that can predispose an individual to behave in a particular way toward the object. Rokeach (1969; 1973) distinguished between two kinds of attitude: attitude towards object, and attitude towards situation. Behaviour flows from the combination of these two. When one does not behave in a particular situation according to one's attitude towards a phenomenon, it may be because one's attitude towards the situation prevents one from doing so. For example, an employee may strongly dislike being shouted at,

but may not react openly negative when his boss shouts at him. Hence, behaviour is the result of a complex interaction between attitudes.

Of the three concepts, Rokeach (1973) regarded values as the most important. Conceptualising them as people's core notions about desirable and undesirable modes of conduct and end states of existence, he distinguished between instrumental and terminal values. Instrumental values are functional guidelines for daily behaviour; for example, working hard may be viewed as a desirable mode of conduct. Terminal values are the ideal, end-state aims in life towards which people strive; for example, equality as an end state of existence may be more desirable than inequality. Values are prioritised within the value system, in terms of their importance to self. Thus, two people with similar values may not rank them in the same order. The following extended definition summarises Rokeach's (1973:25) notion of values and value systems:

To say that a person has a value is to say that he has an enduring prescriptive or proscriptive belief that a specific mode of behaviour or end-state of existence is preferred to an opposite mode of behaviour or end-state. This belief transcends attitudes toward objects and toward situations, it is a standard that guides and determines action, attitudes towards objects and situations, ideology, presentation of self to others, evaluations, judgments, justifications, comparisons of self with others, and attempts to influence others. Values serve adjustive, ego-defensive, knowledge, and self-actualising functions. Instrumental and terminal values are related yet are separately organised into relatively enduring hierarchical organisations along a continuum of importance.

Rokeach (1973) proposed 18 terminal values that motivate people to form attitudes and opinions, and posited that determining their ranking could aid in predicting behaviour. The Rokeach Values Survey (RVS) contained these 18 terminal and also 18 instrumental values, and was widely used for decades. Values develop from personality, culture and social institutions. They are relatively stable, but may change when the individual assumes new roles and responsibilities. Rokeach (1973:20) states:

[Values are] the joint results of sociological as well as psychological forces acting upon the individual – sociological because society and its institutions socialise the individual for the common good to internalise shared conceptions of the desirable; psychological because individual motivations require cognitive expression, justification, and indeed exhortation in socially desirable terms.

People tend to have strong feelings about their central values and defend them when they have to make difficult moral choices, during personal and social conflicts, and whether their values are frustrated or fulfilled. Ultimately, all values serve the self: “a person’s values are conceived to maintain and enhance the master sentiment of self-regard – by helping a person adjust to his society, defend his ego against threat, and test reality” (Rokeach 1973:15).

Hence, whereas beliefs, attitudes and values are the components of the psychological system, self-concept (beliefs about self) is its guiding purpose. Rokeach (1969; 1973) posited that people need consistency; thus, inconsistency generates pressure to change. He considered the entire psychological system and viewed consistency as highly complex; hence the name ‘comprehensive’ theory of change. In this view, the most important inconsistencies in a person’s psychological system involve self-cognitions. Only when inconsistencies relate to the self-concept (causing self-dissatisfaction) will they lead to enduring, significant change, because self-esteem maintenance is the overarching aim of the psychological system. Feather (1975) extended Rokeach’s work on values, and suggested that people employ their value system to assign positive or negative value to actions and their outcomes, making social judgments based on the combination of these two (Feather 2002).

Williams (1979:20) defined a value system as an organised set of preferential standards used to select objects and actions, resolve conflicts, invoke social sanctions, and defend psychological and social choices. Values serve to anticipate and guide conduct, but are also used to justify or explain past behaviour. They are interdependent with beliefs, which orient actors to their presumed reality. While not entirely arbitrary, beliefs may vary. Actual behaviour results from motivations in particular situations, and both the motivations and the definitions of the situation are partly determined by the actor’s prior beliefs and values (Williams 1979).

Values form part of dynamic systems of social interaction because of their interconnectedness, their informational or directive effects, and their capacity to conduct psychological energy. They always possess cultural content, require psychological investment, and are influenced by the opportunities and constraints of a social system and a biophysical environment. Changes in values are limited by external ‘reality constraints’ and by internal dimensions of appropriateness of and consistency among values and beliefs (Williams 1979). Schwartz (1992) argued that values constitute cognitive/emotional transformations of needs or drives into goals. Every value, then, is a goal that reflects one or more of the following requirements (Schwartz 1994): needs of individuals as biological organisms, requisites of coordinated social interaction, and survival and welfare requirements of groups.

Values have been linked to behaviour (Bardi & Schwartz 2003; Schwartz 2009). Firstly, they influence choices (Cieciuch, Schwartz & Davidov 2015) because people act in order to achieve the goals expressed by their values (Caprara, Schwartz, Capanna, Vecchione & Barbaranelli 2006). Secondly, values influence behaviour through planning. The higher a person prioritises a value, the more likely s/he will devise action plans to express the value, thus increasing value-consistent behaviour. Thirdly, values influence behaviour through attention and interpretation in situations. People pay more attention to situational aspects that threaten or advance the attainment of their values (Cieciuch *et al* 2015).

Maio (2010) posits that values have a stronger influence on behaviour when people have considered tangible applications of their values and when those applications are typical rather than atypical. According to Louw and Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014), values, attitudes and beliefs form part of a person's frame of reference, or the particular way in which one experiences and interprets reality. An individual's frame of reference has a strong influence on interpersonal communication, since s/he always communicates and assigns meaning from that perspective and its accompanying assumptions.

5.5.2 Critique

Kulich (2009a) asserts that exploring values, whether universal or contextual, remains a dynamic, fertile area of scholarship, with promising work in areas of value application, such as organisational behaviour. According to Kulich (2009b), the RVS brought new impetus to values research and emphasised the importance of measuring values in standardised ways.

While Rokeach's work is limited to an American context (Kulich 2009a), it has been applied internationally, for instance in Ng, Akhtar-Hossain, Ball, Bond, Hayashi, Lim, O'Driscoll, Sinha and Yang's (1982) study of values in nine countries. Bond (1988) reported on this nine-culture study and a 21-culture study of the Chinese Value Survey (CVS), finding five etic value dimensions: three unique to the RVS, one unique to the CVS, and one common to both.

Kulich (2009a) further claims that the specific effect of values on behaviours, beliefs, attitudes and opinions has not been satisfactorily researched, with many studies either overemphasising values or failing to differentiate them adequately from the other aspects of the psychological system. He adds that the interaction of values with identity construction and social axioms needs more research.

Although Kulich (2009b) finds the RVS is easy to use, he criticises it for the following: arbitrary, subjective criteria for item selection; lack of dimensionality (inherent in a two-tier list of items);

an imposed ethic (due to the American context); and its ipsative nature. These weaknesses do not influence this study, because it does not employ the RVS, but only incorporates Rokeach's (1969; 1973) notions of beliefs, attitudes and values.

5.5.3 Relevance to this study

Rokeach (1973:3) posited that the consequences of values are "manifested in virtually all phenomena that social scientists might consider worth investigating and understanding". Because ILR has been emphasised as an important social phenomenon, it is argued that values are a relevant area to be examined in this study. Particularly, values concerning ILR were considered worth exploring.

From the discussion above, it is posited that leader/followers' frames of reference in general, but their values in particular influence their ILR. From a systems perspective, the interaction of the leader/followers (comprising their individual attributes such as values, attitudes and beliefs) renders a system unique and holistic (where the dyad is more than the sum of its parts). In the context of symbolic interactionism, it is argued that a leader/follower's personal values, attitudes and beliefs would influence the meaning s/he would assign to the other dyadic member's communication, and the confluence of the two leader/followers' values (however different or similar they are) would contribute to the definition and redefinition of the leader/follower dyad through interaction. Therefore, Rokeach's comprehensive theory of change is relevant to this study.

5.6 SUMMARY OF THE INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVES ON LEADERSHIP

The relative relevance to this study of each of the interpersonal communication theories described above is summarised in Table 5.1, followed by a brief discussion. As was done in Chapter 4, the metatheories of this study are summarised in the header row of the table as they relate to this study. In the column below each metatheory, the theoretical perspectives in this chapter are listed in order of relevance to that metatheory in the context of this study, with a brief summary of its relevance.

Table 5.1: Interpersonal communication theories relevant to this study

<p style="text-align: center;">The systems theory</p> <p>The LFD is a system that consists of two interdependent parts (leader/followers) who, by interacting, create a unique whole that comprises more than its parts. The dyad exists within suprasystems (team; organisation) and a greater environment (organisation) that both affect and are affected by the ILC in the dyad.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Symbolic interactionism</p> <p>The members of the LFD communicate symbolically with each other, sharing meaning about their tasks, but also about their relationship. Although this process is affected by pre-existing societal, organisational and relational norms, it also creates the dyad itself and the social structures within which it is embedded.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Social constructionism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ILC creates unique social meanings, producing holism in the LFD, where the dyad is more than the sum of its parts • The social meanings in the LFD influence and are influenced by larger suprasystems (e.g. the organisation) 	<p style="text-align: center;">Social constructionism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ILC between the leader/followers in the leader/follower dyad determines how reality is constructed, and the experience of reality influences ILC
<p style="text-align: center;">Rokeach's comprehensive theory of change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interaction between two leader/followers with unique values, beliefs and attitudes (attributes of the system parts) creates holism in the LFD, where the system (dyad) is more than the sum of its parts 	<p style="text-align: center;">The basic axioms of relational communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to Axiom 2, every interaction between two leader/followers has an informational level and a relational level, which adds definition to the relationship • According to Axiom 3, leader/followers punctuate their interactions into meaningful patterns to make sense of their ILC and to define their relationship
<p style="text-align: center;">The basic axioms of relational communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In terms of Axiom 2, the informational but especially the unique relational meanings exchanged between leader/followers add to the holism of the LFD • In terms of Axiom 3, leader/followers punctuate their interactions into meaningful patterns to retain and restore balance in the LFD 	<p style="text-align: center;">Rokeach's comprehensive theory of change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The leader/followers' values, beliefs and attitudes influence how they make sense of their ILC and define their relationship
<p style="text-align: center;">Attribution theory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How leader/followers attribute causes to each other's behaviour will affect their relationship and future ILC 	<p style="text-align: center;">Attribution theory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader/followers attribute causes to each other's behaviour to make sense of their ILC and to redefine their relationship

In Table 5.1, it can be seen that social constructionism is highly relevant to this study, in terms of both metatheories (the systems theory and symbolic interactionism). Although in reverse order, the basic axioms of relational communication and Rokeach's comprehensive theory of change are the next two theories prioritised for this study in terms of its metatheories. As discussed under Item 5.3.3, Axioms 2 and 3 of the five axioms of relational communication were highlighted as the most pertinent to this study.

In the fourth place for both the systems theory and symbolic interactionism is attribution theory, where it is posited that interpersonal leaders' attributions are partially based on their values, beliefs and attitudes. These theories were used in the compilation of a theoretical framework of ILR in this study.

5.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an overview of the following four theoretical perspectives on interpersonal communication that were considered to be relevant to this study: social constructionism, the basic axioms of relational communication, Rokeach's comprehensive theory of change, and attribution theory.

Social constructionism flowed from symbolic interactionism, and is based on the notion that reality is not an external, objective phenomenon, but instead is constructed through human communication. People are constantly making sense of their experiences by assigning meanings to them.

The basic axioms of relational communication were formulated by Watzlawick *et al* (1967/2011), who viewed relationships as systems within which individuals create patterns of interaction. Summarised, these five axioms are: one cannot *not* communicate; every interaction involves content messages and relationship messages; communicators punctuate or organise interaction into meaningful patterns; people use both digital and analogic codes in communicating; and communicators may interact in symmetrical or complementary ways.

According to *attribution theory*, leader/followers seek explanations for observed events by attributing them to specific causes. These attributions aid them in interpreting and responding to other leader/followers' communication. Attribution occurs in three steps: observing behaviour; determining whether the behaviour is deliberate; and categorising the behaviour as internally or externally motivated (Heider 1958).

Milton Rokeach (1969; 1973) proposed that an individuals' behaviour is guided by a system of beliefs, attitudes and values. Considering values as the most important, he defined them as people's core notions about desirable and undesirable modes of conduct and end states of existence. He posited that individuals need consistency; therefore, inconsistency generates pressure to change. His approach was one of the more systemic and complex consistency theories; hence the name *comprehensive theory of change*. He argued that only when inconsistencies involve the self-concept do they lead to significant change.

Finally, the relevance of each of these four theories to this study was summarised and prioritised in Table 5.1, with particular reference to their links to the metatheories of this study – the systems theory and symbolic interactionism.

In the next chapter, existing leadership and communication models relating to ILR are discussed and then used, in conjunction with the theoretical discussion in Chapters 2-5, to draft a theoretical framework as a basis for exploration in this study.

CHAPTER 6: EXISTING ILR-RELATED MODELS AND A PRELIMINARY THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ILR

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous four chapters constituted the theoretical framework for this study in terms of the systems theory and symbolic interactionism as metatheories, relevant theories of leadership, and relevant interpersonal communication theories. This chapter covers the following four extant theoretical models of leadership communication that have some relevance for interpersonal leadership relations (ILR): Barrett's (2006) leadership communication framework, Mitchell's (2014) conceptual framework of leadership communication skills, Hackman and Johnson's (2013) communication perspective on leadership, and the communicative leadership perspective of Johansson, Miller and Hamrin (2014).

Based on this and the preceding theoretical chapters, a preliminary theoretical framework for ILR is presented, consisting of a theoretically grounded definition and a conceptual model.

6.2 BARRETT'S LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK

Barrett (2006:386) defines leadership communication as "the controlled, purposeful transfer of meaning by which leaders influence a single person, a group, an organisation, or a community". From this perspective, it employs a wide range of communication skills and resources to bridge interference and to guide followers to action. According to (Barrett 2006), leadership communication comprises three primary rings – core, managerial and corporate (as indicated in Figure 6.1) – and, as a leader moves up in the organisational hierarchy, communication becomes more complex.

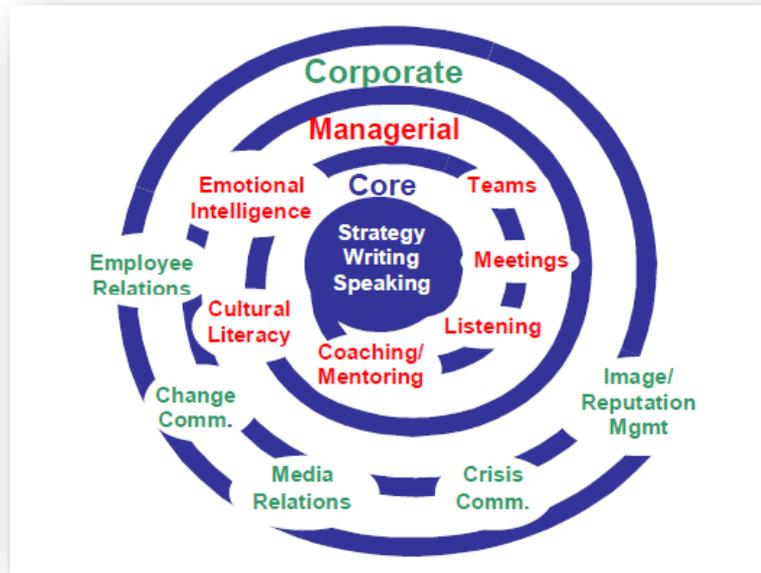


Figure 6.1: Barrett's leadership communication framework

The framework is depicted as a spiral, rather than a hierarchy, illustrating that effective communication is founded on the (more individual) skills at the centre. All organisational leaders must possess these core skills (strategy, writing and speaking), but also skills for leading and managing groups (for example emotional intelligence, cultural literacy and coaching). Ultimately, when they move higher up the organisational hierarchy, they have to master the corporate communication skills in the outer circle, such as employee relations, change communication and media relations (Barrett 2006). Each of these rings are subsequently discussed.

6.2.1 Core communication

Effective communication is based on strategy. In every context, leaders should analyse their audience and strategise to reach their communication goals. Furthermore, they must be adept at all business communication skills, such as writing effectively, using clear, correct and concise language, and confidently delivering interesting and persuasive oral presentations (Barrett 2006).

6.2.2 Managerial communication

Building on the core abilities, managerial communication capabilities enable leaders to relate with and manage people, from one-on-one contact to group and organisational contexts. Foundational to this ring are interpersonal skills and cross-cultural sensitivity. While listening is essential for all interaction, it is placed in this ring because managing others requires truly hearing what they are saying, rather than making assumptions. The managerial ring also comprises managing teams and meetings (Barrett 2006).

6.2.3 Corporate communication

In the corporate communication ring, managerial skills equip leaders to lead organisations and address broader communities. At this level, where managers have to determine the best ways of communicating with internal and external stakeholders, communication becomes even more complex. Good communication still arises from strategy, but strategy becomes more complicated as audiences become larger and more diverse. At this level, leaders are involved in vision development and change management (Barrett 2006).

Leadership communication requires the projection of a positive ethos or character. This enables leaders to influence their audiences strategically, and is based on credibility. For a leader to be perceived as credible, s/he must appear knowledgeable, authoritative, confident, honest, and trustworthy. In building a positive ethos, leaders must be aware of how followers perceive them (Barrett 2006). Barnlund (1962) illustrated the intricacy of perception by stating that when two individuals are together, there are really six people in the room: the individuals as they perceive themselves, each individual as perceived by the other, and the individuals as they may actually be. If Leader/follower A wants to influence Leader/follower B, it is essential for A to know how B perceives him/her. Understanding the audience is crucial in leadership communication, and requires both self-awareness and awareness of others. A follower's receptivity to the leader can be a help or a hindrance in receiving the intended message (Barrett 2006).

A leader can discover how s/he is perceived by developing his/her emotional intelligence and soliciting honest feedback from others (Barrett 2006). Bar-On (2000) defines emotional intelligence as emotional and social knowledge with the following abilities: awareness, understanding and expression of oneself; awareness and understanding of and interacting with others; managing impulses and strong emotions; and adapting to change and solving personal or social problems. For leadership communication, emotional intelligence is required

to assess the context accurately and employ the most suitable leadership approach (Barrett 2006).

6.2.4 Relevance to this study

It should be noted that Barrett's framework is that of leadership communication in general, not interpersonal leadership communication (ILC) specifically. Therefore, it has limited relevance to this study. Furthermore, it is posited that Barrett's model depicts leadership communication as too unilateral (communication from the leader to the follower is emphasised, not vice versa) and too mechanistic (the leader wants to convey a particular message to the receiver, instead of the co-construction of meaning emphasised in symbolic interactionism). However, Barrett's emphasis on emotional intelligence is viewed as useful for this study.

6.3 MITCHELL'S CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Exploring ideal leadership communication from an existential communication viewpoint, Mitchell (2014:269-270) found that leadership communication should include five aspects: being-in-the-world (leaders should acknowledge followers' existence and engage them in open conversations, actively listening to them and considering their viewpoints); 'the Other' (leaders should view followers as unique individuals, allowing them freedom to disagree with decisions); inter-subjectivity (a leader's ability to display empathy towards followers, viewing situations from their perspectives); dialogue (a leader should be able to establish an 'I-Thou' relationship with followers – an open, two-way relationship where mutual respect is essential, which may assist the leader in gaining the support and trust of his/her followers); and indirect communication (where leaders use storytelling, especially in communicating the vision of the organisation, and allow followers to determine what they consider to be the truth in the leaders' communication).

Based on her research, Mitchell (2014:276-285) created a conceptual framework of leadership communication skills. Table 6.1 contains this framework, adapted in the following ways: the descriptions were changed slightly for consistency and to reflect the key concepts used in this study; and two columns – 'Benefits of skill' and 'Obstacles inhibiting skill' were omitted for the sake of brevity and relevance to this study.

Table 6.1: Adaptation of Mitchell’s conceptual framework of leadership communication skills

Leadership communication skill	Associated leadership communication behaviours
Considering followers’ perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging in open conversations with followers • Listening to followers’ points of view • Being willing to learn
Promoting followers’ existence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing an interest in followers as unique individuals • Allowing followers the freedom to make their own decisions • Helping followers with personal problems
Responding appropriately to followers’ problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening with empathy • Viewing situations from followers’ perspectives
Using dialogue when communicating with followers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using open, two-way communication • Showing respect
Using indirect communication to communicate the vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using storytelling • Allowing followers to judge the truth of a leader’s message for themselves
Projecting a positive ethos in writing and speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displaying a positive character • Being credible
Developing an effective communication strategy for all situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning communication and developing a strategy to accomplish communication objectives • Delivering messages in the context in which they appear
Analysing audiences and targeting messages to them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying the target audience and their needs
Communicating with verbal codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligning verbal and nonverbal messages • Using oral and written communication
Communicating with nonverbal codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using nonverbal codes in communication with followers
Avoiding interruptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipating interruptions through audience analysis and developing a communication strategy that facilitates effective message transmission
Being assertive (not aggressive)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being honest/upfront with followers

Leadership communication skill	Associated leadership communication behaviours
Selecting and using the most effective channel and medium to reach the audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting the best channels/mediums to get messages across to the audience
Writing and speaking clearly, concisely and correctly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing a draft and revising it • Choosing words that say what is meant and being clear on what one is trying to say
Preparing and delivering presentations with confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being well prepared and rehearsing one's presentation • Determining the purpose, audience, setting and point of the presentation • Looking at content, design and delivery • Voicing the message correctly • Using the correct body language, movement and language
Displaying emotional intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing one's own emotions and those of others • Possessing the five abilities of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation/drive, empathy and social skills
Displaying cultural intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpreting unfamiliar/ambiguous gestures as compatriots of followers would • Acknowledging different cultural backgrounds
Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging in active listening • Providing learning opportunities • Working to achieve employees' full potential as defined by followers • Helping followers to adapt successfully to the environment • Offering followers constructive feedback about their job performance
Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging in active listening • Helping followers to achieve learning goals • Providing followers with advice
Active listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being engaged and interested in what followers are saying by: paying attention, suspending judgement, reflecting, clarifying, summarising and sharing
Leading small groups, whether in teams or meetings, productively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering open dialogue • Giving employees a sense of belonging • Taking group and individual confidentiality into account

Leadership communication skill	Associated leadership communication behaviours
Managing conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing one's own frame of reference, feelings, words, desires and needs, and assisting the other person to be respected and yet understanding his/her position at the same time • Negotiating through effective verbal and nonverbal communication • Fostering dialogue and attempting to agree on a solution • Using principled negotiation by separating people from the problem, focusing on mutual gain and listening actively • Using mediation (a third party) when needed to reach a settlement • Using humour when it is appropriate
Using self-disclosure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revealing oneself verbally to followers and allowing followers to reveal themselves to leaders • Adopting the 'open area' of the Johari Window
Developing a vision and internal messages that guide and motivate employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a picture of the future • Developing messages as reasons for people to support one's communication strategy • Communicate the vision to employees to make it a reality
Showing authenticity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing that one believes in the vision • Being committed to what one is saying • Showing passion about the vision to inspire follower commitment
Designing and developing external messages to reach the target audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing coherent images and consistency of posture internally and externally • Seeking positive and negative feedback from the external audience

6.3.1 Relevance to this study

Mitchell's (2014) framework is relevant to this study in examining leadership communication in organisations and being executed in South Africa. While leadership communication skills are not a primary focus of this study, they are relevant, especially as Mitchell (2014) embeds them in an existential communication approach, lending them more depth and significance than a mere list of behaviours. Mitchell's (2014) framework covers a broader range of leadership contexts than this study, and as such covers aspects that are not relevant to this research. However, most of the skills cited in Table 6.1 are relevant to the theoretical foundation of this study, for instance 'communicating with verbal codes' and 'communicating with nonverbal codes' reflect one of the axioms of relational communication (Watzlawick *et al* 1967/2011). In addition, Mitchell's (2014) framework places great emphasis on the follower and on interaction with the follower in the leader-follower relationship, which is of particular value to this study.

6.4 HACKMAN AND JOHNSON'S COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE ON LEADERSHIP

According to Hackman and Johnson (2013), leaders and followers work collaboratively towards shared objectives; thus, leaders' roles should not be overemphasised, nor should followers' contributions be overlooked. Rather, leaders and followers are relational partners who play complementary roles. Followers are neither passive nor subservient, but play a vital role as 'constituents', 'stakeholders' or 'collaborators' (Hackman & Johnson 2013:21). Effective leadership, then, is based on service, not hierarchy. True leaders serve rather than rule, recognising that their followers entrust them with leadership. Hackman and Johnson (2013)

From this perspective, leadership is primarily a communication-based activity. Leaders spend much of their time communicating with followers. Greater leadership responsibility requires greater focus on communication, and thus greater communication competence. Hackman and Johnson (2013:11) therefore define leadership as "human (symbolic) communication that modifies the attitudes and behaviours of others in order to meet shared group goals and needs". They posit that the human ability to employ symbols allows for the creation of reality, and state moreover (Hackman & Johnson 2013:10):

A person's communication cannot be viewed separately from the person. Communication is more than a set of behaviours; it is the primary, defining characteristic of a human being. Our view of self and others is shaped, defined, and maintained through communication.

Hackman and Johnson (2013) discuss the following four prominent aspects of leadership from a communication perspective: willingness to communicate, storytelling as leadership, emotional communication competencies, and leaders as impression managers.

6.4.1 Willingness to communicate

According to Hackman and Johnson (2013), leadership effectiveness depends on willingness to interact with others and developing communication skills. Skilful communicators are more likely to influence others. Individuals with a higher willingness to communicate (WTC), communicate more frequently and for longer periods of time than people with low WTC. In turn, increased communication activity leads to positive outcomes in individualistic societies. For instance, higher WTCs are perceived as more credible and attractive; are more often identified as opinion leaders; are more likely to hold leadership positions in small groups; are more likely to be hired and promoted; and are more open to change, enjoying tasks that require thought.

6.4.2 Storytelling as leadership

One of the primary ways in which leaders shape reality is through storytelling in formal and informal contexts (Hackman & Johnson 2013). Stories connect reason, emotion, intuition and the subconscious, presenting an account of reality that affirms or contests existing meaning (Harvey 2006:42). Therefore, storytelling enhances abstract reasoning and analysis, which are recognised aspects of leadership. Through stories, leaders frame events to help followers understand their contexts and solve problems (Harvey 2006). Stories also enable leaders to connect with followers and build a strong sense of affiliation (Hackman & Johnson 2013).

Stories convey important values, inspire followers and describe appropriate behaviour. When leaders tell compelling stories, they influence followers to retell the stories, thus extending the narrative (Hackman & Johnson 2013). Followers thus actively participate, contributing group roles, identity and history, giving the narrative an evolving, negotiated nature (Harvey 2006). This co-creation of meaning is essential to storytelling (Hackman & Johnson 2013).

6.4.3 Emotional communication competencies

While the rational dimension of leadership is critical, effective leaders integrate emotion with cognition, using the following skills (Hackman & Johnson 2013): perceiving, appraising and expressing emotion; attending to others' emotions; using emotion to facilitate thinking; understanding, analysing and employing emotional information; and regulating emotion.

6.4.3.1 *Perceiving, appraising and expressing emotion*

Emotional intelligence begins with the ability to identify, evaluate and express emotional states. While these skills seem simple, 'emotional blind spots' often occur where individuals fail to recognise their effect on the emotions of those with whom they are interacting, are unable to identify their own emotion, or do not know how to express it (Hackman & Johnson 2013).

6.4.3.2 *Attending to others' emotions*

To connect with followers, a leader must understand their emotions. For instance, if leaders fail to notice that their followers are feeling frustrated or discouraged, attempting to inspire them to work harder will probably fail and make the leaders seem disconnected from their followers (Hackman & Johnson 2013).

6.4.3.3 *Using emotion to facilitate thinking*

According to Hackman and Johnson (2013), emotional states influence decision-making. For instance, good moods enhance creativity, while sad moods slow decision-making and encourage more attention to detail. Both emotional states play a role in problem solving. Some problems demand a broad, intuitive approach; others require more linear, logical thought. Emotionally intelligent leaders match the emotional state with the problem. They recognise the dangers of ignoring risks when feeling optimistic, or of being too critical when in a pessimistic mood. Using emotions to facilitate thinking also includes channelling feelings to reach goals, for example using moderate fear of failure to deliver a good presentation.

6.4.3.4 *Understanding, analysing and employing emotional information*

Leaders must be able to link symbols to emotions – to label what they feel and understand the relationship between that label and related terms. For example, ‘anger’ belongs to a collection of words that also includes ‘annoyance’, ‘hostility’ and ‘rage’. These emotions are connected in specific ways – for example, annoyance leads to anger, not vice versa. Some emotions are often accompanied by others; for instance, surprise rarely occurs alone but is usually coupled with an emotion such as happiness or disappointment. Understanding these connections empowers leaders to foster better relationships with followers. For instance, a leader may postpone a meeting with a disagreeable follower if s/he senses that his/her irritation with the individual is likely to escalate into unwanted anger (Hackman & Johnson 2013).

6.4.3.5 *Regulating emotion*

The skill of regulating emotion equips leaders to create the emotions they desire in themselves and in others. Emotionally competent leaders are able to maintain positive moods and repair negative ones, using tactics such as avoiding unpleasant situations, engaging in rewarding tasks, and creating a comfortable work environment. They can also step back from situations and evaluate whether their responses are appropriate. Such evaluation enables them, for instance, to remain calm instead of getting upset, and to be supportive instead of focusing only on the task. Effective leaders also help others maintain and improve their moods, and use these skills to build group cohesion and inspire followers (Hackman & Johnson 2013).

6.4.4 Leaders as impression managers

Hackman and Johnson (2013) posit that, from a communication standpoint, leaders are made, not born. As leaders develop their communication skills, they increase their leadership

competence. Charismatic or transformational leaders are skilled at purposefully creating the impression that they are effective, innovative, moral and competent. Many people are uncomfortable with the notion of impression management, equating playing a role with being insincere and noting that co-workers often get promoted by changing their behaviour to suit the group in which they find themselves. While this may be true of Machiavellian and narcissistic leaders, research indicates that leaders typically employ impression management to convey a public image that is congruent with their self-concept. Followers constantly monitor leaders' behaviour for inconsistencies and tend to 'see through' insincere performances. Because impression management may be used either to support or to undermine group goals, it should be judged by its end results. Ethical impression management meets group needs and, ideally, motivates followers to achieve higher goals (Hackman & Johnson 2013)

6.4.5 Relevance to this study

Hackman and Johnson's (2013) approach to leadership is extremely relevant to this study, specifically their view of leadership as communication-centred, based on service instead of hierarchy. In this context, their emphasis on a leader's willingness to communicate is noteworthy. Their view of communication as creating reality and shaping one's view of self and others is in line with symbolic interactionism (one of the metatheories of this study), while impression management may be equated to the 'Me' in symbolic interactionism.

Hackman and Johnson's (2013) view of the follower as the co-creator of meaning is also in line with symbolic interactionist thinking. The notion of storytelling adds a dimension to leadership as symbolic exchange, while their emotional communication competencies match the aspect of emotional intelligence in both Barrett's (2006) leadership communication framework and Mitchell's (2014) conceptual framework of leadership communication skills.

6.5 JOHANSSON, MILLER AND HAMRIN'S 'COMMUNICATIVE LEADERSHIP'

The term 'communicative leadership' refers to leaders who engage followers in communication. The concept emerged in the late 1990s in response to a changing business environment, and a movement towards value-based leadership. Initially only vaguely defined, the concept was associated with dialogue, openness, feedback, coordination and synergy (Johansson *et al* 2014:148). The contemporary notion of communicative leadership (Johansson *et al* 2014:153) points to leaders who are not merely communicating, but who are

good communicators in their daily responsibilities, outperforming non-communicative leaders in achieving organisational objectives and motivating followers.

Based on the research of scholars such as Fairhurst (2005) and Simonsson (2002), Johansson *et al* (2014) posit that leaders' communication is influenced by the following individual requirements: communication awareness (adapting one's messages to the receiver/s in the context); communication acquaintance, which can be developed through communication training; communication attitude, which influences communication behaviour (for example, leaders who view communication as important will devote time to ILC), and communication ability, which relates to both communication competence and enacting communication in a particular context, which may facilitate or hinder communication.

Johansson *et al* (2014) proposes a theoretical framework for communicative leadership that consists of the following: four central leader communication behaviours, based on early notions of communicative leadership and integrated research findings in the two main historical traditions of communication scholarship (communication behaviour and communication discourse); eight foundational principles of communicative leadership, amalgamated from both quantitative and qualitative research studies; and a theoretically grounded definition of a communicative leader. These aspects are discussed below.

6.5.1 Four central leader communication behaviours

Johansson *et al* (2014) found four common leader communication behaviour categories that apply across various organisational contexts: initiating structure; facilitating work; relational dynamics; and representing the unit. The authors discuss each of these at both the leader-follower level and the work-unit level. For the purpose of this study, the leader-follower level is more relevant and is therefore the only level discussed below.

These sets of communication behaviours can be linked to outcomes on different levels. At the leader-follower level, effective leader communication reportedly results in greater follower role clarity, commitment to the organisation, and being more engaged in work assignments (DeRue *et al* 2011). Because of these effects, communicative leadership produces greater individual performance (DeRue *et al* 2011; Johansson *et al* 2014; Morgeson *et al* 2010).

6.5.1.1 *Initiating structure*

Leaders do the following to initiate structure: planning and allocating tasks (proactively developing assignments, designing clear, complementary roles, and defining priorities and

authority); and setting goals and expectations (setting challenging yet achievable work targets, and maintaining clear standards for individual performance (Johansson *et al* 2014).

6.5.1.2 *Facilitating work*

Facilitating work involves coaching and training followers on the necessary knowledge and skills. Coaching and training develop followers' job skills and include supporting them in learning new tasks, suggesting more effective approaches to tasks, and providing opportunities for improving job skills. Performance feedback comprises giving regular, clear and constructive appraisal of followers' work, including recognition of contributions, balance between positive and negative feedback, and using a respectful tone during evaluations (Johansson *et al* 2014). Performance feedback to employees is essential for facilitating improvement (Morgeson, DeRue & Karam 2010).

6.5.1.3 *Relational dynamics*

Regarding relational dynamics, leaders should be perceived as 'open' listeners, giving feedback, trustworthy (DeRue *et al* 2011; Johansson *et al* 2014; Morgeson *et al* 2010), supportive, and managing conflict constructively. Openness means providing adequate and truthful information, being receptive to feedback, and listening non-defensively. Supportiveness refers to behaving considerately towards followers, taking an interest in their wellbeing, and being available and helpful when needed. Constructive conflict management involves resolving disagreements in a fair and respectful manner (Johansson *et al* 2014).

6.5.1.4 *Representing the unit*

Representing the unit involves exerting upward influence and being able to obtain resources (such as supplies or rewards) from senior management. Upward influence refers to shaping upper management's opinions and actions (Johansson *et al* 2014).

6.5.2 Eight foundational principles of communicative leadership

The eight key principles of communicative leadership put forward by Johansson *et al* (2014) are that communicative leaders: equip followers to self-manage; provide structures that facilitate the work; set clear expectations; are approachable and demonstrate concern for followers; solve problems, respond to feedback, and advocate for the team; provide guidance and help followers to achieve their goals; frame messages and events; and facilitate sense-making. These are discussed briefly below.

6.5.2.1 Communicative leaders coach and equip employees to be self-managing

Communicative leaders coach and equip followers to be self-managing, providing compelling rationales for job designs and individual and team objectives. They solicit followers' input when solving problems and making decisions, improving their own understanding of relevant issues, and reinforcing follower commitment. People are more collaborative when working on joint goals (Johansson *et al* 2014:154). Making decisions together increases people's social commitment to one another and to the decision (Kanji 2008).

6.5.2.2 Communicative leaders provide structures that facilitate the work

Communicative leaders provide structures that facilitate the work. They create effective processes, create safe spaces that invite followers to express themselves, listen and respond to feedback, and are willing to implement change (Johansson *et al* 2014:154). Communicative leaders guide followers through intellectual stimulation, by articulating a vision and by setting an example (Días-Sáenz 2011).

6.5.2.3 Communicative leaders set clear expectations

Communicative leaders set clear expectations, clarifying priorities, long-term goals and short-term objectives, and checking if followers need their help. In collaboration with followers, they set high performance goals and establish how work will be evaluated. Communicative leaders give feedback that is specific, balanced, timely and unconnected to financial rewards. They are also receptive and responsive to negative feedback (Johansson *et al* 2014:154).

6.5.2.4 Communicative leaders are approachable, respectful, and express concern for followers

Communicative leaders are approachable and respectful, and listen to followers' concerns. They promote a positive team climate, show concern for followers and share adequate information truthfully and appropriately (Johansson *et al* 2014:154). Communicative leaders respect and develop followers, encouraging them to contribute to the team (DeRue *et al* 2011).

6.5.2.5 Communicative leaders actively engage in problem solving, follow up on feedback, and advocate for the unit

Communicative leaders actively solve problems, respond to feedback, and advocate for the unit. They seek and share information with followers, peers and superiors to address issues.

They use networking to learn more about the organisational context, unit needs and unit members' abilities. Networking is part of the representing behaviours in the theoretical framework (Johansson *et al* 2014).

6.5.2.6 *Communicative leaders convey direction and help followers to achieve their goals*

Communicative leaders provide direction and help followers to achieve their goals. They comprehend how their team contributes to the organisation's goals, and convey this insight to followers, often through daily informal conversations (Johansson *et al* 2014:155).

6.5.2.7 *Communicative leaders actively frame messages and events*

Communicative leaders actively frame organisational messages, processes and events, knowing that such framing influences followers' sense-making and communication. They deliberately plan and seek feedback on their framing (Johansson *et al* 2014:155). According to (Fairhurst 2005), a leader can learn framing skills, but this competence depends on the leader's motivation and his/her insight into the co-constructed aspects of reality.

6.5.2.8 *Communicative leaders facilitate sense-making*

Communicative leaders facilitate sense-making, recognising that followers constantly make sense of events and communication. Therefore, they use dialogue and stories, and facilitate sense-making in formal and informal interactions (Johansson *et al* 2014:155).

6.5.3 A theoretically grounded definition of a communicative leader

Johansson *et al* (2014:155) define a communicative leader as one who "engages employees in dialogue, actively shares and seeks feedback, practises participative decision making, and is perceived as open and involved". They posit that the behaviours described in their definition are socially co-constructed, shaping leader/followers' interactions.

6.5.4 Communicative leadership and hierarchical levels

Johansson *et al* (2014) present their theoretical framework of 'communicative leadership' as relevant for leaders at top, middle and team levels. For leaders in top management, structuring and representing behaviours may be more important than developing and interacting

behaviours. However, face-to-face communication (openness, listening and strategic messages) is important for employee awareness of strategic goals. Even sophisticated communication systems cannot replace the richness of interpersonal interaction between top-level and frontline managers. Close contact is also essential for developing trust.

Middle managers' representing behaviours are probably stronger than those of team leaders. Middle management's communication is both facilitated and constrained by the organisational environment and relations with top managers. Top management's narration of the rationales leading to the organisational goals informs middle managers how present objectives relate to past ones. In addition, failure by top management to consider and reward middle managers' ideas decreases their motivation to present such ideas (Johansson *et al* 2014:158).

Balogun (2006) and Balogun and Johnson (2005) found that middle management has a considerable impact on the outcomes of organisational strategy, because these managers routinely engage in upward, downward and lateral communication. Thus, they interpret messages in various ways, and also influence each other's sense-making processes (Johansson *et al* 2014:158). Middle managers may encourage different interpretations across hierarchical levels, or they may engage lower-level managers and employees in dialogue to develop a shared understanding in the unit (Thomas, Sargent and Hardy 2011). They use contextually relevant symbols and values to motivate followers. In this manner, they influence how organisational members view the organisation and its values (Smith & Plowman 2010).

6.5.5 Relevance to this study

Of the four central leader communication behaviours (Johansson *et al* 2014), initiating structure and facilitating work are more relevant to management than to leadership, and are moderately relevant to this study in so far as *how* the leader/follower communicates on a relational level while achieving these functions at an informational level. The matter of relational dynamics is highly relevant to ILR; hence the dimensions of this leader behaviour were considered in this study. Representing the unit to senior management is an important aspect of leadership, but less relevant to this study, unless it specifically involves ILC.

Regarding's the principles of communicative leadership (Johansson *et al* 2014), the following principles are relatively unimportant for this study, centring more on management than leadership as a relationship: coaching and equipping employees to self-manage; providing structures that facilitate the work; setting clear expectations; actively solving problems, responding to feedback, and advocating for the team; and giving guidance and helping others to achieve their goals. However, it is suggested that the manner in which these functions are

performed or especially neglected will have relational implications from a systems perspective, a symbolic interactionism perspective and particularly the perspective of Axiom 1 (one cannot *not* communicate) of relational communication (Watzlawick *et al* 1967/2011).

The following principles of communicative leadership (Johansson *et al* 2014) are considered highly relevant to this study, in terms of facilitating ILR from a systems perspective and a symbolic interactionism perspective: being approachable and respectful, and expressing concern for the other leader/follower; actively framing messages and events; and facilitating sense-making. These were taken into account for this study.

The definition of a communicative leader (Johansson *et al* 2014:155) cited under Item 6.5.3 is highly relevant to this study. Although Johansson *et al* (2014) state that their definition and framework comprises socially co-constructed behaviours, such social co-construction and the implied interchangeability of the leader/follower roles were emphasised even more strongly in this study, both from a systems perspective and a symbolic interactionism perspective.

6.6 A PRELIMINARY CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR ILR

Based on the theoretical foundation of this study as discussed in Chapters 2-6, a preliminary conceptual framework for ILR in knowledge-based contexts is presented in this section. The preliminary framework consists of a definition and a model, which was subsequently adapted and expanded, based on the results of this study.

6.6.1 Preliminary definition of ILR

The preliminary definition of ILR in knowledge-based organisational contexts is formulated as follows:

Interpersonal leadership relations is a dynamic, relational process in which two or more leader/followers share meaning through symbolic interaction at an informational level to collaborate on a task, and at a relational level to define and redefine their selves and their relationship.

6.6.2 Preliminary model of ILR

Based on the theoretical research in Chapters 2-6, a preliminary model of interpersonal leadership communication is presented in Figure 6.3.

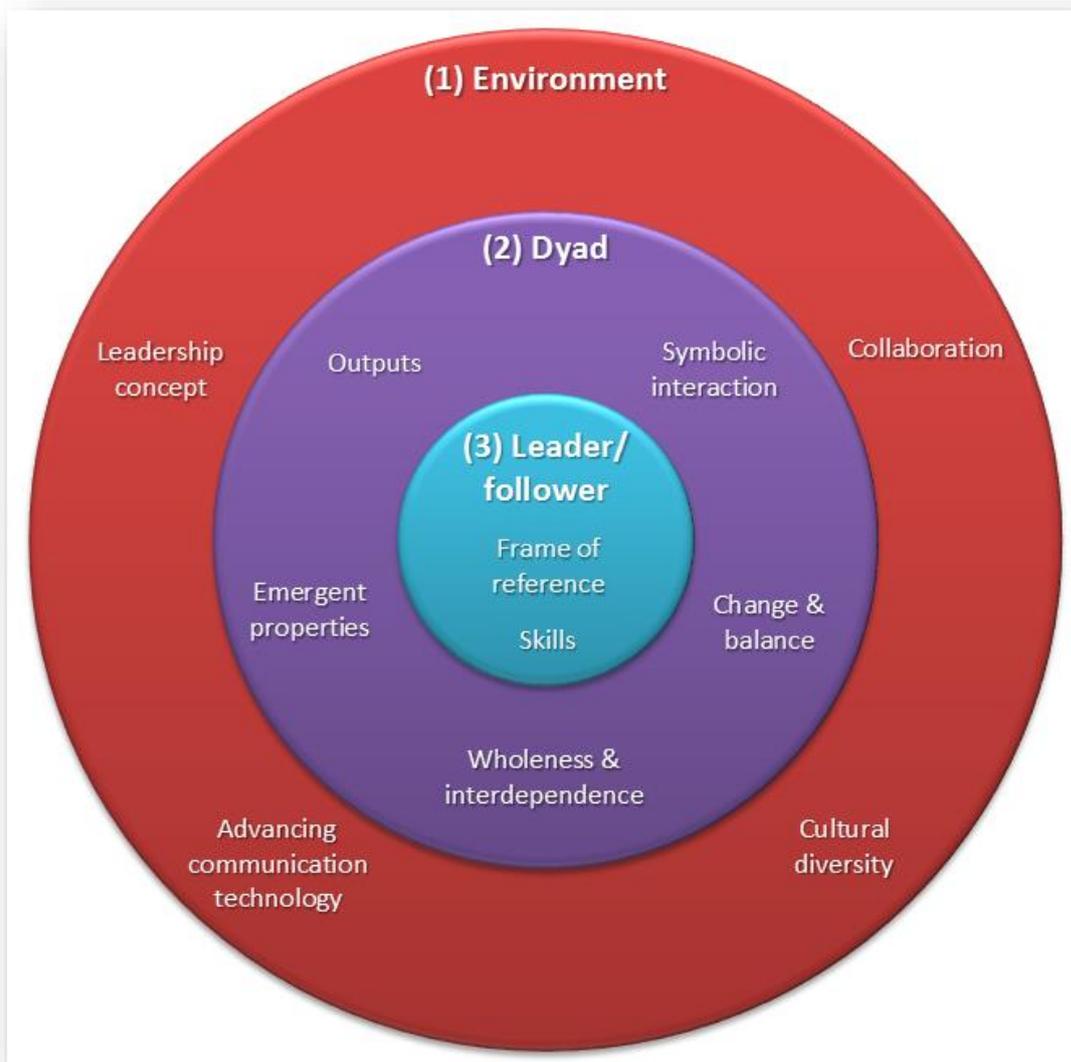


Figure 6.2: Preliminary model of ILR

As proposed by Martin and O'Connor (1989), referenced under Item 2.3.1, this study followed a synthetic (antireductionist) approach to studying ILR in knowledge-based organisational contexts. Thus, the environment of the system was examined first, then the system (LFD) itself, with particular reference to ILC in the dyad, and only then were the system parts (individual leader/followers) briefly explored. Throughout the three-stage process, attention was given to the dynamic interaction between these levels. Because the focus of the study is the dyad itself, the macro-environment (business environment) and micro-environment (the organisation) were grouped together and simply labelled 'Environment'.

In the first phase of enquiry, the environmental influences of the age of collaboration, cultural diversity in the workplace (including generational diversity), advancing communication technology, and the leadership concept of the organisation were examined.

In the second phase, the LFD was examined in terms of the following: wholeness and interdependence in the dyad; symbolic interaction (with reference to sharing of meaning, definition of self, role-taking, constructionist relational leadership, organic leadership, shared leadership, spiritual leadership, communicative leadership, the social construction of reality, relational communication, and attribution); the emergent properties of the dyad; change and balance in the dyad; and outputs of the dyad into the environment.

In the third phase of enquiry, the individual leader/follower was examined in terms of elements of frame of reference (specifically beliefs, attitudes and values) and interpersonal skills that enhance ILR.

6.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the following four existing frameworks of leadership communication were summarised, relating progressively stronger to ILR as conceptualised in this study: Barrett's (2006) leadership communication framework, Mitchell's (2014) conceptual framework of leadership communication skills, Hackman and Johnson's (2013) communication perspective on leadership, and communicative leadership (Johansson *et al* 2014).

According to Barrett's (2006) *leadership communication framework*, leadership communication involves three rings of layered skills: core skills (strategy, writing and speaking), managerial skills (for example emotional intelligence and coaching) and corporate skills (for example change communication). While in general this framework was considered too general and its depiction of leadership communication too unilateral, its emphasis on emotional intelligence was found useful for this study.

Mitchell's (2014) *conceptual framework of leadership communication skills* entails an extensive list and description of leadership communication skills. This framework covers a much broader range of communication contexts than this study, and focuses on individual skills, which constitutes only a small section of this section. However, the framework was deemed relevant to this study because of its existential communication approach, the link between many of Mitchell's (2014) skills to the theoretical foundation of this study, and particularly its emphasis on the follower and the leader-follower relationship.

Hackman and Johnson's (2013) communication perspective on leadership places communication at the core of leadership and emphasises the following four leadership communication aspects: willingness to communicate, storytelling as leadership, emotional communication competencies, and leaders as impression managers. Their view highlights leaders' and followers' co-creation of reality through symbolic communication, echoing various aspects of the theory of symbolic interactionism. This framework was thus deemed highly relevant to this study.

The four leader communication behaviours that are common across organisational contexts are initiating structure, facilitating work, relational dynamics, and representing the unit. The eight key principles of communicative leadership put forward by Johansson *et al* (2014) are that communicative leaders: equip followers to self-manage; provide structures that facilitate the work; set clear expectations; are approachable, respectful, and demonstrate concern for followers; solve problems, respond to feedback, and advocate for the unit; provide guidance and assist followers to reach their objectives; frame messages and events; and facilitate sense-making. Johansson *et al* (2014:155) define a communicative leader as one who engages followers in dialogue, gives and seeks feedback, involves followers in decisions, and appears open and involved. These behaviours are socially co-constructed.

Communicative leadership (Johansson *et al* 2014) comprises four central leader communication behaviours, eight foundational principles of communicative leadership, and a theoretical definition of a communicative leader. Of the leader communication behaviours, relational dynamics was considered highly relevant to ILR. The following principles of communicative leadership were deemed highly relevant to this study, from both a systems perspective and a symbolic interactionism perspective: being approachable and respectful, and expressing concern for the other leader/follower; actively framing messages and events; and facilitating sense-making. These were taken into account for this study. The definition of a communicative leader (Johansson *et al* 2014:155) as one who "engages employees in dialogue, actively shares and seeks feedback, practises participative decision making, and is perceived as open and involved" was also considered very pertinent to this study.

Finally, a preliminary conceptual model of ILR that guided enquiry in this study was provided, consisting of a preliminary definition and model of ILR. In the next chapter, the methodology for enquiry in this study is discussed in detail.

CHAPTER 7: METHODOLOGY

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, existing models of leadership communication were examined and integrated with the theoretical foundation in the previous chapters to construct a conceptual framework from which the present study could be executed. In this chapter, the methodology used in this study is discussed. According to Bazeley (2013), a methodology chapter should explain the researcher's rationale for his/her chosen methods, and how s/he undertook the research. In this chapter, these are therefore discussed in terms of the following: unit of analysis, population parameters, sampling, data collection methods, data analysis and interpretation methods, the trustworthiness of the study, and ethical considerations.

7.2 UNIT OF ANALYSIS

In any research study, a suitable unit of analysis must be selected (Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utraiainen & Kyngäs 2014). The unit of analysis is the phenomenon that is being studied by collecting and analysing data (Collis & Hussey 2014:101). According to Bryman (2016:408), the research questions should inform the unit of analysis, by providing indications of what units should be the focus of attention and therefore sampled. In Chapter 1, the research question for this study was formulated as follows: *How can the theoretical constructs for interpersonal leadership relations (ILR) in knowledge-based organisational contexts be organised into a theoretical framework?* The research sub-questions are the following:

- 1) *How can ILR be defined?*
- 2) *What aspects of an organisational environment enhance ILR?*
- 3) *How do interpersonal leader/followers experience instances of ILR that typically occur in their knowledge-based organisational contexts?*
- 4) *What individual leader/follower traits enhance ILR?*

Research Sub-questions 2-4 required the insights of individuals who are currently involved in the practice or observation of interpersonal leadership communication in knowledge-based organisational contexts. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the unit of analysis was individuals, with particular reference to their views on ILR and related phenomena.

7.3 POPULATION PARAMETERS

The first stage of sample design is to determine the population, which in social research often involves people (Ritchie, Lewis, Elam, Tennant and Rahim (2014). The population of a study comprises the universe or total group of units from which the researcher requires information (Bryman & Bell 2015:187; Collis & Hussey 2014:131; Keyton 2011; Wiid & Diggines 2013). For the purpose of this study, two populations were identified to explore different research sub-questions. The sampling was done similarly in both cases, as discussed below.

7.3.1 Population 1: Individuals with expert ILR-related knowledge

The first population for this study was individuals who have expert knowledge of ILR or related fields in the context of knowledge-based organisational environments. Typical knowledge-based organisational environments include those focusing on education, the law, financial advice and social development. Such individuals include consultants, facilitators, authors, lecturers and practitioners in ILR and related fields (such as leadership, interpersonal leadership, interpersonal communication and organisational communication), with at least five years of experience in this role.

This population was identified to explore all three major themes, but particularly the first theme – environmental inputs into the leader-follower system, since individuals were specifically selected who had experienced various knowledge-based organisational contexts and would thus be able to make generalised observations about such environments from their experience. More details are provided in the discussion of sampling below.

7.3.2 Population 2: Individual interpersonal leader/followers

The second population identified for this study was individuals who are currently interpersonal leader/followers in knowledge-based organisational environments. This population was identified specifically to explore individuals' personal experiences (both positive and negative) of especially Theme 2 (symbolic interaction in the leader-follower dyad), but also of Theme 3 (leader/follower attributes enhancing ILR).

As is discussed subsequently in this chapter, the aim was to gain insight from these individuals about ILR in the context of a single leader-follower dyad (LFD) that is central to their experiences at work, rather than exploring merely isolated instances of interpersonal leadership communication (ILC). In addition, one of the sampling criteria was that these

leader/followers had to have been in this particular LFD for at least one year. This was done to explore more balanced and enduring ILR experiences, rather than first or fleeting impressions. More information is available in the discussion of sampling below.

7.4 SAMPLING: NON-PROBABILITY SAMPLING

The sample of a study is the subset of the population that is selected for investigation (Bryman & Bell 2015:187; Collis & Hussey 2014:131). The method of selection may be based on a probability or a non-probability approach (Bryman 2012). In probability sampling, each unit has an equal chance to be selected. While perfectly suited to statistical research, probability sampling is generally considered inappropriate for qualitative research (Ritchie *et al* 2014). In many qualitative studies, probability sampling is not feasible, because of the constraints of ongoing fieldwork and since it may be challenging to chart the population from which a random sample might be taken. Moreover, qualitative researchers rarely employ probability sampling, because they typically want to access a wide range of units relating to their research questions, to include various perspectives and ranges of activity (Bryman & Bell 2015:428).

Therefore, a non-probability sampling approach was selected for this study. 'Non-probability sampling' is an umbrella term for all forms of sampling that are not conducted according to the principles of probability sampling (Bryman & Bell 2015:200). Being non-random, it does not require a sampling frame – that is, a comprehensive list of the population (Collis & Hussey 2014:131). Instead, units are intentionally selected from the population, based on particular characteristics. Such qualitative sampling requires neither statistical representation nor scale; rather, its rigour depends on its representation of salient characteristics. Qualitative samples are often confined to a small number of geographical, organisational, interest or community locations, so that the context of the study is known (Ritchie *et al* 2014).

Du Plooy (2002) states that non-probability samples possess the following traits: the parameters for the sample and the population may not be identical, since units do not have an equal chance of being selected; the researcher controls the unit of analysis; no sample frame can be compiled; and, because the sample does not represent the entire population, it has no external validity.

Within the broad category of non-probability sampling, this study specifically employed purposive and convenience sampling.

7.4.1 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling, also known as criterion-based sampling (Ritchie *et al* 2014), is the most prevalent type of non-probability sampling. In this sampling type, the researcher, based on experience of the phenomenon under study (Collis & Hussey 2014:132), purposefully and strategically selects units that possess particular characteristics relevant to the research aims. Often, the researcher incorporates variety in the sample, so that sample units differ from each other in terms of key characteristics relevant to the research question (Bryman & Bell 2015).

The specific type of purposive sampling that was employed in this study is critical or typical case sampling (Bryman 2012), where units are selected because they are essential elements of a particular process. These units are thus considered 'critical' to understanding the topic at hand. The sampling criteria used may be any kind of phenomena, such as demographics, roles or experiences, based on the aims of the study (Ritchie *et al* 2014).

As discussed under Item 1.4.1, this study followed a phenomenological interpretivist approach, where the aim is to explore participants' lived experience. Phenomenological interviewers usually select participants who are currently engaged in the experiences relevant to the study (Seidman 2013). Therefore, for the present study, participants were sought who were engaged in ILR in knowledge-based contexts at the time.

Two samples were selected from the two populations, with overlapping sample characteristics. Sample 1, selected from Population 1, comprised individuals who were considered to have relevant expert knowledge of ILR and related fields relevant to this study. For Sample 2, drawn from Population 2, individuals who were engaged in LFDs in knowledge-based organisations were selected. (Table 7.1 features the sampling criteria for each of these samples.)

The main advantage of purposive sampling is the assurance that every sample unit adheres to the population parameters of the study, and thus will aid the research (Pascoe 2014). The main disadvantage of a purposive sample is that, as a type of non-probability sample, it is not representative of the entire population (Du Plooy 2002); therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalised to the entire population (Bryman & Bell 2015:429).

7.4.2 Convenience sampling

A convenience sample is made up of units that are known or readily accessible to the researcher (Aurini, Heath & Howells 2016:55; Pascoe 2014). According to Bryman and Bell (2015), it is an acceptable sampling method when conducting a pilot study, or when the data

could provide a springboard for further research or allow links to be forged with existing findings in the area of research. Furthermore, it is a sampling method that is often used in business and management research. Since this study is exploratory and should provide a basis for further related research, a convenience sample is acceptable. Convenience samples were drawn from both populations – acquaintances of the researcher who adhere to the population parameters and who could be accessed with relative ease were selected as participants.

The major advantage of convenience sampling is captured in its name: convenience. Because the units of the sample are known to or easily accessed by the researcher (Pascoe 2014), the method can be cost-effective and place low demands on the researcher's time. Another advantage that applies to this study is that there is pre-existing familiarity between the researcher and each participant (Du Plooy-Cilliers 2010), which facilitates cooperation and trust. In turn, these are likely to increase the quantity and quality of responses rendered by participants. Du Plooy-Cilliers (2010) considers the relationship between the researcher and the participant in qualitative research to be of paramount importance.

An obvious disadvantage of convenience sampling is that it is likely to be subjective, and thus cannot be representative of the population (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim 2016; Mackie & Gass 2005). Research bias is researchers' tendency to collect, interpret or present data that confirm their own views. This relates to researchers' subjectivity (a term that is often favoured over bias in qualitative research), which is impossible to eliminate entirely. Rather, researchers should understand how their own subjective views may influence their research, and from that understanding strive to avoid the negative effects of such influence (Aurini *et al* 2016:61-62).

As noted in Chapter 1, interpretive researchers do not strive for objectivity. From a social constructionist view, there are as many different versions of reality as there are people involved in the construction thereof. Consequently, there is no detached position for neutral observation (Shipman 2014:18). Shipman (2014:20) continues:

... there can be no pure and unadulterated knowledge of the world as it really is. The researcher has a particular position in society and will see the world from there. This is not a detached position and cannot be the basis for a claim to be objective.

7.4.3 Sampling criteria

Ritchie *et al* (2014) state that, once the sampling criteria for a study have been determined, they may be categorised as primary, secondary and, if necessary, tertiary criteria. Primary criteria are those that are central to the subject and objectives of the study. Secondary criteria

are less important for the purposes of the study, and are specified with less precision and detail. Tertiary criteria (or in some cases the secondary criteria) are not specified in the sample composition but are monitored, and if some diversity in their coverage is not naturally achieved, a selection criterion may be added.

The sampling criteria for this study and their prioritisation are detailed in Table 7.1. Because of the relative simplicity of sampling in this study, the secondary criteria will function in the manner of tertiary criteria as defined above.

Table 7.1: Summary of non-probability sampling criteria for this study

Sample 1 (interviews)	Sample 2 (questionnaires)
<p><i>Sampling methods</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purposive sampling (typical-case sampling) • Convenience sampling 	<p><i>Sampling methods</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purposive sampling (typical-case sampling) • Convenience sampling
<p><i>Sample size</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ten interviews (to achieve theoretical saturation), of which eight were realised 	<p><i>Sample size</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 55 distributed questionnaires (to yield at least 30), of which 31 were realised
<p><i>Primary criteria (for recruitment)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context: Knowledge-based organisational environment • Employment: Employee or self-employed • Role: Expert practising in fields related to interpersonal leadership communication • Experience: 5+ years in above role • Language proficiency: Spoken English 	<p><i>Primary criteria (for recruitment)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context: Knowledge-based organisational environment • Employment: Employee or self-employed • Role: Knowledge worker • Relationship: Member of LFD • Experience: 1+ years in above relationship • Language proficiency: Written English
<p><i>Secondary criteria (not for recruitment but to be monitored)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Category of expertise (e.g. consultant, facilitator, lecturer, author or leader) • Academic qualification • Age • Gender • Ethnicity • Geographical area 	<p><i>Secondary criteria (not for recruitment but to be monitored)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role in LFD (leader, follower or leader/follower) • Industry (e.g. education) • Age • Gender • Ethnicity • Geographical area

In small purposive samples, theoretical saturation (Bryman & Bell 2015; Du Plooy-Cilliers 2010; Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson 2002), also referred to as data saturation (Pascoe 2014), is important. Theoretical saturation is the point where the data from

consecutive participants no longer yields new relevant information and hence ceases to contribute to interpretation (Du Plooy-Cilliers 2010). In qualitative research, the emphasis is not on a sample size that represents the entire population, but on having sufficient participants to gain an in-depth understanding of the research topic and to reach the theoretical saturation point (Pascoe 2014).

Consensus theory, developed and mathematically proven by Romney, Batchelder and Weller (1986), holds that experts tend to agree more on aspects of their domain of expertise than do novices. Therefore, provided participants possess some level of expertise (cultural competence) in the domain of enquiry, small samples can provide sufficient information in that context. Romney *et al* (1986) concluded that samples of four individuals with a high degree of cultural competence can render accurate information with a high confidence level.

Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) posit that, while consensus theory deals with knowledge and structured questions, its assumptions are relevant to open-ended questions exploring beliefs and perceptions. The first assumption of the theory is that there is an external truth in the domain under study (Romney *et al* 1986). While this seems to exclude contexts where perceptions are conveyed, Guest *et al* (2006) argue that the participants in most purposive samples share common experiences, which comprise truths. The second assumption is that participants answer independently of one another (Romney *et al* 1986), which can be satisfied by ensuring that participants are interviewed independently (Guest *et al* 2006). The third assumption is that the questions constitute a coherent domain of knowledge (Romney *et al* 1986), which can be fulfilled by analysing the data compartmentally, by domain (Guest *et al* 2006).

It was posited that the individuals sampled in this study do share common experiences, as summarised in the sample criteria in Table 7.1. In addition, participants were interviewed independently and privately, and the questions comprised the domain of interpersonal leadership communication within knowledge-based organisational contexts. Data collected from the two instruments (interviews and questionnaires) were also analysed compartmentally by domain. The participants who were selected for interviewing possess expertise and five or more years of experience in fields relating to interpersonal leadership communication. In terms of consensus theory, they are thus likely to agree on issues within this domain of expertise, and a small sample is needed.

According to Ritchie *et al* (2014), the number of interviews to be conducted is affected by the following: for a fairly homogenous population, a small sample will suffice; the more selection criteria there are, the larger the sample size that is required; the more interlocking or nesting

of criteria (controlling the representation of one criterion within another) is needed, the larger the sample size that is required; the more special-interest groups requiring study, the larger sample is needed for sufficient representation; multiple samples representing different stakeholders with a distinct relation to the research questions can influence the sample size; the sample size should enlarge increasingly with the use of the data collection methods of single interviews, paired interviews, and small or average-sized discussions; the size of the budget may limit the sample size; and the nature of the research approach affects the appropriateness of sample sizes. Generally, fewer than 50 interviews are conducted for a single study.

According to Bowen (2008) and Guest *et al* (2006), theoretical saturation begins to occur after six interviews and is complete by 12 interviews, given the following (Guest *et al* 2006): by definition, participants in purposive examples share common criteria, and the more similar they are in their experiences of the research domain, the sooner theoretical saturation will be reached; a similar set of questions must be used for all participants; the more commonly distributed the domain of knowledge or experience, the fewer participants are necessary to provide an understanding of the subject being studied; if the aim is describing a shared perception, belief or behaviour among a fairly homogeneous group, as opposed to measuring comparison or association between variables, a sample of 12 will likely be sufficient.

For the purpose of this study, it was argued that 7-10 interviewees selected according to the criteria set out in Table 7.1 would be sufficiently similar in their experiences of ILR and related domains and that this domain of experience is fairly widely distributed, particularly among the individuals who were sampled. Furthermore, the objective in this study was to describe participants' perceptions and behaviour related to ILR, and not to measure the association between variables. While the semi-structured interviews left room for non-scripted avenues of exploration, all participants were asked a basic set of core questions. Therefore, ten planned interviews were deemed sufficient, especially since responses from the interviews would be supplemented with responses from at least 30 questionnaires with open-ended questions.

7.4.4 Recruitment

According to Ritchie *et al* (2014), recruitment is the process of inviting people to take part in a study. The quality and diversity of a purposive sample depends partly on the effectiveness of the recruitment process. Potential participants must be identified and contacted, and the researcher must gain their interest in the research study. This may be challenging, as many people lead busy lives (Jensen & Laurie 2016). This was indeed the case in the present study,

where the potential interviewees who were identified were mostly people with demanding occupations.

While different methods can be used to recruit participants – such as leaflets, emails and social media sites – it is essential that recruitment materials be attractive and simple yet sufficiently informative for individuals to make informed decisions about participating in the study (Ritchie *et al* 2014). The initial message should explain the following: who the researcher is; what the research is about and why it is important; how the potential participant was selected; what can be expected from the interview or questionnaire; how the findings will be used; what incentives are being offered, if relevant; and how individuals can access more detailed information (Cassell 2015; Jensen & Laurie 2016; Ritchie *et al* 2014).

For this study, most participants were recruited via an email to which the interview schedule or the questionnaire was attached, containing all of the aforementioned information (see Appendix A and Appendix B). In many cases, the email invitation was supplemented by communication through other channels, such as face-to-face conversations and WhatsApp messages, to lend more context and persuasion to the appeal. No incentive was offered for participation in the research.

In communicating with potential participants, the researcher should use concise language that would be clear to someone who is not an expert in the field being researched. Theoretical, academic or jargon-heavy language makes the researcher appear out of touch and unapproachable, and may even cause the research topic to seem dull, complex and unappealing. A realistic estimate of the time commitment required of the participant should be included; otherwise, if their participation takes longer than expected, participants may become irritated or may feel deceived (Jensen & Laurie 2016). Similarly, an open-ended time period can produce undue anxiety (Seidman 2013). In the invitations for participation in the present study, care was taken to present the necessary information in a conversational, concise style of language. Participants were clearly informed how much of their time would be required: 40-60 minutes in the case of the interviews, and 45-60 minutes in the case of the questionnaires.

People often decline to participate in research because they are concerned about the security of the data they would provide. This includes apprehension that they will be targeted by marketing companies if they provide personal information, and the fear of negative consequences if they reveal sensitive information. Therefore, participants should be assured of privacy (Jensen & Laurie 2016). An assurance of privacy and confidentiality was given explicitly to potential participants in the present study. However, one individual still declined to participate, stating that she had previously participated in a research study where

confidentiality was also promised, but where she was afterwards confronted by her management about her responses in the study.

Usually, participants are unlikely to directly benefit from the research. To persuade them to take part, the researcher should demonstrate how their participation will help to achieve a larger, pro-social goal. People are often more willing to participate if they believe that they are contributing towards a greater good such as improving quality of life, shedding light on a contentious social issue, or contributing to greater understanding between people (Jensen & Laurie 2016).

For this study, it was impressed on potential participants that, because ILR is an under-researched area of organisational life, they could make a valuable contribution to this domain of knowledge, which could also benefit future leadership growth and development. In the case of those invited to complete the questionnaire, it was also stated that the questions might lead them to reflect on their LFD, allowing for greater insight into and potential improvement of the relationship. One participant indeed reported that the questionnaire had been “thought-provoking” and that she had enjoyed the exercise.

7.5 DATA COLLECTION METHOD: TRIANGULATION

Methodological triangulation may comprise any of the following: using more than one data collection method; obtaining data from multiple information sources (Di Fabio & Maree 2012:141); using different sampling methods; analysing data from more than one theoretical perspective; and using more than one researcher to analyse data (Johnson 1997). Triangulation increases the trustworthiness of a study (Di Fabio & Maree 2012:141; Mouton 2009).

To this end, this study employed two data collection methods (interviews and questionnaires), and data was also analysed from more than one theoretical perspective (the systems theory and symbolic interactionism as metatheories, incorporating several other theories on leadership and on interpersonal communication).

7.5.1 Semi-structured in-depth interviews

Interviews are a method for collecting data in which the researcher asks selected participants (interviewees) questions (Collis & Hussey 2014). This recounting of narratives is a major way in which humans have made sense of their experience throughout recorded history (Seidman

2013). In the present study, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were used to obtain data from Sample 1 (ILR experts as defined in Table 7.1).

One of the advantages of in-depth interviews is that cases are explored in context. The main disadvantage of this method of data collection is that the participant does not have anonymity, which complicates the discussion of sensitive issues (Mouton 2009). This disadvantage did not apply to this study, however, because sensitive topics were not explored. Another disadvantage is that interviewing is time-consuming: the researcher has to conceptualise the project, contact participants, interview them, transcribe the data, and then analyse the material and record the findings (Seidman 2013). In the present study, interviewing was indeed found to be time-consuming. However, the richness of the data provided ample reward for the effort, and because questionnaires were also used to collect data, fewer interviews could be done.

7.5.1.1 Approach to interviewing: phenomenology

In this study, interviewing was approached through a phenomenological lens. A phenomenological approach to interviewing explores participants' experiences and the meaning they make of those experiences, mostly through open-ended questions. The aim is to reconstruct participants' experiences and to understand those experiences from their point of view. Complex issues are explored by examining participants' concrete experience in that area, and the meaning their experience had for them (Seidman 2013).

As a particularly human process, meaning-making relies heavily on language. A basic assumption in in-depth interviewing is that the meaning people make of their experience affects the way they carry out that experience (Blumer 1969/1998). Meaningfulness does not reside in the lived experience itself, but is opened up through intentional attention. By asking participants to reconstruct their experience and reflect on its meaning, interviewers encourage participants to engage in such attention (Schutz 1967). The purpose of in-depth interviewing is thus not to test hypotheses or to evaluate in the conventional sense, but to gain an understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience (Seidman 2013).

The transitory nature of participants' lived experiences presents a challenge to a researcher. Lived experience is experience as it occurs, but actors can only access what they have experienced through a subsequent reconstruction of it. By gathering details of participants' experiences, interviewers strive to guide their participants to reconstitute their lived experience, aiming for the closest possible match between what was and what is. Another complexity in accessing the essence of participants' lived experience is that it takes place mainly through

language: the words used to guide participants and the words they use to respond. The aim is thus to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence (Seidman 2013).

It is argued that, in spite of the limitations of language, rich data was collected from participants. In general, participants were also well able to reflect on past ILR, providing valuable insight into this aspect of their lived experiences. The relationship between the interviewer and interviewee is a key aspect in interviewing (Cassell 2015; Du Plooy-Cilliers 2010). All eight interviewees were acquaintances of the researcher, and the pre-existing interpersonal rapport greatly enhanced the quality of the interviews.

7.5.1.2 Interviewing media and logistics

The face-to-face interview has been viewed as the most appropriate, given the opportunities for rich data collection that it provides (Cassell 2015), including visual cues and small utterances (Stephens 2007). Another option for an interviewer is the online video technology of Skype. Skype offers the advantages that both the interviewer and the interviewee still has access to visual cues, and that the interviewer can easily video-record or audio-record the interaction (Hanna 2012). In addition, it makes it possible to interview participants who are geographically removed from the interviewer. However, it also requires planning for and adaptation to technological difficulties (Cassell 2015).

According to Jensen and Laurie (2016), the researcher should be flexible in terms of the venues for interviews. The meeting place should be convenient and comfortable for participants, and the researcher should assume the burden of travelling. If the interview will be recorded, a quiet setting is best (Cassell 2015).

In this study, participants to be interviewed were invited to suggest a meeting place, including their own workplace or even a restaurant, provided it was relatively quiet (for recording purposes). As a result, of the eight interviewees, one participant was interviewed at the researcher's office, one in a restaurant, two at the participant's home office, two at the participant's workplace, and two via Skype from their home offices. The interviews were audio-recorded, using a cellular phone software application, and transcribed for analysis. The final transcriptions were stored electronically on a laptop computer and also on a web-based Dropbox account for safekeeping.

The interviews took place in June 2016. Each interview was scheduled for one hour, at a time that suited the interviewee. The interviews were completed before the questionnaires were distributed, to create an opportunity to adapt the questionnaires on the grounds of the raw interview data. However, adaptation of the questionnaires was not deemed necessary.

7.5.1.3 *Structure of interviews: semi-structured*

Within an interpretivist paradigm, interviews are usually semi-structured or unstructured, and explore aspects such as interviewees' perceptions, opinions, memories, attitudes and feelings. In an unstructured interview, questions are not prepared in advance, but evolve during the interview and are open-ended (Collis & Hussey 2014). Thus, the interview can go in any direction as a result of the interviewer's or interviewee's interpretations of the topic (Cassell 2015).

In semi-structured interviews, the researcher prepares some questions to guide interviewees in talking about the central themes under study, while developing other questions as the interview progresses (Collis & Hussey 2014; Welman, Kruger & Mitchell 2007), depending on the interviewee's responses. Hence, there is the opportunity to follow up on interesting issues that the interviewee raises that may not have previously been considered by the interviewer. Therefore, the type of interview with the greatest variety of options is the semi-structured interview. Within more qualitative, less structured approaches, it is recognised that the interviewee takes an active role in constructing the nature of the interview (Cassell 2015).

According to Cassell (2015) and Mouton (2009), the main advantage of semi-structured interviews is that they are a versatile method of data collection, allowing the researcher to clarify and explore participants' answers. For this reason, interviews are a popular data collection method for organisational and management researchers (Cassell 2015). However, this flexibility implies that questions outside of the prepared schedule are not always consistent across interviews, reducing the researcher's ability compare participants' responses.

In the present study, the use of semi-structured interviews allowed for the use of a standard set of subthemes (based on the theoretical chapters) and the freedom to deviate from those subthemes. It rendered rich data containing large areas of overlap, strongly confirming certain subthemes, as well as at least one subtheme per interviewee that reflected experiences that were duplicated by none or very few of the other interviewees.

7.5.1.4 *Themes and questions*

While closed questions require a simple, brief answer (such as 'yes', 'no', a short factual answer or a choice between predetermined options), open-ended questions necessitate longer, developed answers. Open questions take longer to answer, because they usually require the participant to consider and reflect. The researcher may also use probes to explore the interviewee's answers in more depth (Collis & Hussey 2014).

In the present study, closed questions were only used to collect background information, such as the industry in which the interviewee works, or the extent of the interviewee’s relevant experience. All the questions exploring the research question were open questions, and interviewees were encouraged to embroider on their responses. The theme-related questions are listed in Table 7.2, while the complete interview schedule is presented in Appendix A.

It was recognised that the participants, particularly the interviewees, lead busy and challenging lives and that the time they donated to this study should be appreciated and optimised. Thus, the focus in the interviews was to provide a macro-perspective on the research topic, although each of the three main themes was covered. The interview schedule included 16 questions in total: five to explore demographic and introductory matters, five covering Theme 1 (the business and organisational environment), three with reference to Theme 2 (interpersonal leader-follower interaction), two covering Theme 3 (individual leader/follower attributes), and one concluding question (allowing the participant to add any issues not covered previously).

Table 7.2: Themes and questions for interviews (macro-perspective)

Theme 1: The environment (systems theory)	Subthemes explored
<p>Over the last five years, have you noticed any trends in the broader business environment that affect interpersonal leadership relationships and communication in knowledge-based organisations?</p>	<p>Environmental inputs, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration • Advancing communication technology • Cultural diversity • Leadership concept
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kinds or organisational culture support good interpersonal leader-follower relationships and communication in knowledge-based organisations? • What kinds or organisational culture do not support good interpersonal leader-follower relationships and communication in knowledge-based organisations? • Without identifying people or organisations, give an actual example of how a knowledge-based organisation’s way of ‘doing’ leadership has affected interpersonal leader-follower relationships and communication in that organisation, positively or negatively. • Workplace spirituality can be defined as an organisational culture where leader/followers experience that life has meaning and that they are making a difference, where they feel connected and appreciated, and where they demonstrate sincere care for others. How relevant do you believe workplace spirituality is for good interpersonal leader-follower relationships and communication in knowledge-based organisations, and why or why not? 	<p>Leadership concept, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared leadership • Workplace spirituality

Theme 2: Symbolic interaction in the dyad	Subthemes explored
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Without identifying people/organisations, describe a good example of interpersonal leader-follower communication that you have witnessed, and explain why it is a good example. • Without identifying people/organisations, describe a poor example of interpersonal leader-follower communication that you have witnessed, and explain why it is a poor example. 	Symbolic interaction, including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organic leadership • Relational leadership • Shared leadership • Spiritual leadership • Communicative leadership • Relational communication • Role taking (empathy) • Sharing of meaning
Do interpersonal leader-follower relationships and communication affect their surrounding environments (for instance, the department or organisation? If so, how?	LFD (system) outputs into environment
Theme 3: Leader/follower attributes (systems theory)	Subthemes explored
What values, attitudes or beliefs must leader/followers in knowledge-based organisations have to create good interpersonal leader-follower relationships and communication?	Frame of reference
What skills must leader/followers in knowledge-based organisations have to create good interpersonal leader-follower relationships and communication?	Skills

7.5.1.5 Interviewee demographics

Six of the eight interviewees are female, while two are male. In terms of ethnicity, all eight are white, with five speaking English as a home language, and three speaking Afrikaans. Their length of relevant experience in knowledge-based contexts ranged from ten to 40 years, with 24 years being the average. Their qualifications and experience are summarised in Table 7.3.

Charmaz (2014) recommends using pseudonyms for participants. These pseudonyms often become more familiar to the researcher than the participants' real names, while also more meaningful than a case number. If pseudonyms are assigned, a master list linking the names and pseudonyms should be kept in a location separate from the data. As can be seen in Table 7.3, pseudonyms were created for interviewees in this study.

Table 7.3: Qualifications and experience of interviewees

Interviewee (chronological order)	Relevant experience (years)	Recent experience (contexts)	Highest qualification
1) Nelson	40	Research	Bachelor's degree (Mathematics and Statistics)
2) Ned	25	Education, medical services and finance	Honours degree (Content Management)
3) Lynette	38	Early childhood development and knowledge transfer	Diploma in Social Entrepreneurship
4) Ingrid	10	Tertiary education (business and economics)	PhD in Communication Management
5) Sarina	15	Business coaching (various fields)	Diploma in Coach Supervision
6) Zena	24	Executive coaching and leadership development (corporate law, financial services and other fields)	Master's degree in Business Leadership
7) Faye	21	Tertiary education (humanities)	PhD in Communication
8) Kate	20	Leadership development (various fields)	PhD in Organisational Leadership; post-doctoral qualification in Executive Coaching

7.5.2 Questionnaires

According to Churchill and Iacobucci (2005), a questionnaire is a set of questions contained in a single document. A self-administered questionnaire has the advantage of being one of the least expensive and time-consuming data collection methods (Du Plooy-Cilliers & Cronje 2014; Patten 2014). In the case of this study, participants could also complete the questionnaire in the place and at the time convenient to them. For these reasons, self-administered questionnaires were selected for this study as a means to glean data from Sample 2 (leader/followers working in knowledge-based contexts).

However, some disadvantages of questionnaires are the following: the response rate is often low, especially where questionnaires are distributed to individuals who do not personally know the researcher; questionnaires may provide only a snapshot of the issue under study (as opposed to the rich data provided by personal interviews), particularly where closed-ended questions are used; and questionnaires may elicit socially desirable responses, where participants provide responses that they believe are socially desirable, but that are not quite accurate (Patten 2014).

In terms of the first disadvantage, the response rate was indeed disappointing, particularly because the recruited individuals were all acquainted with the researcher. While a small number of participants responded promptly, follow-up emails had to be sent repeatedly to the majority to persuade and remind them to complete the questionnaire. A total of 33 completed questionnaires were returned, of which two had to be discarded because the participants had described their general history with a broad group of followers instead of a particular relationship with a specific individual. Thus, 31 questionnaires were realised from the initial sample of 55.

The 'snapshot' disadvantage was partially experienced, although not as much as with closed-ended questions. While most questions were open-ended and participants were encouraged to elaborate on answers, some participants still answered very briefly, at times resorting to a response of 'not applicable', which often seemed implausible. While it cannot be ruled out, it is unlikely that the disadvantage of socially desirable responses played a strong role, because sensitive issues were not explored. Where participants were expected to reflect on negative behaviour, it was the negative behaviour of others, not their own, that they needed to describe.

7.5.2.1 *Themes and questions*

Welman *et al* (2007:173-180) recommend that a questionnaire comprise the following: a judicious compilation of open-ended and closed-ended questions, considering the strengths and weaknesses of each type, and the purpose of each question; clear language that is suitable for the participants' literacy level and is unlikely to offend them; conciseness and focus; neutral questions that apply to all participants, and user-friendly layout that facilitates reading and completion. These aspects were purposefully incorporated into the questionnaire for this study. While simple language was used, it should also be noted that, as knowledge workers, the participants completing the questionnaire are highly educated, and only individuals known to be or likely to be proficient at written English were selected.

Churchill and Iacobucci (2005) emphasise that, for a questionnaire to yield the necessary data to satisfy the research aims, it has to be developed with care. They state that closed-ended questions are suitable for instances where exact answers are needed, but restrict participants' responses, also limiting interpretation. Open-ended questions offer participants more freedom in responding, allowing them to express personal opinions. Hence, open-ended questions are highly suitable for interpretivist studies where the researcher explores the unique meanings that individuals create from their experiences. In this study, participants' personal knowledge and experience of ILR was explored; therefore, the majority of the questions were open-ended. Closed-ended questions were used only for demographic data.

A disadvantage of open-ended questions in questionnaires is that they require a higher level of education (Churchill & Iacobucci 2005). This did not pose a problem for this study, because all participants are highly educated, and were purposively sampled, providing control over this aspect.

In consideration of participants' time and to ensure maximum return of completed questionnaires, the number of questions was confined to 15, some of which contained sub-questions to guide participants in responding. These questions were selected from a larger pool of questions for their potential to explore the conceptual themes in greater number or depth. This necessarily excluded some subthemes, but the following was considered in determining inclusion or exclusion of subthemes: the conceptual framework drawn up in Chapter 6 contains too many subthemes for exploration in a single study with the time and practical constraints that apply to the present study; subthemes that emerged with greater emphasis from the literature study were included in this study; some subthemes are legitimate research themes on their own (such as conflict behaviours and resolution) and were therefore excluded or marginally included in this study.

The questionnaire required a micro-perspective on ILR, where participants were expected to comment on their own immediate contexts and experiences. Table 7.4 summarises the theme-related questions that were formulated for the questionnaires. (The complete questionnaire is presented in Appendix B.) The questions were distributed as follows: four questions were used for introductory and demographic information; one explored Theme 1 (the organisational environment), seven focused on the participant's ILR (Theme 2); two examined individual leader/follower attributes (Theme 3) within that relationship; and the concluding question allowed for any information that the participant wished to add.

Table 7.4: Themes and questions for questionnaires (micro-perspective)

Theme 1: Environmental input into dyad (systems theory)	Subthemes explored
Do you experience that your organisational culture affects your leader-follower relationship? If so, please explain and give an example.	Environmental inputs
Theme 2: Symbolic interaction in the dyad	Subthemes explored
At a given moment, a leader is the person exerting influence or providing guidance, while the follower is being influenced or guided. In the leader-follower relationship that you have selected, which of you and the other leader/follower is usually the leader and which the follower, or do you swop leader/follower roles regularly?	Symbolic interaction, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organic leadership • Relational leadership • Shared leadership
How would you describe your general feelings about this leader-follower relationship?	Definition of relationship through symbolic interaction
Think of a very POSITIVE way in which the other leader/follower behaves towards you. Consider all forms of communication (e.g. words, tone of voice, gestures, facial expressions, touch, gifts and time). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe this positive behaviour/communication (how s/he behaves and what s/he says). • Explain what this behaviour communicates to you and how it makes you feel. 	Symbolic interaction, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interdependence • Sharing of meaning through symbolic interaction • Organic leadership • Constructionist relational leadership • Social construction of reality • Relational communication • Communicative leadership • Emergent properties
Think of a kind of behaviour towards you by the other leader/follower that you experience very NEGATIVELY. Consider all forms of communication (e.g. words, tone of voice, gestures, facial expressions, touch, gifts and time). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe this negative behaviour/communication (how s/he behaves and what s/he says). • Explain what this behaviour communicates to you and how it makes you feel. • In your opinion, why does the other leader/follower behave in this way? • Does this explanation make the behaviour more acceptable to you? Why, or why not? 	Symbolic interaction, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interdependence • Sharing of meaning through symbolic interaction • Role-taking (empathy) • Organic leadership • Constructionist relational leadership • Social construction of reality • Relational communication • Attribution • Communicative leadership • Emergent properties

<p>Think of a typical conflict or disagreement between yourself and the other leader/follower.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you and the other leader/follower typically resolve such a conflict? • How do you feel about this kind of conflict resolution? 	<p>Symbolic interaction, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interdependence • Organic leadership • Constructionist relational leadership • Social construction of reality • Relational communication • Communicative leadership • Emergent properties • Change and balance
<p>How (if at all) has this relationship changed or reinforced the way you see yourself?</p>	<p>Symbolic interaction – selfhood</p>
<p>How (if at all) does the other leader/follower or the leader-follower relationship contribute to a sense of meaning/purpose/calling for you at work?</p>	<p>Spiritual leadership</p>
<p>Theme 3: Leader/follower attributes (systems theory)</p>	<p>Subthemes explored</p>
<p>Give an example of how any of your or the other leader/follower’s values, attitudes or beliefs positively affects your relationship. Please specify the value/attitude/belief, and describe how it enhances the relationship.</p>	<p>Frame of reference</p>
<p>Give an example of how any of your or the other leader/follower’s interpersonal (people) skills positively affects your relationship. Please specify the skill, and describe how it enhances the relationship.</p>	<p>Skills</p>

7.5.2.2 Questionnaire logistics

A total of 55 questionnaires were distributed via email in two batches: 23 questionnaires in July and August 2016, and 32 questionnaires in November 2016. Participants were given approximately two weeks to complete the questionnaire and to return it via email. The completed questionnaires were stored electronically on a laptop computer and also a web-based Dropbox account for safekeeping.

7.5.2.3 Demographics of questionnaire participants

The questionnaire participants were distributed across the following roles and industries: public relations practitioners; a primary school principal; lecturers, heads of department and a head of faculty in tertiary education (various institutions); teachers in secondary education; various roles in public legal organisations; various roles in financial services; a head of industry,

economy & B-BBEE in the petrochemical industry; various roles in social services and religious organisations; various roles in engineering; and various roles in broadcasting. Most participants (71%) were female. The ethnicity of Sample 2 comprised the following: white Afrikaans-speaking South Africans (52%), white English-speaking South Africans (29%), black Zimbabweans (13%), an Indian South African (3%), and a white Australian (3%).

Because this study explored ILC in the context of an existing LFD, Sample 2 was drawn from leader/followers who had been in a working relationship with another leader/follower for at least a year. As can be seen in Figure 7.1, the largest group of questionnaire participants (39%) had been in their leader/follower relationship for about two years, and the second largest grouping (19%) had been in the relationship for four years. However, one participant had been in the relationship for ten years, and another's relationship spanned 30 years.

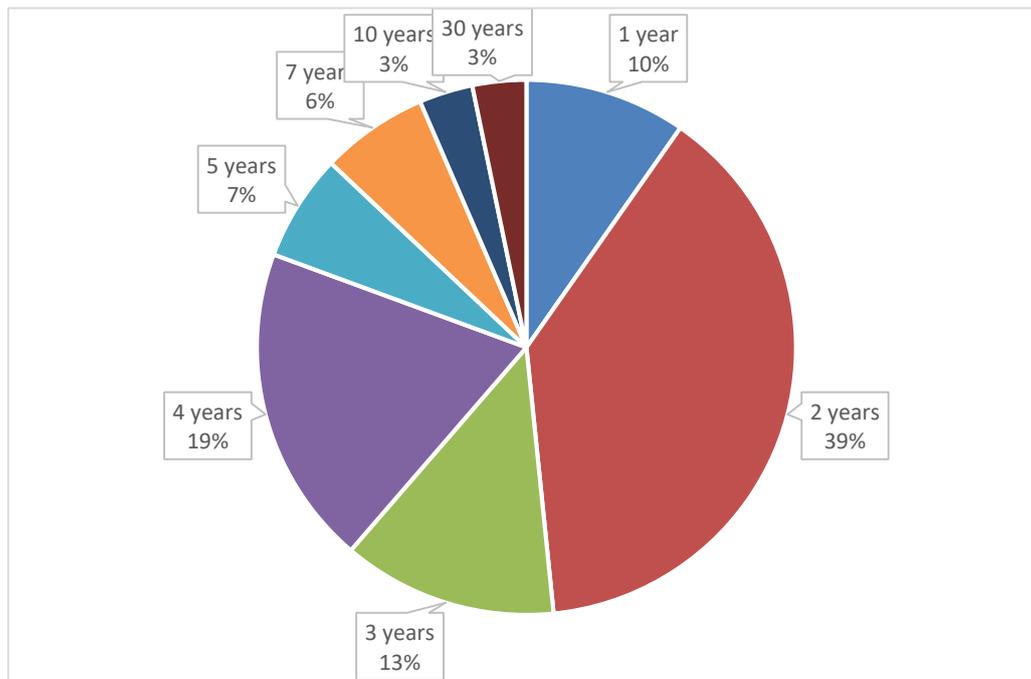


Figure 7.1: Duration of participants' LFDs (Sample 2)

Questionnaire participants (Sample 2) could select any one of their current leader-follower relationships that was at least one year old. As can be seen in Figure 7.2, the majority (65%) opted to describe a relationship in which they occupied the follower role for most of the time, although some indicated that the leader/follower roles in the relationship swapped at times.

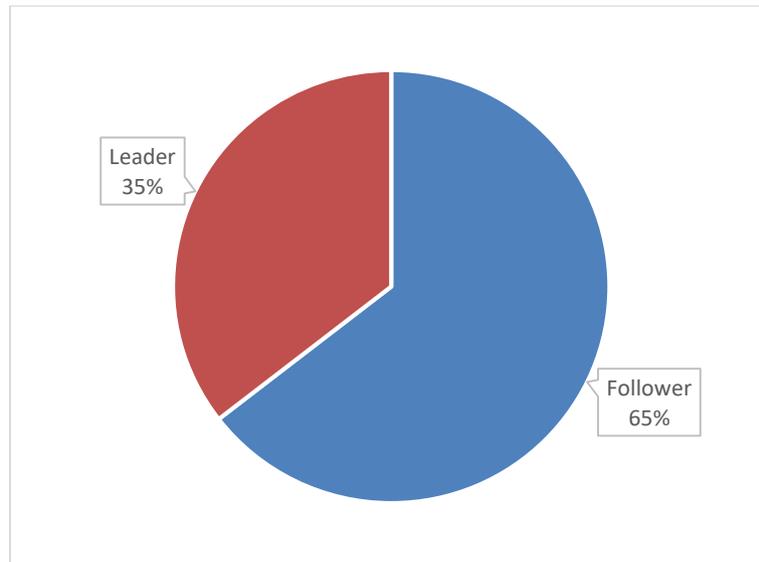


Figure 7.2: Participants' roles in the LFD (Sample 2)

The ages of the questionnaire participants (Sample 2) ranged from 26 to 67. The majority of (48%) were in their forties, and the rest was spread almost equally between their twenties, thirties, fifties and sixties. This age distribution is illustrated in Figure 7.3.

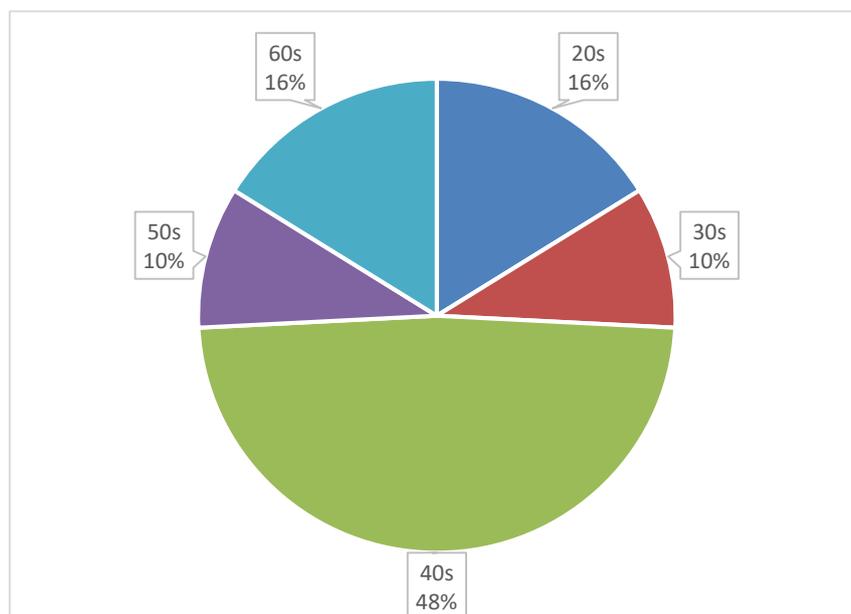


Figure 7.3: Participants' ages (Sample 2)

7.6 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION METHOD: QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

The data analysis method in this study is qualitative content analysis, which is used “to explore and identify overt and covert themes and patterns embedded in a particular text” (Bezuidenhout & Cronje 2014:234), in this case participants’ responses in the interviews and questionnaires. Rather than the statistical incidence of particular concepts, qualitative content analysis explores the unique themes that reflect the range of meanings of the phenomenon under investigation (Zhang & Wildemuth 2009). Saldaña (2016:10) states that, while quantitative analysis “calculates the mean”, qualitative analysis “calculates the meaning”.

Qualitative analysis demands meticulous attention to symbols, and deep reflection on the emergent patterns and meanings of human experience (Saldaña 2016). It is intense, challenging, non-linear, contextualised and variable (Bazeley 2013). While it is “messy, ambiguous, and time-consuming”, it is also a “fascinating and creative process” (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport 2011:397). Bazeley (2013) views qualitative analysis as fundamentally case-oriented. A researcher may interview unconnected individuals, each being a case of a specific type of experience. Such cases are similar enough to be seen as examples of the same phenomenon, yet with distinctions that enable comparison across them.

As a data analysis method, qualitative content analysis has the following strengths: it explores the underlying meanings of a text (Wimmer & Dominick 2011); it facilitates a deeper understanding (Bazeley 2013), specifically of values, attitudes and behaviours; it is context-sensitive and allows for unstructured symbolic material; it is inexpensive; and it can be applied to large volumes of data (Berg 2001). These advantages are valuable for this study, which was aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of values, attitudes and behaviours related to ILR.

The weaknesses of qualitative content analysis include the following: findings are limited to the specified categories, which may be defined differently by other researchers; and it is often laborious and time-consuming (Wimmer & Dominick 2011). The limitation of findings to the conceptual framework is acceptable in the context of this study, because it is an exploratory study, which is limited by definition. The labour-intensive and time-consuming aspects were accepted as the inevitable implications of a data analysis method that yields such rich data.

Qualitative content analysis may be done inductively or reductively. In an inductive approach, the researcher reasons from the specific (raw data) to the general, developing themes without using an existing conceptual framework. By contrast, a deductive approach moves from the general (a conceptual framework derived from applicable theories) to the specific (identifying

specific codes that are grouped within themes). In this process, theories are tested or expanded (Bezuidenhout & Cronje 2014). According to Berg (2001), the deductive approach is useful at the beginning of data analysis. The conceptual framework (the paradigmatic foundations, theoretical foundation and literature review) provides a foundation for analysis and a reference against which researchers can check their analysis (Charmaz 2014).

This study employed mainly deductive reasoning, where the interviews and questionnaires were based on the conceptual framework derived from the literature review. New codes that emerged from the results, were added to one of the three pre-existing main themes. However, inductive reasoning was partially used to create the theoretical framework for ILR.

7.6.1 Thematic analysis

Du Plooy (2009) distinguishes between five levels of content analysis of a text: a presentational analysis, which is usually applied to mediated communication and investigates aspects such as main content, type of phrase and direction; stylistic analysis, which analyses aspects of language used, such as degree of formality; structural analysis, which focuses on how the message is organised; thematic analysis, which describes the main ideas in messages; and interactional analysis, which analyses how people use messages in various settings.

According to (Cassell 2015:77), thematic analysis comprises the thematic organisation of textual data according to a template of codes, some of which are predefined and some of which emerge from the process of analysis. It is a flexible technique that can be used for semi-structured interviews. (Ryan & Bernard 2003:87) define themes as “abstract (and often fuzzy) constructs that link... expressions found in text”. In this study, thematic analysis was used, in that participants’ responses were explored in terms of themes and subthemes.

As indicated under Item 1.4.1, this study was executed from a phenomenological stance. According to Bazeley (2013), phenomenologists often use thematic statements to identify the elements of a phenomenon. A theme can be expressed as a phrase that is specific enough to be grounded, and abstract enough to be conceptual. Themes are then clustered into ‘superordinate’ themes that describe the essential and general aspects of the phenomenon. Thus, the researcher condenses the essential characteristics of a phenomenon, from the perspective of those experiencing it, moving from particular to shared experience, and from descriptive to interpretive analysis. Such analysis is a recursive process of interactive stages, with the aim of insightful understanding of the research topic by making connections across narratives through reviewing, reflecting and journaling.

7.6.2 Coding

Qualitative data collection methods usually generate great volumes of research material (Collis & Hussey 2014:162) or data, defined by Jensen and Laurie (2016:287) as that which the researcher systematically analyses. Coding is the process (Vogt, Vogt, Gardner & Haeffele 2014) of ordering data (Bezuidenhout & Cronje 2014) between data collection and data analysis. More than mere labelling (Saldaña 2016), it links the phenomenon under study to the symbols that the researcher uses to consider and record evidence of the phenomenon. Codes allow the researcher to retrieve and reorganise data in various ways (Collis & Hussey 2014).

The quality of the analysis depends strongly on the quality of the data and coding (Vogt *et al* 2014). Interview transcripts are often complex because of cross-cutting ideas in a single response by a participant. Thus, interview coding must be multifaceted to capture descriptive and interpreted aspects of participants' experiences (Bazeley 2013).

Coding involves 'translating' the data into symbols (Vogt *et al* 2014:13) – grouping them into categories of shared characteristics (e.g. relationships or sequences). In qualitative research, a code is thus a researcher-generated word or phrase that "symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldaña 2016:4). Hence, a code captures the essence of a datum's content (where 'datum' is the singular form of 'data') for subsequent pattern detection and theory building (Vogt *et al* 2014). Coding is one of the best guarantees against losing sight of a valuable datum, since it ensures that the researcher will encounter it again during analysis (Bazeley 2013).

Coding data makes it possible to interrogate them beyond simple data retrieval by label. Challenging the data in this manner involves asking questions such as 'What's going on here?' or 'Why is that?' (Bazeley 2013). Coding is not a precise science, but an interpretive act involving judgment (Vogt *et al* 2014) and critical thinking (Bazeley 2013). The data in qualitative enquiry cannot always be precisely and discretely bounded. A code can sometimes summarise, distil or condense data, not simply reduce them (Saldaña 2016).

Du Plooy (2009) distinguishes between the following coding categories: pre-coded categories; pre-coded categories that are adjusted during analysis, and post-coded categories. Pre-coded categories are determined by the research questions, while post-coding takes place after data collection. Pre-coded categories that are adjusted or supplemented during the analysis, and post-coded categories "let the data speak" (Du Plooy 2009:226). In this study, pre-coded categories were used based on the conceptual framework, and supplemented during analysis. The pre-coded categories for thematic analysis in this study can be seen in Table 7.5.

Table 7.5: Pre-coded categories for thematic analysis

Theme 1: Environmental inputs into the LFD (system)	
Subthemes	Codes
Subtheme 1.1 Age of collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Less hierarchical control within organisations b) Relationships in and between organisations prioritised as much as own interest
Subtheme 1.2 Advancing communication technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Virtual, cross-functional teams b) Virtual work part of weekly routine c) Limited interpersonal interaction d) Online/mediated (instead of face-to-face) ILC
Subtheme 1.3 Cultural diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Harnessing diversity to achieve organisational goals b) Norms for leader/follower conduct influenced by culture
Subtheme 1.4 Generational differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Successive generations prefer relationship-focused leadership to task-focused leadership b) Younger generations prefer leaders who facilitate personal success
Subtheme 1.5 Leadership concept: Shared leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Shared leadership is important in knowledge-based contexts Intellectual capital ('clever' people) is key source of value b) Intellectual capital ('clever' people) is key source of value in knowledge-based contexts c) Collaborative interpersonal relationships are central in shared leadership d) Shift from individual (self) to collective (self-in-relation) e) Shift from control to learning f) Shift from 'power over' to 'power with' g) Shared leadership draws from collective wisdom h) Vaguer distinction between leaders and followers i) Employees alternate between leading and following j) Employees may co-create new knowledge (not merely implement plans) k) Collaborative problem-solving is central
Subtheme 1.6 Leadership concept: Workplace spirituality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Leader/followers experience transcendence through work b) Leader/followers experience that life has meaning c) Leader/followers feel they are making a difference d) Altruistic organisational culture e) Sense of community f) Leader/followers feel understood and appreciated g) Leader/followers feel sincere care and appreciation for themselves and others

Theme 2: Symbolic interactionism in the LFD (system)

Subthemes	Codes
Subtheme 2.1 Wholeness and interdependence in the LFD	a) What happens to one leader/follower affects the other b) There is circular interaction and mutual influence in the LFD c) One leader/follower is limited by dependence on the other d) The LFD is more than the sum of the two leader/followers
Subtheme 2.2 Symbolic interaction: Meaning	a) People behave based on the meanings objects have for them b) Meaning is the response a word evokes c) Every exchange limits subsequent behaviours
Subtheme 2.3 Symbolic interaction: Selfhood	a) Self is defined and redefined through ILC
Subtheme 2.4 Symbolic interaction: Role-taking (empathy)	a) Role-taking influences a leader/follower's interpretation of the other leader/follower's intentions
Subtheme 2.5 Organic leadership	a) There is no formal distinction between leader and follower b) Leader/followers are interacting partners in sense-making c) Control through group dynamics (not formal structures) d) Interdependent leader/followers share responsibility and accountability
Subtheme 2.6 Relational leadership (constructionist view)	a) The LFD (not the leader) is the locus of leadership b) Leader/followers actively and mutually nurture relationships c) Leaders employ communication channels that work for them personally d) Leaders interpret the context and respond accordingly e) Leaders display blend of authenticity and adaptation f) Leaders display blend of individuality and conformity g) Through interaction, leaders reframe the context for own and followers' benefit h) Leaders balance between closeness (warmth) and distance (goals) i) Leaders manage relationships without resorting to formal hierarchy j) Leader/follower roles are neither formal, predetermined or distinctive k) Leader/followers consciously act and exert mutual influence
Subtheme 2.7 Shared leadership	a) Leader/followers are interdependent equals b) Leader/follower roles shift according to team needs and goals c) An individual is a 'leader' in one situation and a 'follower' in the next (with the same people)

Subtheme 2.8 Spiritual leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Values, attitudes and behaviours required to motivate oneself and others towards sense of spiritual well-being b) <i>How</i> spiritual leadership Infuses purpose and meaning into leader/followers' lives c) Shared values and meaningful purposes foster connections between leader/followers d) Through interaction, leader/followers redefine shared values and meaningful purposes
Subtheme 2.9 Social construction of reality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) ILC constructs reality in the dyad, and the experience of reality affects ILC b) Interaction between two unique leader/followers creates unique social meanings c) The social meanings in the LFD influence and are influenced by larger suprasystems
Subtheme 2.10 Relational communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The nature of the LFD is determined by ILC b) Every leader-follower interaction has a content (informational) level and a relational level (Relational Axiom 2) c) Relational meaning is implications of message for relationship (view of self, other, and self by other) d) Every nonverbal signal also makes a statement about the LFD e) Leader/followers may punctuate communication sequences differently (Relational Axiom 3) f) Relational communication is verbal and nonverbal (Relational Axiom 4)
Subtheme 2.11 Attribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Leader/followers attribute causes to each other's behaviour to make sense of interaction, share meaning and redefine their relationship
Subtheme 2.12 Communicative leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Leaders are good, open, non-defensive listeners b) Leaders give feedback c) Leaders are trustworthy d) Leaders are interested, supportive, considerate, available and helpful towards followers e) Leaders manage conflict constructively (in a professional, fair and respectful manner) f) Leaders are approachable and respectful, and express concern for followers g) Leaders share information truthfully, adequately and appropriately h) Leaders facilitate sense-making in formal and informal conversations, including stories i) Leaders practise participative decision making
Subtheme 2.13 Emergent properties of the LFD (system)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Through interaction, leader/followers create emergent properties (system attributes)
Subtheme 2.14 Change and balance in the LFD (system)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Maintaining balance within turbulence (conflict, disruption, stress) b) Leader/followers must proactively cooperate and invest energy, time and commitment to create and maintain balance c) Conflict between leader/followers can enhance mutual understanding and role clarification

Subtheme 2.15 LFD (system) outputs into environment	a) ILR influences organisational culture, climate and communication b) ILR influences employee communication satisfaction c) ILR influences Job satisfaction d) ILR influences employee morale & engagement e) ILR influences staff retention f) ILR influences job performance
Theme 3: Leader/follower attributes	
Subthemes	Codes
Subtheme 3.1 Values, attitudes and beliefs (frame of reference)	a) A leader/follower's behaviour is guided by a system of beliefs, attitudes and values
Subtheme 3.2 Interpersonal skills	a) Agreeableness b) Behavioural flexibility; willingness to reconsider boundaries and adapt c) Interaction management skills d) Assertiveness e) Conflict management f) Verbal skills g) Nonverbal skills h) Multicultural competence i) Emotional intelligence j) Extraversion k) Interpersonal perceptiveness l) Social intelligence m) Finely honed sense of timing in acting and refraining from acting n) Placing current events into historical and future contexts
Subtheme 3.3 Interpersonal practices (habitual behaviours, from Mitchell's framework of leadership communication skills and Hackman & Johnson's communication perspective on leadership)	a) Considering followers' perspectives b) Promoting followers' existence c) Responding appropriately to followers' problems d) Using dialogue when communicating with followers e) Storytelling f) Projecting a positive ethos in writing and speaking g) Communicating verbally h) Communicating nonverbally i) Being assertive j) Coaching k) Mentoring l) Leading the team productively

Vogt *et al* (2014) state that the first phase of coding is determining how the data will be collected. For interviews and questionnaires, the questions are formulated in such a manner as to elicit data relevant to the research question, implying coding. Indeed, most of the coding for questionnaires take place before the data is collected. In interviews, writing the questions are comparatively easy, since they are usually general and few in number, aimed at creating dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee. As a result, coding of interviews may take months. In this study, coding was indeed involved in drawing up the interview schedule and especially the questionnaire, since this was done with the pre-coded categories in mind.

Seidman (2013) states that only the data most salient to the research questions merit analysis; thus, up to two-thirds of the total data can often be summarised or excluded. Trivial passages scattered throughout interviews should be coded 'not applicable' (Saldaña, 2016). Capturing every vague reference to a concept constitutes overcoding, and obscures the meaning of the concept and its association with other codes (Bazeley 2013).

In the present study, overcoding was avoided by labelling irrelevant passages 'not applicable', and excluding them from the analysis. This was done for a very small part of the questionnaire data, since the questions were quite specific, and participants tended to respond too briefly, rather than irrelevantly or too lengthily. The irrelevant data from the interviews differed widely between interviewees, ranging from no irrelevant responses to large response sections labelled as 'not applicable', depending on how focused the interviewee was in responding. Irrelevant data was also reduced gradually from the first to the last interview, because – based on the experience of the first few interviews, the interview questions were rephrased slightly or interviewees were guided more clearly as to the length of response required.

Guest *et al* (2006) posit that code importance should be measured according to the *proportion* of individual interviews yielding that code, rather than the number of times a theme is coded (which may be skewed by talkative participants repeating the same idea). Saldaña (2016) concurs that mere numeric frequency of a code is not a trustworthy indicator of its centrality. Indeed, a code that appears infrequently may hold great summative power in terms of the data.

However, Bazeley (2013) suggests that recurring expressions within an interview are noteworthy. People's tendency to repeat themselves has three implications for coding: if an important datum is missed, it will emerge again; repetitions indicate concepts that should be coded; and variations in repetitions facilitate comparison. Participants' narratives may also involve distortions of facts, yet these distortions constitute the meanings participants have assigned to particular experiences. Such meanings, even though distorted, should therefore be explored. In the present study, a balance was attempted between exploring repetitions and

distortions, as opposed to assigning centrality to a code simply because it was repeated often, or not considering a code important because it emerged infrequently.

Coding is a cyclical and dynamic process. Once a code is applied to a datum, it is not fixed, and the first cycle of coding is rarely perfect. A second cycle (and more, if necessary) of recoding allows data to be reorganised and linked in order to consolidate meaning and develop explanation (Saldaña 2016). Some first-cycle codes may be later subsumed by other codes (Collis & Hussey 2014), relabelled, or removed altogether (Bazeley 2013). Codes may even be placed in more than one category, allowing categories to overlap (Saldaña 2016).

In first-cycle coding, each major theme is *described* in terms of characteristics and boundaries. Answers are sought to questions such as ‘How did participants talk about this aspect?’, ‘How many talked about it?’ and “What is *not* included?” (Bazeley 2013). Typically, the codes for interview data are words. Consistency is important, and can be ensured by using a codebook or glossary. Although commonly used in quantitative research, a codebook can be just as useful for qualitative researchers (Vogt *et al* 2014). All relevant codes should be applied to the entire unit of meaning (such as a sentence, a paragraph or several paragraphs), even if each does not apply to the whole passage. Codes will overlap, while the specific text that gave rise to the code is still readily apparent within the passage. The text is thus sliced or layered, rather than fragmented, overcoming the disconnection issues often associated with fragmenting (Bazeley 2013). This approach was applied in the present study. The list of pre-coded categories as portrayed in Table 7.5 was used as a codebook and updated as necessary.

In second-cycle coding, the qualitative researcher reviews similarly coded passages in search of patterns. Patterns occur when data appear more than twice, in terms of the following aspects of human behaviour: routines, rituals, rules, roles, and relationships. A pattern may also result from any of the following: similarity (events occur similarly); difference (events occur in predictably different ways); frequency (events occur often or seldom); sequence (events occur in a particular order); correspondence (events occur in relation to other events); and causation (one event appears to cause another). Such trends solidify the researcher’s observations into concrete instances of meaning (Saldaña 2016), and aid in confronting existing theories or constructing a new theory (Collis & Hussey 2014). By observing similarities and differences in how participants recount a particular type of experience, the researcher becomes aware of the dimensions that structure it. S/he can then compare these dimensions to other examples from the data; or, alternatively, to a theoretical, imaginary or experiential example (Bazeley 2013).

Using multiple overlapping codes has the advantage that patterns of connection between codes are more easily explored. Codes applied to the same or overlapping passage of text

can be presumed to have some relationship. These connections should be noted immediately, so that they can be retrieved for further analysis or as evidence of a pattern (Bazeley 2013). Collis and Hussey (2014) advise researchers to regularly write summaries of their findings at that point, to aid analysis and correction of deficiencies.

In second-cycle coding, it is important to *compare* and *relate* differences between cases, groups or contexts for a particular theme. Answers should be found to questions such as ‘Does this theme occur more or less frequently in different cases or groups?’, ‘Do different groups express the theme differently; and if so, how?’, ‘How does this theme vary across different contexts?’ ‘Under what conditions does this theme emerge?’, ‘What else is involved in relation to it?’ and ‘What precedes or follows?’ Meaningful associations should be recorded to stimulate further analysis (Bazeley 2013).

The coding and recording process should refine and consolidate the codes and categories and – depending on the methodology – render them more conceptual and abstract. At this stage, the researcher transcends description of the particular reality of the data and progresses towards concept development and theory building (Bazeley 2013; Charmaz 2014; Saldaña, 2016). While analysis begins locally, some form of generalisation is usually expected from a qualitative study, giving it significance beyond a novel narrative (Bazeley 2013).

After two or more coding cycles, the researcher should have several major themes or at least one theory. A theory is a rich statement portraying a key assertion, with accompanying narrative that expands on its meaning. It is often a single sentence that captures insightful if-then and how/why explanations for the phenomenon under study. There is no algorithm for a new theory. It is usually achieved through deep reflection on the themes and subthemes derived from the data that symbolically represent patterns of human action (Saldaña 2016). Theory is not fact, but speculation. It may be acquired passively in moments of insight, or achieved actively through a rigorous process of viewing data as a puzzle (Bazeley 2013).

Original theory development is not necessary in a qualitative study. Research that applies pre-existing theories in different social contexts, or that elaborates or modifies existing theories, may be equally substantive. In all cases, it is essential to address the ‘how’ and ‘why’ aspects of the phenomena – for instance, how they work or develop, how they compare to others, or why they happen under certain conditions (Saldaña 2016).

Coding is complete when all incidents are categorised and sufficient patterns have emerged. Saturation is commonly seen as occurring when no new categories emerge from the data. Moreover, each theme must be fully described, with variations in each identified and preferably related to other concepts. This could imply that analysis is never finished (Bazeley 2013).

The final written report should explain how themes relate to the central/core category, for instance in terms of contexts, conditions, interactions and consequences. Just as all research projects begin with a one-sentence statement ('The purpose of this study is...'), some studies culminate in another one-sentence statement: 'The theory constructed from this study is...' (Saldaña 2016).

In the present study, four coding cycles were applied, related to the discussion above: first, the pre-coded categories were used to develop questions for the interviews and questionnaires; second, codes were used to describe the themes and subthemes; third, coding was used to detect patterns between themes and subthemes; and fourth, a theoretical framework for ILR was developed.

7.6.3 Data saturation

To track data saturation, it was noted whenever a participant produced a new subtheme or code (the themes were pre-coded). Figure 7.4 illustrates how the incidence of new subthemes or codes declined from the first to the eighth interviewee (the dotted line represents the trend). The first interviewee introduced nine new codes, while the last two interviewees introduced only two each. Since the latter did not have major implications for the results of this study, theoretical saturation was deemed to have taken place, and no further interviews were done.

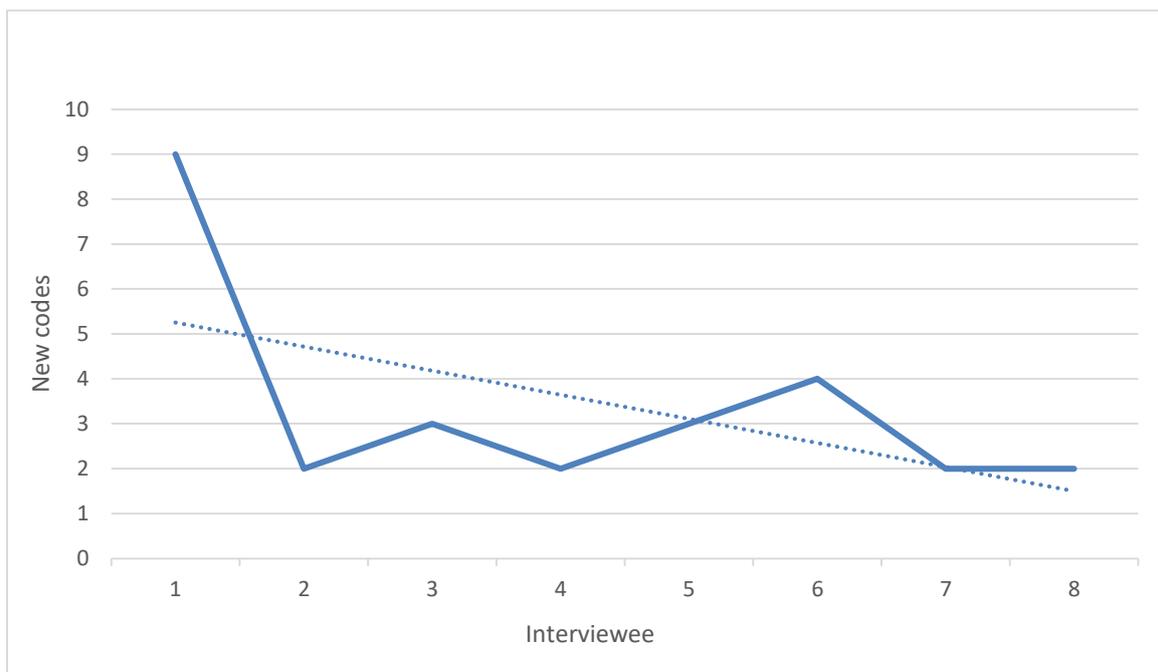


Figure 7.4: Data saturation (interviews)

As with the interviews, data saturation was monitored by tracking new subthemes and codes gleaned from the questionnaires. In Figure 7.5, it is clear how new subthemes or codes declined dramatically within the first few questionnaires and continued a steady trend towards the last questionnaire, with several questionnaires yielding no new codes whatsoever. Therefore, it was deemed that data saturation had taken place, and no further questionnaires were distributed.

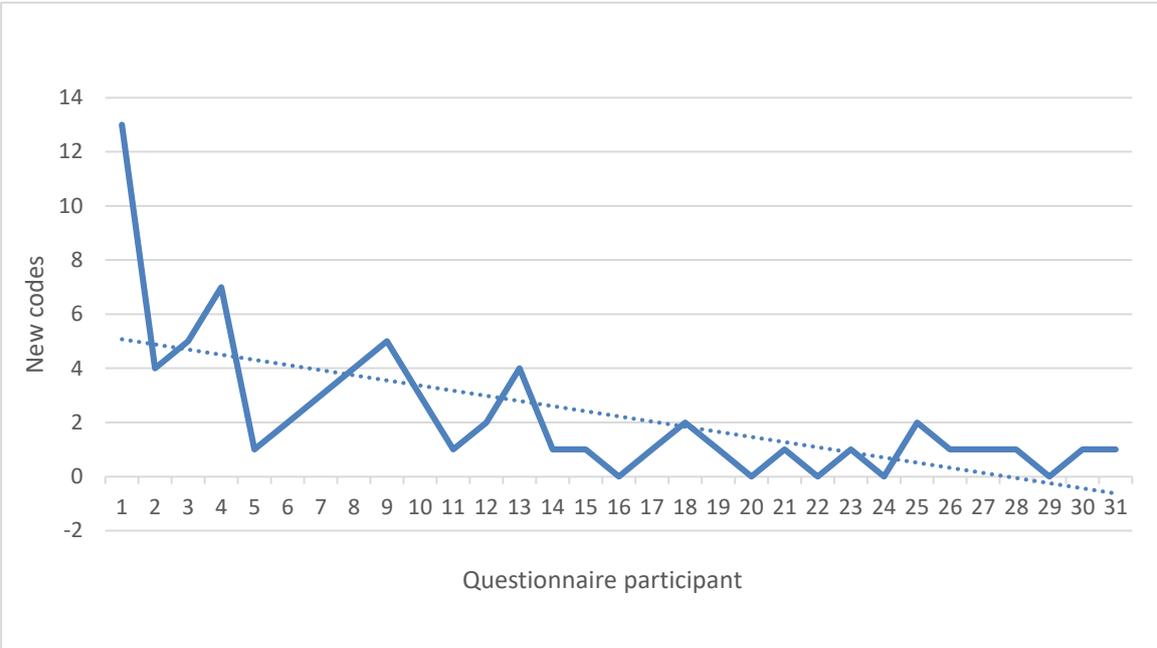


Figure 7.5: Data saturation (questionnaires)

7.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Because the aim of qualitative research is not to generalise results, ‘reliability’ and ‘validity’ are not useful terms to use within these studies. Qualitative researchers therefore prefer to use the concept ‘trustworthiness’ (Koonin 2014:253). In qualitative research, trustworthiness can be measured by four criteria (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Maree 2012; Shenton, 2004): credibility (‘internal validity’ in positivistic research); transferability (‘external validity’ or ‘generalisability’ in positivistic research); dependability (‘reliability’ in positivistic research); and confirmability (‘objectivity’ in positivistic research). This section contains a discussion of how each of these aspects was ensured in this study.

7.7.1 Credibility

Credibility concerns the accuracy of the interpretation of original data obtained from participants (Koonin 2014:258). It is enhanced by sufficient interaction between the researcher and participants, and through the triangulation of data collection methods (Collis & Hussey 2003; Shenton 2004). Qualitative research is also viewed as credible if the overall findings are considered to be accurate by the actual participants in the study. Since the goal of qualitative research is to describe phenomena or understand the experiences of specific individuals in a particular context, research participants are legitimate judges of credibility (Trochim 2000). In addition, by interviewing a number of participants, a researcher can compare their experiences and check one participant's comments against the others' (Seidman 2013).

Seidman (2013) cautions that, no matter how diligently researchers work to minimise the effect of the interviewer and interviewing situation on how participants reconstruct their experience, interviewers are necessarily part of the process. They ask questions, respond to the participant, and may even share their own experiences. Subsequently, they select from the data, and analyse and interpret it. Only by recognising that interaction and affirming its possibilities can interviewers use their skills to minimise the distortion that can occur because of their role in the interview.

In this study, there was sufficient interaction between the researcher and the participants. The interviews allowed for both verbal and nonverbal communication, opportunities for participants to ask clarifying questions about the study, interview questions and terminology used. While the questionnaires involved less interaction by nature, participants were invited to raise queries about any concerns. These two data collection methods also constitute methodological triangulation, which enhanced the credibility of the study. Finally, the research findings were presented to the participants, to judge the credibility of the study.

The results of this study as presented in Chapter 11 was emailed to the 39 participants (eight in Sample 1 and 31 in Sample 2), and they were then invited to evaluate the results via the online software of Survey Monkey (to be found at www.surveymonkey.com). This survey consisted of only three questions (see Appendix D). In response to the first question, participants had to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed that the research results reflected their experience of ILR in knowledge-based organisational contexts. Participants had four response options: strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The second question required a reason for their response to Question 1. The third (identifying) question was clearly indicated as optional. Of the 39 participants, 34 responded to the survey. As

illustrated in Figure 7.6 below, 65% of participants strongly agreed that the results reflected their experience, while 35% agreed. There were no responses that indicated disagreement.

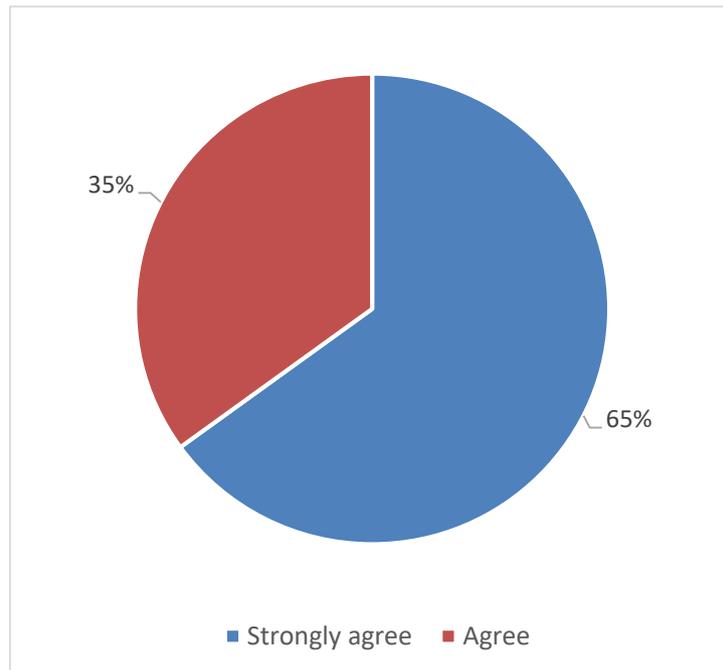


Figure 7.6: Participants' evaluation of the research results

For Sample 1 (ILR experts), the response rate to this survey was 88%. Four of the interviewees indicated that they 'strongly agree', and 43% indicated that they 'agree' with the results based on their experience. While some did not give a reason for their response, examples of relevant comments by those who indicated strong agreement include the following:

I think you managed to capture the essence of interpersonal leadership relations comprehensively.

It is well aligned to what I have observed. It reflects a reality which is seldom postulated. Great work!!!

The following are examples of comments by interviewees who indicated 'agree':

Based on my experience of working and coaching in knowledge-based organisational contexts. The contexts differ and therefore I cannot 'strongly agree'.

Most organisations do not yet use many of these skills.

With reference to the latter comment, it seems plausible that the interviewee interpreted the results as a picture of what currently exists, rather than a picture of ideal ILR. If that is the case, s/he might otherwise have indicated strong agreement.

For Sample 2 (leader/follower in an existing LFD), the response rate to the survey was 87%. Of these questionnaire participants, 67% indicated strong agreement, while 33% indicated agreement. Examples of comments by those who 'strongly agree' include the following:

... This will be a valuable tool for organisations where professionals are employed to lead professionals.

The results... highlighted the importance of care, meaning and purpose... authentic leadership in line with business values... the importance of emotional intelligence to a supportive organisational culture.

... good IRL as defined by the thesis, is a constructive force in the workplace not only in terms of human relations, but also in terms of the work environment functioning more efficiently... if people believe in the meaning of what they do, and in the value of the people they work with and work for, that it will deliver greater synergy and energy to the work quality and environment.

Strong collaborative leaders recognising the personal needs and utilising and enhancing followers' strengths are what has made for excellent leaders from my experience. Furthermore a lack of trust has left me feeling excluded, disconnected and wanting to detach from the goals emotionally. Spot on results and well formulated.

... leadership has shifted from an authoritarian style... It is more about understanding others and what motivates them and to work cooperatively with them in order to achieve the best results in tasks...

... a collaborative leadership style is much more effective as it builds constructive relationships through authenticity and personal interest in the followers, showing value for what they value and by being genuine...

The results show what I have experienced as a manager... It also shows my experiences as a follower.

Very accurate. A thorough study.

... one person knowing so much more than others that he can be the boss and the rest mere automatons obeying orders are a thing of the past. We now have machines for that. People need to learn to be collaborative on all levels and acknowledge all levels of one another's existence. Hopefully this study will help the process.

As a leader in a multicultural organisation, I resonate with the themes outlined...

The following are comments by questionnaire participants who indicated that they 'agree' with the results:

... corresponds to most of my experiences at work (both as the 'leader' in one organisation and as part of the senior management team in another.

In line with what I have experienced in the workplace.

The boss is still the boss, and ultimately must make a profit.

From the above, it is clear that most participants strongly support the results as aligned to their ILR experiences, while the other participants who responded to the credibility survey support the results. Participants' comments in this regard highlighted aspects such as caring and support, meaning and purpose, valuing people's uniqueness and strengths, collaboration and greater equality between leaders and followers (as opposed to autocratic leadership), trust, authenticity, multicultural competence, and emotional intelligence. Comments that indicated the value and applicability of the study in the workplace were deemed very encouraging.

7.7.2 Transferability

Given that interpretivist research does not lend itself to generalised findings, *transferability* is the degree to which the methods and results of a study can be applied beyond its own boundaries, with similar effects (Koonin 2014; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Shenton 2004).

The methodology used in this study is simple and can be easily duplicated in other contexts. Given that the study is qualitative in nature and is based on relatively small purposive samples, results will not be identical in other contexts. However, it is posited that other studies using the same conceptual framework should produce overlapping results.

7.7.3 Dependability

Dependability exists when the research process is clear and appropriate (Pitney & Parker 2009), and the processes of data collection, data analysis and theory building are well integrated (Collis & Hussey 2003:278-279; Koonin 2014). To ensure dependability, a researcher should document the research processes carefully to enable future researchers to repeat the study, although not necessarily the results (Shenton 2004).

Du Plooy (2009) states that the dependability of coding judgments is an issue when conducting a content analysis of an interview; therefore interviews should be transcribed as a verbatim record. Coding dependability can also be increased by applying more than one method of data collection, and by using an external person to judge whether bias and misrepresentation has occurred in coding the data.

Bazeley (2013) also notes that checking coding for reliability is often done by asking a second person to code a sample of data, to check whether s/he produces the same codes as did the first person. This practice stems from coding in quantitative work where codes become separated from the data and consistent application of a clear definition of a code is critical to interpreting statistical results. However, Bazeley (2013) emphasises that no qualitative project contains a single set of categories; therefore, multiple perspectives on the same data are possible. All researchers bring their own knowledge, experiences and aims to a research study, influencing what they see in the data, how they interpret the data, and therefore what themes they develop from the data. Hence it is unreasonable to expect that two individuals approaching the same data only for the purpose of coding, will code it similarly into the same themes, unless the second coder is trained on the framework of the study, and given strict instructions regarding a tightly defined set of codes.

In this study, the research methodology and conceptual framework are sufficiently detailed to enable other researchers to repeat the study, more than one data collection method was used, and interviews were transcribed. All data analysis and interpretation was done by the researcher, ensuring consistent coding of all collected data.

7.7.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is the degree to which the collected data supports the findings and interpretation of a study. It requires that the researcher provide a detailed description of the research process (Koonin 2014; Lincoln & Guba 1985), and that findings flow convincingly from the available data (Shenton 2004). To minimise bias in research, Neuman (2006) advises that the

researcher take specific measures to safeguard against the manipulative effect of preceding assumptions throughout the study. Researchers should refrain from restraining or fabricating findings to meet their own or other parties' requirements (Creswell 2003).

In this study, the conceptual framework, questions to participants and coding frameworks and processes are sufficiently detailed to demonstrate convincingly that the findings flow from the data. There is no external party with a vested interest in a specific outcome. The study also does not aim to prove a particular relationship between or outcome of variables; rather, the aim is to describe ILR in knowledge-based contexts. Hence, because any finding from this study constitutes an answer to the research question, there is no pressure or desire to influence or fabricate the findings. Furthermore, all data collection was done by the researcher, eliminating contradictory instructions by different researchers to participants.

Shipman (2014:20) states that, while a researcher can never be entirely detached, making the research public for scrutiny and assessment by peers can produce agreement among experts. Lay review is also important when the subject is human behaviour. In this study, lay review took place in that questionnaire participants were invited to judge the confirmability of the study and found it acceptable. Peer review was done in the following ways: by inviting interviewees to judge the confirmability of the study; through formal internal and external examination of this thesis; and by making this study publicly available in academic libraries.

7.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations are crucial in research (Louw 2014). Researchers should protect participants' human and civil rights, attending to the following (Du Plooy 2009): the 'do no harm' principle (not causing participants physical or psychological harm), informed and voluntary consent (obtaining direct or substitute consent from participants to study them, particularly in the case of children), participants' legal and cognitive competency; ensuring privacy (confidentiality and anonymity). These issues were addressed in this study, as detailed below.

7.8.1 Ethical clearance

Every institution has policies for the conduct of research (Watson & McMahon 2012:13). Before engaging with participants, researchers must get approval from the research ethics committee of their institution (Jensen & Laurie 2016:53). The present study was conducted under the auspices of the University of South Africa (UNISA). An application for ethical clearance formed part of the research proposal that was submitted in November 2013 and approved by UNISA.

(The application for ethical clearance can be seen in Appendix C.) Particular ethical risks highlighted in the application include using participants who are under 18 years of age or who are otherwise vulnerable, physical or psychological harm to participants, financial cost to participants, and incentives to participants. None of these apply to this study.

7.8.2 Informed consent

Ensuring informed consent from participants is a foundational ethical principle in social research (Holt 2012). People have a right to privacy, control over their lives and ownership over their ideas (Jensen & Laurie 2016:54-55). Participants should be informed that they are being researched, and what the nature of that research is (Ryen 2016:32). They should clearly understand what will be required of them during their participation, whether and how their identities will be protected, and how results will be used. The researcher should preferably communicate these in writing. Participants should sign their consent, and the researcher should keep these documents on record (Louw 2014:264).

In the case of this study, the nature, purpose and procedures of the research were fully explained to all participants in writing and in most cases also through face-to-face, Skype or telephonic conversations. (The explanatory statements can be seen in Appendices A and B.) Participants were also invited to ask questions or raise concerns about the research. One recruit refused to take part in the research, being sceptical about the confidentiality of her responses, due to an earlier, unrelated negative experience. No other recruits or participants raised any concerns.

A consent form typically asks the participant to agree that: they have received sufficient information about the study; they are willing to participate; and that they understand that their participation is voluntary and they can withdraw at any time (Cassell 2015:40). In the present study, consent to voluntary participation was obtained from all participants. Participants were asked to sign a written consent form (included in Appendices A and B). As stipulated on the consent form, if participants returned the consent form via email, it would be deemed as signed. All consent forms and related email communication were electronically stored for record-keeping.

7.8.3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is the obligation to protect participant's identities (Ryen 2016:32) – that is, even though the researcher can match their identities to their responses, not to make this information

known to other parties (Louw 2014:267-268). It also implies that participants' responses may not be used outside of the specific research study (Jensen & Laurie 2016:64). Where researchers include quotations from participants in writing up their research, they can use pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality (Cassell 2015:47). Trust is foundational to the relationship between the researcher and the participants. If such trust is violated by not protecting confidentiality, participants may become reluctant to participate in future research projects (Ryen 2016:32). The latter happened in the present study, where one recruit, because confidentiality was reportedly not honoured in a previous unrelated study, was unwilling to participate.

In this study, anonymity could not be ensured, because face-to-face interviews were conducted and the completed questionnaires could be connected to specific participants. However, participants were assured of confidentiality. Their identities were not revealed in any published documents, and pseudonyms and codes were used where participants were directly quoted in the research results.

7.8.4 Avoiding harm

A fundamental principle of research ethics is to do no harm to others (Jensen & Laurie 2016:48). 'Harm' to participants in social science research may be more complex and subtle than in studies in the natural sciences and may include the following: asking participants to recall emotionally painful memories; exploring topics in a group setting that may cause participants to be embarrassed in front of others; damaging a participant's career prospects; conducting a focus group in such a manner that some participants feel excluded or that their contributions are less valuable than those of others (Louw 2014:266). The researcher must ensure that the study does not put the welfare or reputation of participants at risk (Jensen & Laurie 2016:48).

In this study, no harm to participants was foreseen or noted. Interviewees were interviewed in the venue of their choice, in complete or relative privacy, while questionnaire participants could complete the questionnaires in private if they wished to do so. Participants were not expected to relate particularly painful or embarrassing experiences. All participants were also assured that they could terminate the interview or leave out a particular question in the questionnaire if they did not feel comfortable in answering a particular question. Some participants did relate negative interactions between them and other leader/followers, but did not demonstrate or express any objection to doing so. The context of the research was the workplace, which is

relatively public and generally comprises fewer and less sensitive experiences than, for instance, personal relationships in the home context.

7.8.5 Avoiding plagiarism

Plagiarism is stealing another individual's intellectual property (Jacobs 2014:321), or presenting other people's work as one's own (Du Plooy 2009). Referencing all sources consulted aids in avoiding plagiarism, gives credit to the original authors for their work, and adds credibility to the new study (Jacobs 2014:321).

To avoid plagiarism in this study, acknowledgement was given to the original authors of ideas through meticulous referencing, both in the text and in the list of sources consulted. Furthermore, as per UNISA requirements, the entire dissertation was submitted to the web-based software of Turnitin (found at www.turnitin.com), which detects plagiarism from the Internet and from other works submitted to Turnitin. Although the resultant similarity index (expressed as a percentage) necessarily includes direct quotations and frequently quoted concepts, the similarity index for this dissertation was 9% (including direct quotations), whereas an index of up to 24% is accepted by UNISA.

7.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the methodology for this study was discussed, with reference to the unit of analysis, population parameters, sampling, data collection methods, the data analysis and interpretation method, trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

The *unit of analysis* was identified as an individual; particularly, the individual's expressed views on ILR and related phenomena relevant to this study. Two *populations* were identified as follows: Population 1 included all individuals who are experts at ILR (for example authors, lecturers, training facilitators, business coaches and consultants in relevant fields); and Population 2 comprised leader/followers practising ILR in knowledge-based organisations. Sample 1 (interview participants) was drawn from Population 1, and Sample 2 (questionnaire participants) was selected from Population 2.

Non-probability (non-random) *sampling* was used, which is highly suitable for qualitative research, and requires neither statistical representation nor scale. Specifically, the following types of non-probability sampling were used: purposive sampling, where units are selected based on specific criteria, and convenience sampling, where units are recruited because they

are easily accessible to the researcher. Through these sampling methods, two samples were recruited. Sample 1 consisted of eight individuals who are known to the researcher and are experts in ILR and related fields. Sample 2 consisted of 31 people who are known to the researcher and are interpersonal leader/followers in knowledge-based organisational contexts.

The following *data collection methods* were used: semi-structured in-depth interviews for Sample 1 (experts), and questionnaires for Sample 2 (leader/followers). Semi-structured interviews are a flexible data collection method that is very suitable to qualitative studies, and in the present study the interviews yielded rich data for describing ILR. The questionnaires contained mostly open-ended questions and yielded interesting data, although not as rich as those from the interviews. The response rate to the questionnaires, although adequate, was disappointing. In addition, two questionnaires had to be discarded, because participants had ostensibly misinterpreted the general aim of the questions.

The *data analysis and interpretation method* for this study was thematic analysis as a form of qualitative content analysis. A primarily deductive approach to analysis was taken, where the texts were analysed for codes relating to themes already identified in the conceptual framework of this study. While time-consuming, the thematic analysis yielded rich descriptions of ILR and made meaningful contributions towards establishing a theoretical framework.

In terms of the *trustworthiness* of the study, it was argued that this research possesses sufficient credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Regarding credibility, there was sufficient interaction between the researcher and the participants during the interviews, allowing for verbal and nonverbal communication cues, and clarification of questions and terms. The two data collection methods (in-depth interviews and questionnaires) also constitute methodological triangulation. Finally, the research findings were presented to the participants, to judge the credibility of the study. Based on their responses, the study was found to be highly credible.

In terms of transferability, the methodology in this study is simple and easily duplicated. While results will not be identical, due to the qualitative nature of the study, other studies employing the same conceptual framework should produce overlapping results. To ensure dependability, the methodology and conceptual framework were described in sufficient detail to allow other researchers to repeat the study. In addition, more than one data collection method was used, and interviews were transcribed. All data analysis and interpretation was done by a single researcher, ensuring consistent coding.

Regarding confirmability, the conceptual framework, questions to participants and coding processes were adequately detailed to demonstrate that the findings flow from the data. No

external party had a vested interest in a specific outcome. The study was not aimed at proving a specific outcome or relationship between variables. Because the aim was to describe ILR, any finding from this study constitutes an answer to the research question, removing pressure to influence or fabricate the findings. Furthermore, all data collection was done by a single researcher, eliminating contradictory instructions by different researchers to participants.

In terms of *ethical considerations*, ethical clearance was gained from UNISA to continue with the study. Informed consent was given by all participants, and the confidentiality of their responses was ensured. No harm to participants was foreseen or noted. Plagiarism was avoided through meticulous referencing to original authors, and by submitting the thesis to Turnitin, a website employing software that checks for plagiarism.

The detailed results of this study are presented in Chapters 8-10. The next chapter forms the first part of the discussion.

CHAPTER 8: RESULTS IN TERMS OF ENVIRONMENTAL INPUTS INTO THE LEADER-FOLLOWER DYAD

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter constituted a description of the methodology used in the present study. In this and the following two chapters, the results of the field research (interviews and questionnaires) are reported. Since the results of an interpretive study often cannot be separated from an interpretation of those results (Collis & Hussey 2003), they are presented simultaneously in these chapters.

Qualitative researchers strive to understand and present participants' subjective experience (Seidman 2013). Therefore, qualitative data analysis should provide a detailed, rigorous account of the qualitative data gathered during research, creating an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences (Denzin & Lincoln 2003). To this end, a chapter is devoted to each of the three main themes identified in Chapter 6 (environmental inputs into the leader-follower dyad, symbolic interaction in the leader-follower dyad, and leader-follower attributes).

The results and first-level interpretation are reported concurrently in these chapters. The first-level interpretation comprises the identification of dominant subthemes and patterns between subthemes and codes. For the purpose of this study, in line with the interpretive research tradition as discussed in Chapter 7, a subtheme was considered dominant when any one of the following applied: it was referenced by various participants; it was expressed with greater verbal or nonverbal emphasis than other subthemes by a particular participant; or it has great summative value in terms of the research aims of this study. In cases where one or more of these conditions apply in a greater measure, it is indicated in the discussion as a particularly dominant subtheme. The discussion in Chapters 8-10 culminates in a second-level interpretation of the data in Chapter 11, where a theoretical framework for interpersonal leadership relations (ILR) is presented.

In the theoretical chapters it was argued that, if the leader-follower dyad (LFD) is viewed as a system, it would – like all systems – be influenced by its environment, in this case phenomena in the organisational and greater business environment. Theme 1 (environmental inputs into the LFD) was examined in greater detail in the interviews than in the questionnaires. In Chapter 2, several environmental inputs were identified and served as pre-coded subthemes. All of them were confirmed by the data from this study, and autocratic leadership was added

as a new and very dominant theme during the analysis. Thus, the final subthemes of Theme 1 are discussed below in the following order: a shift towards collaboration (including shared leadership), advances in communication technology, cultural diversity (including generational diversity), and workplace spirituality.

Interviewees are referenced by using pseudonyms. Questionnaire participants are referenced in terms of the prefix 'QUES-' (for 'questionnaire'), followed by a number to distinguish each questionnaire participant. These code names appear in bold typeface to distinguish them clearly from the rest of the text.

8.2 A SHIFT TOWARDS COLLABORATION

In Chapter 2, it was suggested that a new era of collaboration is emerging in the workplace – as opposed to the former approaches of competition and mere cooperation – with an increased emphasis on relationships in and between organisations. The results of this study revealed that collaboration as an approach to work and leadership is highly appropriate for knowledge-based organisations. It also indicated that there is some movement towards more collaborative work and less hierarchical control – even if it is merely the result of new communication technology – but not as much as is desirable.

With regard to this subtheme, this study makes a contribution by identifying and describing four environmental shifts related to collaboration that are conducive to ILR and have implications for the practice thereof: a shift from hierarchy to transparency; a shift from control to empowerment; a shift from autocratic leadership to participative or collaborative leadership; and a shift from an individual focus to a team approach. These are further discussed below.

8.2.1 A shift from hierarchy to transparency (new subtheme)

In the theoretical chapters, it was argued that, while the age of collaboration has caused global proliferation of avenues for communication and collaboration, the need for rapid responses to environmental changes also puts pressure on traditional organisation hierarchies as mechanisms of control and coordination. In particular, hierarchical structures impose filters and delays on interactions between collaborating (internal or external) partners. This viewpoint was confirmed by several participants, who suggested that the more hierarchical knowledge-based organisations are in structure, the less transparent communication is within that structure. Their comments also suggested that collaboration requires a shift from controlled, one-way,

hierarchical communication, to free-flowing, multidirectional, transparent interpersonal leadership communication in organisations.

For example, **Faye** noted that most organisations were very hierarchical in the past, and followers had to communicate with their leaders through personal assistants. Leaders were the experts, because they had access to important information. Leadership communication was not transparent, and leaders hesitated to admit mistakes or lack of knowledge. However, organisations are becoming less hierarchical, because contemporary communication technology (for example, electronic mail) makes leaders more accessible. The top-down approach of autocratic leaders does not appeal to knowledge workers, who are now the experts and often more knowledgeable in their particular fields than are their managers. In addition, compared to previous generations, these knowledge workers are not as loyal to a specific organisation, and will leave if their intellectual and other needs are not met.

From the results of this study, it is posited that the shift from hierarchy to transparency require the following approaches from interpersonal leaders: listening to new ideas by any follower, regardless of his/her hierarchical status; demonstrating flexibility in adopting new ideas; allowing the free expression of and considering different and even unpopular opinions; *guiding* followers (knowledge workers) instead of making decisions for them; and explaining strategic decisions to followers from a larger perspective. This is supported by, amongst others, the following comments by participants:

Ned: *In an ever-changing world and environment in business, you've got to be flexible [in terms of] adopting new ideas, or at least listening to them from whichever quarter it comes.*

Ingrid: *Sometimes an opinion is not going to be what everyone wants to hear, but do you then think, okay, why is that an opinion? ... to give adequate space for different opinions, so that people can feel as if they can voice their truthful opinion without being shot down or immediately just being blocked.*

Faye: *... people are far more informed [and] opinionated; people have expertise in their field, so a leader is no longer this oracle with all the knowledge... especially in a knowledge-based organisation: the people that work there are professionals, they are experts in their fields, and often what they need from you is guidance... not to make decisions for them. It's far more collaborative... As a leader you have to paint the bigger picture for your staff, you need to translate the strategy to them. You need to explain why certain decisions were made... people are no longer happy to just do what they are told to do, they want to understand why.*

Faye described a situation where a decision was made unilaterally by senior management to implement a particular project, without consulting with followers affected by the decision. The decision was strongly resisted by followers:

It was such a negative experience for people that, even though it is a massive part of the strategy, people are resisting it, they are in some ways actually actively sabotaging it... [Somebody decided] this is where the company is going and 'I am paying you a salary and therefore you will do what I ask you to do', and people don't like being treated like that... [The name of the project] has become a swearword in the company... if they managed it correctly, people would have bought into it and they would have been excited about it.

A few questionnaire participants noted that their organisational cultures facilitate open discussion, enhancing ILR. Others observed that their leaders' accessibility allows for transparency and ease of interpersonal leadership communication (ILC). However, while these examples signal progress, many organisations described by participants are still very hierarchical and autocratic. Participants working in such structures (expressed through leadership styles but also in tangible ways such as dress code) had negative perceptions of these environments. They reported that the formality extends to ILR, where little room is allowed for personal matters. Power in their organisations is firmly linked to hierarchical position, and followers have little influence. This argument was emphasised by **QUES-16**:

The culture in my company is very focused on hierarchy... There are no open communication lines upwards and the communication from the top to the bottom is on a 'need-to-know' basis – and more often than not, the majority of the organisation doesn't 'need to know' anything.

From the results, it is posited that open, transparent communication is particularly necessary in uncertain situations (e.g. during organisational change). In this regard, **Nelson** remarked:

[The new CEO] immediately restructured the company... It was a better way of doing things, but a lot of people... didn't know what their new job was... and sometimes they were at sea... It's caused massive, massive discontent... the communication around that has been handled abysmally.

One participant, **Serena**, noted that the size of an organisation affects how hierarchical its structure is, and introduced the term 'relational capacity' as the maximum size an organisation can grow before becoming too hierarchical and detrimental to ILR. ILR can thus be more effective in less hierarchical organisational structures, where leader/followers have more direct access to each other. The term 'relational capacity' is deemed to be a contribution of this study.

Another new contribution was made by **Nelson**, who demonstrated that the physical office environment itself can contribute to flattening an organisational hierarchy and fostering transparency and engagement. He commented:

We've moved into what's called activity-based offices... It's all open plan, and whether you're the MD or the most junior, you just find a station, plug your computer in and work away. There are different kinds of activity areas – a standard full-on work station... little meeting areas... a quiet area where you've still got computer access, but you're not allowed to make a noise... an eating area... So although we do have [a hierarchical] structure on paper, in terms of the way the actual office vibe works, anyone can talk to anybody... [It has] re-established a lot of the warmth that we had lost...

8.2.2 A shift from control to empowerment (new subtheme)

In Chapter 2, it was argued that collaboration is a departure from previous organisational forms, in that control and coordination are based on direct exchanges between leader/followers in self-organised, trusting relationships. It was posited that collaboration is essential in solving complex organisational problems and adapt to evolving environments. Interpersonal leaders, then, must emphasise collaboration instead of competition, and communicate in line with that value. They can no longer view followers (knowledge workers) as mere implementers of plans, but must empower them to contribute meaningfully to organisational knowledge and processes. These notions were strongly supported by several interviewees. For instance, **Faye** described the ideal leader-follower relationship with knowledge workers as one in which the leader values followers' input and gives them ownership. She stated:

... to value people's opinions and their input as thinking, knowing human beings... That really leads to a much better quality product if you allow them to take ownership, to participate, to have a voice, to challenge... not to treat them as cogs in a machine that you are paying a salary to produce work.

Zena noted that, in organisations with an autocratic leadership concept, followers often rely on leaders to do all the thinking and “become comfortable in not taking the lead and not thinking”, which is disempowering to followers and not beneficial to the innovation that is so necessary for the organisation to constantly adapt to its demanding environment. By contrast, a collaborative leadership concept empowers followers and creates what several participants termed a ‘thinking’ environment – that is, an organisational culture of independent thought. Such an environment actually fosters greater accountability in followers, and creates an organisational culture in which it is safe to make mistakes and where conflict can be resolved

promptly. **Kate**, in describing the concerted effort of a particular organisation to transition from a very autocratic leadership style to a much more collaborative style, remarked:

The result has been engaging with followers at a much deeper level and of people taking much greater responsibility... feeling that it's safe to even make mistakes and that one can learn through one's mistakes... that the whole organisation can learn through those mistakes... The organisation has led the way through what they have produced as a result of this culture.

A new subtheme that emerged from several participants' comments is the importance of empowering followers to make and to learn from mistakes. One of the benefits of such an approach is that followers are more transparent about their mistakes, allowing leaders to intervene more proactively. For example, **Faye** commented:

[Leaders should] have some tolerance of mistakes... because you learn through your mistakes... when you support people as opposed to managing by fear, they are more open. So they will tell you, "I am struggling..." or "I made this mistake". And then you can intervene in a far better, more proactive way...

Faye further noted that a disadvantage of a thinking environment is opinion overload. This requires the interpersonal leader to develop his/her skills at selecting useful ideas from a mass of follower input and to proactively gain his/her team's support for projects:

[The] risk of collaboration is... opinion overload... [But] the more you collaborate with people, the more you learn how to filter the good from the bad and how to find the theme that will [satisfy] everyone... But knowledge workers feel disrespected when you don't ask for their opinion [and] will challenge you... When the process doesn't work, they [will] say, "Well, you didn't ask me... I would have told you 'x' and then it would have worked better."

8.2.3 A shift from autocratic leadership to collaborative leadership (new subtheme)

In the theoretical chapters, it was posited that collaboration replaced the former command-and-control approach to leadership. This was confirmed by several interviewees, who discussed the desirability of a more participative or collaborative organisational culture, where leaders draw from the collective wisdom of their teams. This approach, according to the results, is diametrically opposite to autocratic leadership. It also presents a new challenge to leaders, as **Lynette** observed:

In a very collaborative environment... how do you move people to do something from a leadership perspective? ... It's more like herding cats than a dog world.

In addition, some participants noted that collaborative problem-solving is central in knowledge-based contexts. Therefore, as **Faye** stated, leadership in knowledge-based contexts is essentially facilitating collaboration. She firmly believes that interpersonal skills are at the foundation of such leadership:

Managing conflict, managing disagreements, different opinions, different ways of wanting to do things, criticism on other people's work, emotions, stress – those are the kinds of things that you have to manage. And the pace is very fast, so people are under enormous pressure to perform. And it's guiding them in terms of "This is a weakness... You are great at this..."

Zena described this shift as a movement from Type A leadership to Type B leadership, which constitutes a new code in this study. She associates Type A leadership with the traditional organising, commanding and controlling functions of an autocratic leader, where the leader "very much sets the pace, sets the direction, and he or she has followers". Conversely, the Type B leader is much more collaborative – "the leader as the coach, the mentor". Type B leadership is strongly linked to emotional intelligence, and is more conducive to ILR. **Zena** further stated that it is associated with greater transparency and trust in the organisation:

[Type B leadership is] inspirational leadership versus the more A Type or authoritarian kind of approach. A lot of clients are now trying to change the leadership culture from the A Type to the B Type... even companies with a very strong A Type are taking strong strides forward... There's more collaborative working, there's more equal partnerships in the business, there's more transparency, trust increases... The silo working, the levels between the leadership in the organisation also become less visible. There's just a more free-flowing approach between the levels in terms of communication.

According to several participants, Type B leadership fosters employee engagement, which in turn aids in retaining staff. For instance, **Ingrid** commented as follows:

[I recommend] a participative approach... an engagement of communication as opposed to pure message sending... trying to get to a common goal and an understanding of that goal of an organisation... Not just to let people feel part of an organisation, but it encourages them to participate in what organisation is going towards, and not just sitting back and seeing how things unfold in the organisation.

In the theoretical chapters, it was emphasised that collaborative relationships should include mutual trust. A few participants confirmed this notion. For example, **Sarina** stated that leaders should trust followers to counter their own impulse to control followers. Speaking from the follower's viewpoint, **QUES-9** described how being trusted enhanced her creativity at work:

[In] a friendly, independent culture that is not stifling, I tend to perform better than when I have a leader who constantly hovers over me. In my current role, I have very flexible hours and I am free to be innovative...

8.2.4 A shift from an individual focus to a team approach (new subtheme)

A fourth new subtheme that was added to the pre-coded subtheme of collaboration, is a shift from a focus on individuals to a focus on the team as a collective. Several interviewees noted that a team-centred environment is very important for collaborative ILC to thrive in organisations. For example, **Kate** stated she encourages a collaborative “team approach” in her client organisations, because it greatly enhances ILC. In addition, **Lynette** noted that she used group dynamics to guide followers to think through processes as a team, because the task is often a collective effort, and “none of them can achieve it without the others”. This was supported by **Faye**, who stated:

It's important to create a team culture, where people work together and want to see other people succeed. Where the team is more important than the individual, so it is important that the team looks good and that the team meets deadlines and that the team performs, and therefore you will support the team members that need that kind of support... I can do [Project X] on my own, but I pull the whole group in and we all go through it. When that [project] rolls out, I have the buy-in of the entire group, and all of them are happy to support it. And if anything goes wrong, nobody blames me for it, because they had input [and] have a sense of ownership... [The projects] roll out smoothly and the [team] gets the credit...

8.3 ADVANCES IN COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Another environmental trend that was identified in Chapter 2 is advances in communication technology, which potentially leads to virtual (off-site, online) work as part of some people's weekly routine, and also the emergence of virtual, cross-functional teams. As a result, in such cases face-to-face ILC is limited, being replaced by mediated, online communication. With some exceptions, the results confirmed these subthemes, as discussed below.

8.3.1 Virtual work

In the theoretical chapters, it was argued that, with advances in communication technologies, an increasing number of employees across the world are routinely doing virtual work. Some interviewees had noticed this trend in their environments, but very few participants regularly engaged in virtual work themselves, and no participant referred to virtual, cross-functional teams in their contexts. One participant, **Sarina**, mentioned that, while virtual work is a global trend, managers in the organisation for which she works has a “huge resistance against the virtual world”, preferring their employees and clients to be physically present in the office. By contrast, **Nelson** mentioned that he and several colleagues (based in Johannesburg) regularly work virtually. His manager is an extreme example – given her role in the organisation, she works “almost entirely virtually” and has never met her manager, who is based in another country. **QUES-7** also noted that her relationship with her leader is mostly virtual:

We have a very modern ‘cyber’ working relationship... email, WhatsApp and the occasional phone call. I see her very little. I wonder how many professional working relationships will be like this in the future.

In Chapter 2, it was posited that virtual work limits interaction between interpersonal leader/followers; thus, developing community among people who work at a geographical distance from each other and who may be from different cultures is an organisational challenge. Of those participants who referred to virtual work, most confirmed that it presented ILR challenges. For instance, **Nelson** noted that his manager “has to make an extra effort” to maintain her virtual relationship with her manager. He also observed that mediated communication may appear impersonal, and that it has important implications for the manner in which employees process information (he works in the South African office of his organisation, while its head office is in London, England):

There is a risk that you can become less warm... In the old days, it would take a week for [information] to arrive, for the MD to absorb it, and then pass it on. Nowadays you get a mass communication [that] arrives at everyone’s desks in nanoseconds. So it’s changed completely how policies and strategies are communicated, and then how the local people interpret them...

However, virtual work may also have advantages. One participant, **QUES-7**, commented that, because she does not work at the office, her ILR is less affected by the negative aspects of the organisational culture.

8.3.2 The impact of social media on the workplace (new subtheme)

While online communication was discussed in Chapter 2, social media were not specifically identified in the theoretical chapters as a factor that influences ILR. However, some interviewees emphasised the role of social media in the workplace and specifically ILR; therefore it was added as a new subtheme and a specific contribution of this study. For instance, **Ned** views social media as the most significant environmental input into ILR in the workplace, because while an interpersonal leader is communicating with his/her followers at one level, they may be discussing his/her communication on social media. He stated:

[Followers] will, under your nose, create a group and discuss during the meeting... decisions you're making currently... which is scary...

Ned furthermore believes that, instead of ignoring or resisting this trend, leaders should develop strategies for participating in it, in a professional manner. He commented:

People underestimate social media at their own peril... They're so frivolous but also serious at the same time and that's dangerous... Leadership has to know how it works and be part of it to a degree. Because if you resist, it is just going to push out somewhere else... I've said "If a group is created, I must be on the group". It at least gave me a feel of what [my followers] were saying... and I had a chance to influence that communication. So I would seriously participate, and [the followers] appreciated it... But you can't be part of social media on a social level... there must be a formal picture of you in your work attire on your profile picture... Secondly, the way you conduct yourself... there must be value for the business...

Sarina also observed that the biggest organisational trend she had noticed, is the effect of electronic communication on the workplace, and how social media impacts organisations, including interpersonal leader-follower relationships. She believes that the trend increases the quantity but not necessarily the quality of communication, nor sharing of meaning. She stated:

I think it isn't necessarily enriching the quality of relationships. It's actually putting more pressure on it and diluting it more. There is a lot of content and a lot of the businesses understand communication is important, but now they just send out emails or create WhatsApp groups or tweet, and I don't think the quality of communication has improved. Maybe the frequency has, but people don't read it or they don't read to understand.

8.4 CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

In the theoretical chapters it was argued that globalisation and advancing communication technology have rendered people much more mobile and interconnected, which in turn has led to more diversity in both on-site and virtual staff. This presents challenges for ILR, and requires multicultural competence. These notions were supported by several interviewees; for instance, **Ingrid** stated that “one of the trends in business is that you’re not going to deal with people who are similar to you”. Various participants identified the following challenges that it presents for sharing meaning through ILC: language barriers; different frames of reference, resulting in different communication styles and misunderstandings; lack of understanding of other cultures; and different interpretations of organisational values, which may lead to misunderstanding or conflict. For instance, two participants commented as follows:

***Nelson:** We get missives from London on high and I look at them and think, “Ugh, no”. And they don’t really understand our culture and our unique way of doing things, and you feel this imposition...*

***Sarina:** ... not everybody’s definition of caring or how they demonstrate care is the same, and that creates discord in the culture.*

As discussed in Chapter 2, cultural differences may also include generational differences. It was suggested that the presence of different generations in the workplace may influence ILR, because, firstly, successive generations prefer relationship-focused leadership to task-focused leadership; and, secondly, younger generations prefer leaders who facilitate personal rather than organisational success. A few interviewees emphasised the role of generational differences. Regarding the first statement above, **Zena** confirmed that Generation Y – born in the period 1979-1994 (Chaudhuri & Ghosh 2012) – prefers Type B leadership, which is more relationship-focused and relies on emotionally intelligence:

I work with a lot of Generation Y leaders that are in their mid-thirties... emerging into middle management and senior management positions. They buy more into the B Type, and are moving up in organisations with the B Type leadership style.

With reference to the second statement, **Faye** mentioned that younger generations are less loyal than previous generations to a specific organisation, and that they will openly explore other job options that may serve them better. As a result, interpersonal leaders have to relate to and motivate younger followers in more creative ways than merely relying on their hierarchical position. She stated:

The loyalty [to the organisation] that people had in the past; is also not there. So, people are quite open about the fact that they are looking for other jobs; or you know if they find something more interesting or more suitable, that they would leave the organisation for better opportunities or more money or a better work-life balance. So as a leader it is no longer a situation of you are the boss and they are the employees and they must do what you say...

8.5 LEADERSHIP CONCEPT

One of the environmental factors in the organisation as a suprasystem that was presented as a potential influence on the leader/follower system is the leadership concept, that is the embedded assumptions about leadership in the organisational culture that shape how leader/followers perceive and enact leadership. The strength of this influence was strongly confirmed by participants, with specific reference to autocratic leadership. Based on the theoretical chapters, two leadership concepts were specifically explored under Theme 1 in this study: shared leadership and spiritual leadership. A third leadership concept emerged as a particularly dominant theme: autocratic leadership. These three leadership concepts are discussed below.

8.5.1 Shared leadership

Shared leadership was explored as a leadership model in Chapter 4. While no participant mentioned the term, several of its tenets were confirmed by participants' responses. Shared leadership is a particular form of collaborative leadership, which was discussed under Item 8.2 above. In that discussion, the following notions connected to shared leadership as a leadership concept were confirmed as desirable for knowledge-based contexts: collaborative interpersonal relationships drawing from the collective wisdom; a shift from the individual (self) to the collective (self-in-relation); a shift from control to learning; a shift from 'power over' to 'power with'; followers co-creating new knowledge, instead of merely implementing plans; and collaborative problem-solving. Thus, as a desirable leadership concept for knowledge-based organisational contexts, shared leadership was strongly supported by some participants. However, it was also clear from their responses that shared leadership was not yet a widely occurring leadership concept.

Another tenet of shared leadership that was strongly supported by interviewees, is that intellectual capital (or 'clever' people) is a key source of value in knowledge-based contexts, given that technological advances have led to a global information explosion (Hilbert 2014).

For instance, **Sarina** noted a global, exponential increase in knowledge that adds “a level of complexity to knowledge-based organisations, because how can you stay at the cutting edge?” Given this challenge, some participants noted that knowledge workers are highly valuable as intellectual capital in knowledge-based organisational contexts. For instance, **Faye** commented that knowledge workers “are experts and professionals with very good, very interesting ideas and ways of thinking and ways of doing”.

A new subtheme that was added to shared leadership and thus a specific contribution of this study is that, with expert knowledge being so central, some participants noted that the retention and transfer of subject and organisational knowledge is crucial. For instance, **Nelson** stated that adequate knowledge transfer between leader/followers, including across generations, helps to prevent recurring mistakes. However, **Lynette** noted that such knowledge transfer may be challenging, given generational movements in the workplace. She stated that the Baby Boomer generation is leaving the workplace without having fully transferred its knowledge to Generation Y, also called the Millennials. The Baby Boomers (also merely termed Boomers) is the generation born between 1946 and 1964, while Generation Y was born between 1979 and 1994 (Chaudhuri & Ghosh 2012). She furthermore stated:

A lot of people learn much better via another human being rather than a screen because it becomes experiential rather than one-dimensional, even in this day and age... The people with much of the knowledge and wisdom, who've been around for a long time, are leaving... There are [knowledge] gaps that are not seen by [the younger generations], because they haven't experienced it... [or] they leave, rather than [staying and becoming] a higher-level knowledge worker... It takes time to learn certain things... We're not getting enough experiential time out of the younger generations, especially the Millennials.

8.5.2 Spiritual leadership (workplace spirituality)

In the theoretical chapters, workplace spirituality (or the lack thereof) was identified as a potentially strong environmental influence on ILR. Workplace spirituality was defined as an organisational culture where leader/followers experience that life has meaning and that they are making a difference, where they feel connected and appreciated, and where they demonstrate sincere care for others. Spiritual leadership, then, is influencing and guiding followers towards these aspects. As a leadership concept, this approach to leadership would be practised widely, endorsed by senior leaders, and emulated by junior leaders.

Given the above definition, interviewees were asked how relevant they believed workplace spirituality to be for good ILR in knowledge-based organisations, and to substantiate their

stance. In response, all interviewees supported the importance of workplace spirituality, and most did so emphatically. It is thus a strongly dominant subtheme in this study. Workplace spirituality was also contrasted with a business orientation (a focus on business interests) in an organisation.

The following dominant subthemes of workplace spirituality that emerged as strongly supported by participants are discussed below: a sense of meaning, purpose or transcendence through work; a sense of community or belonging; work/life balance; supportive leadership; and recognising followers' holistic humanity in the workplace.

8.5.2.1 *Sense of meaning, purpose or transcendence*

Some of the central indicators of workplace spirituality as discussed in the theoretical chapters, are that leader/followers experience a sense of meaning, purpose or transcendence through work. This was confirmed by several interviewees and was collapsed into one interrelated subtheme. As an example, **Sarina** commented:

We tell clients that their reason for being in business has got a lot to do with their spirituality... they literally have to get a vision for not just their business, but also for their life. And a golden thread between all the entrepreneurs here is that there's got to be more to it than just money. So a trend that I have picked up (most of the entrepreneurs are black) is that sense of ubuntu, that sense of giving back, 'I didn't get here on my own', responsibility to family, even the people that they employ and their families. So spirituality in that definition is alive and well.

A sense of purpose at work is particularly important for the younger generations in the workplace. This is evidenced by, for instance, the following comments by participants:

Zena: *If you look at Generation Z that is approaching fast in terms of the corporate world, and Generation Y – for them it's about having purpose, it's having a family at work, it's having that work/life balance, even more so than Generation X. So engagement will become more and more critical.*

Kate: *The more recent leadership styles that follow a transformational approach – servant leadership, authentic leadership, sacrificial leadership – are undergirded with dimensions that add value to the leader-follower relationship. They [strongly increase] the extent to which the follower is engaged to produce their best contribution to the organisation because they care, not because it's just a career or a job. That's an area that is of vital importance, particularly when we think about the Millennials.*

8.5.2.2 Sense of community

In the theoretical chapters, a sense of community or belonging was highlighted as another aspect of workplace spirituality. This, too, was confirmed by several participants. For instance, **Ned** emphasised the importance of relationship beyond the task in the workplace:

In order to understand the guy that works for you or with you... you have to know what makes him tick, what is at the core of his being... then you can show empathy and you can add value at that level. If you don't know that, you're not going to add any value. You're just going to keep whipping him to produce. No, it's relationship, only relationship.

In addition, **Zena** links workplace spirituality to what she terms 'relatedness' between leader/followers. Relatedness was identified as a human need in organisational settings by Alderfer (1972). However, connecting this term to workplace spirituality it is a specific contribution of this study. **Zena** described how one of her clients achieved greater relatedness with his team and even peers by improving his emotional intelligence. She added that workplace spirituality or relatedness contributes to employee engagement:

... the outcome was to create an increased relatedness with his team and peers... With an increased spirituality in the workplace – that relatedness – you will have better results because ultimately it contributes to engagement... that engagement is one of the key reasons why people are at work... if they don't have that, they resign...

Ingrid argued that a sense of community includes feeling valued, which – in turn – fosters trust in the organisation. She commented as follows:

And that that person is valuable with the baggage that that person brings to the organisation because that opens up space for trust. And so, it most definitely has an impact on interpersonal relationships and communication...

8.5.2.3 Work-life balance (new subtheme)

Although it was not discussed in the theoretical chapters and pre-coded as an aspect of workplace spirituality, the majority of interviewees referred to the importance of 'work-life balance'. Work-life balance has previously been associated with workplace spirituality by authors such as Jena and Pradhan (2014) and has been defined as individuals' ability to maintain a rhythm that allows them to combine their work with their non-work responsibilities, activities and aspirations (Felstead, Jewson, Phizacklea & Walter 2002). From an organisational point of view, Thompson, Beauvais and Lyness (1999) defined it as the extent

to which the organisation – through shared assumptions, beliefs and values – supports employees in integrating their work and family lives. Rama (2010) posited that spiritually supportive organisations help employees to develop their potential, while addressing problems created by work-life conflicts.

Based on the above, work-life balance was added as a new subtheme to workplace spirituality in this study. In this regard, this study makes a contribution to existing knowledge by demonstrating that interpersonal leaders should keep the following in mind in supporting followers towards work-life balance: followers who experience work-life balance may experience greater job satisfaction, while followers who experience an imbalance may become disgruntled and leave the organisation, especially if the imbalance continues over an extended period of time; interpersonal leaders should actively listen and explore individual followers' unique personal values outside the work context; interpersonal leaders should demonstrate a sincere concern for followers' work-life balance; interpersonal leaders should accommodate emotions and emotional expressions that arise from followers' personal lives. These aspects are reflected in and supported by the following comments by participants:

Ned: *To me, the word 'spirituality' does begin and end with what is important to you at the core... If it's God, then God must be your motivator in everything you do. If it's your family, then you're doing it for your family... I've learnt that mine is to make sure that everybody has a work-life balance at some level. Because they can't tell me that all they're interested in is work... Then I say, "What else is there in your life?" And I dig in deep down into those layers to get to the core of that person...*

Faye: *To not pay lip service to it, but to care about it and to understand that a healthy, balanced employee is a happy employee. And when you disturb that balance in people's lives, they become unhappy. And they will resign because it does affect their work. And you can't treat them like, "Please leave your emotions at home. If you have personal problems, please don't let that interfere with your work, because that is so unprofessional." Emotions aren't switches that we switch on and off. And we need to be able to accommodate those things in the workplace.*

Lynette: *And [the new managing director's] words to me were, "You're going to eat and sleep sales and marketing, 24/7". I felt like saying, "I've been doing that for years". I mean, I would put the lights on at 06:00 in the morning and I would be the one that would switch it off at night... And to let go of the status and the money was difficult, but I just felt I didn't have a choice because I didn't have a life, either.*

8.5.2.4 *A supportive organisational culture (new subtheme)*

In the theoretical chapters, an ‘altruistic’ organisational culture was identified as a central aspect of workplace spirituality. An altruistic organisational culture was defined as one in which leader/followers have a sense of community, feel understood and appreciated, and feel sincere care and appreciation for themselves and others. No participant discussed an altruistic culture as such, but several participants described similar concepts, referring to them as a supportive culture (see **Faye’s** and **Kate’s** comments in particular) or a nurturing, serving or accommodating leadership concept. Thus, for the purpose of this study, these concepts are collectively labelled as a ‘supportive culture’, and all aspects discussed in this subsection are new contributions by this study. Northouse (2018:324) defines supportive leadership as providing “what is missing – the human connection”.

According to **Faye**, a supportive culture greatly enhances ILR. In her definition, a supportive culture includes accommodating followers, making sufficient resources available to them, affirming them, and allowing them the freedom to make mistakes. She stated:

The more accommodating you are, the more supported people feel. Also, you have to put resources in place for people to do their jobs well, [otherwise] you are frustrating them... In my experience, when you serve [your followers], you get so much more out of them. But you also need quite a flexible culture and this is the biggest problem for me: organisations are still very much based on rules and regulations and policies and there’s very little flexibility in allowing leaders to manage individuals... The more accommodating you are, the more loyalty it buys you. But companies are still very much in terms of “You have to be at the office from 08:00 till 17:00, you have to bring a sick note if you were sick for a day”... Another thing about a supportive climate is to encourage people and to praise them for the things that they do well... create a supportive climate where people feel that they are allowed to make mistakes...

Kate reiterated the importance of a supportive culture, while other participants noted that their supportive organisational cultures enhance their ILR. Specifically, she emphasised that a supportive culture is characterised by open, transparent communication and a tolerance – even a celebration – of mistakes. Both of these aspects are particularly important in the context of this study for the following reasons: the first clearly necessitates transparent ILC; and the second confirms the argument in Item 8.2.2 (a shift from control to empowerment), where the importance of allowing knowledge workers to make mistakes without harsh penalties or reprimands was emphasised. **Kate** commented as follows on these aspects:

I work with organisations that have... a very supportive, accessible organisational culture... although they are high-performance organisations, there's also a great deal of openness between leaders and followers. That approach definitely [enhances ILR and] ensures tremendous efficiency. It is the kind of culture that says "It's okay to make mistakes, we celebrate mistakes. When we celebrate mistakes we know that we won't be returning to them. How can we use that mistake to learn so that we're more effective when we revisit a similar situation?" That approach to being a learning organisation is really something that I've seen to be very effective.

Several interviewees noted that autocratic leaders tend to view supportive leaders as weak, but these participants differed strongly from this view. Paradoxically, for many participants, a supportive culture is associated with better follower performance. This view is supported by, for instance, the following two comments by participants:

Lynette: *They said I was too nurturing. For me, that is part of a serving style leadership. I don't have to do the work. I have to make sure that they do the best work they can do and then together we all thrive.*

Faye: *People often think that if you are humane and if you treat people as human beings and you are supportive and you are empathetic, that you are weak. And that is not the case... I demand performance and people perform for me...*

8.5.2.5 *Recognising followers' holistic humanity (new subtheme)*

Recognising followers' holistic humanity was not identified as an aspect of workplace spirituality, but was strongly emphasised by several participants. Therefore, it was coded as a separate new subtheme, although it is closely linked to work-life balance and a supportive culture, discussed above. This perspective is in line with those of the following: Ashmos and Duchon (2000), who posited that leaders should provide followers with opportunities to express various aspects of their being at in the workplace; and Thompson (2001), who found that job seekers considered remuneration as less important than a work environment where they would be treated with respect – not only for their knowledge and skills, but as human beings.

Several participants emphasised the importance of recognising the humanity of followers. **Ingrid** emphasised that all levels of employees should be treated with equal respect, especially where there is a significant difference in hierarchical levels in the organisation. She indicated that the "way of communicating and recognising the individual" should be the same. Other participants commented as follows:

Faye: *People are not machines, they are not first of all a worker. They are first of all a human being, and human beings have emotions and they have passions. They get unhappy and you have to treat them as an individual. Nobody likes to be treated like a number or a robot...*

Kate: *[Many] organisations believe that you should leave your spirituality in the parking lot. When we employ somebody, we employ the whole person. And so that dimension is very important... regardless of what that person constitutes in their mind as spirituality... a culture that encourages that sense of being known, of being cared for... where there's sincerity and an openness... there's just a different feel about the culture... where people feel appreciated and recognised as whole people in the workplace, there's a spin-off... knowing that my leader actually cares about the fact that I might have a very sick child... It's a move away from the mechanistic approach to leadership, to a greater sense of emotional intelligence, as well.*

Faye also emphasised the importance of authenticity in expressing care and concern for employees:

I think the key is genuine concern for people.... people pick up on authenticity. People know when you really care about them and supporting their performance, and when it is false – when you pretend to care about people but all you really want is for them to be productive and to make money for the company and make you look good.

Many participants contrasted this subtheme to a business or task orientation to the workplace, where the focus is purely on business interests such as productivity and profitability, and followers are seen as means to these ends. Northouse (2018:324) defines task-oriented leadership as leadership that is focused primarily on goals, activities and procedures. By contrast, relationship-oriented leadership focuses predominantly on followers' wellbeing and relationships with one another, and the atmosphere in which they work.

Participants strongly condemned the task orientation. **QUES-5** noted that, in a results-driven culture, the meeting of deadlines supersedes the fostering of good working relationships. Participants used descriptors such as the following to discuss the business orientation: “highly egocentric and competitive” (**QUES-19**); favouritism; self-serving ambition; “toxic environment” (**Ingrid**); disconnection between leaders and followers; going “corporate”; “process before people” (**Nelson**); inhumane treatment of employees during acquisitions and retrenchments; and destructive communication that contradicts the officially expressed positive values of the organisation (**Kate**). Relevant comments by participants include the following:

Ingrid: *A business coach came for training interventions... [She commented] that it's a toxic environment... In my opinion, there was no spiritual connect in how people deal with each other, and recognition of being human...*

Nelson: *... our boss, who did the restructuring successfully, communicated brilliantly, has gone corporate... he just forgot about us – so unlike him! ... I had a big fight with him and said, "It's process before people now. You used to be people before process..." And it's changed the dynamics in the company quite a lot, besides the loss of some very good people...*

Lynette: *They literally had bought the company for the intellectual property. They didn't want the people... The devastation for these employees was unbelievable... the entire carpet was pulled out from under them... And many of them have been very successful elsewhere, but some have still not recovered... there was a complete disconnect with the leadership there.*

Kate: *There's often a difference between what you read in the foyer on the plaques versus what actually happens... It's chilling to see the outcomes of that negative side of doing leadership... [In one case], retrenchment was not done sensitively... What transpired was a great deal of negativity towards the leadership, and a large number of followers leaving the organisation in addition to those who had been retrenched. A great loss to the organisation in terms of reputation and financial losses.*

A few participants mentioned that a predominantly business orientation is sometimes the result of too heavy workloads, which leave no time for transparent communication, building trust and fostering workplace spirituality. For instance, **Nelson** commented:

It's funny how one person's style has changed as a result of an outside influence. I suspect he's overwhelmed... and his communication's gone to Hannah Handbasket. The financial guy [who has] been with us 25 years lost his job, but there was no recognition [or] communication sent out...

8.5.3 Autocratic leadership as least conducive to ILR (new subtheme)

Although it was not a pre-coded subtheme, one of the most dominant subthemes that emerged is that autocratic leadership is the leadership concept that is least conducive to constructive ILR. Autocratic leadership is typically characterised as follows (Ogalo & Yambo 2017; Russell & Stone 2002): leaders assume that followers are lazy and need close supervision; leaders are task-oriented, are very demanding of followers and expect strict adherence to schedules;

leaders give instructions without explanation and expect followers to adhere to instructions without question; and leaders make unilateral decisions without consulting followers.

Almost all interviewees agreed that autocratic leadership is the leadership concept that is most harmful to followers, ILR and the organisation in general. The majority of participants (from both samples), when describing their most negative experiences with leaders, referred to autocratic leadership. Below, the following aspects of autocratic leadership that were highlighted by participants are discussed as new contributions of this study: the role of local ethnic cultures in perpetuating autocratic leadership; the role of autocratic senior leaders in perpetuating autocratic leadership; and the inhibiting influence of autocratic leadership on ILR.

8.5.3.1 *The role of local ethnic cultures in perpetuating autocratic leadership*

A few interviewees stated that autocratic leadership is still quite prevalent in South Africa and other African countries. For instance, **Kate** commented:

In Africa we still have very autocratic leadership styles... In some organisations there might be the tendency towards a sense of their rightness about the way that they do things, and that the others are actually out of step... That's a very narrow approach that is very much alive and well, particularly in South Africa and some nations across Africa.

Adding to the general self-perpetuating nature of any leadership concept as discussed in Chapter 2, a few participants noted that autocratic leadership is also supported by elements of some local cultures, where one or more of the following cultural norms apply: younger people are required to defer to their elders (thus, younger followers and even younger leaders are disempowered when interacting with older leader/followers); women are required to defer to men (therefore, female leader/followers are disempowered in ILR with men); and followers are required to defer to leaders (thus, followers have very little power and influence in ILR, even though they, as knowledge workers, may possess more expert knowledge and skills than their leaders do). Two participants commented as follows:

Lynette: *I had seen some of the worst leadership styles... and people terrified... they become victims, especially the younger girls... I suppose it's to do with culture of how you're brought up to respect your elders, regardless.*

QUES-9: *I find that if I understand that I am a follower and act in accordance to the follower role, then our conflict will be resolved faster. Since he is also a man, our African culture comes into play... Women are required to be respectful and not challenge a man's point of view...*

The prevalence and cultural support of autocratic leadership in many African organisations have important implications for ILR, as discussed below.

8.5.3.2 *The role of autocratic senior leaders in perpetuating autocratic leadership*

Several interviewees noted that the leadership concept in an organisation is strongly based on the leadership styles of senior leaders in the organisation, particularly in the case of autocratic leadership. According to one participant, **Faye**, this occurs because the senior leaders have the “ultimate power” to influence the organisational culture.

As a specific contribution of this study, the data also revealed that autocratic senior leaders encourage (knowingly or unknowingly) interpersonal leaders to become more autocratic or discourage them from non-autocratic behaviour in the following ways: being arguably the ‘most successful’ individuals in an organisation, senior leaders’ leadership styles become the example of how to attain success in the organisation (for example, see **Zena’s** comment below); some senior leaders expect interpersonal leaders to imitate their autocratic leadership style, and reward them when they do, even if in intangible ways (see **Faye’s** comment below); interpersonal leaders’ supportive leadership is rendered ineffective because of the interference and counter-influence of senior leaders (see **Lynette’s** comment below); and some senior leaders openly ridicule interpersonal leaders who have a more supportive style (see **Faye’s** comment below). Participants’ comments that reflect these arguments include the following:

Zena: *Where a specific leadership style is seen as the norm, everyone starts leading in that way... the way the leader acts and interacts becomes the example for aspiring leaders and the paradigm of getting success... So the whole system gets influenced in the end, it becomes the culture.*

Faye: *Some [leaders] mimic the [autocratic] style of the director, and that pleases her, because she has respect for people who manage in the way that she manages... [The director] will sometimes say things like I have a basket full of puppies [referring to my followers] and I treat them like special flowers.*

Lynette: *[The senior leaders] said I was too nurturing... I kept losing the people because [the one senior leader] would hurt them to such an extent that they would leave... My servant leadership style was no longer allowed to work because she was interfering too much...*

Earlier in this chapter it was argued that leaders in knowledge-based contexts should adopt collaborative and supportive styles of leadership. However, from the current discussion it is

clear that, in organisations with an autocratic leadership concept, interpersonal leaders often exercise collaborative and supportive leadership against great opposition and at great cost. It was argued earlier in this chapter that autocratic leaders tend to view supportive leadership styles as weakness. In addition to the implications discussed above, this perception may also negatively influence the positional promotion of supportive leaders in the organisation.

8.5.3.3 *The inhibiting influence of autocratic leadership on ILC*

Earlier in this chapter it was argued that, in the contemporary age of collaboration, particularly in knowledge-based contexts, a move in organisational culture and leadership concept towards transparency, empowerment and collaborative leadership is advisable. In particular, knowledge workers should be considered intellectual capital and a source of value for the organisation. Thus, they should be empowered to exercise independent thinking and contribute their knowledge to decision making. However, several participants noted how an autocratic leadership concept in the organisation disempowers knowledge workers as sources of intellectual capital, and inhibits ILC that can contribute to knowledge creation, sharing and retention. From these descriptions, it is clear that autocratic leadership is diametrically opposed to the principles associated with collaboration.

Describing the inhibiting influence of an autocratic leadership concept on ILC in knowledge-based contexts is a particular contribution of this study. In this regard, participants' comments indicated that autocratic leaders behave in the following ways that inhibit knowledge-related ILC and thus the value that knowledge workers can add to the organisation as intellectual capital: autocratic leaders resist change (which inhibits the creation and innovation of knowledge that is necessary for success in a dynamic business environment); they create a great power distance between themselves and their followers (which inhibits transparent ILC); they arrogantly assume that they "know best" (see **Faye's** comment below), fail to consult their followers in decisions, and expect obedience without question (which inhibits independent thinking that may lead to new knowledge or more effective application of existing knowledge); and they manage by rules and by fear, and notably reprimand or penalise followers heavily for making mistakes (while, as discussed earlier in this chapter, mistakes provide opportunities for learning and creating more knowledge), often causing followers to hide mistakes that may cause crises later. These notions are reflected by the following statements by participants:

QUES-30: *The set culture of our organisation is that what management decides is what happens, even if there could be a valid reason to change or adjust a decision. It sometimes seems as if the followers have no say and the leaders have all the say. Autocratic leadership.*

Lynette: *[The senior leader was] very autocratic – ‘I say and you do...’ [Followers] weren't allowed to think – she actually told them that... But are they really adding value to the company? They may be ticking the task, but they're not growing the organisation to the extent that you can when you look at the magic happen.*

Ned: *[My followers] were entrepreneurial. Those people you've got to manage in a very particular way. You can't tell the guy “Do that”, “You've got to sit there”... [The new senior leader] would have us sit in meetings like in a classroom and he would hand out reading material, and it was old stuff. It was like a time warp... he was being the ultimate autocrat in an ultimate entrepreneurial space... The result was total destruction.*

Faye: *Very hierarchical organisations where people are obsessed with power and being in a leadership position – for them it is not about serving... [or] supporting... Everyone has to be in awe of them... It is a sort of arrogance where some people think that they always know best, they don't have to draw on the expertise of other people. They don't treat people like the professionals that they are... Some people manage by rules and they manage by fear... So [followers] do particular things because they are scared of the consequences... And in some ways managing by fear creates a high-performance culture because people are too scared to make mistakes, but it also creates a culture where people start hiding things. And then you get some really nasty surprises...*

Extreme autocratic behaviour was termed ‘abusive’ and ‘management by fear’ by several participants (see, for example, **Faye’s** comment above). In such cases, followers are victimised, as is evidenced by the following comments by two of the participants:

Lynette: *... when you see the absolute office victims... soldiers in a little army, and not being able to embrace any of their own skills, their own growth or their own joy. It's about golden handcuffs and ‘I'm terrified I won't find another job’... [These young followers'] self-esteems have been completely messed up with the way she's treated them. If they weren't at their desk at 08:00, she shouted at them. If they actually went to the toilet, they felt guilty. They were terrified, even when she was away... her control became double when she was away...*

Ned: *[The owner had] no interpersonal skills or communication abilities. But everybody was absolutely so scared of her, they just did what she said. She was like Hitler's reincarnation... absolutely out of control... She couldn't string three words together without shouting.*

According to several participants, an autocratic leadership concept influences the organisation in the following ways in the long term: there is a disconnection between leaders and followers; followers' morale, trust, sense of worth and psychological wellbeing decrease; the quality of ILR decreases; some followers and even interpersonal leaders leave the organisation; and it is difficult, even for new leaders, to change the leadership concept to a more participative model. The following comments by participants reflect these views:

Ingrid: ... everyone needs to walk into that direction, almost like sheep to a kraal... A culture where there is a distinct disconnect between the leaders and the followers... can have implications for morale and trust on the lower levels... It will have ultimately an impact on how valued you feel in the organisation.

QUES-7: I felt like a naughty child who has done something terrible. I'm a perfectionist, so getting something wrong, even something small, can be devastating for me.

Lynette: The reason I left that organisation was exactly that: very autocratic... my servant leadership style was no longer allowed to work because she was interfering too much... I had said to [Senior Leader Y], "Whomever you bring in here to replace me – [Senior Leader X] will spit them out for breakfast within three months, unless she changes." [X] appointed [someone], and three weeks later she was gone. [The latter] phoned me and said, "... I don't even know what I did wrong. How on earth did you stand it for five years?"

Kate: The more autocratic the leadership style is, the greater the leader's position power is and the less there will be of that good interpersonal leader-follower relationship. Leadership that functions more on fear-induced motivation does not support good interpersonal leader follower relationships, particularly in the long term. Because they're not sustainable – followers pay a very great price in situations where there is autocratic behaviour of leaders, particularly when it is on the far end of the continuum and moves towards the abusive side... They fall apart in various ways...

Ned: [Autocratic leadership] works for one wave of leadership. The next wave of leadership suffers because the die has been cast and it's almost impossible to change it to a participative model...

8.6 SYNOPSIS OF THEME 1

In line with the systems approach, all the key constructs under Theme 1 were found to be interlinked. These relationships are presented in Figure 8.1.

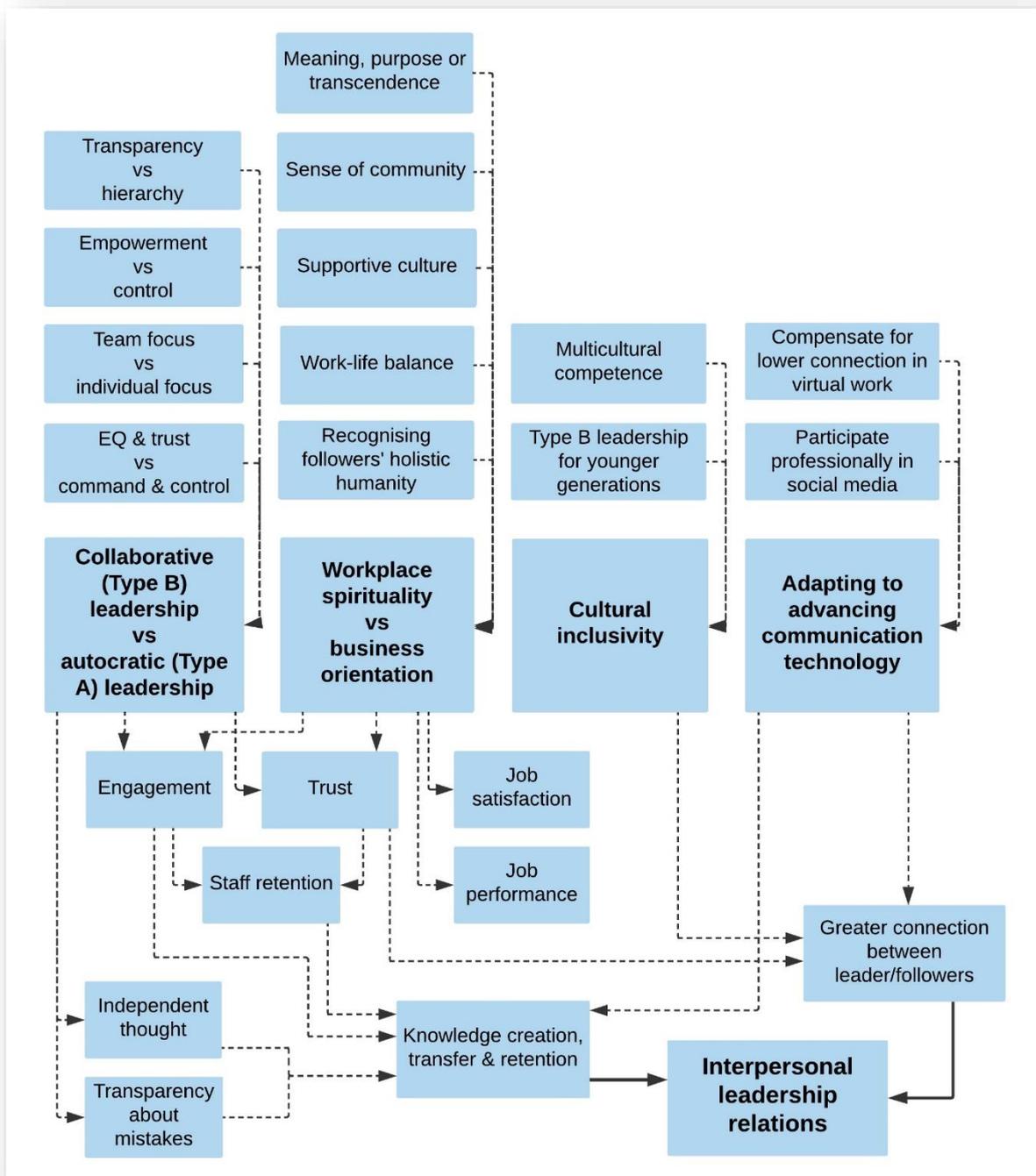


Figure 8.1: Synopsis of Theme 1 (environmental inputs)

As discussed above, collaborative leadership, workplace spirituality, cultural inclusivity and adapting to advancing communication technology all directly and indirectly enhance ILR. Collaborative leadership and workplace spirituality both contribute to employee engagement and a climate of trust in the organisation, which in turn contribute to staff retention. If employees remain at the organisation, and especially if they are engaged, they can use their occupational and organisational expertise to create and transfer knowledge, and the knowledge is retained as intellectual capital in the organisation. Collaborative leadership also leads to independent thought and transparency about mistakes by followers, both of which contribute to learning and knowledge creation, transfer and retention.

In addition to fostering trust, workplace spirituality was also found to contribute to job satisfaction and job performance. Furthermore, increased trust fosters greater interpersonal connection between leader/followers in the organisation. The latter is also strengthened by cultural inclusivity and adaptation to advancing communication technology, while adaptation to technology also enhances knowledge creation, transfer and retention.

Finally, a greater connection between leader/followers and better knowledge creation, transferral and retention constitute enhanced ILR.

8.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, it was demonstrated that the LFD as a system is influenced by the following environmental factors: the contemporary age of collaboration, advances in communication technology, cultural diversity in the workplace, and the leadership concept in the organisation.

The findings from this study confirmed the theoretical supposition that there is an environmental trend towards *collaboration* and that collaboration is a very suitable approach for knowledge-based organisational contexts. However, participants noted that collaboration was not yet very prevalent in their experience. As a specific contribution of this study, four shifts in organisational culture were identified through which collaborative ILR may be enhanced in knowledge-based contexts: a shift from hierarchy to transparency; a shift from control to empowerment; a shift from autocratic leadership to collaborative leadership; and a shift from an individual focus to a team approach.

Participants confirmed the notion discussed in the theoretical chapters that *advances in communication technology* have led to more virtual work. This trend is already affecting some participants in this study, who report both advantages (such as being less affected by negative aspects of organisational culture) and disadvantages (experiencing less personal warmth in

online communication). However, in terms of the samples in this research, virtual work is not yet prevalent. Furthermore, this study contributed the notion that social media have a significant impact on ILR, for instance where followers discuss leaders and their communication online.

The findings confirmed the theoretical supposition that *cultural diversity* (including generational diversity) in the workplace influences ILR. For instance, it was confirmed that younger generations seem to prefer more relationship-based than task-based leadership.

The theoretical supposition that the organisational *leadership concept* influences ILR was strongly supported by participants. In terms of the pre-coded subtheme 'shared leadership', the findings indicate that shared leadership as a collaborative model is highly suited to knowledge-based organisational contexts. However, it was found that the term is not yet widely known and used among the samples; nor is the practice of shared leadership yet prevalent.

There was very strong support for spiritual leadership or workplace spirituality as an environmental influence that enhances ILR. Participants confirmed the following pre-coded subthemes as central aspects to workplace spirituality: a sense of meaning, purpose or transcendence through work; a sense of community or belonging. Whereas an 'altruistic culture' was pre-coded, this was renamed to a 'supportive' organisational culture, based on participants' comments. As particular contributions of this study, two new subthemes were added: followers' work/life balance; and the recognition and accommodation of followers' holistic humanity in the workplace.

It was also a specific contribution of this study that autocratic leadership emerged very strongly as the leadership concept least conducive to ILC, because of its inhibiting influence on the transparent interpersonal sharing, creation and retention of knowledge. It was also found that certain local ethnic cultures and senior organisational leaders' autocratic leadership styles served to perpetuate an autocratic leadership concept.

In the next chapter, the discussion of the results is continued, with an emphasis on symbolic interaction in the leader-follower system itself.

CHAPTER 9: RESULTS IN TERMS OF SYMBOLIC INTERACTION IN THE LEADER-FOLLOWER DYAD

9.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the results of this study in terms of Theme 1 (environmental inputs into the leader-follower dyad) were reported, and the following organisational inputs were found to strongly influence interpersonal leadership relations (ILR): a shift towards collaboration; advances in communication technology, including the roles of social media and virtual work; cultural diversity in the workplace; and the organisational leadership concept.

In this chapter, the results and first-level interpretation relating to Theme 2 (symbolic interaction in the leader-follower dyad) are reported in terms of dominant subthemes and patterns. This theme was explored in greater detail in the questionnaires than in the interviews. In the theoretical chapters, symbolic interactionism (SI) was discussed as a metatheory of this study, and the following tenets thereof were highlighted and subsequently pre-coded: people behave based on the meanings that objects have for them; the self is defined and redefined through ILR; and role-taking affects a leader/follower's interpretation of the other's intentions.

This theme (SI in the leader-follower dyad) was strongly confirmed by participants' responses at a meta-level (that is, all subthemes discussed in this chapter constitute symbolic interaction). Thus, while two of the tenets are discussed, all three tenets are interwoven with elements from other theories in the discussion. Below, dominant subthemes are described in the following order, in the context of the leader-follower dyad (LFD): the LFD as the locus of interpersonal leadership; relational communication; (re)definition of self through SI; attribution; role-taking; maintaining system balance: meaning and purpose through spiritual leadership; emergent properties; and system inputs into the organisation.

9.2 THE LFD AS THE LOCUS OF INTERPERSONAL LEADERSHIP

The constructionist relational leadership perspective, discussed in Chapter 2, was a pre-coded subtheme. Several participants strongly supported this view, particularly in the following respects: the LFD – *not* the leader – is the locus of interpersonal leadership; leader/followers actively and mutually nurture the LFD; and leaders manage these relationships without resorting to formal hierarchy. For instance, **Ned** stated that, as a relational leader, he first creates and defines the leader-follower relationship, and any ensuing communication serves

to “solidify” the relationship. Other participant comments that supported the view of the LFD as the locus of interpersonal leadership included the following:

Faye: *[Leadership] is an interpersonal relationship, first of all. I don't necessarily think of myself as being the leader... I manage people in a way that works for me and I manage based on my interpersonal relationships with people.*

Kate: *[My leader] is a person of very few words, but there is a good understanding between us... We don't have to continually reassure one another of the authenticity of the relationship... It's based on mutual respect... In any organisation, the leader-follower relationship that undergirds that communication is of pivotal importance. I interact with other leaders who have a lot more of a buzz in their communication, but yet the level of the interpersonal relationship is not as clear, and neither is the communication...*

QUES-25: *The best experiences I have had with leaders have been those who are genuinely interested in understanding people as individuals... Organisations are not about the name that they carry but a grouping of people who need to be enabled and motivated to function to the best of their ability...*

9.3 RELATIONAL COMMUNICATION IN THE LFD

Viewed from a relational communication perspective (discussed in Chapter 5), the nature of the LFD is determined by interpersonal leadership communication (ILC), both verbal and nonverbal. Every leader-follower interaction has meaning on both a content (informational) level and a relational level. Relational meaning refers to the implications of the communication for the LFD, in terms of each communicator's view of the self, view of the other, and perception of how the self is viewed by the other. Thus, every verbal and nonverbal sign makes a statement about the dyad, adding definition to it.

These theoretical principles were confirmed by participants' responses. Relational communication theory was explored in this study by enquiring from questionnaire participants what communication behaviours (informational level) by their leader/follower they experience positively and negatively, and how these behaviours made them feel (relational level). These were consequently added as new subthemes. Thus, destructive (negatively perceived) ILC behaviours and constructive (positively perceived) ILC behaviours are discussed below as dominant subthemes of relational communication and particular contributions of this study. Subsequently, these behaviours are summarised and contrasted.

9.3.1 Destructive ILC behaviours (new subtheme)

In this study, negatively perceived ILC behaviours were explored (that is, behaviours that leader/followers would want to avoid in fostering constructive ILR). This is a particular contribution of this study. Questionnaire participants' responses are summarised in Table 9.1 and discussed subsequently in terms of dominant subthemes only. In the table, categories of destructive ILC are grouped together in terms of how dominant each particular category was. Similar to Chapter 8, the dominance of a category was determined by how prevalent, emphatic or summative it was.

Table 9.1: Destructive interpersonal leadership communication

Strength of subtheme	Categories of destructive ILC
Dominant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggressive communication (e.g. a loud voice or finger pointing) • Blocking the other leader/follower's communication • Demonstrating inattention by appearing rushed, impatient or distracted • Indirect communication (instead of addressing issues directly)
Intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating in a patronising manner (especially through tone of voice) • Denying that previous oral instructions took place • Providing a delayed, blunt or inadequate response, or none at all • Undermining followers through subtle power plays • Failing to engage verbally • Appearing annoyed (e.g. frowning or sighing) • Displaying upset emotions (e.g. crying) • [None]
Weak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being manipulative • Expressing negative emotions about the other leader/follower • Discussing followers with other followers • Reprimanding followers in front of others • Avoiding or withdrawing from interaction • Appearing aloof, closed or guarded (e.g. crossed arms) • Using online instead of more personal media (where the latter is practical) • Communicating blame • Appearing defensive • Deliberately misinforming the other leader/follower • Making unreasonable demands • Failing to express self clearly • Making excuses for or covering up poor performance • Taking credit for the other leader/follower's work

In Table 9.1, the following dominant subthemes are listed: aggressive communication; blocking the other leader/follower's communication; demonstrating inattention by appearing rushed, impatient or distracted; and indirect communication. These are discussed below. While the destructive behaviours themselves are informative in that they should be avoided in ILR, it is of equal or greater importance to note what the behaviours communicate to participants, as reflected in the direct quotations below. This refers to the relational meaning of the communication to the participants, and thus constitutes the level of meaning that would most strongly affect leader/followers' perceptions of their ILR. This is particularly important, given that it has been established that the LFD is the locus of interpersonal leadership. It also confirms the social constructionist theoretical approach (discussed under Item 5.2 in the theoretical chapters), which includes the notion that ILC constructs reality in the LFD.

9.3.1.1 *Aggressive communication*

Several participants reported extremely negative perceptions of leaders' aggressive behaviour (also termed "abrasive" behaviour by **Zena** or a "disregard" for the follower by **Lynette**) towards followers. For example, two other participants commented as follows:

***QUES-16:** [My leader] treats other people disrespectfully and talks down to peers and subordinates. His behaviour communicates to me that my opinion does not matter and that I am only there to do his dirty work, which he subsequently brands as his own without adding any further value.*

***QUES-29:** [My leader] would become aggressive... speak louder, more forcefully and defensively. He often uses a pointed finger for emphasis and big movements... [This] definitely communicates anger to me... that he is not in a place to have a logical discussion with me. It sometimes makes me feel threatened and afraid. Sometimes it would just make me feel frustrated because some things need real discussion to come to practical solutions, but if he is angry and defensive, certain topics cannot be solved immediately....*

Zena mentioned "Parent-Child" communication – a reference to transactional analysis, a theory by psychologist Eric Berne (1975), in which an interaction between two human beings is seen as a transaction (Berne 2011) during which each individual behaves from one of three possible ego states: the Parent, the Adult or the Child. Ego states are "coherent systems of thought and feeling manifested by corresponding patterns of behaviour" (Berne 1975:30). In the Parent ego state, a person behaves as a parent would towards a small child – in either a nurturing or controlling manner. In the Adult ego state, individuals appraise their environment objectively and behave according to the probabilities of past experience. In the Child ego state,

people behave in a childlike manner, as they did when they were small children – in natural, rebellious or adapted ways (Berne 1975). **Zena** commented in this regard:

... [the] followers [reported] that he was abrasive, and that his emotional expression is very low. If things were not going according to plan, he would just lose his cool, and talk in a very – if you look at transactional analysis – Parent-Child way... and the team members would react to that in a rebellious child way! He believed that if he could really scare them and they could see his anger, then they would produce. That was a very strong paradigm that he had around getting results.

In Chapter 8, the importance of allowing followers to make mistakes without undue reprimands or penalties was discussed. By contrast, relating to the current discussion, several participants reported that their leaders exhibited very critical or harsh responses to their mistakes, which the participants experienced particularly negatively. The following two comments demonstrate this, and also reflect the critical communication by the leader from controlling Parent ego state, with the result that the followers feel like reprimanded children (Child ego state):

QUES-7: *If one gets something 'wrong' she will come down on you very hard... a few times I have received an email from her that really shook me... I felt like a naughty child who has done something terrible.*

QUES-30: *Harsh words, very strict, loud and angry tone of voice, deep frown and definite indication of disgust on his face. Very aggressive behaviour, intimidating... Words like: "How could you? What were you thinking? Why did you do that? This is unacceptable!" It communicates that what I have done is unacceptable... and had better watch my step. I feel very disappointed in myself. I feel scared and afraid. I feel depressed and deeply hurt. I feel that I am a mistake. I feel I deserve punishment.*

Related to aggressive behaviour, participants described very negative experiences of volatile behaviour by their leader/followers. For instance, two participants commented as follows:

QUES-24: *My leader is incredibly temperamental. His demeanour swings from [one extreme] to the exact opposite. When he is in a rush or stressed... he expresses disdain for everyone... I will be called into his office and demanded a solution is found... This is incredibly hard, as he wants it solved in no time, does not express himself clearly and does not listen... He shouts, is angry and impatient... This makes me feel stressed and unconfident in my abilities... he uses anger, aggression and stress to rule by fear. Staff would be equally or even better able to get the job done, if he didn't frighten them so much...*

QUES-2: *[My follower] is very volatile. When she is happy, she is very happy, and when she is angry, she is extremely rude... I am very cautious of what I say to her and how I say it... She is basically a very caring person but I do not trust her. When she is being easy to work with, I wait for the next outburst... Our relationship is a 'roller coaster ride'. I never know which way our meetings are going to end as I do not allow her to bully me in any way. If she was not [so good at her job], I would work her out of this post and into another.*

As is evident from the above descriptions, the relational responses to such volatile behaviour may include the following: anxious followers do not feel heard and are less self-confident and effective because of their fear; feedback is limited because leader/followers do not express their opinions fully, for fear of verbal aggression; the volatile leader/follower is distrusted; and termination of the volatile follower's employment is considered.

Aggressive behaviour may not always be overt, but could manifest as passive-aggressive behaviour. For instance, **QUES-25** described a former leader who sabotaged his followers:

This individual was a covert bully... The undermining of followers was done in a very strategic and subversive manner. There was no overt negative behaviour... It was done covertly by subtle undermining of people behind their backs and the use of power plays, which negatively impacted the confidence of employees. No one was fired in a temper tantrum, but was rather undermined to the degree that they decided not to engage with the organisation any longer. [This behaviour made me feel] loss of confidence, anger, feeling of lack of respect, frustration with poor leadership and direction.

9.3.1.2 *Blocking the other leader/follower's communication*

Another category of communication behaviour that was viewed very negatively by several participants, was when the other leader/follower – more often the person in the leader role – communicated in a unilateral manner and did not allow them to express their opinions. Again, this confirms the results discussed in the previous chapter, which indicated the importance for leaders to allow their followers as knowledge workers to express their opinions, take part in decision making and contribute to the collective wisdom.

Participants observed that they could not fully or effectively express their opinions for the following reasons: in the particular African culture, female followers are not allowed to challenge male leaders' opinions; leaders believe that they know best and do not welcome or value followers' suggestions; or the leader insists that the follower adhere to the rules without exception. As noted in Chapter 8, these behaviours are rooted in an autocratic leadership style,

which was considered by participants as the least appropriate in a knowledge-based context. The following comments demonstrate some participants' experience of how their leaders communicate autocratically and block their (the followers') communication:

QUES-26: *I must not talk but just listen to what must be done. Long years of experience made him believe his way is the best way... There is no space for me to comment and learn from my mistakes. It makes me feel inadequate and useless.*

QUES-9: *[My leader is] a man... women are required to be respectful and not challenge a man's point of view in our African culture... I often feel stifled and voiceless as a female follower.*

QUES-30: *It is his way or the highway. He can be very adamant when he is convinced of something. It takes much effort to change his mind about things... he is very set in his ways... Comply, or live with the consequences... Just do what is expected of you. Try to make as few waves as possible. Stick to deadlines, follow the rules and regulations and no one gets hurt.*

QUES-8: *When she feels that she needs to make a final decision on a matter, she will stop any further discussion of the topic and close it, stating her decision. She does this with a stern facial expression, breaking any eye contact and showing with her body language that she is moving on the next matter or that the conversation is over (e.g. looking at the next agenda point). This communicates to me that she is not prepared to consider my point of view or make any compromise on her approach. I feel not being heard properly.*

9.3.1.3 Inattention

Some participants objected strongly to inattentive behaviour by their leader/followers. Such inattention typically occurred for the following reasons: poor concentration due to work pressure; distraction by cellular phones or computers; and doing unrelated work during meetings. Notably, in each instance quoted below, the leader/follower on the receiving end of the inattention felt disrespected; it can therefore be surmised that inattentive ILC behaviours are likely to convey the relational meaning of disrespect:

QUES-9: *When my leader is under pressure, he appears aloof. He also fails to concentrate on what I will be saying. Instead, his focus will be on his phone or computer. His nonverbal gestures will be communicating that he is not particularly interested in what I'm saying... In some extreme instances, I feel disrespected because I may have an urgent request that needs his attention.*

QUES-12: ... lack of attention... 'zoning out' or a blank look in one specific direction. He scrolls through his mobile phone and fails to respond... [This behaviour] suggests that he is not interested in the particular discussion or is perhaps bored. This makes me feel disrespected and at times unimportant.

QUES-4: [My follower] would get a bit impatient where she would want to leave meetings early and her body language would show that she would want me to 'hurry up'... she would sigh and take out something to do during the meeting. This would make me angry as I also have a lot of work to do and I found her sighing and taking out other work disrespectful.

9.3.1.4 Indirect communication

Some participants criticised their leaders for communicating vague or delayed messages to a group of followers instead of addressing the issue promptly and directly with the relevant individual. This view is evident in, for example, the following two participant comments:

QUES-8: I think [my leader] is afraid to lose control of situations, especially in bigger meeting set-ups where several strong-willed leader/followers can start voicing their opinions and derail a process... [But] she should not have a blanket approach. Problematic behaviour should be dealt with individually.

Sarina: It's one of my pet hates – when communication isn't immediate and direct... Instead of addressing the person individually and immediately, it was done in a very open, general way... That to me, is poor leadership.

Related to this matter, some participants mentioned that their leaders avoid immediate, direct communication with them, sending electronic mail instead. **QUES-14** found his leader's avoidance of face-to-face communication frustrating "when dealing with difficult issues which require urgent attention and decisions", while **QUES-3** noted:

[My leader] would rather email, usually a lengthy mail referring to policies and procedures and reasons why we should relook the scenarios. It just irritates me. I think she would like to avoid any conflict situation or a discussion. But it mostly ends up with me phoning her and we debate the situation.

9.3.1.5 None

While it was not a dominant category, it should be noted that four participants had no negative behaviour to report. This is notable, firstly because it seems implausible that a person would perceive none of his/her leader/follower's behaviour as negative. Secondly, three of these

participants are men, while the majority of participants were women. While this does not constitute a significant finding in a study of this size and focus, it nevertheless raises the question whether males are less inclined to scrutinise their work relationships or to be sensitive to the dynamics within them.

9.3.2 Constructive ILC behaviours (new subtheme)

Another particular contribution of this study was that, in contrast to the previous item, positively experienced verbal and nonverbal ILC behaviours in LFDs were also explored. These are thus the behaviours that interpersonal leader/followers could consider in strengthening their LFDs. These constructive ILC behaviours as described by questionnaire participants are summarised in Table 9.2. As in the previous table, subthemes were grouped together in terms of dominance (indicated by prevalent, emphatic or summative participant responses).

Table 9.2: Constructive interpersonal leadership communication

Strength of subtheme	Categories of constructive ILC
Dominant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active listening (engaging fully in interaction) • Supporting followers as unique individuals • Respectful communication (e.g. respectful tone of voice) • Considering followers' input
Intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being receptive/responsive to instructions and guidance • Addressing conflict or negative emotions in a constructive manner • Appearing approachable, friendly, mild-tempered, fun or informal
Weak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being concise (getting to the point) • Prompt feedback • Regular communication • Demonstrating trust • Acts of service outside of the job description (e.g. making tea) • Demonstrating a positive attitude • Facilitating the free exchange of ideas • Appearing loyal • Collaborative decision-making and problem solving • Demonstrating trustworthiness

In the table above, the following dominant subthemes were identified: active listening; supporting followers as unique individuals; verbal affirmation; supportive communication; and

communicating respect, equality or importance. In the discussion of these subthemes below, not only the positive communication behaviours themselves should be noted, but also what those behaviours communicated to participants at a relational level of meaning.

9.3.2.1 *Active listening (new subtheme)*

One of the principles of communicative leadership (discussed under Item 6.4 in Chapter 6) is that leaders should be good, 'open' listeners. According to Louw and Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014:144), listening is an active process that requires intense concentration and energy of the listener. Specifically, an active listener is genuinely interested in what the speaker thinks, feels and wants, and checks and reflects his/her understanding (both literal and emotional) of the sender's message (Louw & Du Plooy-Cilliers 2014:146).

This aspect of communicative leadership was strongly supported by several participants, who noted that followers feel valued and respected when their leaders take the time to listen actively to them and to engage fully in interaction with them. For example, **Faye** mentioned that she schedules an hour of "face time" per month with each of her team members, where the follower can discuss anything from personal matters to difficulties experienced with other team members. Furthermore, **QUES-12** noted:

Chats [with my leader] are usually scheduled at a time that is convenient for the both of us – with no specific end time, i.e. we conclude whenever both parties are mutually satisfied with the discussion's outcomes. [This] suggests that I am taken seriously. It makes me feel valued and appreciated.

Several participants noted that active listening fosters trust within the LFD, and a sense of empowerment in followers. They commented, for instance:

QUES-10: *My leader is a very good listener who takes in my comments and reacts with smiles and encouragement. We have a good rapport, where all feedback is constructive and positive... My leader always makes time for me, which shows I am valuable and treated with care and concern. I feel empowered to produce better work, simply because my leader shows I'm a valuable part of the team.*

Ned: *Without trust, nobody's going to tell you the truth. [As a leader, you foster trust] by knowing what makes followers tick, by understanding them as human participants, and listening. And not talking half as much as what you listen...*

9.3.2.2 Supporting followers as unique individuals (new subtheme)

Many participants emphasised that leaders should support followers. This notion overlapped with another – viewing followers as unique individuals – and the two codes were thus collapsed into a single subtheme. Participants emphasised the following aspects of supporting followers as unique individuals: taking an authentic interest in followers’ personal lives and accommodating their personal problems; promoting followers’ work/life balance; listening actively to gain an in-depth understanding of each follower’s values and needs; allowing followers to process information at their own pace and contribute to discussions in their own style; compassionately recognising the unique person behind an issue (**QUES-16**); encouraging, mentoring and behaving considerately towards followers; conveying to followers how they contribute to the team and organisation; building followers’ credibility with third parties; being available and helpful when needed; making alternative organisational resources available to ease the workload of a follower who is struggling; and mentoring followers by providing constructive feedback, encouragement and useful advice.

For example, **Faye** mentioned that, if one of her followers is worried about a sick child at school, she (knowing that a worried parent cannot be fully productive at work) allows the follower to fetch her child and work further from home. In return, this follower often demonstrates her gratitude and commitment by assisting another team member who is experiencing a crisis. This was confirmed by **QUES-10**, who noted that the constant nurture and support that she receives from her leader “motivates me to produce the best work I can”. Other relevant comments by participants include the following:

***Kate:** Where there’s sincerity and an openness... where people feel appreciated and recognised as whole people in the workplace... knowing that my leader actually cares about the fact that I might have a very sick child... That he actually enquires, that he makes certain allowances for that... It’s a move away from the mechanistic approach to leadership, to a greater sense of emotional intelligence...*

***Ned:** To me work spirituality does begin and end with what is important to you at the core, in the kernel of your being, what is important to you... [I] make sure that [each of my followers] has a work/life balance at some level... And I dig in deep and scratch down into those layers... to get to the core of that person... I want to know what makes them tick at that level... [otherwise] I might as well get a little bunch of robots...*

Ingrid: *[Leader Y] really listened to your views and acknowledged you as an individual. Some people's processing speed in meetings is not the same as others', but [Leader Y] acknowledged it and left you alone until towards the end of the meeting, and then asked your opinion, and didn't think that you were not participating. It's acknowledging individuals for how they can contribute to the organisation.*

Nelson: *[My leader's] listening showed compassion with the person behind the issue... There was a feeling that, if you had a real problem, you could go to [her], or she would find out by accident, because that's the kind of person she was. And I think that the place hummed really well. She broke down a lot of the barriers that had been there in a more male-dominated company.*

QUES-25: *I find that the corporate system seems to value employees only in terms of their usefulness and productivity and that it is up to them to motivate themselves to deliver. The best experiences I have had with leaders have been those who are genuinely interested in understanding people as individuals, who make individuals feel that they are valued and relevant to organisation's functioning and goals. Organisations are not about the name that they carry but a grouping of people who need to be enabled and motivated to function to the best of their ability... this group consists of complex individuals who have a need for self-actualisation...*

Faye: *Sometimes you have to support [followers] emotionally; we are not working with robots. And if they are under a lot of pressure, you need to find ways of supporting them to bring in alternative resources to spread the load.*

Related to supporting followers as unique individuals, several participants referred to the importance of promoting (recognising, harnessing and developing) followers' strengths. Specifically, they indicated that this can be achieved by doing the following: investing time to discover followers' passions and strengths (see **Faye's** comment below); giving constructive feedback; allowing followers to excel without being threatened by their success (as commented by **Faye**); assigning work not by merely dividing the volume but by matching the task to a particular follower's strengths (see **Faye's** comment below); through mentoring – passing on institutional knowledge (see **Nelson's** comment below), debriefing followers on challenging situations and offering potential solutions (see **QUES-29's** comment below); encouraging followers to take on new roles or challenges (see **QUES-22's** comment below); and coaching – developing followers' skills through a learning process, and giving feedback without doing the work *for* them (see **Lynette's** comment below);

Faye: ... invest the time in your staff members to find out what they are passionate about, what they like doing... don't make everybody do the same work... I distribute loads according to people's strengths. [Other managers] will divide [projects] and they will say everybody gets 20. In my department, some people will have five and others will have 30, but some people really like moderation and they enjoy doing it but they hate admin [and vice versa]. So why would you make everybody do a little bit of things that they love and a lot of things that they hate? Whereas when you distribute it differently... people then feel "I am really doing something that is meaningful, that I enjoy doing"...

Lynette: [One of my followers] was brand new and I wanted to train her. I would say to her, you go and think about it and come and present it to me. Then I'd say, you need to change it and she needed to go back. I wouldn't do it for her. And she reflected at the end of the project that she had grown miles in that process because I held her hand... she's one of the skilled people now in that team... So it's about taking people through a process.

QUES-29: [My leader] is very supportive of my work... He would take time to talk through challenging situations that I face and make suggestions... I feel he respects my efforts by not criticising it, but rather supporting me... Because he is not directly involved in my areas of responsibility, he is able to be more objective about situations, which also helps to give me a greater sense of security.

Nelson: I'm passionate about passing on now what I've learned in those 44 years, so that other people aren't making the same mistakes or solving problems that have already been solved.

QUES-22: [My leader] encouraged me to do [Project X] at Head Office. She said that she was impressed with my work and work ethic. This made me pursue this task and when the director heard about this, I was given the opportunity to go work for Head Office. It communicated the feeling of worth and that she believed in me. This made me feel positive and proud about working for the [organisation].

Moreover, **Faye** made the following suggestions for giving constructive feedback: affirm followers for good performance; keep negative feedback private, allowing followers to "save face"; hold followers accountable for making mistakes, but focus on correcting the mistake and preventing similar mistakes in the future. She commented as follows:

... separate what people do from who they are... to encourage them to do their best; to build them up instead of breaking them down... if they mess up, you have to hold them accountable, but again it is how you do it. Professional people are quite hard on themselves, so if they make a mistake they feel bad about it, and you don't have to add to that... For me, it's far better to say, "So this happened now – it's not ideal, it shouldn't happen again... But what are we going to do to prevent it from happening again, and how do we solve it now in the best possible way...?"

Participants identified the following benefits of promoting followers' strengths: followers' strengths can then be used "in a constructive way" for the benefit of the organisation (commented by **Zena**); it gives followers a sense of ownership (see **Faye's** comment below) and motivates and empowers them to do their best work (**QUES-10**); projects run more smoothly and the final result is "far superior" to what the leader would have achieved on his/her own (commented by **Faye**). The following is an excerpt of Faye's comments:

I will draw on the different strengths of different people to add value to [the project]... all of them then have a sense of ownership and the final document is far superior to something that I would have done on my own... this is where the whole becomes greater than the sum of the parts, where the end product is really magnificent because you pulled on the strengths of different people.

This subtheme confirms one of the foundational principles in communicative leadership (discussed in Chapter 6) – that 'communicative leaders are approachable and express concern for followers'. It also confirms the following central leadership behaviours in Johansson's (2014) communicative leadership theory, discussed in Chapter 6: initiating structure (specifically, allocating tasks, designing complementary roles, setting challenging yet achievable work targets, and maintaining clear standards for individual performance); and facilitating work (with specific reference to coaching and training followers on the necessary knowledge and skills, supporting followers in learning new tasks, suggesting more effective approaches to tasks, providing opportunities for improving job skills, and giving constructive performance feedback, including recognition of contributions and maintaining a balance between positive and negative feedback). In addition, this subtheme also confirms the foundational principles of Johansson's (2014) communicative leadership theory that communicative leaders convey direction and help followers to achieve their goals.

The subtheme also confirms the following aspects of Mitchell's (2014) conceptual framework of leadership communication skills: promoting followers' existence; responding appropriately to followers' problems; using dialogue when communicating with followers; and listening

actively. In addition, this subtheme reinforces the following key constructs identified in Chapter 8: the shift from controlling to empowering followers as a requirement for collaboration; and the importance of creating a supportive organisational culture.

9.3.2.3 *Respectful communication (new subtheme)*

Some participants expressed appreciation for leader/followers who communicated respectfully towards them, reporting that such communication made them feel more valuable, confident and motivated. For example, **QUES-16** noted that her leader's interest in and respect towards her "makes me feel respected and that my opinion is valued" and motivates her to be helpful.

Participants identified the following ways in which they or their leader/followers communicate respect: communicating equality and avoiding an attitude of superiority (see **QUES-20**'s comment below); communicating with and recognising all employees similarly, regardless of their hierarchical position (commented by **Ingrid**); choosing respectful words (**QUES-13**), but also refraining from speaking at other times (**Kate**); encouraging respect for the follower in other followers (see **QUES-24**'s comment below); and speaking in a calm and respectful tone of voice (**QUES-22**). Participant comments illustrating these notions include the following:

QUES-20: *[My leader] sees me as an equal and not inferior. She does not show an attitude of supremacy. It makes me feel valuable and confident...*

QUES-27: *[My leader is generally] respectful, friendly... Makes me feel secure and part of a team working together and building something good. Gives purpose and validates the work we do. Encouraging.*

QUES-24: *He behaves positively towards me by commanding respect from the other staff. His facial expressions are encouraging and respectful. Tone is equally respectful – he uses his own body language to show the other staff the meeting is important and requires their attention... His behaviour communicates to me that I am important and he respects me. This makes me feel encouraged and confident as I know the other staff will follow his lead.*

QUES-28: *Mutual respect and trust... Enables me to do my job to the fullest and personally develop skills.*

9.3.2.4 *Considering followers' input (new subtheme)*

Several participants emphasised the importance of considering followers' input in leading knowledge workers, who are experts in their particular field, for the following reasons:

knowledge workers do not merely want to implement others' decisions without context, and have a need to express their opinions and participate in decision making; followers' ideas may be developed further for the benefit of the organisation; and drawing on followers' expertise leads them to "buy in and the end product is much better" (commented by **Faye**).

Participants advised that the following aspects are important in considering followers' perspectives: all followers' perspectives should be taken into account, regardless of their position in the team or organisation; the leader should hold back, "not talking half as much as what you listen" (**Ned**) and "asking more questions, creating a more thinking environment" (**Zena**); the follower must trust the leader, otherwise s/he will not express him/herself freely (**Ned**); leaders should implement followers' feedback where it has merit; and where possible, leaders should allow followers to devise solutions to problems. Specific comments by participants that further support these findings include the following:

***Ned:** Never disregard even the smallest job... You've got to talk to everybody and let them know that you actually are interested.*

***Faye:** ... it is no longer a situation of you are the boss and [followers] must do what you say... It's far more collaborative. You basically problem solve with them and they bounce ideas off you and you bounce ideas off them until you find a solution that will work best... knowledge workers feel disrespected when you don't ask for their opinion. Value their opinions and their input... give them a voice and let them participate... knowledge workers... are experts... with very good ideas... That really leads to a much better quality product if you allow them to take ownership, to participate, to have a voice, to challenge.*

***QUES-10:** My leader... listens carefully to the concerns of staff. He takes the feedback on board, and if it has merit, he adapts the program to try to arrive at the best outcomes.*

***QUES-24:** [My leader] explains his issue and allows me to come up with a solution.*

***QUES-27:** ... I accept [my follower's] input... she feels respected and it builds her up.*

In a related matter, several participants experience leaders who verbally affirm their followers' ideas, strengths and contributions in a very positive manner. Verbal affirmation is particularly valuable if it is witnessed by the entire team. For instance, **QUES-14** noted that when his leader endorses his opinions or contributions during communication with the team, it "shows me that

she values my input and worth to the organisation”. This is especially true of followers who work remotely, as reflected by the following comment by **QUES-7**:

[My leader] always commends me on work well done and passes on compliments from others about the column. I appreciate this. I feel I am making a contribution to her organisation. Because I work remotely, I am often isolated. Communication of this nature is vital for me. It keeps me going.

In addition, **QUES-8** noted that verbal affirmation does not need to be accompanied by a large degree of personal warmth, but needs to be perceived as sincere. She commented:

[My leader] gives credit for work done well or personal strengths... publicly and in one-on-one interactions. Because of her formal nature and perfectionistic approach, these carry weight with other leader/followers. Compliments are not given in an overly warm and friendly way... but are experienced positively. It communicates recognition that can be trusted and accepted and that is not just lip service...

This subtheme confirms the following aspects of communicative leadership (discussed in Chapter 6): relational dynamics, specifically being receptive to feedback from followers and listening non-defensively; and the principle that ‘communicative leaders are approachable’, according to which the leader encourages followers to contribute to the team. Furthermore, the subtheme confirms the following aspects of Mitchell’s (2014) conceptual framework of leadership communication skills (discussed in Chapter 6): considering followers’ perspectives, specifically engaging in open conversations with followers, listening to followers’ points of view, and being willing to learn; using dialogue when communicating with followers; and active listening (being engaged and interested in what followers are saying by paying attention, suspending judgment, reflecting, clarifying, summarising and sharing).

In addition, the subtheme reinforces the following key constructs identified under Theme 1 in Chapter 8: the need for a shift from controlling followers to empowering followers and from autocratic leadership to collaborative leadership; and the need for shared leadership.

9.3.2.5 *A summary of constructive verbal and nonverbal ILC behaviours*

Although from an SI perspective meaning is the response to a message or behaviour (rather than the behaviour itself), it is worth noting what specific verbal and nonverbal ILC behaviours were experienced positively by participants. These are summarised in Table 9.3.

Table 9.3: Constructive verbal and nonverbal communication behaviours

Verbal communication	Nonverbal communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal appreciation or affirmation of the follower’s ideas, strengths or contributions • Communicating respect, equality or importance • Supportive communication • Addressing conflict or negative emotions in a constructive manner • Giving advice or constructive feedback • Being concise • Prompt feedback • Regular communication • Demonstrating interest in the follower as a person • Expressing a positive attitude • Facilitating the free exchange of ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating respect, equality or importance • Positive vocal cues • Being receptive to instructions and guidance • Positive facial expressions • Positive touch • Appearing approachable, friendly, mild-tempered, fun or casual • Body posture and movements that are open, relaxed and friendly • Engaging fully in interaction, including active listening and eye contact • Acts of service outside of the job description • Demonstrating interest in the follower as a person • Making time for the other leader/follower • Demonstrating a positive attitude

Participants perceived the following types of verbal communication positively: verbal appreciation or affirmation of followers’ ideas, strengths or contributions; communicating respect, equality or importance; supportive communication; addressing conflict or negative emotions constructively; giving advice or constructive feedback; being concise (getting to the point); prompt feedback; regular communication; demonstrating interest in the follower as a person; demonstrating a positive attitude; and facilitating the free exchange of ideas (the latter was seen to be important to knowledge workers in Theme 1 discussed in Chapter 8).

The following examples of nonverbal communication were perceived positively by participants: communicating respect, equality or importance regarding the other follower/leader; positive vocal cues, such as laughing or a friendly, calm, soft, cordial or respectful tone of voice; being receptive or responsive to instructions and guidance; positive facial expressions, such as smiling; positive touch, such as hugging; appearing approachable, friendly, mild-tempered, fun or casual; body posture and movements that are open, relaxed and friendly; engaging fully in interaction, including active listening and eye contact; acts of service outside of the job description, such as making tea; demonstrating interest in the leader/follower as a person; making time for the other leader/follower; and demonstrating a positive attitude.

9.3.3 Destructive ILC compared to constructive ILC

In the analysis as discussed in the above two sections, a pattern emerged where the ILC behaviours perceived most negatively by participants constituted dichotomies with the most positively perceived behaviours. These dichotomies are summarised in Table 9.4, where the four most destructive ILC behaviours are contrasted with the four most constructive categories, with the paraphrased negative and positive relational meanings adjacent to each.

Table 9.4: Destructive ILC compared to constructive ILC

Negative relational meaning	Destructive ILC	Constructive ILC	Positive relational meaning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My opinion is not valued • I feel used • I feel anxious or afraid • I feel reprimanded • I feel depressed or hurt • I lose my confidence • I do not trust him/her • I feel angry or frustrated • I do not respect him/her 	Aggressive communication	Respectful communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My opinion is valued • I feel respected • I am motivated to contribute • I feel valuable • I feel confident • I feel secure • Our relationship is strengthened
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My input is not valued • I do not get an opportunity to learn from my mistakes • I feel inadequate or useless • I feel stifled or not being heard • S/he is unwilling to compromise 	Blocking the other's communication	Considering the other's perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My input is valued • I am making a contribution to the organisation • I feel motivated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel disrespected or unimportant • S/he is not interested in the conversation • I feel angry 	Inattention	Active listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel valued, trusted or taken seriously • I feel empowered to produce better work • I trust him/her
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S/he demonstrates poor leadership • I feel frustrated or irritated 	Indirect communication	Supportive communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am motivated to do good work or to pursue more responsibility • I feel a sense of worth

From Table 9.3, four dichotomies are clear. Firstly, participants who received aggressive communication experienced a wide range of negative emotions, together with a loss of confidence and the sense that their opinion was not valued. By contrast, those who received respectful communication felt confident, respected and motivated, and believed that their opinion was valued. Secondly, being blocked from communicating made participants feel stifled and even “useless”, while verbal affirmation of their strengths and contributions made them feel motivated and valued. Thirdly, inattentiveness by their leader/followers led them to feel disrespected, unimportant or even angry. By contrast, when their leader/followers listened actively to them, they felt valued, empowered, and – notably – both trusted and trusting. Fourthly, indirect communication from their leader/followers frustrated them, while supportive communication gave them a sense of confidence and worth, and motivated them to do their work well and even pursue more responsibility.

9.4 (RE)DEFINITION OF SELF THROUGH ILR

According to symbolic interactionism (discussed in Chapter 3), the self is defined and redefined through SI. It was thus posited that individual leader/followers would define and redefine their selves based on the ILC in the LFD. Most participants’ responses strongly supported this notion, barring a few exceptions, as is noted in Table 9.5 and the discussion below.

Table 9.5: (Re)definition of self through ILR

Strength of subtheme	Aspect of (re)definition of self
Dominant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal growth or fresh perspectives • Enhanced self-confidence or feeling valuable/appreciated • Insight into personal strengths and weaknesses
Intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [NONE]
Weak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal values reinforced • Decreased self-confidence

In Table 9.5 it can be seen that the following emerged as dominant subthemes of the (re)definition of self through ILR: personal growth or fresh perspectives; enhanced self-confidence or feeling valuable or appreciated; and insight into personal strengths and weaknesses. These are discussed below, followed by a brief note on ‘no influence’ as a

subtheme of intermediate strength. The descriptions below are a particular contribution of this study, shedding light on how, specifically, interpersonal leader/followers in knowledge-based contexts may define or redefine their selves through ILR.

9.4.1 Personal growth or fresh perspectives (new subtheme)

Several participants reported growth as a result of ILR, in areas such as interpersonal skills, problem solving, confidence, decision making, personal strength, patience, and perspectives on situations. Examples of participants' comments in this regard include the following:

QUES-10: *I am always learning by the way I interact with my leader and others. I have learned to become a better listener and ensure I have a proactive attitude to issues and problem solving.*

QUES-12: *The relationship challenges me to dig deeper into areas that are uncomfortable and unconventional... [It] eliminates my fear of sometimes addressing controversial matters. This, in turn, increases my confidence levels when dealing with matters that may initially have made me feel insecure to address – both within the workplace and outside, on a personal level.*

QUES-27: *[My follower] brings a more balanced perspective to my understanding of the situation... Brings clarity and focus to my leadership decisions.... When I have felt very frustrated about another staff member, this relationship has given me a different perspective and I have dealt with that situation in a more appropriate way, than I would have... It has taught me about myself and the way I deal with people; it has taught me to stand my ground when necessary; it has also caused me to change when I needed to.*

9.4.2 Enhanced self-confidence or feeling appreciated (new subtheme)

Several participants indicated that their LFDs give them more self-confidence or self-esteem, or make them feel valuable or appreciated. Specific reasons for this included the following: knowing that one is empowering another person; being trusted by one's leader, and receiving positive feedback from the other leader/follower. The themes of empowerment and trust emphasise the findings discussed in Chapter 8 that both of these phenomena are essential in knowledge-based organisational contexts. Participant comments supporting the role of the LFD in enhancing self-confidence or a sense of being appreciated included the following:

QUES-8: *It has reinforced me seeing myself as a competent and valuable contribution to an organisation.*

QUES-7: *[My leader] gave me an awesome chance. I don't give myself much credit for anything, so it is quite something to be writing under her name. She has enormous trust in my ability, something I probably don't have in myself.*

QUES-20: *My relationship with [my leader] has made me feel more valuable and confident as a person.*

QUES-18: *The fact that I am empowering another individual is good for my self-esteem.*

QUES-23: *Makes me feel better about myself, i.e. useful.*

9.4.3 Insight into personal strengths and weaknesses (new subtheme)

Several participants reported that they had discovered or rediscovered personal strengths or weaknesses, directly through feedback from their leader/followers, or indirectly through reflection on their interactions with their leader/followers. Participants discovered strengths such as organisation and time-management skills, conflict management skills and assertiveness, as demonstrated by the following remarks:

QUES-4: *I think this relationship has helped me to see that I am very good at organising my work and my time. I also think I resolve conflict before it escalates.*

QUES-24: *I see that my conflict resolution skills are better than I ever imagined, as I spend a vast majority of the time fixing issues my boss creates from his own communication shortfalls.*

QUES-13: *It has shown me that I can be assertive when I need to be, even if my relationship with the other party might suffer...*

Conversely, participants became aware of the following weaknesses or areas for improvement, through their LFDs: poor conflict management skills, insufficient job knowledge and skills, and poor time management. Participant comments supporting these views included the following:

QUES-8: *It also showed me that I don't deal well with an aggressive approach to conflict...*

QUES-26: *I need to work harder to improve my knowledge and execution of my work.*

QUES-21: *It has confirmed the shortcoming of mine that I work on the very edge of deadlines.*

Rather than discovering a strength or a weakness, **QUES-29** gained a fresh perspective on her nature, due to the influencing role she often plays in her LFD. She commented as follows:

I have always seen myself as a peacemaker and a diplomat. I think this relationship has sometimes challenged this view of myself. I think of myself as more of an influencer now than I used to.

9.4.4 No influence (new subtheme)

Although this was not a dominant subtheme, four participants stated that the LFD had no significant effect on their views of themselves. Notably, these participants were all male, while only nine of the 31 questionnaire participants were male. Thus, no females and almost half of the males did not consider their LFD to have an impact on their view of self. It raises the question of whether males are less subject to impact from their LFD, or less likely to notice such impact. Comments reflecting no or almost no influence on the self included the following:

QUES-11: *Not really. I have a fairly set (positive) view of myself.*

QUES-14: *I like to think that my self-esteem is not affected much by this (or any other) relationship, as I know who I am. However, it is always pleasant to be appreciated, so I have to admit that when it happens, that's a bonus.*

9.5 ATTRIBUTION IN THE LEADER-FOLLOWER DYAD

One of the tenets of SI (discussed as a metatheory in Chapter 3) is that people behave according to the meaning objects have for them. According to attribution theory (discussed in Chapter 5), attribution – that is, attributing reasons or causes to another person's behaviour – is an important way in which people make and share meaning and redefine their relationships. Both of these theoretical aspects were strongly confirmed by participants' responses.

In this study, it was explored how leader/followers make meaning in their LFDs. Thus, participants' attributions were examined with the following purposes: firstly, to understand what kinds of causes they attributed to negatively perceived ILC behaviours by their leader/followers; and secondly, to what extent those attributions made the destructive behaviours more acceptable to them. The most descriptive or notable responses to these questions are compiled in Table 9.6.

Table 9.6: Examples of participants' attributions

Negatively perceived behaviour	Attribution	Internal result of attribution
QUES-2: "She will say that I did not ask her to do whatever it is that she has not done. She will say that she would never have agreed to do this or that... She often becomes tearful."	"She needs to earn a salary and is only prepared to do the minimum amount of work. I don't think she has the [organisation's] interests at heart."	"No, it doesn't. There are other people who earn the same as her, who put much more effort and time into their jobs. She is not a good team player."
QUES-7: "Her email communication is very short and to the point. She also won't answer for a few days if she is busy. If one gets something 'wrong' she will come down on you very hard..."	"She is used to being the leader, the boss... she has no time for errors. You get it right, period. No ifs and buts. It is very much part of her personality and leadership style."	"Nobody likes being treated like a child, so at first it was difficult, but I'm fine with it now. I don't take it personally. I've also learned to double-check my work.... Better to get things right first time."
QUES-12: "His lack of attention... 'zoning out' or a blank look in one specific direction... when he scrolls through his mobile phone and fails to respond timeously to my statements..."	"Perhaps whatever is distracting him seems more appealing or more interesting than what is being discussed with me."	"Absolutely not. I feel it is rude and if we are going to schedule time to engage with each other, then that time should be respected and given the appropriate attention."
QUES-13: "Not responding to something I say (when she has been in the wrong), thus ignoring me."	"She is ashamed and does not know how to communicate that she feels bad about disappointing me."	"No. It is important to verbalise our disagreements, to ensure that both understand where the other one is coming from."
QUES-16: "He treats other people disrespectfully and talks down to peers and subordinates."	"He is extremely insecure of himself and has no EQ. This results in him mistrusting everyone and belittling other people in order for him to feel better about himself."	"No. Senior managers should have a basic level of EQ and interpersonal skills. This should be tested before they are appointed to such a senior position."
QUES-21: "She cries a lot, and vents her emotions... saying what is too much for her. It always feels as if she's blaming me, because she's complaining about things that I can do something about. So she's complaining about the organisation, but it's actually about me."	"She pushes herself too hard. Then she gets to a place where it's just too much. Often there are other contributing factors at home or with her health. Then the smallest thing at work is the straw that breaks the camel's back."	"It makes it more acceptable, but it puts a term on my effectiveness. There's only so many responses I can show to that kind of teary venting. And I can show those responses only so many times before they lose their impact."
QUES-29: "He would sometimes not be agreeable to discuss issues and would become aggressive..."	"I might have put things in a way that was insulting to him. Sometimes he seems to feel I am accusing him if things have gone wrong, and he feels it is unfair."	"No, I don't think an angry response is helpful, but he has improved. He no longer automatically assumes the worst and does not get upset as frequently as he used to."

Negatively perceived behaviour	Attribution	Internal result of attribution
<p>QUES-24: “My leader is incredibly temperamental. When he is in a rush or stressed... he expresses disdain for everyone. He has zero patience. I will be called into his office and demanded a solution is found... he wants it solved in no time, does not express himself clearly and does not listen.”</p>	<p>“He lacks stress management skills and cannot cope with excessive pressure. His communication skills are bad: as soon as he gets frustrated he uses anger to make people around him move faster.”</p>	<p>“His behaviour is unacceptable as he uses anger, aggression and stress to rule by fear. Staff would be equally or even better able to get the job done, if he didn’t frighten them so much with his temper.”</p>

Notably, no participant indicated that s/he could not explain the other leader/follower’s destructive ILC. While this may be due to participants’ desire to complete the questionnaire comprehensively, it does confirm attribution theory, which claims that people naturally try to explain others’ behaviour. Every leader/follower should thus take note that the other person in the LFD will most likely form an internal explanation of his/her behaviour, whether positive or negative, and whether correct or incorrect.

Responses to this question can be grouped into three broad categories, even though participants responded in lengthier terms: yes (the attribution does make destructive ILC behaviour more acceptable), somewhat or mixed (the attribution makes the behaviour more understandable, but not entirely acceptable), and no (the attribution does *not* make the behaviour more acceptable). Five responses constituted ‘yes’, seven ‘somewhat’ and 14 ‘no’.

These responses were compared to participants’ rating of their general attitude towards the LFD. All five participants who essentially responded ‘yes’ to the second attribution question had a positive attitude towards their LFD (two felt ‘mostly positive’ and three felt ‘very positive’). This is notable contribution of this study, since a similar pattern was not detected for those who responded ‘no’ to the second attribution question (these 14 participants ranged from ‘mostly negative’ to ‘very positive’ in their attitudes towards the relationship). From the very limited information on this aspect of the study, it cannot be stated that a general positive attitude towards the relationship results in more positive attributions. However, the inverse may be a subject worthy of further research: could positive explanations of the other leader/follower’s destructive behaviour result in a more positive general attitude towards the relationship?

Participants provided various types of explanations (attributions) for the other leader/follower’s destructive ILC behaviour. These are summarised in Table 9.7. As in previous tables in this chapter, categories of attribution are ordered in terms of how dominant (prevalent, emphatic or summative) they were.

Table 9.7: Participants' attributions by type of explanation

Strength of subtheme	Category of attribution
Dominant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work (concern with the quality or speedy completion of the task) • Low EQ (low emotional intelligence, or personal insecurity)
Intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal style (temperament, personal traits or habits) • Lack of time or overwork
Weak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selfish interests • Conflict avoidance (to avoid confrontation or conflict) • Control (to keep control of the task or situation) • Lack of awareness (unaware of his/her own negative behaviour) • Distraction (distracted by other stimuli) • Hiding non-performance • Culture (the behaviour is acceptable in his/her own culture) • Reaction to the other leader/follower's behaviour • Lack of interpersonal communication skills • Sense of importance or superiority • Desire to impress senior leaders • Putting too much pressure on self • Factors outside of the workplace (e.g. health problems) • Lack of interest

In Table 9.7 it can be seen that 'work' (concern with the quality or speedy completion of the task) and 'low EQ' (low emotional intelligence, or personal insecurity) were dominant subthemes in participants' attributions concerning their leader/followers' destructive ILC. Notably, most participants who cited work as the cause deemed the destructive behaviour acceptable in light of the explanation. By contrast, most participants who cited 'low EQ' viewed the behaviour as unacceptable. One, **QUES-16**, mentioned that senior managers "should have a basic level of EQ and interpersonal skills". Identifying the types of attributions that interpersonal leader/followers make and specifically what types of attributions are considered more or less acceptable, is a particular contribution of this study.

9.6 ROLE-TAKING IN THE LEADER-FOLLOWER DYAD

In the discussion of symbolic interactionism in Chapter 3, it was argued that role-taking (perceiving the situation from the other leader/follower's role) affects interpretation of the other's intentions. Thus, it influences how leader/followers make sense of their

leader/follower's communication, and how they define the LFD. Role-taking is closely related to attribution, since attributing causes to another leader/follower's behaviour requires taking the role of that person to interpret his/her behaviour. In this study, role-taking as a tenet of symbolic interactionism was confirmed by participants' responses, in that it was clear that all questionnaire participants engaged in a degree of role-taking and that this aided them in understanding their leader/follower's behaviour. Furthermore, although some condemned their leader/follower's behaviour even after gaining such insight, most were very tolerant of destructive behaviour, given the personal traits and circumstances that led to it.

Apart from the above, some participants generally emphasised the importance of role-taking in making sense of the other leader/follower's perspectives and communication, referring specifically to understanding their emotions. The latter reemphasises the importance of Type B (emotionally intelligent) leadership, as discussed in Chapter 8. This emphasis on emotionally intelligent role-taking in ILR is a specific contribution of this study. **QUES-8** remarked that she understands that her leader may be less accommodating when under stress; therefore she rather raises issues when her leader seems calmer or the situation is more controlled. Other participant comments that referred to role-taking included the following:

***QUES-2:** I always wonder what has happened in any of my follower's day before coming to work and why they are feeling like they are. I am very aware of trying to see matters from the other person's point of view, to the point of being too soft at times. It then makes it harder for me to make decisions that might not be the way the person was expecting.*

***Kate:** The important thing is that leaders need to grow in their sense of awareness of the emotions, the feelings, and their consideration towards their followers. And that it's not so much all about the leader and production of whatever the outcome is that the organisation seeks to achieve, but that it's more follower-based. And when that occurs, the production, the efficiency and the effectiveness of the organisation is a natural follow-on.*

9.7 MAINTAINING SYSTEM BALANCE IN THE LFD

According to the systems approach to ILR (discussed as a metatheory in Chapter 2), the LFD as a system will experience turbulence from time to time, in the form of conflict, disruption or stress. In addition, systems also attempt to resolve such turbulence and regain balance. It was thus argued that leader-followers will attempt to resolve or circumvent conflict to restore stability in the situation and the LFD. This principle was confirmed by participants' responses.

In this study, it was specifically examined how leader-followers approached conflict in their LFDs, and how participants experienced particular approaches. Summarised in Table 9.8, these aspects constitute a particular contribution of this study in that they provide useful guidance to interpersonal leader/followers in approaching conflict constructively. As in previous tables in this chapter, categories of conflict resolution approaches are ordered in terms of how dominant (prevalent, emphatic or summative) they were. In addition, participants' perceptions are indicated as one or more of the following: positive (participants believed that the approach to conflict was constructive or beneficial to the relationship); negative (participants believed that the approach was destructive or harmful to the relationship); neutral (participants believed that the approach is not the most effective or beneficial, but they could understand and cope with it).

Table 9.8: Participants' approaches to conflict resolution

Strength of subtheme	Approach to conflict resolution	Participants' perceptions of the approach
Dominant	Non-threatening, face-to-face discussion	Extremely positive; only negative if there is a delay before the discussion
	Being submissive	Extremely negative
	Avoidance or withdrawal	Mostly negative to very negative; also neutral
Intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologising • Empathy • Norms 	Positive
Weak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waiting for the other leader/follower to calm down or think about the issue • Revisiting the issue in more opportune circumstances • Arguing only when feeling strongly about the matter ('choosing one's battles') • Keeping a written record of the discussion 	Neutral
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arbitration • Ignoring the issue or not taking it personally • Mediated communication instead of face-to-face communication • Voicing an opinion, then letting the matter go 	Neutral or negative
	Enduring the conflict or emotional outburst	Negative

In Table 9.8, it can be seen that the following dominant categories emerged from participants' discussions of common approaches to conflict in their relationships: non-threatening, face-to-face discussion; being submissive; one-way communication; and avoiding conflict. These are further discussed below.

9.7.1 Non-threatening, face-to-face discussion

Non-threatening, face-to-face discussion was the most used and most preferred approach to conflict resolution among participants. Several participants stated that this approach builds mutual understanding, trust and collaboration. For example, **QUES-11** stated that, in cases of disagreement between him and his leader, "after discussion it is invariably resolved amicably". **QUES-20** also remarked that she and her leader talk about their different viewpoints and find the best way to resolve the conflict, adding that she prefers such "open communication". Other participant comments that supported the importance of open, non-threatening discussion included the following:

***QUES-4:** The best is to resolve it face to face. It sorts out everything and makes us both understand each other better, and as a result we work together better.*

***QUES-1:** We talk about any issues that may arise and brainstorm how to overcome those issues. I feel it is a very efficient and effective method for dealing with any conflict that may arise.*

***QUES-27:** We confront each other very honestly; it is hard, but clarifies much and we are able to move on together without hard feelings. I prefer [this approach]; it builds trust.*

***QUES-31:** We talk it over. Luckily we haven't had any conflict that we have not managed to solve through talking. It has worked well for us.*

A few participants also emphasised mutual respect for each other's viewpoints, whether or not the disagreement is resolved. For instance, **QUES-12** noted:

We come to a general consensus or agree to disagree. It works, because it avoids the unnecessary investment into negative emotions...

9.7.2 Being submissive

In contrast to open, face-to-face discussion, the other particularly dominant theme that was discussed by several participants was 'being submissive' (having to submit to the other leader/follower to regain harmony in the relationship), which they perceived as a very poor approach to resolving conflict. (One participant, **QUES-16**, notably indicated that her frustration with this approach to conflict eventually led to her resignation from the organisation.) Reasons for submission included patriarchal culture, autocratic leadership and followers' own lack of assertiveness. Relevant comments by participants included the following:

QUES-9: *Our African culture comes into play when we resolve a conflict... women are required to be respectful and not challenge a man's point of view. Respecting my leader's role and his opinions has helped us solve conflicts. I often feel stifled and voiceless as a female follower [but] have made peace with the fact that when I am working with my leader, I am a follower and should act as one. This includes not being too opinionated and too challenging.*

QUES-30: *It is his way or the highway. [My leader] can be very adamant when he is convinced of something. It takes much effort to change his mind about things. I am very weak at handling conflict – I flee from it rather than face it. Knowing that my leader is very set in his ways makes it very difficult... [This approach to conflict] does not resolve the conflict, but suppresses it...*

9.7.3 Avoidance or withdrawal

Some participants referred to conflict avoidance or withdrawal from conflict as a typical approach to conflict in their contexts. Their perceptions of this approach were mostly negative, and indicated that avoiding, ignoring or withdrawing from conflict negatively affects ILR over time. Notably, participants disliked avoidance or withdrawal from individuals in both the leader and the follower roles. These notions are reflected in the following comments by participants:

QUES-24: *I try to ignore [my leader's] anger as much as possible and not take it personally. It is very rare for him to apologise; therefore, much of the conflict is never resolved. I do not like this conflict resolution at all, as it is not constructive to a healthy working environment. So much so that many of the staff have resigned or are looking for other jobs, the main reason being the CEO's communication issues and conflict resolution.*

QUES-13: *I am usually very verbal... but [my follower] will keep quiet and totally withdraw until it has blown over. I do not like someone keeping quiet...*

QUES-21: We just do the work and when it's done, we're so relieved that we forgive each other for the tension and the rest is swept under the rug. But every upcoming deadline is now greeted with more and more tension... [This approach] feels like a survival thing, but in the long run it will not render the right results.

9.7.4 Cooperatively investing in maintaining balance (systems theory)

In Chapter 2 it was posited that, according to the systems approach to ILR, leader/followers must cooperate and invest energy, time and commitment to create and maintain balance in the LFD. This principle was not specifically examined in this study, but was nevertheless confirmed by participants' responses. Several participants indicated that conflict in their LFD (turbulence in the system) is disruptive, needs to be cooperatively managed by both leader/followers, and that even the preferred approach of open discussion may be challenging, but is necessary to regain balance in the LFD. Leader/followers should therefore view resolving conflict through open, two-way discussion as an investment in the relationship that is likely to increase the quality of interaction and collaboration.

In this regard, it is noteworthy that some participants reported being unable to fully resolve interpersonal conflict, due to lack of time caused by workload pressures. This reinforces the notion discussed in the previous chapter that overly heavy workloads leave too little time for transparent communication, building trust and fostering workplace spirituality.

9.8 MEANING AND PURPOSE THROUGH ILR

In Chapter 4, it was posited that the spiritual aspect of human existence, particularly the need for meaning, is largely neglected in leadership research (Gill 2011), whereas Podolny, Khurana and Besharov (2010:69) suggested that the importance of leadership to organisational life be measured by its capacity to infuse purpose and meaning into the organisation. It was further noted that Glynn and DeJordy (2010:142) considered the manner in which such infusion takes place as an underdeveloped and potentially fruitful area of leadership scholarship.

Therefore, this phenomenon was specifically explored in this study. To this end, the following question was included in the questionnaire: 'How (if at all) does the other leader/follower or the leader-follower relationship contribute to a sense of meaning/purpose/calling for you at work?' Participants' responses to this question are summarised in Table 9.9 and discussed below.

Table 9.9: How ILR contributes to meaning or purpose

Strength of subtheme	Response category
Dominant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of making a difference • Professional growth • Personal growth • Feeling appreciated or respected
Intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of belonging or team focus • Sense of calling • Fulfilment in promoting growth/achievement in another • Engagement about purpose
Weak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpersonal insight • Renewed purpose during difficult times • Freedom to lead (while usually a follower) • [NONE] • Positive feedback

Most participants strongly believed that their LFDs contributed to a sense of meaning of purpose for them at work. The following categories emerged as dominant in this subtheme: a sense of making a difference; professional growth; personal growth; and feeling appreciated or respected. These are discussed below as specific contributions of this study.

9.8.1 Sense of making a difference (new subtheme)

For several participants, their LFD gives them a sense of making a difference or contributing to a larger goal, which increases meaning and purpose for them at work. These notions are reflected in the following comments by participants:

QUES-4: *From working with this person I have discovered that I am very passionate about my work. The work I do does not just mean a pay check... I can make a difference to someone's life, whether it is a [client] or a colleague.*

QUES-8: *[My leader] will often deliberately stop and step back and let us see the bigger picture together – education of the youth.*

QUES-25: *It is important for me to feel that my contribution is meaningful and important in order for me to have purpose.*

QUES-21: *It has definitely kept me involved [as a volunteer. My follower] is doing a great job, and I need to ensure that she's able to carry on doing that. The fact that she expresses her need for help focuses my contribution and the fact that she is more motivated by what we accomplish for the [mission of the organisation than by her salary], makes that I'm always talking about the [mission] to her, and in lifting her I'm motivating myself.*

QUES-22: *It contributed a lot as I feel that I am making a difference in the lives of people that are out of work or have been abused at work.*

QUES-5: *If I receive insight into strategic decisions, I can see how my work fits with the bigger picture.*

It can thus be argued that leaders should deliberately emphasise the larger context or higher goal to followers. As noted by **QUES-5**, insight into strategic decisions can contribute thereto.

9.8.2 Professional growth (new subtheme)

For several participants, their LFDs contributed to a heightened sense of meaning or purpose for them, in that the relationship gave them a sense of professional growth. Specifically, participants mentioned the following aspects flowing from interaction with their leader/followers: increased quality of work, broader range of work, higher achievement, inspiration by example, support for innovation, motivation to learn, and opportunities to grow professionally. For example, the following comments by participants reflected these notions:

QUES-8: *She is an inspiration in her dedication to her calling... Her insistence on high-quality work forced me to get my work virtually error-free. This instils a sense of pride and meaningfulness...*

QUES-29: *[My leader] gives me plenty of opportunity to grow in my areas of work, so that has definitely increased my sense of purpose in my work.*

QUES-10: *My leader... happily supports innovative projects, even if you don't produce perfect work... I'm always working to improve on my skills and expertise. Our good rapport helps me to achieve what I do...*

QUES-20: *It has made me realise a lot of areas I did not know I had potential in and helped me to venture into new areas without fear of making mistakes, therefore growing.*

It is important to note that the above positive outcomes will not necessarily be generated by all LFDs, but rather depend on a “good rapport” between leader/followers, as **QUES-10** remarked.

9.8.3 Personal growth (new subtheme)

Some participants reported that their personal growth (including increased self-knowledge, and self-improvement) through the LFD had given them a sense of meaning and purpose. For example, two participants commented as follows:

***QUES-1:** The relationship gives me a sense of belonging and it helps me grow as a person...*

***QUES-9:** This relationship has made me understand and appreciate the different personalities in organisations... it is interesting to learn new things about people and about yourself through your daily interpersonal relations. I am appreciative of the things I am learning through my leader, because it also helps me work on my flaws in the process.*

9.8.4 Feeling appreciated or respected

Feeling appreciated, useful or respected in their LFD gave some participants a sense of meaning and purpose. This view is reflected by the following two participant comments:

***QUES-24:** Initially the relationship was good as I was learning new skills. I felt meaning and purpose as I was respected and treated with respect. Over time the relationship has broken down due to conflict. So I do not feel a sense of meaning or purpose in this company any longer.*

***QUES-14:** Being wanted, appreciated and useful is very important to me to achieve and enjoy what I am expected to do. I would go so far as to say that I would not be working here if it were not so.*

Two aspects are noteworthy concerning the remarks above. Firstly, for **QUES-24**, when the LFD deteriorated and she no longer felt respected, her sense of meaning and purpose in the organisation disappeared entirely. Secondly, **QUES-14** stated that feeling appreciated by his leader is a central reason for remaining at his organisation. Both of these views emphasise the importance of respecting and appreciating followers, reiterating similar findings discussed in Chapter 8. They also demonstrate that ILR is central to followers’ experience of meaning and purpose in the organisation, to the extent that it may affect staff retention.

9.9 EMERGENT PROPERTIES OF THE LFD

According to the systems theory (discussed as a metatheory in Chapter 2), the interaction of system parts create emergent properties in the system. It was posited that the two leader/followers (as system parts) in the LFD (system) would, through interacting, create phenomena that would become properties of the relationship. This theoretical principle was explored and confirmed in this study, and also corresponds with the social constructionist tenet that ILC constructs reality in the LFD. The emergent system properties revealed by participants' responses are a particular contribution of this study, and are summarised in Table 9.10. Of the three dominant subthemes reflected in this table, 'roles' and 'mutual influence' were pre-coded subthemes, while 'trust' came to the fore as a new subtheme.

Table 9.10: Common emergent properties in the leader-follower dyad

Strength of subtheme	Emergent system property
Dominant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust • Roles • Mutual influence
Intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerance/appreciation of personal differences • Respect • Sense of security in the relationship • Feedback • Enhanced task outputs • Better conflict management (depending on other relationship dynamics) • Poorer conflict management (depending on other relationship dynamics) • Mutual understanding • Openness/transparency • Positive relationship climate or stronger relationship • Synergy/unity of purpose/direction • Norms
Weak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power • Exchange of value • Honesty • Proactivity • Reactivity • Credibility or lack thereof • Reduced stress

9.9.1 Trust (new subtheme)

As a specific contribution of this study, participants' responses revealed that most of them highly value trust as a property of their LFD. This links strongly with the importance of trust as an aspect of both a collaborative and highly spiritual organisational environment, as highlighted in the Chapter 8. For example, **Faye** believes that an interpersonal leader must be intentional about creating trust in the LFD. She stated:

I build very strong and trusting interpersonal relationships with people in order to be able to manage them; and I manage individuals, I don't manage groups.

Some participants highlighted the following aspects of ILC that build trust: active listening; acknowledging and accommodating followers as unique individuals; open discussion to resolve conflict; and demonstrating personal integrity, credibility and reliability. The following are examples of these participants' comments:

Ingrid: *The attitude of the leader has a great influence on the interpersonal sharing of information and trust. From a positive perspective, [Leader Y] really listened to your views and acknowledged you as an individual. Some people's processing speed in meetings is not the same as others', but [Leader Y] acknowledged it and left you alone until towards the end of the meeting, and then asked your opinion, and didn't think that you were not participating. It's acknowledging individuals for how they can contribute to the organisation. A negative way of doing leadership that I personally experienced is where I really thought I tried my best in my job and the leader bluntly said in my performance review I needed to pull up my socks. I don't think that was a good example of interpersonal leader-follower communication, as I didn't have a context or specific examples which I could improve on.*

Ned: *[As a leader, you create trust] by knowing what makes [followers] tick, by understanding them as human participant, and listening. Not talking half as much as what you listen...*

Nelson: *Her listening showed compassion with the person behind the issue. It implies trust.*

QUES-27: *We confront each other, very honestly... it builds trust.*

QUES-25: *... a sense that those you are dealing with are credible and ethical in order to build trust.*

QUES-8: *From my side I also show reliability in meeting deadlines etcetera, which builds trust.*

9.9.2 Roles (shared leadership)

As discussed in Chapter 4, one of the principles of shared leadership is that leader and follower roles shift between team members; thus, a person may be a leader in one situation and a follower in the next situation with the same group of people. This phenomenon was specifically explored in this study but received very little support, in that most participants functioned in a stable role as either a leader or a follower in their leader-follower relationships.

However, it should be noted that, where roles did shift, this occurred on the grounds of expert knowledge. This emphasises the value of knowledge workers in organisations, as highlighted in Chapter 8. The following participant comments reflect the shifting of roles on the grounds of expert knowledge:

QUES-24: *My CEO is usually the leader, as he runs the entire company; however, I have far more knowledge than he does when it comes to social media and communication. Therefore, our roles do swap occasionally when he looks to me for advice or guidance on communication.*

QUES-1: *We alternate between the leader/follower roles. At times she may have more experience at a certain task and therefore will become the leader. Other times I may have more experience and will become the leader.*

QUES-14: *I am usually the follower... We swap roles sometimes when I have an opinion or expertise to offer, which stems from skills that I have that are not held by the leader.*

9.9.3 Mutual influence (systems theory and organic leadership theory)

According to the systems theory, the parts of a system are interdependent and therefore mutually influence one another. In Chapter 2 it was argued that mutual influence would occur between the two leader/followers in the LFD (system). In addition, in Chapter 4 it was stated that, according to the theory of organic leadership, leader/followers are interacting partners in sense-making, where sense-making is not a unilateral but an interactive process that depends on both leader/followers in the LFD.

These theoretical principles were not specifically explored in this study, but were confirmed by some participants who referred to mutual and interactive sense-making. For instance, **Faye** noted that she consciously influences her followers, while her followers actively challenge decisions with which they do not agree. Other participants noted that such mutual influence benefitted them or the LFD in the following respects: better decision making (which reinforces the finding discussed in Chapter 8 that knowledge workers should be allowed to express their opinions, to improve knowledge sharing which may lead to more informed decisions); improved work-life balance (which was highlighted as an important aspect of workplace spirituality in Chapter 8); improved job performance; and the fruitful application of complementary skills and traits. Relevant comments by these participants include the following:

QUES-27: *[My follower] brings a more balanced perspective to my understanding of the situation. Decision making is better. She brings clarity and focus to my leadership decisions. Because I accept her input, she feels respected and it builds her up.*

QUES-4: *I think I can be a workaholic, which is not always a good thing. My colleague does know when to 'switch off' after work hours and forget about the day. This colleague has taught me the value of taking a break and so her attitude has affected our relationship positively. I have also taught my colleague the value of paying attention to detail... So overall I think we both had something to learn from each other.*

QUES-19: *My patience, maturity, experience and leadership skills afford [my follower] the opportunity and freedom to express his talents and competencies. His proactive style, confidence and quiet respect for me afford me the opportunity to think out of the box, and to not take things so seriously...*

9.10 SYSTEM OUTPUTS INTO THE ORGANISATION (SYSTEMS THEORY)

According to the systems theory, a system produces outputs into its surrounding environment. In the case of this study, where the system under examination was the LFD, it was indeed found that the dyad produces outputs that influence the larger organisation. From the theoretical chapters, several potential system outputs were pre-coded for exploration, and the following were confirmed by the data: organisational climate, employee morale and engagement, job performance, and staff retention. These are discussed below.

9.10.1 Organisational climate and culture

Several interviewees commented on how ILR may influence organisational culture and climate in positive or negative ways. For example, **Ned** stated that toxic interpersonal relationships can “poison the entire organisation, if they’re unchecked”. The following examples of such influence were mentioned: the quality of communication and trust in LFDs can spread to the more general organisational climate and culture; informal interpersonal leaders may exert strong influence over followers, which may oppose and even outweigh the influence of formal leaders; and, in some cases, interpersonal leaders’ shift towards Type B leadership (which employs emotional intelligence and fosters independent thinking in followers) may upwardly influence more senior leaders to adopt the same leadership style. Participant comments that reflect these notions include the following:

Kate: *[ILR can affect the organisation] both positively and negatively. Communication and trust are the two most pivotal dimensions that almost every organisation globally struggles with. And so if there are cracks or flaws in those areas [in interpersonal relationships] that are not addressed, then they will have a serious impact on the organisation and definitely on the followers. And those are the kinds of organisations where you would probably find that there’s quite a high turnover of followers as well.*

Ned: *The leader needs to know who are the pseudo-leaders in his organisation and how much clout do they carry. [Organisation X’s] human resource problem started with the packers at the tills who are very influential because they were the old gogos. So the floor manager, if he was young black guy coming out of varsity, traditionally – which is at his core – he would listen to her... And if it’s poisonous, they will bring that organisation to its knees... because she has that level of influence... Now you take that scenario and you put it among educated young people and we’re given the thing called social media. If there’s any poison moving around, its moving around very fast, as fast as their little tongues can type.*

Zena: *[My coachee] is a chartered accountant and he [used to drive] a team... Change [from being] directional to a thinking environment that he creates, has definitely changed the relationship that he has with his followers... His line manager has followed suit... We see success and results, and it’s definitely contagious.*

However, one participant, **Lynette**, noted that positive upward and outward influence from LFDs is limited by the following two aspects: senior leaders’ openness to such influence; and

the degree to which interpersonal teams are laterally interconnected and interdependent in the organisation. She commented:

... it depends on the leadership style of the top leadership team. If there is a lot of pain and conversation happening in [the teams] and there is an opportunity in the hierarchy to communicate to get to the higher levels about what's happening, and those in the higher levels are more collaborative in servant leadership, then change will happen. But if it is the converse – very autocratic at the top and these groups are basically almost independent of one another, they're not interdependent – then it won't make a difference.

9.10.2 Employee morale and engagement

Several participants remarked that ILR influences employee morale and engagement (including communication satisfaction) in the organisation, particularly if leaders have strong interpersonal relationships with followers, undergirded by emotional intelligence and “an attitude of care” (as commented by **Kate**). Examples of participant comments that support this view include the following:

Faye: *Those leaders [in our organisation] that have very strong interpersonal relationships with their teams... have the most loyal members, the most positive members; whereas the ones who stick to the rules have the unhappiest members...*

Zena: *We did an emotional intelligence 360° with some of his team members and peers. You could actually see the shift in his leadership style, because there was a 360° about nine months prior to that, where a lot of the issues were picked up. It was obvious in the assessment that the followers clearly saw [the shift] and they liked it, they preferred it. When he got that connection going and he saw the results... specifically of difficult situations... a better outcome in conflict situations and so forth... I think it motivated him to really hardwire this new behaviour.*

9.10.3 Job performance

Several participants described instances where ILR influenced follower job performance positively or negatively, which contributes to the overall performance of the organisation. They mentioned the following specific ways in which interpersonal leaders support followers' performance: being people-orientated (as opposed to task-orientated), fostering a good rapport with followers and accommodating their personal values and needs; practising servant

leadership – making followers feel valuable, demonstrating care and concern for them, and nurturing and supporting them constantly; making time for followers; demonstrating trust in followers; and giving only constructive feedback to followers. These notions are reflected in, for example, the following comments by participants:

Lynette: *I was very much a task-driven leader and had to learn to become a people-orientated leader, [because] I wasn't getting the results. The minute you drive people through the task rather than understanding their own values... it's quite difficult to move them. [Later, as a people-orientated leader], sometimes I would be softer on my people than I should, because they were going through a really tough personal battle... I often had to justify [to my autocratic leaders] why I was allowing that person to do that. But the minute [the followers] got through this process, if I asked them to go run to there and back for me, they would...*

Faye: *Those leaders [in our organisation] that have very strong interpersonal relationships with their teams... have the highest performance... whereas the ones who stick to the rules... have the most complaints [from clients]; don't meet the deadlines... [The director] will sometimes say I have a basket full of puppies because I treat [my followers] like special flowers. But at the end of the day when it comes to performance and meeting deadlines, then my 'puppies' are the ones performing... in my experience when you serve the people that you are supposed to lead, you get so much more out of them... [Managers] are so scared that employees are going to steal the company's time and that they are earning more than what they are doing, which is not true. People really work hard and if you accommodate people it buys you loyalty.*

QUES-10: *[My leader and I] have a good rapport, where all feedback is constructive and positive... My leader always makes time for me, which shows I am valuable and treated with care and concern... I am nurtured and supported constantly, and this level of support motivates me to produce the best work I can.*

These comments reiterate the importance of leaders' support and consideration of followers, highlighted in Chapter 8.

9.10.4 Staff retention

Responses by various participants suggested that ILR may influence staff retention in the organisation. For example, **Faye** stated that the leaders in her organisation who had the best interpersonal leader-follower relationships also had the lowest staff turnover. By contrast, **Nelson** illustrated how a poor ILR can induce a follower to leave an organisation, even at great personal cost:

That was my worst ever boss – terrible, terrible... I was supposed to stay for two years, because that was the agreement for them to pay my costs, and I couldn't. I left after a year and paid the costs back.

Other participants commented that they or other followers left organisations because they were frustrated by poor communication with their interpersonal leaders. Specifically, autocratic leaders who insisted on compliance and leaders with explosive tempers were perceived very negatively, as can be seen in the participant comments below:

Kate: *Depending on the extent and the seriousness of the poor communication, it may be one of the dimensions that they would take into consideration when choosing to either stay or leave that organisation. Because it can really impact the frustration level of followers.*

QUES-16: *The conflict was normally resolved by me agreeing to do as [my leader] asked... It resulted in my resignation in the end.*

QUES-24: *Many of the staff have resigned or are looking for other jobs, the main reason being the CEO's communication issues and conflict resolution. His temper results in many of the staff and myself included being frustrated.*

By contrast, some participants stated that they accepted or stayed in a permanent position because of positive relationships with their interpersonal leaders. Comments by these participants include the following:

QUES-14: *Being wanted, appreciated and useful [in my LFD] is very important to me to achieve and enjoy what I am expected to do. I would go so far as to say that I would not be working here if it were not so.*

QUES-10: *This positive work relationship is one of the reasons I accepted the position full-time at [the organisation] and broke away from [my previous] industry.*

9.10.5 Synopsis of Theme 2 (symbolic interaction in the LFD)

Key constructs under Theme 2 were found to be interlinked, as illustrated in Figure 9.1.

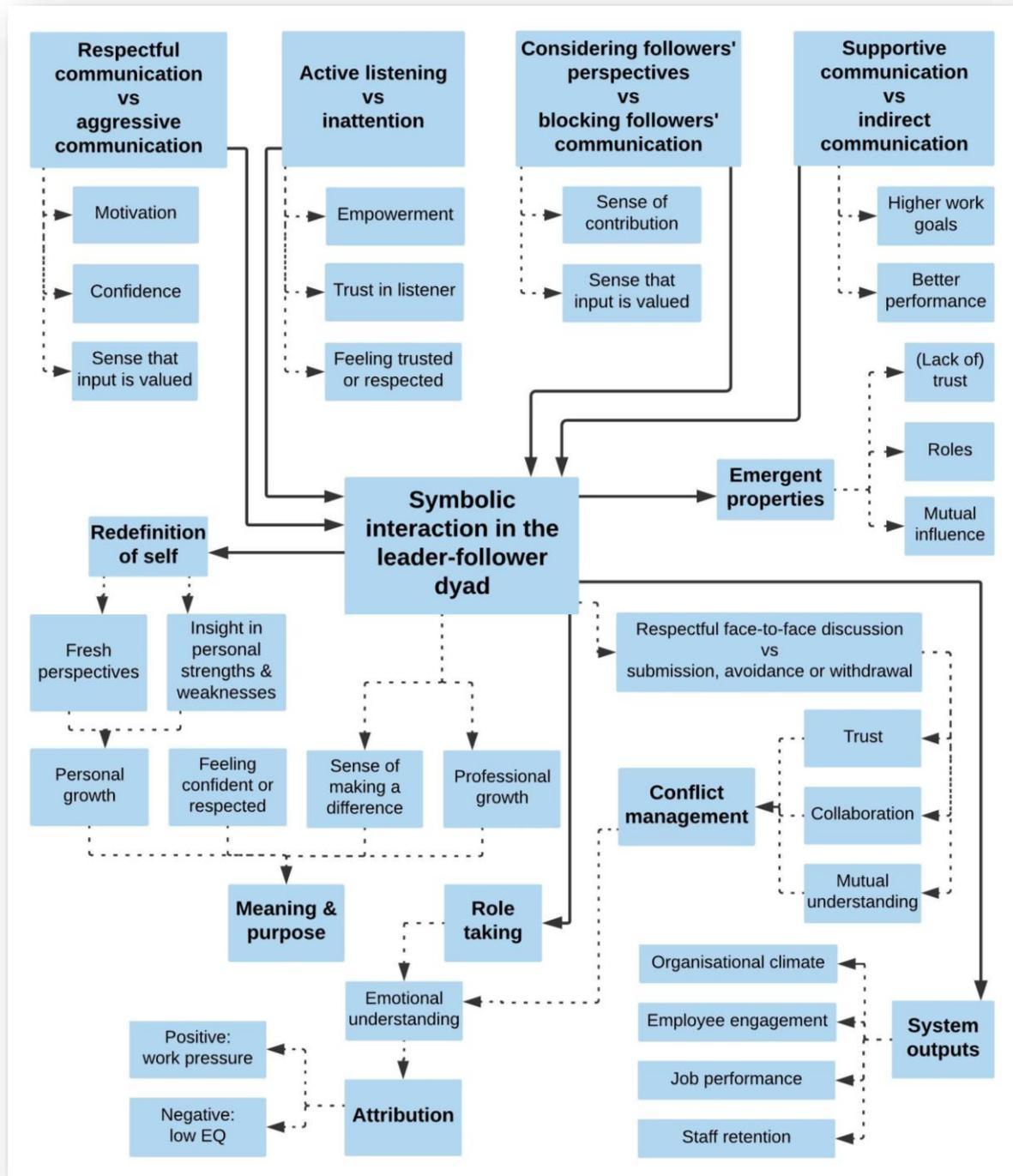


Figure 9.1: Symbolic interaction in the LFD

In this study, it was found that the four most important constructive ILC behaviours are active listening, considering followers' perspectives, respectful communication and supportive communication. Listening actively to another leader/follower makes the other leader/follower feel more empowered, trusting and trusted or respected. When followers' perspectives are considered, they experience a sense of contribution and that their input is valued. Communicating respect makes leader/followers feel motivated and confident, and conveys that their input is valued. Supportive communication tends to inspire leader/followers to set higher work goals and perform better.

Symbolic interaction in the LFD leads to a (re)definition of the self, particularly in terms of fresh perspectives on situations, and insight into one's own strengths and weaknesses. This, in turn, creates a sense of personal growth as a result of ILR. Together with personal growth, feeling confident or respected, having a sense of making a difference, and experiencing professional growth enhance a personal sense of meaning and purpose at work.

Leader/followers tend to engage in role taking (taking the perspective of the other leader/follower's role), which aids in understanding the other person's emotions. In turn, this emotional understanding tends to contribute to more positive attributions of the other person's behaviour and intentions. The attributions most commonly made were 'work pressure', which was generally viewed as a valid reason for destructive ILC behaviour, and 'low emotional intelligence', which was not tolerated as a reason for negatively perceived behaviour.

Participants most often used respectful, face-to-face discussion to resolve conflict, and reported this approach as the most desirable, especially compared to submission, withdrawal or avoidance, which were deemed to be the most destructive ways of approaching conflict. Respectful discussion contributes to mutual understanding, higher trust, better collaboration, and greater understanding of the other person's emotions.

The ILC in the LFD creates emergent system properties. In this regard, the most salient properties were found to be trust (or lack thereof), roles and mutual influence. In addition, it was found that the LFD contributes system outputs to its environment, particularly in terms of organisational climate, employee engagement, job performance and staff retention.

9.11 CONCLUSION

Theme 2 (SI in the LFD or system) is the central theme in this study, the focus of the latter being ILR. Therefore, from a systems perspective, the LFD was designated as the system for exploration, and several valuable insights resorting to this theme were gleaned.

The data supported the notion from the constructionist relational leadership perspective that the *LFD is the locus of interpersonal leadership*, whereas many historical perspectives view the leader as the locus of leadership. Examples were gained from participants' responses where relational leader/followers mutually nurtured their LFDs, without resorting to formal hierarchy.

In accordance with the *relational communication* perspective, it was indeed found in this study that communication is the constitutive element in LFDs, in that the nature of communication largely determines the nature of the relationship. ILC behaviours that were perceived particularly negatively by participants were the following: aggressive communication, blocking the other leader/follower's communication, inattention, and indirect communication. By contrast, participants experienced the following ILC behaviours very positively: listening actively, considering followers' perspectives, communicating support and communicating respect.

The results also strongly confirmed the notion posited in the theoretical chapters of leader/followers' *(re)definition of self through symbolic interaction* in the LFD. As a specific contribution of this study, participants reported that their sense of self was (re)defined in the following respects: personal growth or fresh perspectives; enhanced self-confidence or feeling appreciated; and insight into personal strengths and weaknesses.

In exploring *attribution* (making sense of the other leader/follower's behaviour by attributing causes to it), strong support was found for attribution theory and symbolic interactionism. Only attributions to destructive behaviours were examined. As a specific contribution of this study, the following two attributions were found to be most dominant: work pressure (concern with the quality or speedy completion of the task), which was mostly deemed an acceptable reason for negatively perceived behaviour; and 'low EQ' (low emotional intelligence, or personal insecurity), which was mostly considered an unacceptable reason for such behaviour.

Related to attribution, strong support was also found for the symbolic interactionist tenet of *role-taking* (perceiving the situation from another's role). The data indicated that participants engage in role-taking to make sense of their leader/follower's ILC, especially to make sense of their leader/follower's emotional perspectives in a given situation. The latter is a particular contribution of this study.

In confirmation of the systems approach to LFDs, participants indicated that they experienced disruptive turbulence or conflict in their relationship, requiring cooperative management to regain or *maintain system balance*. As a particular contribution of this study, the most preferred

approach to managing conflict is open, two-way discussion, while the least preferred is having to passively submit to the other leader/follower.

The results indicated strong support for the theoretical tenet of infusing *meaning and purpose through spiritual leadership* in the LFD. As a specific contribution of this study, ILR was found to enhance leader/followers' sense of meaning and purpose at work in that participants experienced the following as a result of ILR: a sense of making a difference; professional growth; personal growth; and feeling appreciated or respected.

Strong support was gained in this study for *emergent properties* in the LFD as a system, as a result of interaction between the two leader/followers as system parts. As a particular contribution of this study, it was found that participants highly value trust as a relationship property. While strong support was not found for shifting leader/follower roles as a tenet of shared leadership, it should be noted that such role shifts as did occur, took place on the basis of which leader/follower had the most expert knowledge in the given context. The third dominant emergent property was mutual influence (interdependence) between leader/followers (system parts). The related notion of interactive sense-making is also a tenet of organic leadership.

Regarding *system outputs into the environment*, it was confirmed that ILR may positively or negatively influence the organisational climate and culture, employee morale and engagement, job performance, and staff retention. As a specific contribution of this study, supportive ILC was found to enhance most of these aspects.

In the next chapter, the results of this study in terms of individual leader/follower attributes are discussed.

CHAPTER 10: RESULTS IN TERMS OF LEADER/FOLLOWER ATTRIBUTES

10.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous two chapters, the results of this study in terms of Theme 1 (environmental inputs into the leader-follower dyad) and Theme 2 (symbolic interaction in the leader-follower dyad) were reported. The following organisational inputs were found to strongly influence interpersonal leadership relations (ILR): a shift towards collaboration; advances in communication technology, including the roles of social media and virtual work; cultural diversity in the workplace; and leadership concept.

For Theme 2, the dominant subthemes were the following: the leader-follower dyad (LFD) as the locus of interpersonal leadership; relational communication in the LFD; (re)definition of self through symbolic interaction; attribution in the LFD; role-taking in the LFD; maintaining system balance in the LFD; a sense of meaning and purpose through spiritual leadership; emergent properties of the LFD; and system outputs into the organisation.

In this chapter, the results in terms of Theme 3 (leader/follower attributes) are reported. In the theoretical chapters, it was posited that, in a systems approach to ILR, the attributes of each leader/follower (subsystem) would influence the other subsystem and the system (LFD) as a whole. This tenet was strongly confirmed by all participants. The individual attributes that enhance ILR that were identified by participants are discussed below in terms of the two pre-coded subthemes: values and competencies.

10.2 VALUES

In the theoretical chapters it was posited, in relation to Rokeach's comprehensive theory of change (Item 5.5) and the theory of communicative leadership (Item 6.5) of Johansson *et al* (2014), that leader/followers' attitudes, beliefs and especially their values (all of which form part of an individual's frame of reference) would influence their ILR. This was confirmed by all participants. Identifying aspects of an individual leader/follower's frame of reference that enhance ILR is a particular contribution of this study, and these elements are summarised in Table 10.1.

Table 10.1: Leader/follower values, attitudes and beliefs that enhance ILR

Strength of subtheme	Value, attitude or belief
Dominant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honesty • Love, care or support • Respect • Engagement, relationships and communication • Trust • Professional excellence • Shared values and beliefs
Intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive attitude • Recognition of individual contributions
Weak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belief in the other leader/follower's abilities • Open-mindedness • Accountability and responsibility • Mindfulness • Awareness of personal uniqueness

As can be seen from the above table, the following new dominant subthemes emerged from the data: honesty; love, care or support; respect; engagement, relationships and communication; trust; and professional excellence. These are discussed below. Although beliefs and attitudes were also identified, values emerged as more dominant. The discussion is therefore organised around the values identified, and related attitudes and beliefs are discussed where relevant.

10.2.1 Honesty (new subtheme)

Northouse (2018:322) defines honesty as “telling the truth and representing reality as fully and completely as possible”. Notably, honesty (often grouped together with the notions of integrity, transparency, trustworthiness, ethical conduct or credibility) was cited by most participants as central to good ILR. These participants stated that honesty strengthens their LFDs in that it breeds trust (also identified as a key construct under Theme 1 and Theme 2 in the previous two chapters) and removes the fear of manipulation or deception; facilitates collaboration (identified as a key construct under Theme 1 in Chapter 8); and facilitates conflict resolution (identified as a key construct under Theme 2 in Chapter 9). Examples of participants’ comments that reflect these notions include the following:

Lynette: ... it's about encouragement and walking the talk with [followers].

Kate: In a study that I conducted, [I found] that the highest value that any leader should have for a follower to work well with them is integrity...

QUES-7: [My leader] knows I will be completely honest with her, and I trust her too. I know she will fulfil her agreement with me. She can trust me 100% to deliver the weekly work... her 25-year reputation is on the line.

QUES-27: I prefer honesty to performance. If something has not been done, I prefer the truth (even if it is not a good reason) than excuses.

This subtheme confirms the relational dynamics tenet of the communicative leadership model (see Item 6.4), specifically the aspect of openness (communicative leader/followers provide adequate and truthful information).

10.2.2 Love, care or support (new subtheme)

Several participants expressed the belief that an attitude of love, care or support towards one's leader/follower enhances ILR. Such care may be expressed in the following ways: showing an interest in followers' personal lives and being lenient when they have personal problems; encouraging followers in their work; listening to followers' challenges and offering suggestions; and crediting followers for team successes and taking responsibility for team failures. These findings are supported by, for example, the following comments by participants:

Lynette: Just to love [followers]... because they're human beings first... Sometimes I would be softer on my people than I should, because they were going through a really tough personal battle.

Kate: [Leaders] should approach the leader-follower relationship with an attitude of care... one might call it love leadership... really caring about the followers and the fact that they are hired hearts rather than hired hands.

QUES-29: [My leader] is very supportive... [and] encourages me. He would sometimes take time to talk through challenging situations that I face...

Faye: You have to really care about [followers]... it is almost like a parent-child relationship. It doesn't matter what your children do, you always care about them.

Notably, two participants referred to ‘loving’ followers – a term that, traditionally, was not applied to professional relationships. This constitutes a philosophical shift in viewing ILR. The subtheme also confirms the following: one of the foundational principles of communicative leadership (communicative leaders express concern for followers), discussed under Item 6.5; a supportive culture, identified as a key construct under Theme 1 in Chapter 8; and supportive communication (identified as constructive ILC in Chapter 9).

10.2.3 Respect (new subtheme)

For several participants, respect is very important in a leader/follower’s approach to ILR. One participant, **Faye**, noted that leaders should respect followers (knowledge workers) for their knowledge and expertise. A few participants emphasised that communicating with and recognising all followers with equal respect – regardless of their role in the team or their status in the organisational hierarchy – breaks down communication barriers. **QUES-13** experienced her follower’s “respectful verbal communication and actions” very positively. For **Lynette**, it was a priority to “make sure that my team felt loved and honoured in whatever they did”. **Kate** described one of her LFDs that she views as particularly good and mature, that is “based on an excellent foundation of... mutual respect in that leader-follower communication...”

This subtheme confirms one of the foundational principles of communicative leadership (communicative leaders are approachable and respectful) as discussed under Item 6.5, and the construct of respectful communication that was identified as constructive ILC in Chapter 9.

10.2.4 Engagement, relationships or communication (new subtheme)

According to several participants, ILR can only occur optimally when leader/followers specifically value engagement, relationships or communication. Specifically, participants commented that this value may have the following positive outcomes: it “helps to form a good work culture” (**QUES-1**); it may motivate leader/followers to “do everything in my power to make sure [relationships] work efficiently” (**QUES-9**); and engagement may enhance productivity, as noted by **Zena** below:

... valuing engagement, quality engagement... every single interaction is seen as an opportunity for engagement... There’s a lot of research being done where there’s a direct link between the engagement and productivity... [In] the organisations of the future... engagement will become a given, and what organisations will have to have to attract talent and keep talent.

One participant, **Sarina**, noted that, for this value to positively influence ILR, leaders should hold and express the value authentically and not delegate all communication to others. She commented:

The first one is a value that communication and relationships are important. I know two entrepreneurs who have a great business idea, but they're not good with communication... they just hire someone else to do that. So at their core, they do not believe that it's important... If you do not believe it, it's very difficult to fake it... The world was not set up in a way that systems make the world go round. It's relationships and interrelationships that work, symbiotic relationships... The exchange happens person to person. Everything else – the systems, technologies... are vehicles or tools to enable that exchange...

This subtheme confirms Hackman and Johnson's (2013) notion of willingness to communicate (WTC) – as discussed under Item 6.4.1 – where leader/followers with a higher WTC possess a willingness to interact with others and thus communicate more frequently and for longer periods of time than do people with low WTC.

10.2.5 Trust (new subtheme)

For several participants, trusting one's leader/follower is essential for constructive ILR. **QUES-5** noted that she has a need for her leader to trust her integrity and to allow her to make decisions. **Lynette** emphasised the value of trust as follows:

Definitively a value of trust. If there is not a level of trust between the leader and the follower, you're not going to get them to operate to the best of their ability. Helping them to unlock their own skills and growth rather than pushing... making sure that they understand that you have their back, and that goes back to the trust again.

In the discussion in Chapter 8 of autocratic leadership as the leadership concept most destructive to ILR and also organisations and followers in general, it was noted that autocratic leaders often do not trust followers to work hard or to deal wisely with sensitive information. Therefore, trust as a philosophical approach to other leader/followers requires beliefs in contrast to those held by autocratic leaders. Two participants expressed the beliefs they consider to be crucial to constructive ILR as follows (notably, **Ingrid** implies that distrust of followers leads to followers distrusting the leader):

Nelson: *The belief that you can trust your people to do their job, that people are inherently good.*

Ingrid: ... the belief that most people are not doing things maliciously or with an inherently negative mind-set. The majority of people, I truly believe, are not doing that. [If as a leader you are always suspicious of followers], people are not going to trust you and they're constantly going to feel inferior and doubt their own abilities, which will then block two-way interpersonal communication between leader and follower.

10.2.6 Professional excellence (new subtheme)

Several participants indicated that a value of professional excellence (described in several cases as good 'work ethic') enhances the LFD, particularly in the following ways: enabling leader/followers to achieve mutual goals; creating a shared sense of pride in high-quality work produced; increasing trust in the relationship; and motivating the follower to emulate the leader's high professional standards. Specific participant comments that support these findings include the following:

QUES-14: [My leader] has a value that I respect and try to emulate; that being a desire to do every task to the highest standard that is possible. This sometimes causes more effort and time, therefore other people do not always understand or appreciate what is happening, but I see it as a very positive attribute in this environment.

QUES-30: My leader has great work ethic. This enhances our relationship, because he is punctual and reliable. That motivates me. I would like to do my work with excellence and it is great to have a leader that encourages exactly that through his work ethic.

10.2.7 Shared values and beliefs (new subtheme)

Although a shared attribute is not strictly an individual attribute (which is the focus of the current discussion), several participants so strongly emphasised that shared values and beliefs enhance the LFD, that this was added to the discussion as a subtheme. Participants noted that shared values and beliefs augment communication, connection and support in the LFD. Shared values and beliefs may even supersede the potentially divisive effects of contrasting personalities (see **QUES-30's** comment below) and ethnic cultural diversity (see **QUES-23's** comment below). A number of participants supported the importance of shared values and beliefs, for instance:

QUES-23: Even though we come from different cultures, our values seem to be similar, so it is therefore easier to communicate.

QUES-24: *We share the same work values and family values. [My leader] has three children and was very supportive of my choice to have a baby.*

QUES-19: *Believing in the same values and understanding the value of integrity, transparency and professionalism made it possible and easier for the relationship to develop and to endure and respect differences and to learn from each other...*

QUES-12: *I believe a large portion of why we share such a positive relationship is the fact that we hold a common spiritual faith. Almost by default, this sets the premise of like-minded moral and individual values towards life, as well as the outcomes and behaviour patterns that are maintained when addressing conflict. It contributes to us understanding each other better and why we may hold certain opinions about various matters.*

QUES-29: *[Our shared spiritual belief set] unifies our purpose, which greatly helps us to move in the same direction and to desire the same outcomes. It also makes us more willing to work out our differences.*

QUES-30: *[Our shared spiritual belief set] is a firm foundation to our relationship. We are extreme opposites of each other and this belief grounds our relationship. It enhances the relationship because our morals and values align with each other's even though our personalities may differ. Having common ground is refreshing and it remains an area of strength.*

10.3 COMPETENCIES

In this study, it was specifically explored what individual skills in the interpersonal context enhance ILR. Most participants agreed that interpersonal skills are essential for ILR, and many did so emphatically, as is evidenced by the following participant comments:

Nelson: *... in a knowledge-based company, interpersonal skills are everything. They're everything.*

Sarina: *[Leaders] have got to have interpersonal skills... [In our organisation], interpersonal skills are our business.*

Faye: *Excellent interpersonal skills [are] the absolute key... management and leadership – all of it, it's communication... If you don't have good interpersonal skills, you won't be able to really manage a team of people in a positive way...*

Several interpersonal skills were pre-coded from the theoretical discussion, and the following emerged as dominant subthemes: listening skills, emotional communication competencies, engagement skills, conflict management, and multicultural competence.

10.3.1 Listening skills

Of all the interpersonal skills coded in this study, listening skills received the most references and strongest emphasis from participants. **Ned** stated that this skill is “the biggest attribute any leader can have”. Participants emphasised the following aspects of listening skills: one should be mindful or fully present in the moment when listening; one should listen with a calm and collegial attitude (commented by **QUES-10**); one should be mindful of the speaker and consider his/her context in sharing meaning with him/her; and as a leader, if a follower has raised an issue, one should follow up with a solution or action. For instance, **Ingrid** stated:

[One is a good listener] when you're actually in the moment and present when people speak to you, and to not just leave it in the passage, but to actually take something further... it's about being mindful of that person and that person's context, and to try and get to an understanding or a solution that can lead to action.

Participants considered the following to be benefits of good listening skills in the interpersonal context: it clarifies what the task is and how it should be accomplished (commented by **QUES-1**); it creates a climate of openness, where the other leader/follower experience that his/her “voice does count” (**QUES-3**) and s/he has an opportunity to suggest useful ideas (**QUES-31**); it curbs stress in the workplace (**QUES-3**); it “helps to maintain the relationship in the long term” (**QUES-5**); and it may be “a hugely productive and encouraging experience” (**QUES-29**).

It should also be noted that, as discussed in Chapter 9, some participants experienced their leader/followers' lack of listening skills (for instance, not maintaining eye contact or scrolling on their cellular phones) very negatively. Some participants, for example **QUES-29**, also mentioned that there is not always enough time in the workplace to apply listening skills effectively.

This subtheme confirms the following aspects of communicative leadership theory: the central leader communication behaviour ‘relational dynamics’, specifically the tenet that leaders should be perceived as open, good listeners; and the foundational principle that communicative leaders should follow up on feedback. It also confirms that following aspects of Mitchell’s (2014) conceptual framework of leadership communication skills: considering

followers' perspectives; responding appropriately to followers' problems; and active listening. The subtheme also confirms the importance of active listening identified as a key construct under Theme 2 in Chapter 9.

10.3.2 Emotional communication competencies

Northouse (2018:322) defines emotional intelligence (EQ) as “a person’s ability to understand his or her own and others’ emotions, and then to apply this understanding to life’s tasks; the ability to perceive and express emotions, to use emotions to facilitate thinking, to understand and reason with emotions, and to manage emotions effectively within oneself and in relationships with others”. EQ was a particularly dominant subtheme in this study, confirming similarly labelled aspects in the theoretical frameworks of Barrett (2006), Hackman and Johnson (2013) and Mitchell (2014), discussed in Chapter 6. Whereas most models refer to ‘emotional intelligence’, Hackman and Johnson’s (2013) term ‘emotional communication competencies’ is used here, being considered apt for the focus of this study.

One participant, **Kate**, defines emotional communication competencies (ECCs) as “the ability to speak about one’s emotions and to be aware of one’s own emotions as a leader, and those of others in the organisation”, and considers it very important in ILR. **Zena** emphasised that the current shift from Type A leadership to Type B leadership (discussed as a key construct under Theme 1 in Chapter 8) requires ECC. **QUES-16** insisted that a basic level of ECC should be a requirement for senior managers, stating:

Most of my experience with my current leader is extremely negative. He treats other people disrespectfully and talks down to peers and subordinates [because he] is extremely insecure of himself and has no emotional intelligence (EQ). This results in him mistrusting everyone and belittling other people to feel better about himself... Senior managers in his position (vice-president) should have a basic level of EQ and interpersonal skills. This should be tested before they are appointed to such a senior position.

One participant, **Zena**, related an instance where she had coached a leader in emotional intelligence. The leader’s enhanced ECCs led to better relationships with his followers, as described by **Zena** below:

... it was obvious in the assessment that the followers clearly saw [the shift in his behaviour] and they liked it, they preferred it... That was very, very profound... When he got that connection going and he saw the results... difficult situations handled differently... a better outcome in conflict situations... I think it motivated him to really hardwire this new behaviour.

ECC comprises several skills, but the following were highlighted by participants and are discussed below: self-awareness, self-regulation and attending to others' emotions.

10.3.2.1 Self-awareness

Some participants emphasised self-awareness (also self-reflection) as an important individual attribute that enhances ILR. For instance, **Zena** commented that a leader/follower's self-awareness "can really impact the quality of interaction and communication", and that being aware of one's own strengths and development areas is especially important in a team context. **Sarina** noted that self-awareness is a requirement for personal change (see her comment below). This is noteworthy, given the need for leader/followers to adapt to their dynamic workplace environments, particularly in knowledge-based contexts (as discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 8) and to develop relevant skills. These two participants commented as follows:

***Sarina:** I have found that [leader/followers'] level of self-awareness has got a huge impact on (1) whether they are open to coaching, and (2) whether they actually change and that change is sustainable... If it truly is coming from a level of self-awareness, they are willing to try other behaviours... Also, we really try and get the clients... into the habit of self-reflection. I find it's difficult for a person to reflect if they don't have the ability to be self-aware.*

***Zena:** [The client and I] have worked with the SCARF neuroscience model that deals with emotional triggers: status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness and fairness. Through recognising his emotional triggers in interpersonal situations, and self-regulating, he was able to improve interpersonal communication... Two weeks ago he said confidently that in every interaction he enters, the SCARF model just comes up automatically... That has had the most impact on interpersonal communication with his peers and team.*

This subtheme confirms one of Hackman and Johnson's (2013) emotional communication competencies (discussed in Chapter 6), namely perceiving and appraising emotion, in this case one's own. It also confirms the self-awareness aspect of Mitchell's (2014) leadership communication skill of displaying emotional intelligence.

10.3.2.2 Self-regulation

Closely related to self-awareness is the skill of self-regulation, which was also highlighted by some participants as enhancing the LFD. **Zena** described leaders' self-regulation as "holding back, asking more questions [of followers], creating a more thinking environment". Notably,

this comment relates strongly to the interpersonal leadership communication practice of considering followers' perspectives, discussed under Item 10.3.2 in this chapter.

Zena emphasised the combination of self-awareness (being intrapersonally aware of one's emotional triggers) and self-regulation (regulating one's emotions as identified through self-awareness, and regulating one's own contributions to an interpersonal interaction, ensuring that the other person's opinions are acknowledged) in enhancing ILR. Two other participants noted how their own or their leader/followers' self-regulation enhances their LFD:

***QUES-9:** I think I am not easily angered and I believe this has helped the relationship. I have accepted my leader as he is and I laugh things off when he delays in giving me feedback.*

***QUES-21:** [My follower] has ability to not make things personal. She has the skill to work with volunteers, which in some ways is what I am. So if she's really upset about something being late, she doesn't feel she can get angry or throw a fit, but that I need to be thanked for what I'm doing.*

This subtheme confirms the central leader communication behaviour of relational dynamics in communicative leadership (discussed in Chapter 6), specifically with reference to listening in a non-defensive manner. It also confirms the self-regulation aspect of Mitchell's (2014) conceptual framework of leadership communication skills (discussed in Chapter 6). Furthermore, it aids in explaining why participants experience aggressive communication by their leader/followers (see Item 9.3.1.1) – where the other leader/follower fails to practise self-regulation – so negatively; and conversely, why participants experience respectful communication (see Item 9.3.2.3) that demonstrates self-regulation so positively.

10.3.2.3 *Attending to others' emotions*

The third ECC that was emphasised by some participants is attending to others' emotions, which also implies empathy. For example, **Kate** stated that leaders “need to grow in their sense of awareness of the emotions of their followers, and their consideration towards them”, adding that “when that occurs, the production, the efficiency and the effectiveness of the organisation is a natural follow-on”. Similarly, **Nelson** noted that, if “you want to get the best out of people, see them as *people*”, treating them with empathy and compassion.

Other participants noted that attending to other leader/followers' emotions may require some conscious effort, and sensitivity to nonverbal signals, as evidenced in the following comments:

Ned: ... to understand the guy that works for you or works with you... you have to know what makes him tick, what is at the core of his being... If it's family and his family is ill or something's gone wrong... then you can show empathy and you can add value at that level. If you don't know that, you're not going to add any value. You're just gonna keep whipping him to produce.

QUES-8: I believe in showing understanding that when somebody is under great stress, they might be less accommodating. I will then rather deal with the matter at a later opportunity when [my leader] is calmer... I am sensitive to nonverbal communication and could pick up on many nuances of where she is aiming at or under what level of stress she is at a given time.

QUES-2: I always wonder what has happened in any of my followers' day before coming to work and why they are feeling like they are. I am very aware of trying to see matters from the other person's point of view...

This subtheme confirms the leader communication behaviour of relational dynamics in communicative leadership (discussed in Chapter 6), specifically that leaders should behave considerately towards followers, taking an interest in their wellbeing. In addition, the subtheme confirms Hackman and Johnson's (2013) emotional communication competency of attending to others' emotions as a requirement for connecting with followers (see Chapter 6). It also corresponds with 'empathy' as an aspect of displaying EQ in Mitchell's (2014) framework of leadership communication skills.

Furthermore, this subtheme confirms the following key constructs highlighted previously from the results: supportive communication as a constructive ILC behaviour (see Item 9.3.2.2); and role-taking in LFDs (see Item 9.6); and the value (individual attribute) of love, care or support (see Item 10.2.2).

10.3.3 Engagement skills (new subtheme)

Engagement skills were not pre-coded for this study, but emerged from the results as a new subtheme and a contribution of this study. Gill (2011) defines engagement as influencing, motivating and inspiring followers to *want to do* what needs to be done. According to Daft (2015:250), engaged followers enjoy their work and experience that they are making a valuable contribution. Leaders should create an environment that enhances follower engagement, partly by helping followers find meaning and value in their work. It is thus posited that engagement skills are competencies that enable leaders to enhance follower engagement.

Several participants referred to engagement or engagement skills, although not necessarily using the term. They deemed these skills as vital for the following reasons: the “corporate system seems to value employees only in terms of their usefulness and productivity, and it is up to them to motivate themselves to deliver” (**QUES-25**); in “the organisations of the future... engagement will become a given, and what organisations will have to have to attract and keep talent” (**Zena**); research shows that “there’s a direct link between engagement and productivity” (**Zena**); many leaders, although they are experts in their fields, lack the skills of engaging followers as a team (see **Zena**’s comment below); and production suffers if followers are not engaged as a team (see **Zena**’s comment below). **Zena** commented as follows in this regard:

I think the ability of the leader to [create that spirituality or engagement] is critical... specialist areas like chartered accountants and lawyers are subject-matter experts... but they have teams that they need to pull together. And that, at times, is a disconnect for them. They seem to find it very hard... but they can't have the outcome if they don't pull the team together.

Participants highlighted the following aspects of engagement skills: nurturing collaboration and flexibility, as opposed to control (**Zena**), particularly when working with followers from the younger generations; striving to understand (**QUES-25**) and sincerely care for followers as holistic beings (**Kate**); demonstrating to followers that they are making relevant and valuable contributions to the organisation (**QUES-25**); being aware that followers are complex individuals who need to be enabled and motivated to function to the best of their ability (**QUES-25**); facilitating cooperation, managing conflict, and managing followers’ emotions and stress in a pressured environment (**Faye**); viewing every interaction as an opportunity for engagement (**Zena**); facilitating the spiritual elements of a sense of purpose, a sense of belonging and work-life balance for followers (**Zena**); employing Type B or inspirational leadership, as opposed to Type A or autocratic leadership (**Zena**); and identifying the other leader/follower’s communication style and adapting one’s own communication style thereto (**Lynette**). The following are relevant comments by two of these participants:

***Zena** ... the Generation Zs and Ys are saying “I want a leader that has got vision and has got excellent engagement skills”... they want the vision but they also want flexibility and collaboration around it... every single interaction [should be] seen as an opportunity for engagement... I think there’s a very strong link between engagement and spirituality. If you look at Generation Z that is approaching the corporate world fast, and Gen Ys – they want purpose in their work environment... it’s having a family at work, it’s having that work/life balance, even more so than Gen X... obviously that’s aligned with a B Type leadership... the skills of engaging people and taking them with you...*

QUES-25: *The best experiences I have had with leaders have been those who are genuinely interested in understanding people as individuals, who make individuals feel that they are valued and relevant to the organisation's functioning and goals. Organisations are not about the name that they carry but about a group of people who need to be enabled and motivated to function to the best of their ability, to achieve the goal of the organisation that all identify with strongly. It needs to be understood that this group consists of complex individuals who have a need for self-actualisation. If the values of leaders are only output, production and profit and employees are seen as purely a means to those ends, they may be seen as efficient at production; however, the question to be asked is whether they are serving society at a higher level and a macro-economic level.*

This subtheme relates to one of the foundational principles of communicative leadership (discussed in Chapter 6) – that communicative leaders convey direction and help followers to achieve their goals. Specifically, they comprehend how the team contributes to organisational goals, and convey this insight to followers, often through daily informal conversations (Johansson *et al* 2014:155). Furthermore, it corresponds with one of the leadership communication skills in Mitchell's (2014) framework (discussed in Chapter 6), namely developing a vision and internal messages that guide and motivate employees.

In addition, this subtheme reinforces the following key constructs previously identified from the results: Type B leadership with its emphasis on emotional intelligence as a desirable leadership style in knowledge-based contexts (see Chapter 8); the importance of workplace spirituality (see Chapter 8), with specific reference to a sense of meaning and purpose, a sense of community, work-life balance, and recognising followers' holistic humanity; and the important role of symbolic interaction in the LFD in fostering a sense of meaning and purpose (see Chapter 9), with particular reference to followers' sense of making a difference and feeling appreciated.

10.3.4 Conflict management

The fourth interpersonal competency that was emphasised by several participants as central to ILR was conflict management. For instance, **Faye** stated that interpersonal leaders “need to know how to manage conflict”. **QUES-24** added that her conflict management skills, together with other interpersonal skills such as listening skills and nonverbal skills, “are what encouraged my boss to trust me and put me in a leading role in his company, as he knows he is not always the calmest person”.

As a contribution of this study, participants highlighted the following aspects of conflict management skills as important: disagreeing respectfully (**QUES-16**; **QUES-25**); discussing the disagreement openly and honestly (**QUES-1**; **QUES-13**) – **QUES-25** referred to “open and honest heart-to-heart communication” – to ensure sharing of meaning (**QUES-13**); and brainstorming solutions (**QUES-1**). **QUES-15** also mentioned that her leader’s mild temperament and keen sense of humour often steer potentially “explosive situations in a positive direction”. In addition, **QUES-25** stated:

For these interpersonal relationships to function they have to start from a basis of mutual respect and all parties should have the maturity to know how to handle confrontation. (Easier said than done.)

This subtheme confirms relational dynamics, a central leader communication behaviour in communicative leadership (discussed in Chapter 6), specifically constructive conflict management through addressing disagreements in a professional, fair and respectful manner. It also confirms the leadership communication skill of managing conflict in Mitchell’s (2014) framework (discussed in Chapter 6), with particular reference to the following aspects: negotiating through effective verbal and nonverbal communication; fostering dialogue and attempting to agree on a solution; and using humour when it is appropriate.

Furthermore, the subtheme relates to the following key constructs previously identified from this research: conflict management as a way of maintaining balance in the LFD, particularly through non-threatening, face-to-face discussion and generally by cooperatively investing in maintaining system balance (see Chapter 9); and the leadership values of honesty (see Item 10.2.1 in this chapter) and respect (see Item 10.2.3).

10.3.5 Multicultural competence

In Chapter 2, it was argued that increased diversity in many workplaces necessitates multicultural competence in leader/followers. This was confirmed by some participants. For instance, **Ingrid** stated that, in the current business environment, “your leader is most likely not going to be from the same culture”, and continued as follows:

[This has] implications for the interpersonal understanding and getting the message to the receiver in the way that it was intended, especially in terms of the sensitivity and taking the other culture into consideration and also to make sure that what you mean actually comes across as what you mean, and not what that person assumes it means.

Participants emphasised that, as part of multicultural competence, the following are important: where there is a diversity of cultures (including generations) in one workplace, a leader/follower should “deal with each person differently”, taking into account his/her cultural background (**QUES-2**); in multinational organisations, leader/followers should avoid alienating the local culture (see **Ingrid’s** comment below), as was argued in Chapter 2; and leaders who mentor or coach followers must possess multicultural competence, particularly “generational skills” (see **Lynette’s** comment below). Two of the interviewees commented as follows:

***Ingrid:** You cannot force a culture on another culture – then you're going to have a breakdown in that relationship... it would be really hard for people to relate, because inherently people think that their culture is superior to others... Not being cognisant of other cultures is actually quite dangerous.*

***Lynette:** One of the biggest challenges in the mentoring process is... to teach [leaders] mentoring skills... but to teach them generational and cultural skills as well. Because if they're going to be mentoring someone of a different culture and a different generation, if they don't understand those three things, the process won't work. Those dimensions are key to the success of coaching and especially mentoring [which is] a process to bring about the change that's needed in the workplace.*

This subtheme confirms cultural literacy as an aspect of Barrett’s (2006) leadership communication framework, discussed in Chapter 6. It also confirms the leadership communication skills in Mitchell’s (2014) framework (discussed in Chapter 6) of displaying cultural intelligence, particularly with reference to acknowledging different cultural backgrounds, and interpreting unfamiliar or ambiguous gestures from the cultural viewpoint of the sender.

In addition, this subtheme relates to the environmental influence of cultural diversity in the workplace (see Chapter 8); communicating respectfully as a constructive ILC behaviour (see Chapter 9); considering followers’ perspectives as a constructive ILC behaviour (see Chapter 9); the importance of role-taking in ILR (see Chapter 9); and respect as a central leadership value (see Item 10.2.3 in this chapter).

10.3.6 Synopsis of Theme 3

For Theme 3, key constructs were interlinked. These connections are illustrated in Figure 10.1 and summarised below.

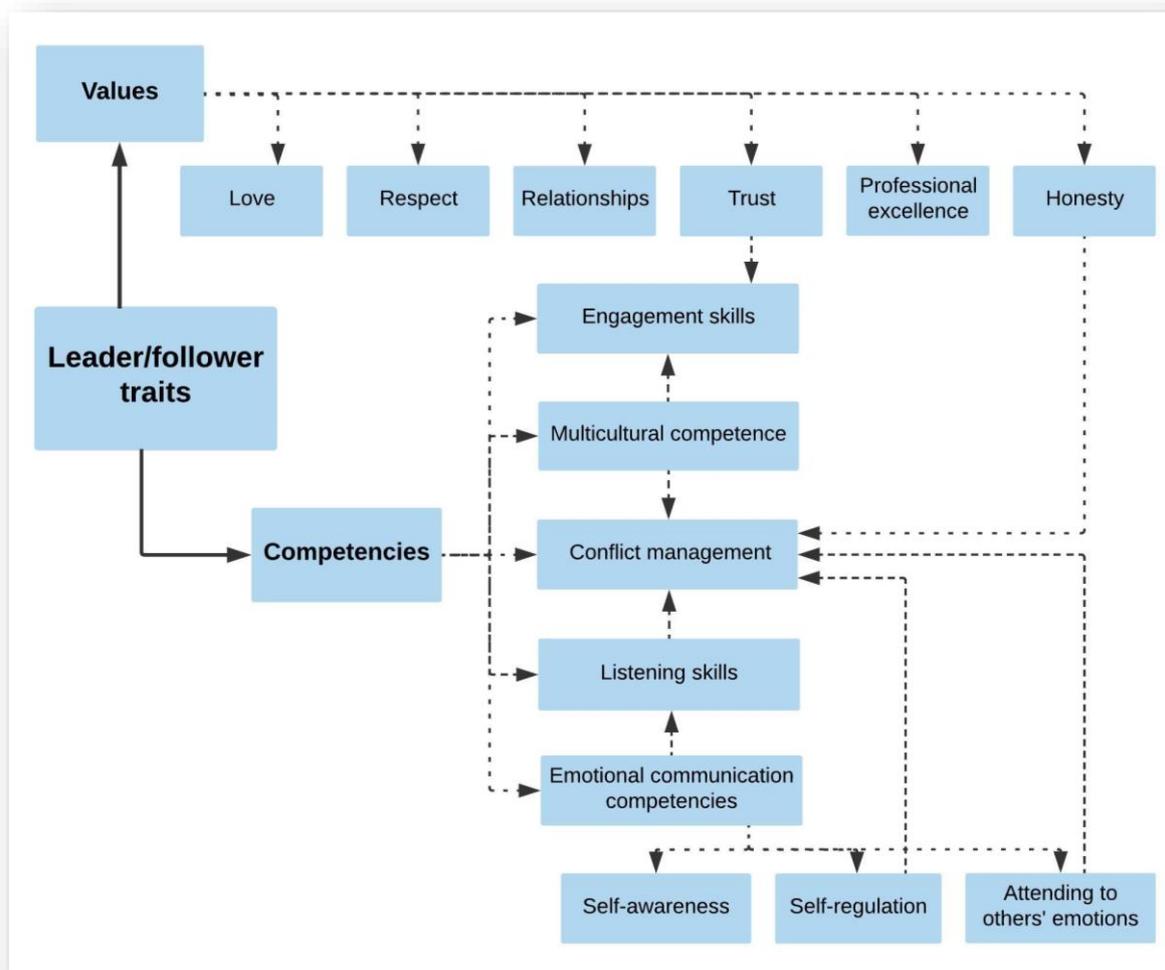


Figure 10.1: Leader/follower attributes that enhance ILR

In this study, it was found that the values that most enhance ILC are honesty, relationships, love, respect, trust and professional excellence. The competencies that participants believed contribute most to ILR are listening skills, emotional communication competencies (particularly self-awareness, self-regulation and attending to others' emotions), conflict management skills, multicultural competence (including generational skills) and engagement skills.

The value of trust was found to support engagement skills, while the value of honesty enhanced conflict management skills. Conflict management skills were further found to be enhanced by multicultural competence, listening skills and the emotional communication competencies (ECC) of self-regulation and attending to others' emotions. Finally, ECC also contributed to listening skills.

10.4 SYNOPSIS OF KEY CONSTRUCTS ACROSS MAJOR THEMES

Some key constructs were found in all three major themes (environmental inputs, symbolic interaction in the LFD, and leader/follower traits), and were therefore considered highly salient. They are graphically illustrated in Figure 10.2 below.

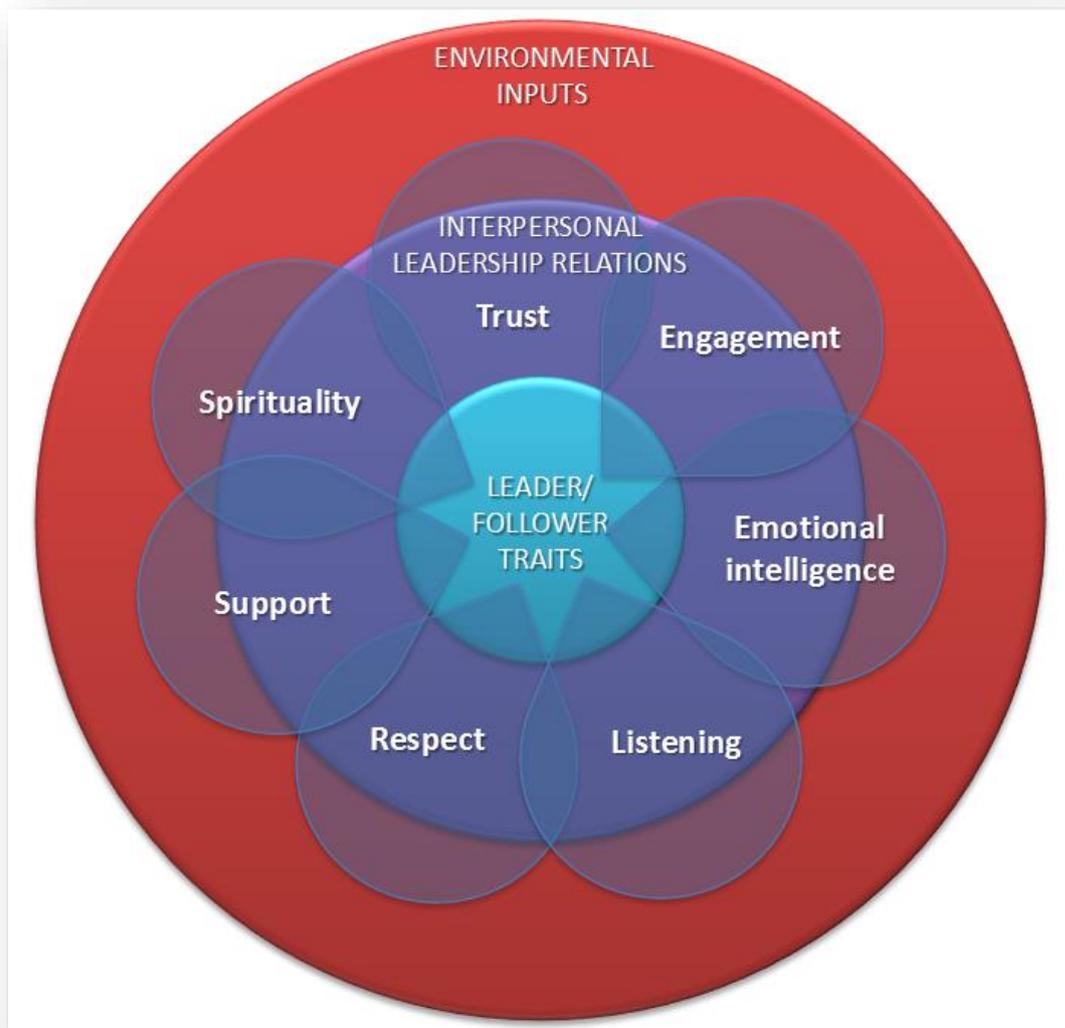


Figure 10.2: Key constructs occurring across major themes

As indicated in Figure 10.2, the following key constructs were found in all three major themes (environmental inputs, aspects of interpersonal leadership relations, and leader/follower traits): trust, engagement, emotional intelligence, listening, respect, support and spirituality. Table 10.2 summarises how these constructs occur at each of the three levels.

Table 10.2: Key constructs occurring across major themes

Key construct	As constructive environmental input	As constructive ILR practice	As leader/follower trait
Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative leadership rests on trust • Collaborative leadership fosters trust • Workplace spirituality fosters trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active listening fosters trust • Conflict management through respectful, face-to-face discussion fosters trust • Trust is an important emergent property of the LFD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust as a value enhances ILR
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative leadership fosters engagement • Workplace spirituality fosters engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement is a potential system output of the LFD into the environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement or relationships as a value enhances ILR
Emotional intelligence (EQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative leadership rests strongly on EQ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low EQ is not perceived as an acceptable reason for destructive ILC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional communication competencies enhance ILR
Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening is integral to collaborative leadership • Listening fosters a supportive organisational culture (as part of workplace spirituality) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active listening is a constructive ILC behaviour • Listening is part of respectful discussion as a conflict management approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening skills enhance ILR
Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect as part of empowerment (an aspect of collaborative leadership) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respectful communication as a constructive ILC behaviour • Demonstrating respect through active listening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect as a personal value
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A supportive organisational culture (part of workplace spirituality) enhances ILR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive communication is a constructive ILC behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support or love as a value enhances ILR
Spirituality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace spirituality as an organisational input enhances ILR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constructive ILR fosters a sense of meaning and purpose at work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love as a value enhances ILR

10.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the results of this study with reference to Theme 3 (leader/follower attributes that enhance ILR) were discussed in terms of values and competencies. While these categories were pre-coded from the theoretical chapters, the specific values and competencies that were identified, constitute a particular contribution of this study.

From the results, the following *values* were identified as highly conducive to constructive ILR: honesty; love, care or supportiveness; respect; engagement, relationships and communication; trust; and professional excellence. In addition, participants stated that shared values and beliefs enhanced their leader-follower relationships. Thus, it can be argued that striving to discover shared values and beliefs would be beneficial to ILR.

In addition, the following *competencies* were highlighted as key constructs: listening skills; emotional communication competencies, particularly self-awareness, self-regulation and attending to others' emotions; engagement skills; conflict management; and multicultural competence, including generational skills.

In the next chapter, a theoretical framework for ILR is presented.

CHAPTER 11: PRESENTATION OF A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ILR

11.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous three chapters, the results and first-level interpretation of the three major themes in this study (environmental inputs into the leader-follower dyad, symbolic interaction in the leader-follower dyad, and individual leader/follower attributes enhancing interpersonal leadership relations) were discussed. Under Theme 1, the following environmental inputs were found to strongly influence interpersonal leadership relations (ILR): a shift towards collaboration; advances in communication technology, including the roles of social media and virtual work; cultural diversity in the workplace; and leadership concept.

For Theme 2, the dominant subthemes were the following: the leader-follower dyad (LFD) as the locus of interpersonal leadership; relational communication; (re)definition of self through ILR; attribution; role-taking; maintaining system balance; meaning and purpose; emergent properties of the LFD; and system outputs into the organisation.

Under Theme 3, leader/follower values and competencies were discussed as dominant subthemes. The following values were identified: honesty; love, care or supportiveness; respect, trust; and professional excellence. It was also noted that shared values and beliefs enhance ILR. The competences that were highlighted were listening skills, emotional communication competencies (ECC), engagement skills, conflict management, and multicultural competence.

The primary research objective of this study was to develop a theoretical framework for ILR in knowledge-based organisational contexts. Thus, this chapter constitutes a description of how constructive ILR should ideally be practised and supported in knowledge-based contexts, based on the results as viewed through the theoretical lenses of the two metatheories of this study (systems theory and symbolic interactionism) and other contributing theories as discussed in the theoretical chapters. The theoretical framework constitutes a second-level interpretation of the key findings in the three major themes and includes the following aspects: a theoretically based definition of constructive ILR; a general model of ILR; a description of an organisational environment that supports constructive ILR; a description of constructive ILR; and leader/follower attributes that contribute to constructive ILR.

11.2 A THEORETICALLY BASED DEFINITION OF CONSTRUCTIVE INTERPERSONAL LEADERSHIP RELATIONS

One of the secondary research objectives in this study was to produce a theoretically based definition of constructive ILR. Based on the findings, the term is defined as follows:

Constructive interpersonal leadership relations (ILR) in a knowledge-based organisational context is a dyadic process of symbolic interaction between two expert leader/followers who mutually influence each other and share meaning to strengthen their relationship and to collaboratively transfer and apply knowledge to achieve organisational goals.

This definition includes several important concepts. Firstly, two participants are mentioned. While a small group of communication participants could still engage in interpersonal leadership communication (ILC), the focus of this study was dyadic communication. It can be surmised that many of the tenets of dyadic ILC could apply to small groups, but it must also be assumed that group dynamics (absent in dyadic communication) would affect these or add others. Furthermore, the adjective 'expert' denotes that they possess knowledge and skills valuable to the organisation and that they therefore constitute intellectual capital in the organisation.

Secondly, the term 'leader/followers' is used to denote a relationship in which the leader and follower roles are not static, but may be swapped between the two communicators, especially on the grounds of superior knowledge in the particular context. This notion is emphasised by the reference to mutual influence, which is a systems principle and contradicts traditional views of the leader unilaterally influencing a passive follower.

Thirdly, the aim of ILR is to 'share meaning', a tenet of symbolic interactionism. 'Meaning' here refers to both relational and informational meaning, in accordance with the theory of relational communication. The sharing of meaning serves two purposes: the strengthening of the leader-follower relationship (mentioned first, to indicate that it is the highest priority of the two); and the collaborative transference and application of knowledge (mentioned second, to indicate that it usually flows naturally from an accomplishment of the relational purpose) in service of organisational goals (which is the functional objective of knowledge workers as intellectual capital).

Fourthly, the term 'constructive' is used to denote ILR that enhances rather than detracts from relationship building and knowledge sharing.

11.3 A GENERAL MODEL OF ILR

Based on the results of this study, Figure 11.1 represents a general model of ILR, containing the elements that are common to all instances of ILR in knowledge-based contexts.

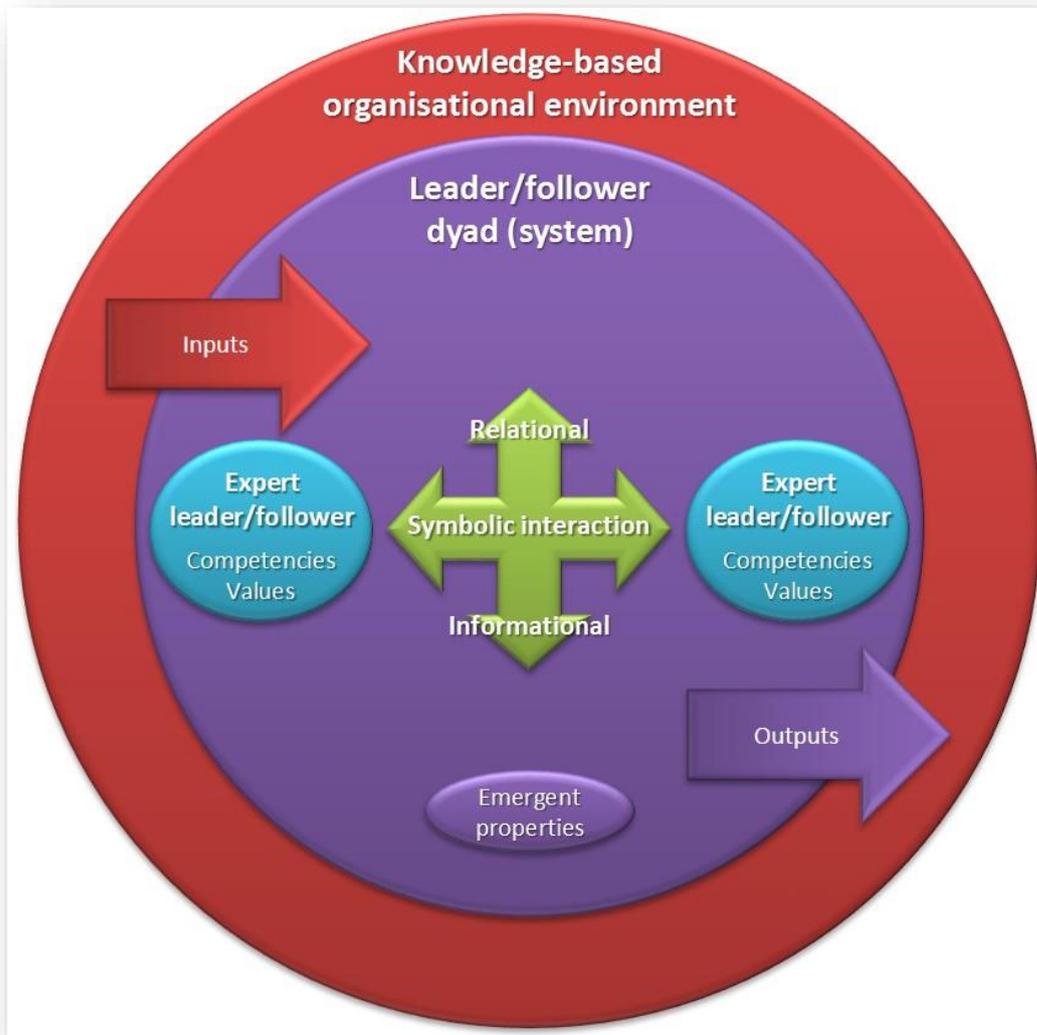


Figure 11.1: General model of interpersonal leadership relations

As Figure 11.1 shows, the context is knowledge-based. The focus is on any particular LFD (system) within that environment, consisting of two experts (knowledge workers) who constitute intellectual capital for the organisation. These experts are termed leader/followers because their leadership roles may shift according to the knowledge demands of the situation.

The two leader/followers engage in mutual symbolic interaction, sharing meaning at a relational level (to reinforce their relationship) and at an informational level (to transfer, develop

and retain knowledge). In doing so, their communication is influenced by their values and competencies related to ILR. As a result of the symbolic interaction in the LFD (system), the dyad develops particular emergent properties that are unique to that relationship. The LFD may also contribute outputs to its organisational environment.

In addition to these general elements, the more specific aspects of the theoretical framework that are based on the results of this study are discussed below. Viewed from a systems theory perspective, any open system is influenced by its dynamic environment. Therefore, it is posited that the constructs described below may become more or less relevant as time passes and economic, political and organisational environments change in ways yet unforeseen. However, these constructs are likely to remain current for at least some years.

11.4 AN ORGANISATIONAL ENVIRONMENT THAT SUPPORTS ILR

One of the secondary research objectives was to describe the aspects of an organisational environment that supports constructive ILR. The relevant key constructs resulting from this study are summarised in Table 11.1.

Table 11.1: An organisational climate that supports constructive ILR

Collaborative leadership concept	
Aspect	Contributing practices
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening to new ideas by followers, regardless of their hierarchical status • Demonstrating flexibility in adopting new ideas • Inviting free expression of and considering diverse and dissenting opinions • Guiding expert followers instead of making decisions for them • Explaining strategic decisions to followers from a larger perspective • Increasing open and transparent communication during organisational change and other uncertain situations
Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viewing followers as valuable intellectual capital instead of mere implementers of strategies • Allowing followers to think independently • Allowing followers to make and learn from mistakes • Coaching and mentoring followers • Fostering interpersonal trust • Facilitating collaborative problem solving
Team focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a team-centred environment

Workplace spirituality	
Aspect	Contributing practices
Sense of meaning, purpose or transcendence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving followers feedback on personal strengths and weaknesses • Providing fresh perspectives on situations • Demonstrating respect for leader/followers • Facilitating followers' professional growth • Facilitating insight into how followers are making a difference at work
Sense of community or relatedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valuing leader-follower relationships beyond their functional role • Valuing all leader/followers as members of the organisational community
Work-life balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting individuals' work-life balance through shared organisational assumptions, values and beliefs • Listening actively to and exploring individual followers' unique personal values outside of the work context • Demonstrating a sincere concern for followers' work-life balance • Accommodating emotions and emotional expressions that flow from followers' personal lives
Supportive organisational culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodating followers' unique needs and circumstances • Making sufficient resources available to followers • Affirming followers in what they do well • Communicating in an open and transparent manner • Tolerating (even celebrating) mistakes
Recognising followers' holistic humanity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing followers with an environment and opportunities to express various aspects of their being at work • Treating followers with respect, both for their knowledge and as human beings, regardless of their hierarchical status • Authentically expressing care and concern for followers
Cultural inclusivity	
Aspect	Contributing practices
Multicultural competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being open and sensitive to alternative interpretations of meaning from different cultural perspectives
Collaborative leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivate followers from younger generations in creative ways instead of relying on hierarchical position

Adapting to advancing communication technology	
Aspect	Contributing practices
Compensating for lower connection in virtual communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactively invest energy to maintain virtual leader-follower relationships
Participating professionally in social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating on social media platforms in a professional manner • Remaining informed of follower communication on social media forums, and the implications thereof for ILR

It is important that senior leaders actively demonstrate and promote the climate summarised in Table 11.1, as it was found in this study that senior leaders have a very strong direct and indirect influence on the organisational culture and climate, particularly with reference to the leadership concept. The concepts encapsulated in Table 11.1 are discussed below.

11.4.1 A collaborative leadership concept

The leadership concept in the organisation (embedded assumptions in the organisational culture that shape how leader/followers perceive and enact leadership) has a strong influence on ILR. The more hierarchical an organisation is in structure, the less transparent communication is within that structure. In this study, it was found that a collaborative approach to work and leadership is highly suitable for knowledge-based organisations. This approach requires four important shifts in the organisational culture: a shift from hierarchy to transparency; a shift from control to empowerment; and a shift from an individual focus to a team approach. Because it has been demonstrated in this and other studies that the leadership concept in an organisation is determined primarily by its senior leaders, it is imperative that senior leaders demonstrate and support these shifts – as discussed below – throughout the organisation.

11.4.1.1 *A shift from hierarchy to transparency*

A collaborative leadership concept requires a shift from controlled, one-way, hierarchical communication, to free-flowing, multidirectional, transparent ILC in organisations. The top-down approach of autocratic leadership approach does not appeal to knowledge workers, who are now the experts and often more knowledgeable in their particular fields than the people

who manage them. In addition, these experts are not as loyal as previous generations to a specific organisation, and will leave if their intellectual and other needs are not met. Knowledge workers also do not take ownership of projects when their leaders' decisions on those projects are not transparent.

This shift from hierarchy to transparency require the following approaches from organisational leaders: listening to new ideas by any follower, regardless of his/her hierarchical status; demonstrating flexibility in adopting new ideas; allowing the free expression of and considering diverse and dissenting opinions; guiding expert followers instead of making decisions for them; and explaining strategic decisions to followers from a larger perspective. Open, transparent communication is particularly necessary in uncertain situations, for example during organisational change.

In this study, it was found that organisations have a 'relational capacity' in terms of their size. Usually, the more an organisation grows in size, the more hierarchical its structure becomes, which limits transparent communication. While it may be difficult or undesirable to control the size of the organisation, organisational leaders should ensure that leaders at all levels remain accessible to their followers, which enhances transparency. Such accessibility may be facilitated through communication technology, which is essential in keeping virtual workers engaged.

Organisational leaders should also consider how the physical office environment itself contributes to or detracts from transparency in communication. For instance, in certain contexts, an activity-based office environment (a particular kind of open-plan office) can contribute to flattening an organisational hierarchy and fostering transparency and engagement, in that leaders are more accessible and there is a greater sense of equality among all employees.

11.4.1.2 A shift from control to empowerment

A collaborative leadership concept also requires a shift from controlling followers (Type A leadership) to *empowering* them (Type B leadership). Type A leadership is associated with the traditional organising, commanding and controlling functions of an autocratic leader, who is task-oriented, is very demanding of followers and supervise them closely, instructs followers without explanation and expects them to adhere to instructions and schedules without question, and make unilateral decisions without consulting them. Conversely, the Type B leader is much more collaborative – the leader as a coach or a mentor. Type B leadership is strongly linked to emotional intelligence and is much more conducive to ILR. It is also

associated with greater transparency, trust and engagement in the organisation, which in turn aids in retaining staff. Diametrically opposed to autocratic leaders, collaborative or Type B leaders draw from the collective wisdom of their teams. In knowledge-based contexts, collaborative problem-solving is central. Therefore, leadership in such contexts is, essentially, facilitating collaboration, and relies heavily on interpersonal competencies and mutual trust.

It was posited that multi-actor collaboration is essential to solve complex organisational problems and adapt to evolving environments. Therefore, organisational leaders must emphasise collaboration instead of competition, and must communicate in line with that value. To nurture mutually beneficial collaboration in trusting relationships, expert followers can no longer be viewed as mere implementers of plans, but must be empowered to contribute meaningfully to organisational knowledge and processes. Ideally, leaders of knowledge workers value their followers' input and give them ownership. Knowledge workers are highly valuable as intellectual capital in knowledge-based organisational contexts. With expert knowledge being so central, the retention and transfer of subject and organisational knowledge is crucial, especially given the generational movements in the workplace.

While it is important to emphasise what kind of leadership concept contributes towards good ILR, it is equally noteworthy to acknowledge what kind of leadership should be avoided to enhance ILR in knowledge-based contexts. In this regard, it was found Type A or autocratic leadership is the leadership concept that is least conducive to constructive ILR. The results demonstrate that autocratic leadership is the leadership concept that is most harmful to followers, ILR and the organisation in general.

In some cases, autocratic leadership is perpetuated by local ethnic cultures, according to which followers should defer to leaders, younger people should defer to older people, and females should defer to males. This leads to the disempowerment of interpersonal followers (and even leaders, if they are younger than their followers), especially of younger female followers. In turn, such disempowered leader/followers are less able to contribute to organisational knowledge, even though as knowledge workers they may be more knowledgeable than the leaders who are exercising autocratic control over them.

In addition, the role of senior leaders in perpetuating an autocratic leadership concept is cause for particular concern. The results of this study revealed that autocratic senior leaders (knowingly or unknowingly) encourage interpersonal leaders to become more autocratic or discourage them from more collaborative behaviour in the following ways: indirectly, by setting the example of how to attain success in the organisation; by expecting interpersonal leaders to imitate their autocratic leadership style and rewarding them when they do, even if in

intangible ways such as affording respect; by using their own autocratic style to counter-influence or interfere with interpersonal leaders' followers; and even by openly ridiculing interpersonal leaders who have a more supportive style.

In this study, it was found that an autocratic leadership concept disempowers knowledge workers as intellectual capital, and inhibits ILC that can contribute to knowledge creation, sharing and retention. This is diametrically opposed to the principles of collaboration. Specifically, autocratic leaders were found to inhibit ILC and knowledge sharing in the following ways: resisting change (which inhibits the creation of knowledge that is necessary for success in a dynamic business environment); creating a great power distance between themselves and their followers (inhibiting transparency); arrogantly assuming that they 'know best', failing to consult followers in decisions, and expecting obedience without question (inhibiting independent thinking that may lead to new knowledge or more effective application of existing knowledge); and managing by rules and by fear, and reprimanding or penalising followers heavily for making mistakes (whereas mistakes provide opportunities for learning and creating knowledge), often causing followers to hide mistakes that become difficult to manage later.

An autocratic leadership concept relies on leaders to do all the thinking, which is disempowering to followers and detrimental to innovative adjustment to a dynamic and demanding business environment. By contrast, a collaborative leadership concept empowers followers and creates an organisational culture of independent thought. Such an environment fosters greater accountability in followers, and creates an organisational culture in which it is safe to make mistakes and where conflict can be resolved promptly. When followers are empowered to make and learn from mistakes, they also communicate more transparently to their leaders about their mistakes, allowing leaders to intervene more timeously.

Over time, an autocratic leadership concept influences the organisation in the following ways: there is a disconnection between leaders and followers; followers' morale, trust, sense of worth and psychological wellbeing decrease; the quality of ILR decreases; some followers and even interpersonal leaders leave the organisation; and it is difficult, even for new leaders, to change the leadership concept to a more collaborative model.

11.4.1.3 *A shift from an individual focus to a team focus*

Thirdly, a collaborative leadership concept requires a shift from an individual focus to *a focus on the team* as a collective. Since the task is often a collective effort, and one follower cannot achieve it without the help of other team members, a team-centred environment is important for collaborative ILC to thrive in organisations.

11.4.2 Workplace spirituality

In this study, workplace spirituality (or the lack thereof) was identified as a strong environmental influence on the LFD. Workplace spirituality was defined as an organisational culture where leader/followers experience that life has meaning and that they are making a difference, where they feel connected and appreciated, and where they demonstrate sincere care for others. Spiritual leadership, then, is influencing and guiding followers towards these aspects. As a leadership concept, this approach to leadership should be practised widely, endorsed by senior leaders, and emulated by junior leaders.

Contrasted with a business orientation (a focus on business interests), workplace spirituality was found to be enhanced by fostering the following aspects in a knowledge-based organisation: a sense of meaning, purpose or transcendence through work; a sense of community or relatedness; work-life balance; a supportive organisational culture; and recognising followers' holistic humanity in the workplace.

Firstly, leader/followers should experience a *sense of meaning, purpose or transcendence* through their work in the organisation. This is particularly important for the younger generations in the workplace.

Secondly, leader/followers should experience a *sense of community or 'relatedness'* in the organisation. LFDs should thus be valued beyond their role in facilitating accomplishment of the task. A sense of community or relatedness includes feeling valued as a member of the community, which fosters trust among followers. Ultimately, it contributes to employee engagement.

Thirdly, leader/followers should experience *work-life balance* (an integration of their work and personal lives). The organisation – through its shared assumptions, values and beliefs – should support employees towards this. According to this study, followers who experience work-life balance may experience greater job satisfaction. By contrast, followers who experience an imbalance may become disgruntled and leave the organisation, especially if the imbalance continues over an extended period of time. To nurture work-life balance in followers, leaders should do the following: listen actively and explore individual followers' unique personal values outside the work context; demonstrate a sincere concern for followers' work-life balance; and accommodate emotions and emotional expressions that flow from followers' personal lives.

In the fourth place, leader/followers should experience a *supportive organisational culture*. In such a culture, leaders accommodate followers' unique needs and circumstances, make sufficient resources available to them, and affirm them in what they do well. It is characterised

by open, transparent communication and a tolerance – even a celebration – of mistakes. While autocratic leaders tend to perceive supportive leaders as weak, it was found in this study that a supportive culture may contribute to better follower performance.

Lastly, leaders should *recognise followers' holistic humanity*. Closely linked to work-life balance and a supportive culture, this means that leaders should provide followers with an environment and opportunities to express various aspects of their being at in the workplace. It is particularly important that followers be treated with respect, both for their knowledge and as human beings, and that followers at all hierarchical levels be treated with equal respect. Leaders' should also express care and concern for followers in an authentic manner.

In this study, this aspect of workplace spirituality was contrasted with a business orientation to the workplace, where the focus is purely on business interests such as productivity and profitability, and followers are seen as means to these ends. It was also found that a predominantly business orientation is sometimes the result of too heavy workloads, which leave no time for transparent communication, building trust and fostering workplace spirituality.

11.4.3 Cultural inclusivity

In this study it was argued that globalisation and advancing communication technology have led to more cultural diversity in both on-site and virtual staff, requiring *cultural inclusivity* and *multicultural competence*. These notions were supported by the findings, which demonstrated the following challenges for sharing meaning through ILC: language barriers; different frames of reference, resulting in different communication styles and misunderstandings; lack of understanding of other cultures; and different interpretations of organisational values, which may lead to misunderstanding or conflict.

For the purpose of this study, generational differences were included in cultural diversity. In this regard, the data confirmed that younger generations such as Generation Y prefer *Type B leadership*, which is more relationship-focused and relies on emotional intelligence. It was also found that younger generations are less loyal than previous generations to a specific organisation, and that they will openly explore other job options that may serve them better. As a result, interpersonal leaders have to relate to and motivate younger followers in more creative ways than merely relying on their hierarchical position.

11.4.4 Adapting to advancing communication technology

Another environmental trend that was identified is advances in communication technology, which potentially leads to virtual (off-site, online) work as part of some people's weekly routine and also the emergence of virtual, cross-functional teams. As a result, in such cases face-to-face ILC is limited and is replaced by mediated, online communication.

Thus, developing community among people who work at a distance from each other and who may be from different cultures presents a challenge in ILR. In this study, it was found that interpersonal leader/followers have to *proactively invest energy to maintain virtual leader-follower relationships*, more so than in the case of face-to-face relationships. Mediated communication may appear impersonal, and has important implications for the manner in which leader-followers process information.

In terms of social media in the workplace, the results suggest that social media may add more quantity than quality to ILR. However, it was emphasised that leaders should not resist followers' participation on social media platforms. Rather, they should *participate on social media forums in a professional manner, thus remaining informed of follower communication on social media forums, and the implications thereof for ILR*.

11.5 CONSTRUCTIVE INTERPERSONAL LEADERSHIP RELATIONS

In this study, it was found that the LFD – not the leader – is the locus of interpersonal leadership. Thus, leader/followers actively and mutually nurture the LFD, and leaders manage these relationships without resorting to formal hierarchy. The nature of the LFD is determined by verbal and nonverbal ILC. Every leader-follower interaction has meaning on both an informational (content) level and a relational level (the implications of the communication for the LFD).

One of the secondary research objectives was to describe interpersonal leader/followers' experiences of ILR in knowledge-based contexts, with a view to understand what leader/followers consider destructive ILR, but especially what they consider constructive ILR. The relevant key constructs that emerged are summarised in Table 11.2 below.

Table 11.2: Constructive interpersonal leadership relations

Constructive ILR	
Aspect	Contributing practices or conditions
Active listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening with concentration and receptiveness • Demonstrating sincere interest in the speaker • Reflecting literal and emotional understanding of the speaker's message
Supporting followers as unique individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking a sincere interest in followers' personal wellbeing and accommodating their personal challenges • Focusing compassionately on the unique person behind an issue • Promoting followers' work-life balance • Investing time and listening actively to discover followers' passions, strengths, needs and values • Conveying to followers how they contribute to the organisation • Making supporting organisational resources available • Being available, encouraging and helpful when needed • Building the follower's credibility with the team or department • Providing useful advice to the follower • Giving constructive feedback • Allowing followers to excel without being threatened by their success • Matching tasks to particular followers' strengths • Mentoring followers • Encouraging followers to take on new roles or challenges • Coaching followers
Respectful communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treating the follower as an equal
Considering followers' perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering all followers' input, regardless of their hierarchical position • Practising self-regulation, listening more than talking • Asking questions and creating an environment of independent thought • Allowing followers to process information at their own pace and to contribute to discussions in their own style • Fostering interpersonal trust to facilitate free self-expression • Implementing followers' feedback where it has merit • Allowing followers to devise solutions to problems • Verbally affirming followers' ideas, strengths and contributions in a sincere manner
Facilitating constructive redefinition of the leader/follower's self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing fresh perspectives on situations • Facilitating insight into the leader/follower's strengths and weaknesses

Constructive ILR	
Aspect	Contributing practices or conditions
Facilitating a sense of meaning and purpose in the leader/follower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving feedback to followers on personal strengths and weaknesses • Providing fresh perspectives on situations • Demonstrating respect for leader/followers • Facilitating followers' professional growth • Facilitating insight into how followers are making a difference at work
Role taking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceiving the situation from the other leader/follower's role • Striving to understand the other leader/followers' emotions
Awareness of attribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employing role taking to understand the other leader/followers' behaviour • Being aware that leader/followers often attribute one another's behaviour to certain causes, which may or may not be accurate • Communicating transparently, so that the reasons for one's behaviour may be clear and credible, removing the need for attribution by others
Conflict management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using respectful, non-threatening and (if possible) face-to-face communication to resolve conflict • Investing time, energy and commitment to resolve conflict, keeping workloads reasonable to allow time for conflict management
Fostering constructive relationship properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering mutual trust through collaborative leadership and spiritual leadership • Listening actively to the other leader/follower • Acknowledging and accommodating the follower as a unique individual • Resolving conflict through open, respectful discussion • Demonstrating personal integrity, credibility and reliability • Swopping leading and following roles with the other leader/follower according to the knowledge demands of the situation • Being receptive to and contributing to mutual influence in the dyad
Producing constructive outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-quality ILC, trust and Type B leadership may spread to the organisational climate • Strong ILR, undergirded by emotional intelligence and a caring attitude, may contribute to employee morale and engagement • Interpersonal relations in which followers' performance is supported, contribute to the overall job performance level in the organisation • Constructive ILR may contribute to staff retention in the organisation

The behaviours listed in Table 11.2 are thus the behaviours that interpersonal leaders could consider practising to strengthen their LFDs and efficiently share and apply knowledge. These behaviours are discussed in the subsections below. In some cases, they are also contrasted with specific destructive ILC behaviours that should be avoided in ILR.

11.5.1 Active listening

Leader/followers should practise active listening – listening with concentration and receptiveness, demonstrating sincere interest in the sender, and reflecting their literal and emotional understanding of his/her message. Followers feel valued, respected and empowered when their leaders take the time to listen actively to them and to engage fully in interaction. Interestingly, they also feel both trusted and trusting. By contrast, inattentive behaviour (poor concentration, distraction, and continuing with other work during interaction) should be avoided, especially since it is likely to convey the relational meaning of disrespect.

11.5.2 Supporting followers as unique individuals

Participants emphasised that leaders should support followers as unique individuals, for instance through the following supportive attitudes and communication behaviours: taking a sincere interest in followers' personal wellbeing and accommodating their personal challenges; focusing compassionately on the unique person behind an issue; promoting followers' work/life balance; conveying to followers how they contribute to the team and organisation; making supporting organisational resources available to ease the workload of a follower who is overextended; being available, encouraging and helpful when needed; building the follower's credibility with the team or department; and giving useful advice to the follower.

Supportive communication is likely to give followers an increased sense of confidence and worth, and to motivate them to improve their performance and to pursue more responsibility. By contrast, indirect communication (communicating vague, general and often delayed messages to a group of followers instead of addressing the problem immediately and directly with the relevant individuals) is viewed as destructive ILC.

An important part of supporting followers is to recognise, harness and develop followers' strengths. Participants indicated that this can be achieved through the following: investing time and listening actively to gain a deep understanding of each follower's passions, strengths, values and needs; giving constructive feedback; allowing followers to excel without being threatened by their success; matching tasks to followers' strengths; mentoring followers (passing on institutional knowledge, debriefing followers on challenging situations and offering potential solutions); encouraging followers to take on new roles or challenges; and coaching (developing followers' skills through a learning process, and giving constructive feedback).

The following was suggested for giving constructive feedback: affirming followers for good performance; keeping negative feedback private, allowing followers to 'save face'; and, while

holding followers accountable for making mistakes, focusing on correcting the mistake and preventing similar mistakes in the future.

Participants identified the following benefits of promoting followers' strengths: followers' strengths can then be applied for the benefit of the organisation; it gives followers a sense of ownership; and it motivates and empowers them to do their best work; projects run more smoothly and the results are superior to what the leader alone would have achieved.

This interpersonal practice of supporting followers and promoting their strengths is enhanced by the values of love, relationships and professional excellence, and requires listening and engagement skills. Furthermore, it is supported by the interpersonal practice of enhancing followers' sense of meaning and purpose by facilitating personal and professional growth (Item 11.5.6). Finally, in terms of the organisational environment, it is enhanced by empowerment as part of a collaborative leadership concept (Item 11.4.1.2) and by a supportive organisational culture as part of workplace spirituality (Item 11.4.2).

11.5.3 Respectful communication

Respectful communication is appreciated by leader/followers, because it makes them feel valuable, confident and motivated. By contrast, aggressive communication is perceived very negatively, particularly when a follower has made a mistake. It may result in reduced self-confidence in the receiver, distrust in the aggressive leader/follower, and reduced feedback (especially about mistakes). The latter is counter-productive in terms of the sharing and development of knowledge and learning from mistakes that are desirable in knowledge-based contexts.

11.5.4 Considering followers' input

Several participants emphasised the importance of considering followers' perspectives in leading knowledge workers, who are experts in their particular field, for the following reasons: knowledge workers do not merely want to implement others' decisions without context, and have a need to express their opinions and participate in decision making; followers' ideas may be developed further for the benefit of the organisation; and drawing on followers' expertise gives them ownership of the project and improves the quality of the product.

In considering followers' perspectives, leaders should do the following: taking all followers' perspectives into account, regardless of their hierarchical position in the team or organisation; practising self-regulation, in listening more than talking; asking questions and creating an

environment of independent thought; allowing followers to process information at their own pace and to contribute to discussions in their own style; fostering interpersonal trust to facilitate followers' free self-expression; implementing followers' feedback where it has merit; allowing followers to devise solutions to problems; and verbally affirming followers' ideas, strengths and contributions. In terms of the latter, leader/followers experience leaders who verbally affirm their ideas, strengths and contributions (especially if this is done in front of the entire team) in a positive light, and feel motivated and valued in response. Verbal affirmation does not require unnatural personal warmth, but needs to be perceived as sincere.

By contrast, leader/followers should not block communication by the other leader/follower (communicate unilaterally, not allowing him/her to express his/her opinion). Being blocked in one's communication is perceived very negatively and is also counter-productive in knowledge-based contexts, where expert followers (as the intellectual capital of the organisation) should be empowered to express their opinions, take part in decision making and contribute to the collective wisdom. To avoid blocking communication, leaders should move away from authoritarian and patriarchal elements of ethnic cultures, value knowledge workers as intellectual capital and welcome their suggestions, and be less rigid in enforcing rules.

The practice of considering followers' input is supported by the value of respect and requires listening skills. It is closely linked to the interpersonal practice of active listening (Item 11.5.1). In addition, it is supported by a collaborative leadership concept (Item 11.4.1).

11.5.5 Facilitating constructive redefinition of the other leader/follower's self

In this study, it was found that individual leader/followers define and redefine their selves based on ILR. Particularly, participants reported experiencing one or more of the following as a result of ILR: personal growth or fresh perspectives (in areas such as interpersonal skills, problem solving, confidence, decision making, personal strength, patience, and perspectives on situations); enhanced self-confidence or feeling valuable or appreciated; and insight into personal strengths and weaknesses (in areas such as organisation and time-management skills, conflict management skills, assertiveness, and job knowledge and skills).

All of these aspects may contribute to a leader/follower's professional growth and increased contribution to shared knowledge in the organisation. In addition, experiencing personal growth and feeling confident, respected or appreciated contribute to a sense of meaning and purpose at work.

11.5.6 Facilitating a sense of meaning or purpose

In this study, most participants strongly believed that their LFDs contributed to a sense of meaning or purpose for them at work. Specifically, they reported a sense of meaning as a result of experiencing one or more of the following in the LFD: a sense of making a difference; professional growth; and feeling appreciated or respected.

For several participants, ILR gives them a *sense of making a difference or contributing to a larger goal*, which increases meaning and purpose for them at work. Therefore, leaders should take care to emphasise the larger context or higher goal to followers.

Several participants also reported that ILR contributed to a heightened *sense of meaning or purpose* for them, in that they experienced a sense of professional growth. Specifically, participants mentioned the following aspects flowing from interaction with their leader/followers: increased quality of work, broader range of work, higher achievement, inspiration by example, support for innovation, motivation to learn, and opportunities to grow professionally. Importantly, these outcomes will not necessarily be generated by all LFDs, but rather depend on a good rapport between leader/followers.

Some participants reported that their *personal growth* (including increased self-knowledge, and self-improvement) through the LFD had given them a sense of meaning and purpose.

Finally, *feeling appreciated, useful or respected* in their LFD gave some participants a sense of meaning and purpose.

11.5.7 Role-taking

In this study, it was argued that role-taking (perceiving the situation from the other leader/follower's role) affects a leader/follower's interpretation of the other's intentions, influencing how they make sense of ILC, and how they define the LFD. Role-taking is closely related to attribution, since attributing causes to another leader/follower's behaviour requires taking the role of that person to interpret his/her behaviour. The findings supported role-taking as a tenet of symbolic interactionism, in that all questionnaire participants clearly engaged in a degree of role-taking and that this aided them in understanding their leader/follower's communication. Furthermore, although some condemned their leader/follower's behaviour even after gaining such insight, most were very tolerant of even negative communication, given the personal traits and circumstances that had led to it.

In addition to the above, some participants emphasised the importance of role-taking in making sense of the other leader/follower's perspectives and communication, referring specifically to understanding their emotions. The latter reemphasises the importance of Type B (emotionally intelligent) leadership. Role-taking was found to increase understanding of the other leader/follower's emotions.

11.5.8 Awareness of attribution

It was posited in this study that attribution (attributing reasons or causes to another person's behaviour) is an important way in which people create and share meaning and redefine their LFDs. The findings indicated that leader/followers do attempt to find explanations for their leader/follower's behaviour, and do so with relative confidence. It is therefore essential that leader/followers be aware that their behaviour is likely to be attributed to specific causes (whether or not those attributions are accurate), and also rather explain their own behaviour to their leader/followers to promote sense-making in the LFD.

In this study, participants' responses pointed to mainly two attributed reasons for their leader/follower's destructive ILC: work pressures, which was mostly deemed an acceptable reason, and low emotional intelligence, which was not considered an acceptable explanation. In addition, the findings suggested that greater understanding of the other leader/follower's emotions contributed to more insightful and positive attributions.

11.5.9 Conflict management in the LFD

As a system, the LFD experiences turbulence (in the form of conflict, disruption or stress) from time to time. To resolve such conflict and restore balance and stability in the relationship, leader/followers must cooperatively invest energy, time and commitment. In this study, three common approaches to conflict management in LFDs were discovered: non-threatening, respectful face-to-face discussion, being submissive, and avoidance of or withdrawal from the conflict.

Non-threatening, face-to-face discussion was the most used and most preferred approach to conflict resolution among participants, building mutual understanding, trust and collaboration. This approach to conflict management was found to increase understanding of the other leader/follower's emotions.

By contrast, *being submissive* (having to submit to the other leader/follower to regain harmony in the relationship) was perceived very negatively by participants. Reasons for having to submit

included patriarchal culture, autocratic leadership and followers' own lack of assertiveness. Participants considered this a very poor approach to resolving conflict.

Participants perceived *conflict avoidance or withdrawal from conflict* as mostly negative, and indicated that avoiding, ignoring or withdrawing from conflict adversely affects ILR. Notably, participants disliked avoidance or withdrawal from individuals in both the leader and the follower roles.

In addition, some participants reported being unable to fully resolve interpersonal conflict due to lack of time caused by workload pressures. This is in line with the finding that overly heavy workloads in an organisation leave too little time for transparent communication, building trust and fostering workplace spirituality (Item 11.4.2).

11.5.10 Fostering constructive relationship properties

The findings indicate that leader/followers, through ILR, create emergent properties in the LFD. Specifically, the emergent properties of trust (or lack thereof), roles and mutual influence were identified.

The participants' responses revealed that they highly value *trust* as an LFD property. This links strongly with the finding that trust is an aspect of both a collaborative (Item 11.4.1) and highly spiritual organisational environment (Item 11.4.2). Therefore, interpersonal leader/followers should intentionally create trust in their LFDs, for instance through the following behaviours: active listening; acknowledging and accommodating followers as unique individuals; open discussion to resolve conflict; and demonstrating personal integrity, credibility and reliability.

One of the principles of shared leadership is that leader and follower *roles* shift between team members; thus, a person may be a leader in one situation and a follower in the next situation with the same group of people. While the existence of this phenomenon received little support from the findings, it was also clear that it is functional to shift roles based on expert knowledge. In this manner, the intellectual capital represented by various individuals is allowed to fully benefit the organisation.

In this study, it was found that leader/followers are interacting partners in sense-making, where sense-making is not a unilateral process but depends on both leader/followers in the LFD. Participants reported that *mutual influence* benefitted them or the relationship in the following respects: better decision making (reiterating the finding discussed under Item 11.4.1.2 that expert followers should be allowed to express their opinions to improve knowledge sharing,

which may lead to more informed decisions); improved work-life balance (an important aspect of workplace spirituality discussed under Item 11.4.2); improved job performance; and the fruitful application of complementary skills and traits.

11.5.11 Producing constructive system outputs into the organisation

In this study, the viewpoint was confirmed that, as a system, the LFD produces outputs that potentially influence the organisation, specifically in terms of the following: organisational culture and climate, employee morale and engagement, job performance, and staff retention. As discussed under Item 2.3.4.2, system outputs are the collective results of various practices and conditions in the LFD.

The results indicated that LFDs may influence the *organisational culture and climate* in positive or negative ways, for instance: the quality of communication and trust in LFDs can spread to the general organisational climate; informal interpersonal leaders may exert strong influence over followers, which may oppose and even outweigh the influence of formal leaders; and, in some cases, interpersonal leaders' shift towards Type B leadership (which employs emotional intelligence and fosters independent thinking in followers) may upwardly influence more senior leaders to adopt the same leadership style. Notably, positive upward and outward influence from LFDs is limited by the following two aspects: senior leaders' openness to such influence; and the degree to which interpersonal teams are laterally interconnected and interdependent in the organisation.

Several participants reported that ILR influences *employee morale and engagement* (including communication satisfaction) in the organisation, particularly if leaders have strong LFDs with followers, based on emotional intelligence and a caring attitude.

Participants described instances where ILR influenced follower *job performance* positively or negatively, which contributes to the overall performance of the organisation. For instance, interpersonal leaders can support followers' performance in the following ways: being people-orientated (as opposed to task-orientated), fostering a good rapport with followers and accommodating their personal values and needs; practising servant leadership, making followers feel valuable, demonstrating care and concern for them, and nurturing and supporting them constantly; making time for followers; demonstrating trust in followers; and giving only constructive feedback to followers.

The findings also suggested that ILR may influence *staff retention* in the organisation. For instance, participants mentioned examples where the leaders with the best LFDs also had the

lowest staff turnover, where a poor LFD caused a follower to leave an organisation at great personal cost, and where followers left organisations because they were frustrated by poor ILR. Regarding the latter, autocratic leaders insisting on compliance and leaders with volatile tempers were perceived very negatively. By contrast, some participants stated that they accepted or stayed in a permanent position because of positive ILR.

11.6 LEADER/FOLLOWER ATTRIBUTES THAT ENHANCE ILR

Another secondary research objective was to identify individual leader/follower attributes that enhance ILR. The key constructs that emerged in this regard are summarised in Table 11.3 and discussed below.

Table 11.3: Leader/follower attributes that enhance ILR

Constructive leader/follower attributes	
Value	Behaviour demonstrating the value
Honesty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being completely honest with the other leader/follower • Fulfilling one's agreements • Telling the truth about mistakes instead of making excuses
Love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing an interest in and accommodating followers' personal lives • Encouraging followers in their work • Listening to followers' professional challenges and offering suggestions • Crediting followers with team successes and taking responsibility for failures
Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respecting followers for their knowledge and expertise • Communicating with and recognising all followers with equal respect
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authentically expressing the value of relationships, communication or engagement • Communicating directly with followers, instead of delegating the function
Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believing that people are generally trustworthy and well-intentioned • Promoting followers' strengths rather than pushing them to perform • Demonstrating support to followers
Professional excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling leader/followers to achieve mutual goals • Fostering a shared sense of pride in high-quality work produced • Demonstrating high professional standards and motivating followers to emulate them

Constructive leader/follower attributes	
Competency	Behaviour demonstrating the competency
Listening skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being mindful or fully present in the moment when listening • Listening with a calm and collegial attitude • Considering the speaker's context in gaining an understanding • If a follower has raised an issue, following up with feedback or action
Emotional communication competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrating self-awareness and self-reflection • Demonstrating self-regulation • Attending to others' emotions
Engagement skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurturing collaboration and flexibility, as opposed to control • Striving to understand and sincerely care for followers as holistic beings • Demonstrating to followers that they are contributing to the organisation • Being aware that followers are complex individuals who must be motivated • Managing conflict and followers' emotions and stress • Viewing every interaction as an opportunity for engagement • Facilitating a sense of purpose, a sense of belonging, and work-life balance for followers • Employing collaborative as opposed to autocratic leadership • Identifying and adapting to the other leader/follower's communication style
Conflict management skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disagreeing respectfully • Discussing conflict openly and honestly to ensure sharing of meaning • Brainstorming solutions • Using humour when appropriate
Multicultural competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating differently with each individual based on cultural background • In multinational organisations, being sensitive to the local culture • Applying multicultural competence when mentoring or coaching followers

The values and competencies summarised in Table 11.3 are discussed in greater detail below.

11.6.1 Values

In this study, it was posited that leader/followers' values influence their ILR. The following values that enhance ILR emerged from the findings: honesty, love, respect, relationships, trust and professional excellence.

11.6.1.1 Honesty

Notably, honesty (often grouped together with the notions of integrity, transparency, trustworthiness, ethical conduct or credibility) was cited by most participants as central to constructive ILR. According to participants, honesty includes the following behaviours: being completely honest with the other leader/follower; fulfilling one's agreements; and telling the truth about mistakes instead of making excuses.

Participants stated that honesty enhances ILR in that it breeds trust (also identified as a key construct under Theme 1 and Theme 2) and removes the fear of manipulation or deception; facilitates collaboration (discussed as a key environmental construct under Item 11.4.1); and is central in facilitating conflict resolution (identified as a key ILR practice under Item 11.5.9 and an important personal competency under Item 11.6.2).

11.6.1.2 Love

Several participants expressed their belief that an attitude of love (also referred to as care or support) towards one's leader/follower strengthens the LFD. Such care may be expressed in the following ways: showing an interest in followers' personal lives and being lenient when they have personal problems; encouraging followers in their work; listening to followers' challenges and offering suggestions; and crediting followers for team successes and taking responsibility for team failures. Clearly, a value of love or support contributes to the ILR practice of supporting followers as unique individuals. It is enhanced by a supportive organisational culture (identified as a key environmental construct as part of workplace spirituality under Item 11.4.2).

11.6.1.3 Respect

For several participants, respect is very important in a leader/follower's approach to ILR. Specifically, leaders should respect expert followers for their knowledge and expertise. Furthermore, communicating with and recognising all followers with equal respect – regardless of their role in the team or their status in the organisational hierarchy – breaks down communication barriers. The value of respect supports the practices of respectful communication (discussed as a key construct under Item 11.5.3) and of considering followers' perspectives, in that the leader/follower respects the opinions of other leader/followers.

11.6.1.4 *Relationships*

According to several participants, ILR can only take place optimally when leader/followers specifically value relationships (also grouped with communication or engagement). Specifically, this value may have the following positive outcomes: it helps to form a 'good work culture'; it may motivate leader/followers to do their best to enhance their relationships; and engagement may even contribute towards productivity. Notably, for this value to positively influence ILR, leaders should hold and express the value authentically and not delegate all communication to others. The value of relationships aids in supporting followers as unique individuals. It also enhances conflict management skills and engagement skills.

11.6.1.5 *Trust*

The findings indicated that trust in one's leader/follower is essential for constructive ILR. In the discussion of autocratic leadership as the leadership concept most destructive to ILR and also organisations and followers in general (see Item 11.4.1.2), it was noted that autocratic leaders often do not trust followers to work hard or to deal wisely with sensitive information. Therefore, trust in other leader/followers requires beliefs in contrast to those held by autocratic leaders, such as that people are generally trustworthy and well-intentioned.

Trust further involves that leaders promote followers' strengths instead of pushing them to perform, and that they demonstrate support to followers. Furthermore, trust underpins engagement skills, since a leader cannot engage followers without demonstrating a degree of trust in them; similarly, a follower will not become fully engaged if s/he distrusts his/her leader.

11.6.1.6 *Professional excellence*

Several participants indicated that a value of professional excellence (described in several cases as good 'work ethic') enhances ILR, particularly in the following ways: enabling leader/followers to achieve mutual goals; creating a shared sense of pride in high-quality work produced; increasing trust in the relationship; and motivating the follower to emulate the leader's high professional standards. The latter indicates that the value of professional excellence may assist leaders in promoting followers' strengths, discussed as part of supporting followers as unique individuals under Item 11.5.2.

11.6.1.7 Shared values and beliefs

In addition to the six values discussed above, the findings suggested that shared values and beliefs enhance ILR by augmenting communication, connection and support in the LFD. Shared values and beliefs may even supersede the potentially divisive effects of contrasting personalities and ethnic cultural diversity. Therefore, it is important for interpersonal leader/followers to discover and build on their shared values and beliefs.

11.6.2 Competencies

In this study, individual skills that enhance ILR were specifically explored. Most participants agreed that interpersonal skills are essential for ILR, and many did so emphatically. The following competencies were found to enhance ILR: listening skills, emotional communication competencies, engagement skills, conflict management skills, and multicultural competence. These are discussed below.

11.6.2.1 Listening skills

Listening skills received the most references and strongest emphasis from participants, who highlighted the following aspects of this skill: being mindful or fully present in the moment when listening; listening with a calm and collegial attitude; considering the speaker's context in gaining an understanding of his/her ILC; and if a follower has raised an issue, following up with a solution or action as a leader.

Participants considered the following to be benefits of skilful listening to ILR: it clarifies what the task is and how it should be accomplished; it creates a climate of openness, where followers are able to suggest useful ideas; it curbs stress in the workplace; it helps to maintain the LFD; and it may be a productive and encouraging experience. The findings indicate that listening skills are central to conflict management skills (see Item 11.6.2.4). They are also essential for the constructive ILR practices of active listening (see Item 11.5.1) and of considering followers' perspectives (see Item 11.5.4).

11.6.2.2 Emotional communication competencies

Emotional communication competencies were also considered by participants to be extremely important in ILR. These competencies comprise several skills, but participants emphasised the following: self-awareness, self-regulation and attending to others' emotions.

Self-awareness is an understanding of one's strengths, weaknesses and the way one makes sense of the world (Avolio *et al* 2009). The findings indicate that self-awareness (together with self-reflection) influences the quality of ILR. Specifically, it is important for leader/followers to be aware of their own strengths and development areas in a team context. Self-awareness was also viewed as a requirement for personal change. This is noteworthy, given the need for leader/followers to adapt to their dynamic workplace environments, particularly in knowledge-based contexts. Self-awareness also contributes to conflict management skills, in that a leader/follower must be aware of his/her own emotional cues that are open to interpretation by the other leader/follower in the LFD.

In the context of this study, *self-regulation* means regulating one's emotions (identified through self-awareness), and regulating one's own contributions to ILR. In this regard, leaders should apply self-regulation in asking questions and listening more than speaking. This facilitates the consideration of followers' input (identified as an important ILR practice under Item 11.5.4) and in the long term creates an environment of independent thought (part of a collaborative leadership concept, identified as highly desirable under Item 11.4.1.2).

The third emotional communication competency that emerged from the results was *attending to others' emotions*, which also implies empathy. Leaders must be aware and considerate of followers' emotions. This may require conscious effort and sensitivity to nonverbal signals. Similar to self-awareness, this skill also augments conflict management skills and is enhanced by the value of love (see Item 11.6.1.2). In addition, it aids in the practice of supporting followers as unique individuals, identified as a key construct under Item 11.5.2.

11.6.2.3 *Engagement skills*

Engagement skills emerged from the results as a new subtheme and constitutes another contribution of this study. In this context, engagement skills are viewed as competencies that enable leaders to enhance follower engagement – in other words, to influence and motivate them to desire to perform their required tasks. Participants viewed engagement skills as important for the following reasons: engagement is becoming increasingly important in attracting and retaining knowledge workers as intellectual capital; and many leaders, although they are experts in their fields, lack the skills of engaging followers as a team, which is necessary for productivity.

Participants highlighted the following aspects of engagement skills: nurturing collaboration and flexibility, as opposed to control, particularly when working with followers from the younger generations; striving to understand and sincerely care for followers as holistic human beings;

demonstrating to followers that they are making relevant and valuable contributions to the organisation; being aware that followers are complex individuals who need to be enabled and motivated to function to the best of their ability; facilitating cooperation, managing conflict, and managing followers' emotions and stress in a pressured environment; viewing every interaction as an opportunity for engagement; facilitating the spiritual elements of a sense of purpose, a sense of belonging, and work-life balance for followers; employing Type B (collaborative and inspirational) leadership, as opposed to Type A (autocratic) leadership; and identifying and adapting to the other leader/follower's communication style. Engagement skills are necessary for promoting followers' strengths (part of supporting followers as unique individuals, identified as a key ILR practice under Item 11.5.2).

11.6.2.4 Conflict management skills

Another interpersonal competency that was emphasised as central to ILR is conflict management skills. Participants highlighted some aspects of conflict management skills that they considered important: disagreeing respectfully; discussing the disagreement openly and honestly to ensure sharing of meaning; brainstorming solutions; and using humour. Conflict management requires the value of honesty (see Item 11.6.1.1), and contributes to the maintenance of balance in the LFD (see Item 11.5.9).

11.6.2.5 Multicultural competence

Increased diversity in many workplaces necessitates multicultural competence in leader/followers to accomplish shared meaning and avoid misunderstandings. The following aspects of multicultural competence are deemed important: where there is a diversity of cultures (including generations) in one workplace, a leader/follower should communicate differently with each individual, according to that person's cultural background; in multinational organisations, leader/followers should avoid alienating the local culture; and leaders who mentor or coach followers must possess multicultural competence, particularly generational skills (adapting one's communication to suit the preferences of different generations of leader/followers). In a culturally diverse workplace, multicultural skills are needed as part of conflict management skills (see Item 11.5.9), and to effectively practise supporting followers as individuals (see Item 11.5.2).

11.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter constituted the culmination of the research results through a presentation of a theoretical framework for ILR consisting of the following: a theoretically based definition of constructive ILR; a general model of ILR; a description of the kind of organisational environment that enhances constructive ILR; a description of constructive ILR; and leader/follower attributes that enhance constructive ILR.

Constructive ILR in a knowledge-based organisational context was *defined* as a dyadic process of symbolic communication between two expert leader/followers who mutually influence each other and share meaning to strengthen their relationship and to collaboratively transfer and apply knowledge to achieve organisational goals.

A *general model of ILR* was presented in which the LFD is presented as a system receiving inputs from its knowledge-based organisational environment and also producing outputs into it. Within the LFD or system, each leader/follower is a subsystem with his/her own competencies and values. Symbolic interaction takes place between the two leader/followers at both a relational and information level. Based on this symbolic interaction, the system assumes emergent properties. These generally applicable elements were then discussed in terms of the specific results of this study.

The findings indicated that *an environment that enhances constructive ILR* includes a collaborative leadership concept, workplace spirituality, cultural inclusivity and adaptation to advancing communication technology.

Within the LFD as a system, it was argued that *constructive ILR* is marked by the following aspects: active listening; supporting followers as unique individuals; respectful communication; considering followers' perspectives; facilitating a sense of meaning and purpose; role-taking; awareness of attribution; constructive conflict management; fostering constructive relationship properties; and producing constructive system outputs into the organisation.

Finally, *leader/follower traits that enhance constructive ILR* were discussed in terms of values and competencies. The next chapter concludes this study.

CHAPTER 12: CONCLUDING REMARKS

12.1 INTRODUCTION

In this concluding chapter, the contributions of this study, its limitations, and recommendations for further research are discussed.

12.2 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

According to Presthus and Munkvold (2016), the key criterion for assessing any research is the extent to which it contributes to knowledge, ideally to both a theoretical understanding and to practice in the field. It is posited here that this study makes a valuable contribution to knowledge, both in theory and in practice.

12.2.1 Major theoretical contribution: a theoretical framework for ILR

The major contribution of this study is the theoretical framework for interpersonal leadership relations (ILR) that was presented as a result of the study. This framework presents an in-depth theoretical understanding of ILR, from three different but related perspectives: the organisational environment (Theme 1), the leader-follower dyad itself (Theme 2), and the individual leader/follower (Theme 3). For each perspective, a deep description was provided of the key constructs resorting to the theme, and how they relate to one another. Key constructs that span and interlink the different themes were also highlighted.

This theoretical framework expands the current knowledge of leadership communication and establishes interpersonal leadership relations as a worthy sub-discipline of communication. Specifically, the centrality of the leader-follower dyad (LFD) in a knowledge-based organisation as viewed from a systems perspective and, moreover, the role of symbolic interaction in and around that dyad were highlighted. In addition to the theoretical framework as a whole, the study also makes several specific new contributions within each theme, of which the most important are discussed below.

12.2.1.1 *Theme 1: The organisational environment*

A collaborative leadership concept was identified as a key construct in enhancing ILR in knowledge-based contexts. It was a contribution of this study that three shifts in the

organisational culture required to enhance ILR were identified: a shift from hierarchy to transparency, a shift from control to empowerment, and a shift from an individual focus to a team focus.

The term 'relational capacity' of an organisation (referring to the maximum size of an organisation before it becomes too hierarchical to support ILR) is a contribution of this study. In a related contribution, it was noted that the physical office environment itself (such as an activity-based office) can flatten the organisational hierarchy and contribute to transparency and engagement.

It has previously been established in communication research that an autocratic leadership concept is limiting or even harmful to knowledge-based contexts and the followers within them. It has also been established that senior leaders have a strong influence on the leadership concept in an organisation. However, a contribution of this study was its description of how autocratic senior leaders in participants' contexts perpetuate an autocratic leadership concept in the organisation: by enforcing an authoritarian, patriarchal ethnic culture; by modelling to followers that autocratic leadership brings 'ultimate success' in the organisation; by expecting interpersonal leaders to imitate their autocratic leadership style and rewarding them when they do so; by interfering with and counter-influencing the followers of collaborative interpersonal leaders; and by openly ridiculing interpersonal leaders who have a supportive leadership style. Thus, interpersonal leaders in autocratic environments exercise collaborative or supportive leadership against great opposition and at great cost.

12.2.1.2 Theme 2: Symbolic interaction in the leader-follower dyad

As a very particular contribution of this study, ILC behaviours that were perceived to be constructive or destructive by participants were identified and described. Four dichotomies emerged from this discussion, and were discussed together with their typical relational meanings among participants. In the theoretical chapters, relational meaning was emphasised from the perspective of relational communication theory. Firstly, participants who received aggressive communication experienced a wide range of negative emotions, together with a loss of confidence and the sense that their opinion was not valued. By contrast, those who received respectful communication felt confident, respected and motivated, and believed that their opinion was valued.

Secondly, being blocked from communicating made participants feel silenced and even "useless", while verbal affirmation of their strengths and contributions made them feel motivated and valued. Thirdly, inattentiveness by their leader/followers led them to feel

disrespected, unimportant or even angry. By contrast, when their leader/followers listened actively to them, they felt valued, empowered, and – interestingly – both trusted and trusting. Fourthly, indirect communication from their leader/followers frustrated them, while supportive communication gave them a sense of confidence and worth, and motivated them to do their work well and even pursue more responsibility.

In terms of attribution, it was a contribution of this study that the types of attributions to destructive ILC by leader/followers were identified, including whether leader/followers view these attributions as acceptable reasons for the destructive behaviour. Work pressures (concern with the quality or speedy completion of the task) and low EQ (low emotional intelligence, or personal insecurity) were the attributions most often cited. Notably, participants tended to view work pressures as an acceptable reason for negatively perceived behaviour, while low EQ was generally not tolerated as an explanation for such behaviour.

Another notable contribution of this study is that a pattern was detected where participants who believed the reasons they attributed to their leader/followers' destructive behaviour were acceptable explanations for such behaviour, also had positive attitudes towards their LFDs. This is notable, since a corresponding pattern was not detected for participants who viewed their attributed reasons as unacceptable. The latter group of participants were ranged from 'mostly negative' to 'very positive' in their attitudes towards their LFDs. From the limited information on this aspect of the study, no firm conclusions can be drawn from this pattern, but it is worthy of further perusal.

In terms of role taking, it was found that participants were generally very understanding of their leader/followers (given the latter's circumstances) and tolerant of even destructive behaviour. In addition, participants emphasised the importance of understanding the other leader/followers' emotions as an important aspect of role taking.

This study also made a particular contribution in identifying typical approaches to conflict management in LFDs, and how participants perceived the particular approach in their dyad. The most prevalent and by far the most preferred approach was non-threatening, respectful face-to-face discussion, which was considered as the approach most likely to increase the quality of interaction and collaboration in the dyad. Two other common approaches were being submissive (perceived extremely negatively) and avoiding or withdrawing from the conflict (perceived mostly negatively). It is also noteworthy that some participants reported that heavy workloads interfered with their ability to invest time and energy to fully resolve interpersonal conflict.

As a notable contribution of this study, the ways in which symbolic interaction in the LFD can enhance leader/followers' sense of meaning or purpose at work – identified as a knowledge gap by Glynn and DeJordy (2010:142) – were explored. It was found that leader/followers experience a greater sense of meaning or purpose by experiencing the following as a result of symbolic interaction in the dyad: a sense of making a difference or contributing to a larger goal; experiencing professional growth; experiencing personal growth; and feeling respected, appreciated or useful. Notably, the degree to which leader/followers experience a sense of meaning or purpose at work may also influence their decisions to remain in or leave the organisation. In this regard, ILR has a particularly important role to play in the organisation.

12.2.1.3 Theme 3: Leader/follower attributes that enhance ILR

Identifying the leader/follower values that contribute to constructive ILR is a specific contribution of this study. The most important values in this regard were found to be honesty (also integrity, transparency, trustworthiness, ethical conduct or credibility), love (also care or supportiveness), respect, relationships (also communication and engagement), trust and professional excellence (described by several participants as good 'work ethic'). It was found that trust requires personal beliefs opposite to those typically held by autocratic leaders. An example of a constructive belief in this regard is the belief that people are basically good, well-intentioned and trustworthy.

Another contribution of the study under this theme is the identification of leader/follower competencies that enhance ILR, the most important of which were found to be the following: listening skills (viewed as central by most participants), emotional communication competencies (particularly self-awareness, self-reflection and attending to others' emotions), engagement skills, conflict management skills and multicultural competence (including generational skills).

12.2.2 Other theoretical contributions

In addition to its major contribution of a new theoretical framework, this study also confirms the usefulness of several existing theories. Notably, the systems theory and symbolic interactionism were confirmed to be valuable metatheories within which to explore ILR.

In addition, this study confirmed the usefulness of aspects of the following leadership theories in contributing to an understanding of ILR: shared leadership, organic leadership, spiritual leadership, constructionist relational leadership, Hackman and Johnson's (2013) communication perspective on leadership, and Johansson's (2014) communicative leadership.

Furthermore, the relevance of the following communication theories for ILR were confirmed by the results of this study: relational communication, attribution theory, Barrett's (2006) leadership communication framework, and Mitchell's (2014) conceptual framework of leadership communication skills.

12.2.3 Contribution to knowledge in practice

The results of this study provide insight into what is considered constructive and destructive ILR in knowledge-based contexts. The theoretical framework in particular provides useful guidelines for how organisational (especially senior) leaders may foster an organisational environment that supports constructive ILR, how constructive ILR may be practised in LFDs, and what personal attributes individual leader/followers may adopt and develop to contribute to constructive ILR. The theoretical framework may thus also be used for interpersonal leadership training interventions, and as a contributing guide in appointing new leader/followers in the organisation.

12.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As a qualitative study based on two relatively small convenience samples, the results of this study cannot be generalised to a wider population. However, it should also be reiterated that this study was exploratory and descriptive, and its aim was not generalisability, but rather an in-depth understanding of ILR in knowledge-based contexts, through the lenses of the systems theory and symbolic interactionism. It is argued that this was achieved.

This study was also done from a social constructionist perspective, in which it is asserted that knowledge and theory cannot be generalised and universally applied. However, constructionists do not discard theory, but in generating theory recognise that human experience is complex, dynamic and contextual. Any theory can thus be only a partial reflection of a social reality that is too complex to be represented in a single theory. Therefore, at best, social scientists can provide a particular type of commentary on human experience (Svensson 2009:192). In this study it is acknowledged that ILR in knowledge-based organisational contexts is too complex a phenomenon to definitively represent in a single theory. However, it is posited that the theoretical framework presented in this study constitutes meaningful commentary on the theoretical concept of ILR, and provides useful guidelines for its practice.

This study was also cross-sectional, meaning that the data was gleaned from a specific point in time as opposed to over an extended period of time. This is a limitation, because – especially

from a systems perspective – a dynamic environment is expected to change and cause changes over time. For this purpose, the theoretical framework resulting from this study was divided into a general model (see Figure 11.1) and a more detailed and specific framework for constructive ILR resulting from the cross-sectional data. The general model is a generic overview based on the systems theory and other theoretical approaches that already possess longevity, and is likely to stand the test of time. However, the time-specific section of the framework cannot be claimed to be a static, definitive result and will need to be revisited over time.

It should also be mentioned that the two samples and the data collection instruments were constituted in such a manner as to counter the limitation of cross-sectional data. The experts in Sample 1 were asked to report on their experiences across relevant contexts over the last five years, while the leader/followers in Sample 2 were asked to report on their typical experiences of ILR in an LFD that spanned at least one year.

Another limitation is that self-reported viewpoints were used, and that the researcher did not collect information on ILR directly, such as through observation. Thus, the findings reflect participants' perceptions of ILR in their experience. While this renders the results very subjective, it should be noted that objectivity was not an aim of this study, and that the study was executed from a phenomenological perspective, where the focus is the lived experiences of participants. It is argued that the representation of these lived experiences makes a significant contribution to the discipline of communication.

Finally, it was a limitation of this study that, because it was exploratory and covered three major aspects of ILR (the organisational environment, the LFD and personal attributes), all of these aspects could not be covered in depth. Thus, aspects that were considered central were explored in greater detail, while others were covered relatively superficially. In addition, the focus of this study was the LFD, to limit its scope and consequently allow for more depth of exploration. ILR in small teams was not explored at all.

12.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

It is recommended that this study is replicated over time and with diverse samples, to test and modify the theoretical framework. Specifically, more international and multicultural perspectives would be useful. In addition, specific aspects of the framework may be tested through quantitative research employing larger samples. Since the focus of this study was

dyadic, research exploring team dynamics related to ILR in small teams would add a valuable dimension.

Future research projects may also explore various aspects of the framework in greater detail. For instance, more research on attribution and conflict management would make a contribution to an understanding of ILR. Specifically, the relationship between attributions and general satisfaction with the LFD may be examined further in both quantitative and qualitative studies.

Finally, the results of this study coincidentally suggested some gender differences in participants' experiences of ILR in their LFDs, but exploring such differences extended beyond the scope of the study. It is argued that qualitative and quantitative studies in this regard could make a valuable contribution to an understanding of ILR.

12.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter served as the conclusion of this study, and the demarcation of the constituting chapters are summarised below.

Chapter 1 provided background to the study, outlined its purpose and relevance and conceptualised its key terms. The research paradigm at the core of the study (interpretivism) was explicated in terms of epistemological and ontological positions. The study was classified as qualitative, basic and exploratory-descriptive. Finally, the research problem, research questions and research objectives guiding this study were outlined.

The purpose of *Chapter 2* was to present the first of two metatheories of this study – the systems theory. The systems approach to communication developed from the multidisciplinary 'general systems theory' that was later applied to social systems. For the purpose of this study, the LFD was viewed as a system functioning in a larger organisational environment, and consisting of two system parts (the individual leader/followers).

The following system qualities were discussed: wholeness and interdependence, hierarchy, self-regulation and control, interchange with the environment, balance, change and adaptability, and equifinality. Of these, wholeness and interdependence was highlighted as the central quality of open social systems, which emphasises the importance of interaction and interdependence in the LFD. Under 'interchange with the environment', important inputs from the contemporary business environment that could potentially affect the LFD were described, namely the age of collaboration, technological advances and virtual teams, globalisation and multicultural competence, generational differences and the organisational leadership concept.

Finally, in a critique of the systems theory, its weaknesses were not found to affect the objectives of this study. Its emphasis on the interdependence between leader/followers in the LFD – rather than on independent individuals – was found to be an appropriate and meaningful lens through which to examine ILR. Furthermore, it demonstrates the importance of environmental influences, but at the same time allows for object attributes (individual leader/follower attributes).

In *Chapter 3*, the second metatheory of this study, symbolic interactionism (SI), was discussed in terms of its origin, major tenets, and strengths and weaknesses. From the SI perspective, meanings are social products that are generated through interaction, and interacting leader/followers share meaning to the extent that they coordinate their behaviour in relation to each other and the context. Symbolic interactionists view people as social beings whose individual identities are emerging social products. People constantly reflect on themselves and their relationships, engaging in mindful, symbolic action and negotiating meanings.

The implications of SI for this study were found to be as follows: ILR involves symbolic interaction, where meaning depends on how each leader/follower interprets the other's behaviour; meaning is co-created by leader/followers, is influenced by the context of the particular LFD, and can change over time; ILR contributes to creating and modifying the organisation as a social institution; the identities of the leader/followers are social products that are influenced by various relationships and interactions, including the LFD itself. In light of these implications, an examination of ILC cannot focus on the leader, to the exclusion of the follower and the context, but must focus on the symbolic interaction between leader/followers.

Some weaknesses of SI were noted. It is argued that most of them do not affect this study – either because they occurred more in classical interactionism than in contemporary versions, because they were refuted by other scholars, or because SI is complemented by the systems theory to form the meta-framework of this study. The criticism that SI depicts meaning making as too effortless and cooperative was noted; therefore this study included an examination of obstacles to sharing of meaning. Hence, it was posited that SI is a useful theory in general, and flexible yet specific enough to explore ILR. In areas where SI is weak, for instance in neglecting psychological and societal variables, the systems theory has complementary strengths. Thus, together, these two theories provided a solid and useful theoretical framework for this study.

In *Chapter 4*, an overview was given of the major theoretical perspectives on leadership since the 1940s, namely the leadership trait approach, the leadership style approach, the situational approach, emergent leadership, servant leadership, leader-member exchange theory, the New

Leadership movement, authentic leadership, relational leadership, shared leadership and spiritual leadership.

The leadership perspectives most relevant to this study, with particular reference to the two metatheories, were identified as follows: the constructionist approach to relational leadership (where interpersonal leadership is viewed as a system in which leader/followers create shared patterns of meaning-making); organic leadership (where leader/followers are viewed as interdependent, interacting partners in sense-making); shared leadership (which assumes a dynamic network of shifting, interchangeable leader/follower relations); and spiritual leadership (which, for the purpose of this study, contributes primarily the importance of higher meaning in work and thus as a goal in ILR).

Chapter 5 focused on four communication-related theories that could contribute to the theoretical framework of this study: social constructionism, the basic axioms of relational communication, Rokeach's comprehensive theory of change, and attribution theory. Social constructionism flowed from SI, and is based on the notion that reality is not an external, objective phenomenon, but instead is constructed through human communication. The basic axioms of relational communication were formulated by Watzlawick *et al* (1967/2011), who viewed relationships as systems within which individuals create patterns of interaction.

According to attribution theory (Heider 1958), leader/followers seek explanations for observed events by attributing them to specific causes. These attributions aid them in interpreting and responding to other leader/followers' communication. In his comprehensive theory of change, Rokeach (1969; 1973) proposed that an individuals' behaviour is guided by a system of beliefs, attitudes and values. Considering values as the most important, he defined them as people's core notions about desirable and undesirable modes of conduct and end states of existence. He posited that individuals need consistency; therefore, inconsistency generates pressure to change.

The relevance of each of these four theories to this study was summarised and prioritised, with particular reference to their links to the metatheories of this study – the systems theory and SI. Social constructionism was viewed to be highly relevant to this study, in terms of both metatheories. Relational communication and Rokeach's comprehensive theory of change were the next two theories prioritised for this study. Attribution theory was placed fourth for both the systems theory and symbolic interactionism. These theories were integrated into the theoretical foundation for this study.

In *Chapter 6*, the following four existing frameworks of leadership and leadership communication were summarised, relating progressively stronger to ILR as conceptualised in

this study: Barrett's (2006) leadership communication framework, Mitchell's (2014) conceptual framework of leadership communication skills, Hackman and Johnson's (2013) communication perspective on leadership, and communicative leadership (Johansson *et al* 2014). Finally, a preliminary conceptual framework to guide enquiry in this study was provided, consisting of a preliminary definition and a preliminary model.

In *Chapter 7*, the methodology for this study was discussed, with reference to the unit of analysis, population parameters, sampling, data collection methods, the data analysis and interpretation method, trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

Chapters 8, 9 and 10 reflected the results of this study organised by major theme. In Chapter 8, it was demonstrated that the LFD as a system is influenced by the following environmental factors (Theme 1): a shift towards collaboration, advances in communication technology, cultural diversity in the workplace, and the leadership concept in the organisation. In Chapter 9, results relating to Theme 2 (SI in the LFD or system), the central theme of the study, were reported. In Chapter 10, the results with reference to Theme 3 (leader/follower attributes that enhance ILR) were discussed in terms of values and competencies. While these categories were pre-coded from the theoretical chapters, the specific values and competencies that were identified, constitute a particular contribution of this study.

Chapter 11 presented the theoretical framework resulting from the findings, with specific reference to the following: a theoretically based definition of constructive ILR; a general model of ILR; a description of the type of environment that enhances ILR; elements of constructive ILR in the LFD; and leader/follower attributes that enhance ILR.

In this concluding chapter, *Chapter 12*, the theoretical and practical contributions of the study were presented, as well as the limitations of the study. Finally, recommendations for further research were made.

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APPENDICES

A: Interviews (consent form and questions)

B: Questionnaires (consent form and questions)

C: Application for ethical clearance

D: Email to interviewees for confirmability

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (CONSENT FORM AND QUESTIONS)

Invitation to participate in research study

You are invited to participate in a research study in which I explore interpersonal leadership communication in knowledge-based organisations (see 'Interview guidelines' below for definitions of these terms). My aim is to present a theoretical framework of interpersonal leadership communication that clearly describes what it is and how it ideally takes place.

As a recognised expert in fields related to my study (such as leadership, communication and organisational culture), you can make a valuable contribution to the study. Please read this document to make an informed decision about being interviewed for the study. If you have any questions or concerns, you are most welcome to contact me (see contact details below).



Marianne Louw

Researcher

cell 083 739 0111 | tel 011 950 4085 | email marianne.louw@monash.edu

Interview procedures

I will interview you for 40-60 minutes in person or via Skype, at a date, time and (preferably quiet) place that is convenient for you. (The interview questions can be found at the end of this document.) I will take notes and audio-record the interview to ensure accuracy.

Confidentiality

Your identity will be protected and your responses kept confidential in the following ways:

- Neither your name nor any information that can be linked to you will be recorded in any public medium.
- Only three people will have access to your responses: I as the researcher, a research assistant who will assist in transcribing the interview, and an experienced researcher who will verify some aspects of my analysis.
- Where asked for examples, you are not required to name any person or organisation.

Risk and discomfort

No risk or discomfort to you is envisaged. The questions are not of a personal nature, and you will not be expected to reveal anything that makes you uncomfortable. You are free to refuse to answer a question or to terminate the interview at any time without an explanation.

Potential benefits of this study

While leadership is a central part of organisational life, interpersonal leadership communication has been greatly under-explored. By participating in this study, you will make a valuable contribution to this domain of knowledge. The results of this study will contribute a deeper understanding of the topic, and potentially to future leadership development.

Consent to participate in this study

Please read the following and sign below if you are willing to participate in this study:

I have read and understood the information in this document and understand the implications of participating in this study. I have been invited to ask questions and am satisfied that any concerns have been adequately addressed. I understand that I am under no obligation to participate in this study and that I can withdraw from it at any stage without having to provide an explanation for my withdrawal. I hereby volunteer to take part in this study.

Participant's signature:

Date:

(If you return this document via email, it will be considered as signed.)

Researcher's signature:



Date:

Interview guidelines

I want to explore your personal experience and do not expect you to factually represent wider realities. Please express yourself feelings freely, elaborating as much as possible. You are welcome to deviate from my questions. For the purpose of this study, the following definitions are important:

- **Knowledge-based organisations** deal in information-based rather than physical products or services. Examples are educational institutions, financial institutions, legal institutions, research institutes, professional consulting firms and social services.
- A **leader** at a given time is the person exerting influence or providing guidance to another.
- A **follower** at a given time is the person being influenced or guided.
- A **leader/follower** is someone who leads or follows, or sometimes leads and sometimes follows someone else in a particular leader-follower relationship.
- An interpersonal **leader-follower relationship** is a relationship between two leader/followers who work together.
- **Interpersonal leadership communication** is any communication that takes place between the leader/followers in the leader-follower relationship.

Interview questions

After some introductory questions on your background, we will discuss three areas relating to interpersonal leadership communication, moving from a wider to a narrower perspective:

- The organisational/business environment within which interpersonal leadership takes place
- The interpersonal leadership relationship itself
- The individual members of the interpersonal relationship.

Introduction

- 1) Please summarise your expertise and current activities relating to leadership and communication in knowledge-based organisations.

- 2) For how many years have you been doing this kind of work?

- 3) In what kinds/industries of knowledge-based organisations have you worked in the last five years?
- 4) In terms of leadership and/or communication in knowledge-based organisations, what is your particular area of expertise or passion?
- 5) What is your highest qualification?

Section A: The organisational and business environment

- 6) Over the last five years, have you noticed any trends in the broader business environment that affect interpersonal leadership relationships and communication in knowledge-based organisations?
- 7) What kinds or organisational culture **support** good interpersonal leader-follower relationships and communication in knowledge-based organisations?
- 8) What kinds or organisational culture **do not support** good interpersonal leader-follower relationships and communication in knowledge-based organisations?
- 9) Without identifying people or organisations, give an actual example of how a knowledge-based organisation's way of 'doing' leadership has affected interpersonal leader-follower relationships and communication in that organisation, positively or negatively.
- 10) Workplace spirituality can be defined as an organisational culture where leader/followers experience that life has meaning and that they are making a difference, where they feel connected and appreciated, and where they demonstrate sincere care for others. How

relevant do you believe workplace spirituality is for good interpersonal leader-follower relationships and communication in knowledge-based organisations, and why or why not?

Section B: The interpersonal leader-follower relationship

- 11) Without identifying people/organisations, describe a **good** example of interpersonal leader-follower communication that you have witnessed, and explain why it is a good example.

- 12) Without identifying people/organisations, describe a **poor** example of interpersonal leader-follower communication that you have witnessed, and explain why it is a poor example.

- 13) Do interpersonal leader-follower relationships and communication affect their surrounding environments (for instance, the department or organisation? If so, how?

Section C: The leader/follower

- 14) What **values, attitudes or beliefs** must leader/followers in knowledge-based organisations have to create good interpersonal leader-follower relationships and communication?

- 15) What **skills** must leader/followers in knowledge-based organisations have to create good interpersonal leader-follower relationships and communication?

Conclusion

- 16) Would you like to add anything that we have not discussed?

Thank you for contributing to this study!

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE (CONSENT FORM AND QUESTIONS)

Invitation to participate in research study

You are invited to participate in a research study in which I explore interpersonal leadership communication in leader-follower relationships in knowledge-based organisations (see 'Interview guidelines' for definitions of these terms). I aim to present a theoretical framework of interpersonal leadership communication that describes what it is and how it ideally takes place.

As a leader/follower in a knowledge-based organisation, you can make a valuable contribution to this study. Please use the information in this document to make an informed decision about completing a questionnaire for the study. If you have any questions or concerns, you are most welcome to contact me (see contact details below).



Marianne Louw (researcher)

cell 083 739 0111 | tel 011 950 4085 | email marianne.louw@monash.edu

Questionnaire procedures

Please sign the consent section below and complete the attached questionnaire electronically and email it back to me within ten days, if possible. The questionnaire should take you about 45-60 minutes to complete. Please express your opinions freely, elaborating as much as possible. You may refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time, without providing an explanation for doing so.

Confidentiality

Your identity will be protected and your responses kept confidential in the following ways:

- No information that can be linked to you, other people or your organisation will be published.
- Only I (the researcher) and an experienced researcher (who will verify the consistency of my analysis) will have access to your responses.

- Where asked for examples, you are not required to name any person or organisation.

Risk and discomfort

No permanent risk and a very low level of discomfort to you are envisaged. The questions cover a work relationship and context, and are not of a personal nature. While you will be asked about potentially negative aspects of your leader-follower relationship (such as conflict), you will not be expected to reveal anything that makes you uncomfortable.

Possible benefits of this study

Interpersonal leadership communication is a greatly under-researched area of organisational life. By participating in this study, you will make a valuable contribution to this domain of knowledge. The results of this study will contribute a deeper understanding of the topic, and potentially to future leadership growth and development.

The questions asked will also cause you to reflect on your leader-follower relationship, allowing for greater insight into and potential improvement of the relationship.

Consent to participate in this study

Please read the following and sign below if you are willing to participate in this study:

I have read and understood the information in this document and understand the implications of participating in this study. I have been invited to ask questions and am satisfied that any concerns have been adequately addressed. I understand that I am under no obligation to participate in this study and that I can withdraw from it at any stage without having to provide an explanation for my withdrawal. I hereby volunteer to take part in this study.

Participant's signature:

Date:

(If you return this document via email, it will be considered as signed.)

Researcher's signature:



Date: 25 June 2016

Questionnaire guidelines

This questionnaire explores your personal experience. Please express your opinions and feelings freely, elaborating as much as possible. Should you have any query about a question, please contact me (see researcher's details above).

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions are important:

- **Knowledge-based organisations** deal in information-based rather than physical products or services. Examples are educational institutions, financial institutions, legal institutions, research institutes, professional consulting firms and social services.
- A **leader** at a given moment is the person exerting influence or providing guidance.
- A **follower** at a given moment is the person being influenced or guided.
- A **leader/follower** is someone who leads or follows, or sometimes leads and sometimes follows in a particular leader-follower relationship.
- An interpersonal **leader-follower relationship** is a relationship between two leader/followers who work together.
- **Interpersonal leadership communication** is any communication that takes place between the leader/followers in the leader-follower relationship.

Questions

After some introductory questions, the questionnaire will cover three areas relating to interpersonal leadership communication, moving from a wider to a narrower perspective:

- The organisational environment of the interpersonal leader-follower relationship
- The leader-follower relationship itself
- The individual leader/followers in the leader-follower relationship.

Introduction

1) What is your current role/position in this organisation?

Answer:

2) Choose **ONE** leader-follower relationship in which you are currently involved in your organisation, on which you will base all your answers in this questionnaire. Please select a relationship that has existed for at least a year, and that has enough substance that you

can meaningfully answer the rest of the questions in this questionnaire. For how many years has this relationship existed in its current leader-follower form?

Answer:

3) To what industry (for instance media or tertiary education) does the organisation in which you work belong?

Answer:

Section A: Organisational environment

4) Do you experience that your organisational culture affects your leader-follower relationship? If so, please explain and give an example.

Answer:

Section B: The leader-follower relationship

5) At a given moment, a **leader** is the person exerting influence or providing guidance, while the **follower** is being influenced or guided. In the leader-follower relationship that you have selected, which of you and the other leader/follower is usually the leader and which the follower, or do you swap leader/follower roles regularly?

Answer:

6) How would you describe your general feelings about this leader-follower relationship? (Mark with an X.)

Very positive	Mostly positive	Mixed or neutral	Mostly negative	Very negative

- 7) The researcher wants to include some diversity in terms of gender, age and culture in this study. To record such diversity, please complete the following information about yourself and the other leader/follower in the leader-follower relationship:

You				Partner (the other leader/follower)				
Gender (mark with X)	Male		Female	Gender (mark with X)	Male		Female	
Age			years	Age (estimate)			years	
Ethnicity/culture/race				Ethnicity/culture/race				

- 8) Think of a very **POSITIVE** way in which the other leader/follower behaves towards you. Consider all forms of communication (e.g. words, tone of voice, gestures, facial expressions, touch, gifts and time).

- a) Describe this positive behaviour/communication (how s/he behaves and what s/he says):

Answer:

- b) Explain what this behaviour communicates to you and how it makes you feel.

Answer:

- 9) Think of a kind of behaviour towards you by the other leader/follower that you experience very **NEGATIVELY**. Consider all forms of communication (e.g. words, tone of voice, gestures, facial expressions, touch, gifts and time).

- a) Describe this negative behaviour/communication (how s/he behaves and what s/he says):

Answer:

- b) Explain what this behaviour communicates to you and how it makes you feel.

Answer:

c) In your opinion, why does the other leader/follower behave in this way?

Answer:

d) Does this explanation make the behaviour more acceptable to you? Why, or why not?

Answer:

10) Think of a typical conflict or disagreement between yourself and the other leader/follower.

a) How do you and the other leader/follower typically resolve such a conflict?

Answer:

b) How do you feel about this kind of conflict resolution?

Answer:

11) How (if at all) has this relationship changed or reinforced the way you see yourself?

Answer:

12) How (if at all) does the other leader/follower or the leader-follower relationship contribute to a sense of meaning/purpose/calling for you at work?

Answer:

Section C: The individual leader/followers

13) Give an example of how any of your or the other leader/follower's **values, attitudes or beliefs** positively affects your relationship. Please specify the value/attitude/belief, and describe how it enhances the relationship.

Answer:

14) Give an example of how any of your or the other leader/follower's interpersonal (people) **skills** positively affects your relationship. Please specify the skill, and describe how it enhances the relationship.

Answer:

Conclusion

15) Would you like to add anything that has not been asked?

Answer:

Thank you for contributing to this study!

APPENDIX C: APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE

SUMMARY SHEET FOR THE ETHICAL CLEARANCE OF A POSTGRADUATE STUDENT'S RESEARCH PROPOSAL FOR THESES/DISSERTATION: DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION SCIENCE

****Please note: Prospective students should, in addition to this form, submit the research proposal as required by the Department of Communication Science***

A STUDENT'S DETAILS (PLEASE USE PRINT)

A1 FIRST NAME(S) AND SURNAME

Marianne Louw

A2 HIGHEST ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

M Phil Human Resource Management (Personal, Interpersonal & Professional Leadership)
--

BA Honours Communication

A3 PROPOSED THESIS/DISSERTATION TITLE

A theoretical framework for interpersonal leadership communication.

A4 PERSONAL PARTICULARS

student number:	53668952
current address:	Residential: 94 Printers Loft 2 Baanbreker Ave HELDERKRUIN 1724 Postal: PO Box 1814 RUIMSIG 1732
e-mail address:	Mariannelouw8@gmail.com
telephone number(s)	(w) 011 950 4085 (h) Cellphone: 083 739 0111

A5 PROVISIONAL SUPERVISOR(S)

Title, initials & surname:	Prof R Barker
Contact details:	Tel (w): +27 12 429 6772 Email: barker@unisa.ac.za
Department:	Communication Science
Title, initials & surname:	
Contact details:	Tel (w): Email:
Department:	

B PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

B1 ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

According to Riggio and Lee (2007), decades of research on leadership demonstrate that emotional and interpersonal competencies are essential for leader effectiveness. However, the connection between leadership and communication has not been adequately conceptualised. The purpose of this study is therefore to develop a theoretical framework for the concept 'interpersonal leadership communication', with examination of the link between interpersonal leadership and interpersonal communication; an interpersonal leader's ideal philosophical approach to people, leadership and interpersonal communication; the purpose of interpersonal leadership communication; the communication skills and approaches employed by interpersonal leaders, and the influence of context on interpersonal leadership communication.

B2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In order to answer the research question, the research goal can be expressed as:
To provide a theoretical framework for 'interpersonal leadership communication' in the organisation.

The research sub-goals are:

- 1) To describe the existing theoretical viewpoints on leadership communication and interpersonal communication.

To explore the philosophical basis regarding people, leadership and communication that underpin the communication of an interpersonal leader

To describe typical personal traits and behaviours of an interpersonal leader

To describe the skills that an interpersonal leader needs to communicate effectively

To define interpersonal leadership communication.

To describe the influence of the context on interpersonal leadership communication.

B3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design for this study is qualitative. The study is exploratory, because the researcher intends to explore the concept of interpersonal leadership communication, a term that is relatively new and unfamiliar in South African and even international context, for the purpose of conceptualising the term and developing a theoretical framework for its application. The study is also descriptive, because the researcher wishes to describe the philosophical foundation and communication qualities and behaviours associated with interpersonal leadership.

The unit of analysis for this study is individuals, with particular reference to their views on leadership and communication. The population for this study is all human beings who have knowledge of leadership and interpersonal communication within the organisational context, such as authors, facilitators, lecturers and practitioners in this area of expertise. The researcher will make use of a non-probability sample, specifically a purposive sample. She will select individuals that she considers to have relevant knowledge in the areas of leadership and interpersonal communication, commencing with close acquaintances and then including referrals from acquaintances if necessary.

The researcher will make use of two data collection methods to enhance the trustworthiness of the study: interviews and questionnaires. She will conduct face-to-face, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 10 leadership experts and 10 communication experts. These experts may include authors, consultants, training facilitators, lecturers and practitioners in the relevant areas. The researcher does not expect the interviews to include any sensitive information. She will also distribute 40-50 questionnaires to experts in leadership and communication, with the aim of collecting 30 realised questionnaires to analyse. The questionnaire will be developed based on insights gained from the interviews.

The data analysis method that will be used in this study is qualitative thematic textual analysis.

B4 HOW SHOULD THIS STUDY BE CHARACTERISED? (Please tick all appropriate boxes.)

Personal, social and other relevant information to be collected directly from respondents by means of an interview	<u>Yes</u>	No
Respondents to complete a self-administered questionnaire	<u>Yes</u>	No
Participants to participate in a focus group	Yes	<u>No</u>
A content analysis of identifiable information to be collected about people from available records (e.g. staff records, student records, etc.)	Yes	<u>No</u>
Other (Please specify)		

B5 WHAT IS THE AGE RANGE OF THE INTENDED RESPONDENTS/PARTICIPANTS IN THIS STUDY?

Not specified, but expected to be 35-50

Not applicable
Reason:

B5.1 If the proposed participants are 18 years and older, is the informed consent form for participants/respondents attached?

Yes	<u>No</u>	Not applicable
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The form has not yet been developed, but will be developed when the measuring instruments are developed.

B.5.2 If the proposed participants/respondents are younger than 18 years, are consent and substitute consent forms attached? (In order for minors - younger than 18 years of age - to participate in a research study, parental or guardian permission must be obtained. For minors a substitute consent form is required.)

Yes	No	<u>Not applicable</u>
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B 5.3 Do the intended research participants fall under the category “vulnerable participants” as described on page 1 and especially page 15, paragraph 3.10 (vulnerable participants) of the Policy on Research Ethics of UNISA? Available at:
http://cm.unisa.ac.za/contents/departments/res_policies/docs/ResearchEthicsPolicy_apprvCounc_21Sept07.pdf

Yes	Please provide details and outline steps to protect such vulnerable groups:
<u>No</u>	Go to B 5.4

B5.4 Does the proposed study involve collaborative, multi-institutional or multi-country research? (Please see paragraph 6 of the Policy on Research Ethics of UNISA and make sure that the principal researcher complies with the stipulations of the policy). Please complete if applicable. Available at:
http://cm.unisa.ac.za/contents/departments/res_policies/docs/ResearchEthicsPolicy_apprvCounc_21Sept07.pdf

Research in 1 country only	Please state country: South Africa
Research in more than 1 country	Please state countries: _____ _____
Research to be conducted in 1 institution	Details: _____
Research is multi-institutional	Please give details: _____ _____

B5.5 Description of the process for obtaining informed consent (if applicable)

<u>Not applicable.</u> Reason:

B6. DESCRIPTION OF THE RISKS POSED BY THE PROPOSED STUDY WHICH RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS/RESPONDENTS MAY/WILL SUFFER AS WELL AS THE LEVEL OF RISK (IF APPLICABLE) (Please consider any discomfort, pain/physical or psychological problems/side-effects, persecution, stigmatisation or negative labelling. See also B9 below.)

None expected.

B7. DESCRIPTION AND/OR AMOUNTS OF COMPENSATION INCLUDING REIMBURSEMENTS, GIFTS OR SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO PARTICIPANTS/RESPONDENTS (IF APPLICABLE) (Will the participants/respondents incur financial costs by participating in this study? Will incentives be given to the participants/respondents for participation in this study?)

No compensation/incentives will be provided; participants will incur no costs.

B8. DESCRIPTION FOR ARRANGEMENT FOR INDEMNITY (IF APPLICABLE)

NA

B9. DESCRIPTION OF STEPS TO BE UNDERTAKEN IN CASE OF ADVERSE EVENTS OR WHEN INJURY OR HARM IS EXPERIENCED BY THE PARTICIPANTS/RESPONDENTS ATTRIBUTABLE TO THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY (IF APPLICABLE)

NA

C STUDENT'S STATEMENT AGREEING TO COMPLY WITH ETHICAL PRINCIPLES SET OUT IN UNISA POLICY ON RESEARCH ETHICS

I, **Marianne Louw** declare that I have read the Policy for Research Ethics of UNISA and that the contents of this form are a true and accurate reflection of the methodological and ethical implications of my proposed study. I shall carry out the study in strict accordance with the approved proposal and the ethics policy of UNISA. I shall maintain the confidentiality of all data collected from or about research participants, and maintain security procedures for the protection of privacy. I shall record the way in which the ethical guidelines as suggested in the proposal has been implemented in my research. I shall work in close collaboration with my promoter(s)/supervisor(s) and shall notify my promoter(s)/supervisor(s) in writing immediately if any change to the study is proposed. I undertake to notify the Higher Degrees Committee of the Department of Communication Science in the College of Human Sciences in writing immediately if any adverse event occurs or when injury or harm is experienced by the participants attributable to their participation in the study. I have taken note of paragraph 5 of the Policy for Research Ethics in which integrity in research is detailed and have read and understood UNISA's Policy for Copyright Infringement and Plagiarism (see http://cm.unisa.ac.za/contents/departments/tuition_policies/docs/copyrightinfringement_and_plagiarism_policy_16nov05.pdf)

(Signature)



(Date) 12 November 2013

Witness:

APPENDIX D: CONFIRMABILITY SURVEY

Email invitation to participants

Dear participant

I want to thank you once again for taking part in my PhD research. You have made a huge contribution, and if you ever see a copy of my published PhD (not yet in existence), you'll see that I have thanked you in front (not by name, of course)!

I am submitting my PhD in less than four weeks' time, and need one last favour from you, to be able to verify the trustworthiness of my research. I'm attaching a summary of my research results. Would you please read through it and then give your opinion by completing the brief Survey Monkey questionnaire that I'll be inviting you to shortly? It contains three questions, of which only two are required. The questionnaire itself should take you no longer than five minutes to complete.

I would really appreciate this. Also, it may be of some interest to you to see the results of the process in which you have participated.

Warm regards

Marianne Louw

Survey questions

Question 1: Please indicate how strongly you (dis)agree with the following statement: The research results are in line with my experience of interpersonal leadership relations in knowledge-based organisational contexts. (Response options: strongly agree; agree; disagree; strongly disagree.)

Question 2: Please provide a reason for the level of (dis)agreement you indicated above. Additional comments are welcome.

Question 3: Please enter your name (optional).