

THE SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMICS OF VOLUNTARY TURNOVER

By

CALUM BRUCE MCCOMB

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PROMOTOR: PROF. H.A. BARNARD

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DECLARATION

Name: Calum Bruce McComb
Student number: 36031224
Degree: PhD of Psychology (Consulting Psychology)
Title: The Systems Psychodynamics of Voluntary Turnover

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I further declare that I submitted the thesis to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

Throughout the thesis, I applied the APA 7th edition referencing style.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



SIGNATURE

08 November 2022

DATE

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ABSTRACT

The Systems Psychodynamics of Voluntary Turnover

by

Calum Bruce McComb

Promotor: Prof. Antoni Barnard

Department: Industrial and Organisational Psychology

Degree: PhD in Psychology (Consulting Psychology)

The cost of voluntary turnover to organisations has prompted extensive research into the phenomenon over the past 70 years. Much of the initial research focused on predicting why individuals leave, with limited studies done on how the process is experienced. Many of the antecedents that researchers identified to predict voluntary turnover suggest it to be a psychologically challenging experience, yet little understanding exists to support groups, organisations, and individuals to adjust through it. Most process models furthermore focus on rational decision-making, and very little is known about the unconscious processes of voluntary turnover. Research has also focused on the individual as the primary subject of voluntary turnover, with antecedents and processes located in the individual, while limited understanding of group and organisational influences and processes exists.

The study aimed to explore and describe seven cases of lived voluntary turnover experiences and analyse them using systems psychodynamics as a meta-theoretical lens. The study sought to create a depth of understanding of the phenomenon that would enable groups, organisations, and individuals to better adjust and develop psychologically through the voluntary turnover process. Hermeneutic phenomenology and the use of the theoretical framework of systems psychodynamics enabled me to provide in-depth descriptions and formulate abductive working hypotheses about the lived experiences of voluntary turnover.

Triple hermeneutics allowed for the exploration of the transpersonal experiences of the researcher and the researched to inform the findings. The research strategy comprised case studies which were analysed individually before integrating findings across the cases into themes.

The study revealed the unconscious psychodynamic processes of voluntary turnover at the levels of the group (meso), the organisation (macro), and the individual (micro). The themes that emerged at the level of the group included conflict, identity, boundaries, power, authority, role, task, and themes relating to toxic leadership dynamics. Themes at the level of the organisation included a culture of devalued people, a culture of cruelty shrouded in niceness, a messiah culture, a stagnated culture, a detached culture, and a paranoid-schizoid culture. The themes that emerged at the individual level included desire and trauma, emotional responses to the trauma, defences against anxiety, and coming to awareness. Themes culminated into three working hypotheses about the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover, one for each of the meso, macro and micro-levels. Triple hermeneutics themes that emerged included anxiety, shame, loss, idealisation, boundary, and phases of voluntary turnover. The triple hermeneutics themes were mirrored in the working hypotheses and informed the findings. The findings culminated in two systems psychodynamics models of voluntary turnover with recommendations for applying them to the fields of consulting and coaching psychology.

Key terms: Voluntary turnover; unconscious; lived experience; anxiety; defences; hermeneutic phenomenology; triple hermeneutics; CIBART; toxic leadership; organisational culture; trauma; loss; shame; adjustment; systems psychodynamics.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Term	Definition
Anxiety	The dynamo of all human behaviour and that is caused by unconscious internal conflicts, repressed libido, dynamics, and phantasies.
CIBART	A theoretical framework that includes the constructs of conflict, identity, boundaries, authority, role, and task to which systems psychodynamics is applied in researching and consulting to groups.
Defences	The ways in which the ego defends itself against anxiety to shield the conscious mind.
Group relations theory	A body of theory and a consulting practice that is used to understand the psychology of the group-as-a-whole, raise awareness of anti-task behaviours, how the group is related to by its members, and to formulate an understanding of how the group uses different members to carry psychic material on behalf of the group.
Hermeneutic phenomenology	An approach to data analysis that involves reflective analysis of empirical data.
Open systems theory	A theory that views systems as interdependent and where inputs, throughputs, and outputs are exchanged across the system boundary.
Psychoanalysis	A body of psychological theory and a practice that that seeks to understand the interaction between conscious and unconscious

	parts of the mind, and to make conscious the fears and conflicts that were repressed.
Qualitative research	Data rich descriptive and interpretive research that explores how people experience phenomena and the meaning they make from them.
Systems Psychodynamics	A conceptual framework amalgamating psychodynamic ideas, group relations theory, and systems concepts such as boundaries, roles, and tasks.
Unconscious	That part of the mind, personal and shared, that is not readily available to the conscious mind, and into which psychic material is repressed.
Voluntary turnover	When a person decides to leave an organisation at their own discretion.

CHAPTER ONE: SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Voluntary turnover has long captured the interests of researchers and organisations seeking improved profitability and performance. The promise to curb the cost of voluntary turnover has made it somewhat of a holy grail in research. While the driving force and focus on economic utility have contributed to the production of extensive knowledge about turnover, limited understanding exists in people's lived experiences. To date, no research has been done into the unconscious, hidden beneath the rational mind, or the psychodynamics of the voluntary turnover process. This is despite the multitude of people who have experienced and will experience it in the future. This research provides the reader with insights into people's lived voluntary turnover experiences and illuminates the previously hidden unconscious intrapsychic and psychosocial dynamics involved in the process. Focusing on lived experiences, this insight will enable consulting and coaching psychologists to support their client systems toward constructive psychological development through the voluntary turnover process. The study emphasises the psychological adjustment of people rather than an economic utility for organisations.

This chapter aims to give the reader a scientific orientation to the study. To this end, the chapter begins with a background and rationale for the study, followed by a problem statement. I then present the research aims, provide a discussion about the paradigm perspective, and discuss the research design broadly. The structure of the study in terms of the layout of the chapters then follows before a concluding summary of the chapter.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The current workforce is fluid and comprises people who stay with an employer for a few years only (Bauman, 2017). The fourth industrial revolution, with rapid technological advances, has given rise to the gig economy (Ruyter et al., 2018). People who opt for protean-type careers are likely to quit their jobs (Supeli & Creed, 2016) more often to join the emerging market of freelance knowledge workers. Millennials, with a reputation for being notoriously difficult to retain, will also soon comprise more than half the workforce (Nolan, 2015). More recently, the Covid 19 pandemic has contributed towards the "Great Resignation" (Tessema et al., 2022), an emerging phenomenon characterised by the highest levels of voluntary turnover seen in history. Changes to the nature of work, the future workforce, and the advent of the post-pandemic "Great Resignation" mean that voluntary turnover as a phenomenon is here to stay

and likely to happen more often in the future. Therefore, this study's focus is not to stop it from happening but rather to understand it more deeply as a psychological process for those involved.

More than 2000 articles on the subject of voluntary turnover have been published over the past 100 years (Lee et al., 2017). Research titles such as 'Effective Strategy for Solving Voluntary Turnover Problem among Employees' (Anvari et al., 2014), 'Voluntary Employee Turnover: Retaining High-Performing Healthcare Workers' (Boyd & Vadell, 2018), and 'Identifying the Sources of Turnover Costs: A Segmental Approach' (Darmon, 1990) tell the story of the primary economic utility as the driving force behind most turnover research. Most research has been driven by the idea that voluntary turnover is a costly problem for organisations that needs to be solved. Almost every turnover article starts with a justification for the study that has to do with the costs that organisations incur because of resignations. Purba et al. (2016) begin their research article by stating that the costs associated with high rates of voluntary turnover are a tremendous burden on organisations. While this is not untrue, it has meant that the research focus has primarily been on benefitting organisations at the expense of the people who experience voluntary turnover.

Early research into voluntary turnover was guided by the idea that individuals' perceptions of both the benefits and costs of seeking alternative employment could explain their turnover decisions (March & Simons, 1958). This idea framed people as individualistic, operating from a purely rational decision-making stance and seeking to profit from every move. It denied the emotional life of people undergoing voluntary turnover and could be seen to have constituted capitalist organisations projecting their capitalism onto and into people in the process. The view was later expanded to consider various antecedents or causes of turnover (Lee et al., 2017). Causal research also locates voluntary turnover within the individual and mostly ignores the social and systemic aspects of how it happens. Lee and Mitchell (1994) discovered how shocks to the system triggered different decision paths to voluntary turnover, marking the point at which the system was acknowledged to impact the process. The focus, however, still remained on the rational mind and at the level of the individual when formulating an understanding of how people come to leave.

More recent studies have acknowledged and sought to create an understanding of social structures and relational influences of voluntary turnover. Ballinger et al. (2015) discovered that social capital and reputation, as social structures, relate to voluntary turnover. The idea of job embeddedness, which has to do with maintaining relational ties, was also shown to relate to voluntary turnover (Jiang et al., 2012). Although correlations have been discovered to exist between social structures and turnover intentions and between organisational culture

and intentions to leave (Aldhuwaih & Shee, 2015; Jacobs & Roodt, 2008), little is known about the socio-psychodynamic processes involved. Such an understanding is necessary to consult with groups and organisational cultures presenting with voluntary turnover issues. Grobler and Grobler (2019) discovered that certain groups in organisations are more prone to higher levels of voluntary turnover. Grossman and Mazer (2021) discovered the importance for team members to identify with the group and perceive task cohesion in order to prevent voluntary turnover. These studies suggest the importance of considering the group psychology of voluntary turnover, yet we do not know how the unconscious group psychodynamics contribute to it as a process.

Many of the antecedents to turnover suggest it has the potential to be a psychologically challenging process. The antecedent of psychological empowerment, as self-directed decision-making and self-efficacy (Bester et al., 2015), speaks to experiences of being authorised or deauthorised in one's role at work (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002). Deauthorisation as a theme, for example, may imply an overly controlling culture as contributing towards voluntary turnover. Repeated experiences of being deauthorised create high levels of survival anxiety and feelings of helplessness. Trust in the supervisor, as feelings of comfort and safety (Purba et al., 2016), speaks to the containing function of leadership or the lack thereof (Western, 2017). A lack of containment by leadership results in high levels of frustration on the part of the follower. Emotional exhaustion, characterised by experiences of depersonalisation and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment (Wright & Cropanzano, 1998), can be related to experiences of being manipulated or bullied (Cilliers, 2012) to the point of leaving. Bullying leads to experiences of disempowerment, a loss of identity and high levels of anxiety. Shocks to the system as triggers for decision paths to leave (Holtom et al., 2005) represent traumatic experiences. Poor reputation as a social structure (Ballinger et al., 2015) implies the experience of shame has something to do with voluntary turnover. Ad hoc, all these experiences have been linked to turnover and implies that voluntary turnover can be psychologically challenging.

The choice of a research topic often reflects researchers' personal interests and deep feelings, although this is often not immediately apparent (Churchill, 2018). Research is, therefore, inevitably a deeply personal pursuit. As the researcher, I came to acknowledge my own proclivity for historical patterns of and emotional experiences of voluntary turnover through a process of reflexivity. This awareness wasn't evident at the onset of the research project but developed over time as it was necessary to reflect critically on my position in relation to the research. Reflexivity is considered to be a trademark of qualitative research (Gemignani, 2017). Berger (2015) asserts the importance for researchers to raise awareness of and track

how their beliefs and personal experiences impact their research as part of reflexive practice. In as much as I was attempting to create an understanding of the voluntary turnover in the experiences of the participants of the study, I soon realised that part of my interest in the study topic was motivated by a personal need to understand my own poignant emotional experiences thereof.

I espouse my personal beliefs here as they are fundamental to the transparent and authentic account of qualitative studies. As such, I believe that to understand and come to terms with my own experience, I was motivated to study voluntary turnover in-depth, taking my proclivity for voluntary turnover into account and my own personal lived experiences of it. I experienced voluntary turnover repeatedly through my junior and high school years and again during my adult working life. My first experience of it comprised a move from one junior school to another. This was after several years of having been repeatedly emotionally bullied and positioned as an outsider by my peers. I voluntarily quit four more schools during my high school career and eventually settled for homeschooling. I had a difficult time fitting in, and with each incidence of voluntary turnover, I experienced more intense humiliation, anger, confusion, and deep sadness. The processes through which I left all bore a similar pattern in that I felt like an outsider each time, had the experiences of being bullied and shamed, and was left questioning my self-worth. I believe that these patterns are prevalent in voluntary turnover as a process.

I had two profoundly difficult voluntary turnover experiences in my professional adult working life. I felt like an outsider. I was the only English person in a predominantly Afrikaans organisation. My colleagues talked about the Anglo-Boer war and the atrocities that were committed. I felt as if my being English was used to position me as an outsider, an enemy and the recipient of bad projections of guilt and shame. My decision to leave was finalised when my employer broke a promise. I had moved provinces and made an enormous adjustment to take up an opportunity with the promise that once I qualified as an Industrial Psychologist that I would be remunerated at a specific amount. On meeting my end of the bargain, the employer offered me substantially less than what we agreed on. This caused me to feel mistrustful towards the authority in the system. I felt overwhelmed with survival anxiety to afford to live on the much lower salary that was offered. I felt a sense of indignation and that I had been betrayed. My desires and aspirations for the future had also been denied, and the image that I'd held of myself as a successful and financially comfortable professional was severely challenged. This triggered me to embark on the process of leaving the organisation.

I eventually left to join another organisation but only stayed there for three months before leaving it too. I experienced my boss being a bully as they¹ made me and my colleagues cry on a weekly basis. I would describe my former boss as a toxic leader. I also experienced them being dishonest and using me unwantedly in political battles. I was eventually left questioning my sanity and who I was as a person. I believe that these experiences are not unique to my story but that others might also have had similar experiences in the process of leaving their jobs. Throughout the study, I reflected on my own personal experiences of voluntary turnover as well as my personal experience of my research journey. I consolidated these reflections in Appendixes A and B. I applied triple hermeneutics to my reflections and engaged in circular reflection between my own experiences in the research and those that were shared by the participants. The triple hermeneutic findings informed my understanding of the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover, which is discussed in Chapter 7.

Voluntary turnover isn't going to stop happening anytime soon. Rather, more and more people are likely to experience it in the future. The research, therefore, needs to extend its focus beyond that the cost that voluntary turnover has to organisations. It needs to hold the people who undergo voluntary turnover in mind and work towards understanding more deeply the experiences that people have of it. Voluntary turnover also needs to be understood within the social context within which it occurs. This means developing a deeper understanding of how the psychology of groups and organisations contributes towards it happening. There is sufficient evidence of the potentially challenging psychological nature of the process of leaving one's job. This necessitates a deeper understanding of how organisations, groups and individuals might be better supported to better adjust through the process. This research provides a deeper understanding of personal accounts of lived voluntary turnover experiences, the intrapsychic and psychosocial psychodynamic processes involved, and how people might be better supported for optimal psychological adjustment through the process.

¹ According to the APA 7th edition referencing style, it is acceptable to use the pronoun "they" and its derivatives (them, their, themselves etc.) as a generic third-person singular pronoun in English. It is endorsed by the APA to denote inclusivity and aid in avoiding readers to make assumptions about gender (<https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/grammar/singular-they>). For the purposes of my study I have thus decided to use the pronoun as a generic singular third-person reference when it aids in the strife to retain anonymity and confidentiality.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

An abundance of research into the causes (Du Plooy & Roodt, 2010; Holtom et al., 2005; Liu et al., 2011; Mendes & Stander, 2011; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998), costs to organisations (Benson et al., 2004; Darmon, 1990; Dess & Shaw, 2001; Michele Kacmar et al., 2006), and strategies aimed at preventing voluntary turnover (Anvari et al., 2014; Dwesini, 2019; Rombaut & Guerry, 2018; Selden & Sowa, 2015; Stovel & Bontis, 2002) exists. However, the accumulated knowledge on turnover only allows for the prediction of around twenty-five percent of the variance in it as a critical outcome (Lee et al., 2017). It continues to happen despite the best efforts of researchers to predict and prevent it, and although it can present as a challenging psychological process, little is understood about how people might be supported to better adjust through it.

Further to this, most research locates the antecedents of voluntary turnover at the level of the individual with little consideration for the psychosocial aspects of it as a systemic process. Most process models also frame it as a rational decision-making process (Dunegan, 1993; Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Sharma & Singh, 2015) with little regard for the unconscious in the process. There currently exists no other research that creates an understanding of the intrapsychic and psychosocial irrational and emotional psychodynamic processes of voluntary turnover. Such an understanding is critical for coaching psychologists to support their clients to better adjust through the process; and for consulting psychologists to consult to a group and organisational level voluntary turnover psychodynamics. This research addresses these critical gaps in understanding.

Traditional quantitative research strategies have reached the limit of predictive validity by adding more predictor variables, and the standard research practices have become limited in utility (Lee et al., 2017). It didn't make sense to attempt to understand anything new about voluntary turnover by adding more variables to an equation using statistical analysis in a quantitative research design. I, therefore, opted to use the hermeneutic phenomenological approach and systems psychodynamics paradigm as part of a qualitative study as an alternative to the traditional quantitative approach. The systems psychodynamics paradigm looks beneath the rational and conscious mind to consider the intrapsychic and psychosocial unconscious dynamics. This paradigm shines a light onto the human mind as a deep ocean that could be considered the container of obscure life forms, most of which are unconscious, and until an understanding of these obscurities is brought to light, we couldn't anticipate them let alone control them (Kets de Vries & Cheak, 2014). Authentic change that is considered genuine in organisations requires the ongoing work of breaking up and undoing structures

within the mind of the individual, the group and the organisation to transform repetitive behaviours that stem from them (Diamond, 2013b).

Systems psychodynamics served the utility of the study to understand lived voluntary turnover experiences more deeply and discover how to support optimal adjustment. To this end, I developed two systems of psychodynamics models for voluntary (see Chapter 7). The models: (a) describe the unconscious psychodynamic patterns of voluntary turnover at the levels of the group (meso level), the organisation (macro-level), and the individual (micro-level); (b) explain the intrapsychic and psychosocial unconscious dynamics that manifest through voluntary turnover as a process; and (c) enables coaches and consultants better to support psychological adjustment and development through the process. The models were needed to close the chasm in understanding the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover and how to support psychological adjustment through the process.

The research question in a general sense was: How do systems psychodynamics manifest in lived voluntary turnover experiences as a process that, if consulted, would better enable constructive psychological adjustment? The specific research questions are stated below:

- How is voluntary turnover and systems psychodynamics conceptualised in the literature?
- How do meso-level group psychodynamics manifest as a process through lived voluntary turnover experiences?
- How does the macro-level organisational culture level of psychodynamics manifest as a process and through the lived experiences of people who undergo voluntary turnover?
- How do the micro-level psychodynamic processes play out through the lived voluntary turnover experiences of people?
- What understanding and recommendations can be formulated to enable consultants to consult on voluntary turnover psychodynamics in groups and organisations?
- What understanding and meaningful recommendations can be conveyed to coaches to support the psychological adjustment and development of individuals undergoing voluntary turnover as a process?

1.4 RESEARCH AIMS

The study aimed to explore people's lived voluntary turnover experiences to develop an in-depth understanding of the systems psychodynamics involved in the process.

The literature aims were as follows:

1. To conceptualise the systems psychodynamics perspective.
2. To conceptualise voluntary employee turnover, the specific characteristics of voluntary turnover, and the processes of voluntary turnover.

The empirical research aims were as follows:

1. To explore people's lived voluntary turnover experiences from a systems psychodynamics perspective and to describe these in depth.
2. To develop a systems psychodynamics model of voluntary turnover for coaching and consulting psychology.

1.5 PARADIGM PERSPECTIVES

I conducted the study within the broader field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology, which falls within the sub-disciplines of Consulting Psychology and Coaching Psychology. It contributes theoretically and methodologically to the meta-theoretical boundaries of systems psychodynamics that frames the conceptual understanding of phenomena in the study. Lived voluntary turnover experiences are therefore framed from the theoretical paradigm of systems psychodynamics. De Grooijer (2013) lists assumptions, too extensive to list here, that informed how I defined lived voluntary turnover experiences for the purpose of the study. Framed from the meta-theoretical boundaries of systems psychodynamics, lived voluntary turnover experiences are defined as: conscious and unconscious psychodynamic processes of intrapsychic objects relating within the subjective inner psyche of an individual, which is informed by and informs the social context as a subjective shared reality that is distinguishable from fantasy as a concrete, shared, or symbolic reality, and through voluntary turnover as a process. A brief discussion about systems psychodynamics as the theoretical paradigm for the study and its core meta-theoretical assumptions follows.

Systems Psychodynamics is directly related to socioanalysis, a synthesis of psychoanalysis and systems thinking that explores individuals, groups, organisations, and society (Long & Harding, 2013). Systems psychodynamics encompasses psychoanalysis, group relations theory, and open systems theory. The psychoanalytic school of thought emphasises the relatedness between the conscious and the unconscious forces that impact individual and collective behaviour (Flotman, 2018). Psychoanalysis assumes psycho-social subjects to be emotional in their being and avoid learning that is painful through defences that are deployed (Alexandrov, 2009), which can be seen in behaviour. The dynamic interplay of intrapsychic

forces and objects can be viewed as the conversion process of inputs from the social context, while behaviour can be seen as the output back into the social. Group relations theory views the group-as-a-whole unit of study (Hinshelwood, 2007), which members relate to as a maternal object (Rosenbaum, 2004). The group is considered to be functioning at two levels simultaneously, the workgroup or task mentality and the basic assumptions mentality (Bion, 1961). The basic assumptions mentality can be understood to be the group's ways of defending itself against anxiety, but which defences typically take the group off task and out of the work group mentality. Open systems theory views institutions, or part thereof, as open systems that, to survive, exchange materials with the environment in which it is located (Rice, 1969). The individual, groups even only as small as two, in fact any human pursuit, can be understood to be open systems (Appelbaum, 1973). The individual, group, organisational and societal level systems are each viewed as interconnected open systems with the task of survival. Each system interacts from across its system boundary, exchanging inputs for outputs through a series of internal conversation processes.

Psychoanalysis applied to systems theory implies that micro, meso and macro systems must exchange psychic materials. They are interconnected through this exchange, with each mirroring the unconscious psychodynamics of the other. The psychology of the individual, in systems psychodynamics, is therefore not seen as separate from the psychology of the group and vice versa, but rather part of the system. Central to psychoanalysis is the dynamic view of the unconscious as both a motivating force and a receptacle for the thoughts and desires that the mind seeks to hide (Gabriel & Carr, 2002). Creating genuine transformation in human systems (individuals, groups, and organisations) requires awareness making of the structures of thinking, feeling and behaving that are repetitive and fragmented and that are often accepted on the surface without deeper reflection (Diamond, 2013b). The practice of applying psychoanalysis, group relations theory, and open systems theory can therefore be viewed to be a pursuit of psychological integration and development in nature through making conscious what was once fragmented and unconscious. This is indeed the fundamental assumption to treat the root of the behaviour rather than the symptom it represents. Systems psychodynamics served the study well in understanding the unconscious dynamics of voluntary turnover and discovering how to better support adjustment through the process.

From a methodological perspective, hermeneutic phenomenology as a research paradigm and an interpretative method of inquiry (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Rennie, 2012; Suddick et al., 2020; Terre Blanche, Kelly, et al., 2006) was selected to conduct the study. Hermeneutic phenomenology adopts an existential ontology that seeks to answer questions of experiencing and understanding. It endeavours to understand the meaning of being a person in the world

and assumes the act of interpretation as an act of cocreation of the data (Robinson & Kerr, 2015). Human lives and the experiences that people have of living in the world are understood in context through an epistemology that is interpretivist and that considers intentionality and intersubjectivity through hermeneutics as an interpretative theory (Suddick et al., 2020). Hermeneutics, as a stance of openness, assumes no absolute truth because our knowledge and understanding of things change continuously (Suddick et al., 2020). Hermeneutic phenomenology aligns with the assumptions of social constructionism, which formed the overall philosophy of science for the study (see section 2.2). The epistemology of constructivism accepts that there is no universal knowledge of true or false, good or bad, or right or wrong, but rather that there are only stories that speak to true, false, good, bad, right or right, wrong (Grinsted, 2011). This implies a relativist ontology that believes in multiple realities as social constructions that are shared, local and specific (Weenink & Bridgman, 2017).

I used simple hermeneutics to understand what was shared in the participants' stories of voluntary turnover and how they had attached meaning to these. Double hermeneutics (Finlay, 2009) was used to interpret the stories through the lens of systems psychodynamics. I explored how I impacted the research through triple hermeneutics (Whitehead, 2004). I engaged in the process of reflexivity throughout the research process to explore the transferences, counter-transferences, and identifications in my relatedness with the participants and the research. Reflexivity refers to a constant questioning on the part of qualitative researchers of their own stance in relation to their empirical material, analysis and theorising (Ciesielska & Kozminski, 2018). I considered the systems psychodynamics in my interactions with the participants (see Appendix A) and the systems psychodynamics in my personal experience of my research journey and history of voluntary turnover (see Appendix B) (Alexandrov, 2009). I analysed Appendixes A and B at the third hermeneutic level, which findings were both mirrored in and contributed towards my findings. These are evident in Chapter 7, where I present triple hermeneutic themes from the data and discuss how they were mirrored in the working hypotheses presented in Chapters 5 and 6 and how they informed my understanding of the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover in Chapter 7. The findings culminate into two systems of psychodynamics models of voluntary turnover that are presented in Chapter 7. My practice of reflexivity is also evident throughout the thesis, and I provide insight, where appropriate, into how I, as the researcher, co-constructed the voluntary turnover stories together with the participants. I also provide an explanation of the different roles that I fulfilled during the research with specific reference to how I used myself as the instrument (see section 2.3.3.2).

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

A comprehensive account of the research design is provided in Chapter 2. Herewith is a synopsis of the design I followed in the study, specifying the research strategy and methods in the context of the research approach discussed in the paradigm section above.

Congruent with the hermeneutic phenomenology approach (Rennie, 2012), a qualitative type of study was adopted to explore and write about the rich and descriptive accounts of voluntary turnover as the phenomenon that was under study (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). A qualitative study served to shed light on the psychosocial issues, often complex, and to answer the humanistic 'how?' questions of voluntary turnover (Marshall, 1996). It lent towards the development of deeper insight and understanding into the beneath-the-surface systems psychodynamics of lived voluntary turnover experiences of the participants.

Multiple case studies were selected as the research strategy (Babbie & Mouton, 2001) because they allow for the understanding of complex psychological phenomena that comprise multiple variables (Carneiro, 2018). They also allow for the development of different views of reality and the generation of hypotheses (Starman, 2013). The case study is an all-encompassing method that includes the logic of the research design, method for data collection, and the approaches specific to data analysis (Yin, 2003). As noted in the research method below, seven cases were selected as part of the study.

The research methods used, including the setting of the research, the entrée and my role as the researcher, sampling method, data collection method and procedure, and the method of data analysis are briefly presented below with a more detailed discussion of each in Chapter 2:

- The research was conducted in a large corporate organisation in the retail industry in South Africa.
- Access to the organisation and the participants was obtained from my own client base.
- The roles that I took up included doctoral student, industrial and organisational psychologist, consulting and coaching psychologist, and the use of myself as an instrument during the study.
- The research question informed the sampling strategy. The study had the intent to explore the lived voluntary turnover experiences of the participants. This warranted a purposeful judgement and convenient sample of seven participants who were selected based on specific criteria that were set out and according to participant availability

(Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Terre Blanche, Durrheim, et al., 2006). A sample of seven cases was selected for the study.

- Semi-structured in-depth interviews comprised the data collection method. The free association narrative interview (FANI) interviewing method (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008) was used to gather information. It allowed me to elicit stories and unconscious psychic materials from the participants that had to do with their voluntary turnover experiences.
- The data collection procedure included gaining consent from the participants, securing a location-neutral for both the participant and researcher, organising the interviews, and then conducting them. Access to the organisation and to the participants was obtained through my own client base. I emailed an information sheet and consent form to the prospective participants to read and sign. Upon receiving the signed consent forms, I scheduled the interviews according to my and the participant's availability. Neutral interview settings were selected to help the participant feel comfortable sharing their experiences. The data from the interviews were collected onto a recording device and later transcribed into word format.
- The data were analysed by means of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012) to identify systems psychodynamics themes. The data were furthermore approached using the triple hermeneutic interpretive method (Alexandrov, 2009). I spent time immersing myself in the data to understand the content and processes and to attach meaning at the first level of analysis. At the first hermeneutic level, I analysed the data to interpret the primary facets of the individuals' subjectivity: directions taken, conundrums, conflicts, changes in direction, unfinished business, repetitive behaviours, fixations, and resolutions (Alexandrov, 2009). The systems psychodynamics paradigm was applied at the second level of analysis. At the third hermeneutic level, I explored, through self-reflection, my own personal and emotional experiences of voluntary turnover (see section 1.2 and Appendix B), my emotional responses to the participants (see Appendix A), and my personal experiences of the research journey (see Appendix B). By applying consistent self-reflection throughout the study, I aspired to develop a critical reflexive attitude to the research. Reflexivity meant that I developed an understanding of my influence on the research process and outcomes (Robinson & Kerr, 2015). Cases were analysed individually, followed by cross-case analysis, which led to the emergence of themes. This approach led to developing working hypotheses to stimulate further reflection and deepen the understanding of the lived voluntary turnover experiences from the systems psychodynamics perspective.

1.7 ENSURING QUALITY AND ETHICAL RESEARCH

Strategies were adopted to ensure that I met the five criteria of trustworthy research (Shenton, 2004). The key criterion of good qualitative research resides in the conception of trustworthiness that is operationalised through the quality criteria of research that is credible, transferable, dependable, confirmable and authentic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I applied these quality criteria to the research. Credibility can be likened to internal validity, transferability is the extent to which the research findings might be applied to other contexts, dependability can be understood in terms of reliability or repeatability of the study, and confirmability is about the qualitative investigator's comparable concern to objectivity (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Krefting, 1991; Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004; Tobin & Begley, 2004). I considered the multiple realities of all the participants in a fair way to ensure authenticity (Tobin & Begley, 2004). The strategies for operationalising these quality criteria in this study are discussed in detail in Chapter 2 under section 2.5.

Informed consent was gained from both the organisation within which the research took place as well as from the participants to ensure ethicality (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, et al., 2006). Ethical approval was also granted by the academic department of the university and the ethics committee before commencing with the research. Ethical research as a reflexive researcher also meant my being sensitive to the participants' beliefs, rights and culturally informed contexts and the power relations they held in both society and the research relationship (Etherington, 2007). Respectful curiosity and wonder formed the stance from which I worked (Long, 2013). A final area for professional reflexivity concerns our professional knowledge base (Haverkamp, 2005). In addition to reading extensively about systems psychodynamics and voluntary turnover, I also attended both local and international development programs in systems psychodynamics to ensure that I acquired the knowledge and skills needed to conduct ethical research (see elaboration in section 2.3.3.2). Steps taken to ensure the ethicality of the research are discussed in depth in Chapter 2 under section 2.5.

1.8 CHAPTER LAYOUT

The thesis layout of the chapters reporting the research is presented below:

Chapter 1: Scientific orientation to the research. Chapter 1 aims to orientate the reader to the background and rationale of the research, the problem statement and research aims, its paradigmatic perspectives and the design and methods. It also provides an overview of the trustworthiness strategies employed for the research.

Chapter 2: Research methodology. The aim of this chapter is to articulate the research approach, the strategy adopted, and the methods used in the study. A theoretical discussion of the trustworthiness strategies needed for quality data and adherence to the ethical standards of qualitative research and reporting is also provided.

Chapter 3: The systems psychodynamic approach. This chapter aims to conceptualise systems psychodynamics from the literature.

Chapter 4: Voluntary turnover. This chapter aims to conceptualise voluntary turnover from the literature.

Chapter 5: Meso-level findings. This chapter aims to provide an understanding of the group-level systems psychodynamics as derived from the stories about the lived experiences of voluntary turnover that participants shared. Themes are presented with findings, systems psychodynamics interpretative discussions, and working hypotheses. An integrated working hypothesis about the meso-level systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover is presented.

Chapter 6: Macro cultural assumptions and micro individual experiences. This chapter aims to provide a systems psychodynamics understanding of macro-level social defences. It also aims to provide a systems psychodynamics understanding of the micro-level individual lived experiences of voluntary turnover. Themes are presented with findings, discussions and working hypotheses. An integrated working hypothesis is provided for the macro-level findings and another for the micro-level findings.

Chapter 7: Systems psychodynamics models of voluntary turnover. The purpose of this chapter is to integrate the findings of the research. It provides a summary of the findings from Chapters 5 and 6, followed by a discussion about how I applied triple hermeneutics to the study. Two systems psychodynamics models of voluntary turnover are presented, a meso and macro-level model and a micro-level model, and recommendations for the application thereof are made. Recommendations are also made for organisations and for future research.

Chapter 8: Conclusions, limitations, and critical reflections. The conclusions of the study are discussed with reference to the aims that were set out and a critical reflection on whether the aims were met. The limitations of the study are also discussed, followed by a critical reflection on the trustworthiness strategies that were employed for the research.

1.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the reader with a background and rationale for the study, followed by the problem statement, research questions and research aims. The paradigm perspectives and a brief overview of the research design were presented before an introductory discussion about how the quality and ethicality of the study were ensured. The chapter layout for the research was also presented. Chapter 2 follows with a detailed discussion of the research methodology.

CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Methodology speaks to the research processes and the primary beliefs and procedures by which problems are approached and questions answered (Bogdan et al., 1975). The methodology is furthermore concerned with the general research strategy followed in conducting research and the resulting methods (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Thus, the research methodology is not only about the research methods but also considers the logic behind the methods (Kothari, 2004). This chapter aims to orient the reader to the research methodology. It is broadly comprised of the research approach and the research design. The research approach addresses the study's paradigms, the philosophical dimensions (Wahyuni, 2012). The research design comprises a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between the research questions and the execution of the study (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

The research approach is discussed first in addition to the explication already provided in Chapter 1. This is followed by the research design. The research design is discussed with specific reference to the type of study adopted, the research strategy and the research method. The research method presents the research setting, entrée, and roles that I took up as the researcher, the sampling method, the data collection method, the procedure used for data collection, and the data analysis. Trustworthiness strategies that ensured quality data and ethical considerations that were accounted for are then discussed. Lastly, the reader is oriented toward how I reported on the research findings.

2.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

Social constructivism was adopted as the philosophy of science that guided the research. It proposes that knowledge and understanding are derived from communities of understanding together as opposed to an individual who operates as a siloed psychological entity (Cottone, 2007). It refers to phenomena as developing relative to a social context (Kham, 2013). Social constructivism adopts a relativist ontology and believes in the existence of multiple realities that are contextual and specific as shared social constructions (Weenink & Bridgman, 2017). It assumes 'truth' and knowledge to be co-constructed in a relational way (Alexandrov, 2009) and is epistemologically subjective and relational. The ontological and epistemological assumptions of social constructivism, therefore, place it within the interpretive paradigm and align it well with a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to research. The interpretive paradigm adopts the notion of the existence of multiple realities that are constructed and that

can be changed by the knower (Lavery, 2003). Interpretivism concerns deep variables and elements that are contextual (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Epistemologically, it views a relationship between what is known and the knower (Lavery, 2003) and assumes that understanding and knowledge are co-created through the process of relating. Human life is an embroidery of both emotion and rationality that brings about multiple domains of reality (Maturana, 1988). My ontology for the study is, therefore, relativist, and my epistemology is subjective and relational.

Hermeneutics is the heart of interpretivism (Pozzebon, 2004). Specifically, hermeneutic phenomenology is concerned with the life-world or human experience as it is lived (Lavery, 2003) and the interpretation thereof to construct meaning (Kafle, 2011). The research approach that I adopted for the study was, therefore, hermeneutic phenomenology. It is based on the premise that it is impossible to reduce experience to a final truth and accepts the possibility of countless interpretations (Kafle, 2011). Our life world reflects both our way of being in the world and the structure of meaningful relationships we create (McManus Holroyd, 2007). Hermeneutic phenomenology, therefore, assumes an ontology of being and knowing (van Manen, 2007). As such, it was an appropriate empirical approach within the interpretive paradigm to allow for the exploration of lived voluntary turnover experiences of participants and to understand the research participants' ontological experiences of leaving their organisations. To generate the best interpretation of phenomena, hermeneutic phenomenology proposes to use the hermeneutic circle (Kafle, 2011) (see section 2.3.3.6).

Systems psychodynamics, with its pillars of systemic psychoanalysis, is Freudian, group relations theory and open systems theory (Colman & Bexton, 1975; Cytrynbaum & Noumair, 2004; Miller & Rice, 1975), served as the theoretical paradigm for the study. The voluntary turnover experiences of the participants were explored and interpreted using systems psychodynamics as the theoretical paradigm, enabling a detailed description of their experiences (Durrheim, 2006, p. 39) and an understanding of unconscious behaviour (Huffington et al., 2004). A relativist ontology and relational epistemology, congruent with the social constructivist philosophy of science and hermeneutic phenomenological approach, guided the study. Congruent to the epistemological assumptions of hermeneutic phenomenology, I engaged in a process of reflexivity throughout the research process (see section 2.3.3.4). The research approach I selected was closely tied to the research question and provided a coherent set of philosophical assumptions to guide the study. Moreover, the systems psychodynamics paradigm is congruent with hermeneutic phenomenology, which emphasises emergent understanding rather than proof (Handy & Rowlands, 2017).

2.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is critical because everything flows from the choice of design and because the design choice ties closely to the research questions and theories (Vogt et al., 2012). A research design then becomes important to connect a methodology and an appropriate set of research methods to address the research questions (Wahyuni, 2012). It ensures that the evidence obtained enables us to answer the initial question as unambiguously as possible (de Vaus, 2001). The research design, therefore, includes a brief discussion of the type of research that was conducted, the research strategy and details of the research method.

2.3.1 Type of research adopted

I think metaphorically of qualitative research as an intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colours, different textures, and various blends of materials (Creswell, 2013). I adopted qualitative research to allow for the exploration, rich description, and deep understanding of the lived voluntary turnover experiences of the research participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Terre Blanche, Durrheim, et al., 2006). Qualitative research is mainly concerned with meaning (for example, how individuals make sense of the world, how they experience events, and what meaning they attribute to phenomena) (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Among the distinguishing features of qualitative research is its preference for data-rich descriptions, the belief that reality is constructed socially, and that reality is about interpretation (Howitt, 2010). The choice of qualitative research, therefore, aligned well with the ontological and epistemological assumptions of hermeneutic phenomenology that served as the research approach. The research strategy is discussed next.

2.3.2 Research Strategy

Multiple case studies were selected as the research strategy, with individual cases comprising the unit of analysis (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Case studies are defined as ideographic research methods that study individuals as individuals rather than as members of a population (Lindegger, 2006). The evidence created by multiple case studies is considered robust and reliable (Baxter & Jack, 2008), and the use of rich ideographic information about the cases had the advantage of allowing for new ideas and hypotheses to emerge (Durrheim, 2006). Qualitative case studies that are rigorous allow researchers the opportunity to explore or describe a phenomenon in context using multiple data sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Cross case analysis was necessary to understand the systemic and psychoanalytical voluntary turnover dynamics beyond psychoanalysis of the individual. The use of multiple cases allowed

for the possibility of case comparatives (Carneiro, 2018), making it possible to integrate the findings to form a collective understanding of elements of voluntary turnover as the phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The thickly described case studies took multiple perspectives into account in order to understand the influences of multiple social systems on the perspectives shared by the participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

The limitations of case studies include possible problems with the validity of information, causal links that are difficult to test, and generalisations that cannot be made from single cases (Durrheim, 2006). While it was not the aim to create generalisations from the study, the transferability of the findings was enhanced using multiple case studies and other strategies (see section 2.5.1) to support the research's trustworthiness. One common pitfall of case study research is the tendency for researchers to try and answer a question that is too broad or a topic with too many objectives for one study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). I held a boundary of definition and context around the cases to mitigate the risk of this pitfall. The phenomenon was defined focusing on the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover specifically and explored in the context of a large organisation in the value retail industry. The research boundaries determined the breadth and depth of the study (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Participants, as individual cases, shared their personal stories of voluntary turnover from which insight into and understanding of the phenomenon was derived. It was important to generate robust and reliable evidence in forming a collective understanding of multiple facets of the phenomenon, hence the choice of multiple case studies as the research strategy. This strategy proved congruent with the epistemology and ontological assumptions that informed the study. The use of multiple cases allowed for holistic integration in the findings and the development of two psychodynamic models of voluntary turnover (see Chapter 7). A discussion about the research method follows.

2.3.3 Research method

The research method consists of a set of specific procedures, tools and techniques to gather and analyse data (Wahyuni, 2012). A research design should provide detailed information about the sampling strategy, method of data collection and the techniques of analysis employed in the execution of the study (Durrheim, 2006). The research method is discussed in terms of the setting of the research, entrée and the researcher roles that were established, the sampling method, the method that I used to collect the data, the procedure for data collection and the method for analysing the data.

2.3.3.1 *Research setting*

I conducted the research in a large corporate organisation in the value retail sector in South Africa. The participants had all worked at the head office. The sector is highly concentrated, with a relatively small number of big retail groups dominating the environment (Malgas et al., 2018). The industry faced challenges, including load shedding, which impacted consumers in a dynamic and complex way, resulting in lost revenue (Goldberg, 2015). Technology had a radical influence on the industry forcing retailers to adapt to provide online shopping, e-commerce and e-marketing to reduce costs and remain competitive (Malgas et al., 2018). Post the economic boom that ended in 2007, retailers and their customers also became much more conservative (Malgas et al., 2018), resulting in tougher trading conditions. These conditions have been experienced to contribute to the challenges of sustainable growth for industry players.

The organisation had also recently undergone a restructure of the top leadership with the introduction of a new CEO and a C-suite of executives to head it. Attempts at changing a social system lead to resistance to the change, with people striving to maintain the status quo because it serves as a defence against their anxiety (Huffington et al., 2004). Resistance to the way the restructure had taken place was evident in the stories that were shared and which contributed to the experiences of a detached head from the body of the organisation (see section 6.3). The collective experiences were of a disconnect of the role and task of the top leadership structure from the roles and tasks of those below. An us and them mentality between the c-suite and the rest of the organisation had furthermore formed through the restructuring process. The boundaries between authority and task had also been experienced to have been severed in the process of the senior leadership restructure, making for high levels of anxiety.

Participants in the study fulfilled various formal roles at different levels across functional areas of the organisation. They fulfilled roles at the levels of middle management and professional and in the functional areas of HR, IT, Finance and Merchandising. Objectives of the roles included:

- At the middle management level, the focus was on business operations with the aim to realise the business strategy through the management of a team of professionals.
- At the professional level, the focus was to tactically execute professional work tasks that were aligned with the functional strategy.
- In the HR, IT and Finance functional areas, the focus was to tactically deliver on work tasks aligned to the functional strategy in support of the strategic organisational objectives.

- In the Merchandising functional area, the focus was to develop a merchandising strategy and source appropriate merchandise for retail to meet the strategy of the business division.

These objectives had to be fulfilled against the complex backdrop of load shedding, rapid changes in technology, and changes in the top leadership structure of the organisation. Some of the participants had to fill both a professional level and an acting middle management level role simultaneously whilst delivering in their functional area. Others fulfilled only one role at a specific level and within one functional area. The participants weren't required to fulfil multiple roles across the functional areas. All the participants had been promised a promotion into either their acting role or a future higher-level role. They had to cope with both the pressure to prove themselves and the uncertainty about whether they would achieve the desired promotion. The work environment was characterised by a change in both organisational structure and task structure, which made for high levels of anxiety in pursuit of performance against their role objectives.

2.3.3.2 Entrée and establishing researcher roles

The research participants and organisation were accessed through my former consulting role to the organisation and negotiated through the HR director, who authorised both the study and me in my role as a doctoral student. A professional member of the talent management team of the organisation acted as gatekeeper and communicated the research aim to prospective participants using a detailed information sheet. Those who agreed to form part of the study were introduced to me by a member of the talent management team, after which I took responsibility for further engagements with the participants.

I fulfilled various roles throughout the research, which are discussed below:

- *Doctoral student.* I had a depth of knowledge about systems psychodynamics as a doctoral student researching in the field. I attended many systems psychodynamics conferences and read extensively on the subject. I was well equipped to apply systems psychodynamics as a lens for the research. I took up the role of interviewer to gather information about the lived voluntary turnover experiences from the research participants; witness in the recording of field notes; analyst of the data that I sourced; and interpreter of the findings. I was aware of and had insight into how organisational behaviour impacts individuals, groups, and the organisation at large.
- *Industrial psychologist.* As an industrial psychologist, I worked in the organisation to deliver specialist industrial psychology expertise. I had met with professionals and leaders in my

work who had either undergone voluntary turnover from the organisation or who knew of people who had left. I consulted directly with one of the research participants as a client in providing talent management expertise to her.

- *Consultant and coach.* I also took up the role of consultant and coach. I provided psychometric assessments, coaching, and change management interventions and consulted on team dynamics in the organisation. I also had the experience of coaching a senior manager through a voluntary turnover process from the organisation.
- *Self as an instrument in the research.* Having personally experienced voluntary turnover as a process, I was aware of some of the psychological challenges that it can present. I also developed an awareness of the difficult nature of voluntary turnover when I coached a client to support him through the process of leaving his job. Intrigued with voluntary turnover, I was curious about the process and how my own and others' unconscious behaviour manifested in the process of leaving. The use of self is the conscious use of one's whole being in the intentional execution of one's role for effectiveness in whatever the current situation is presenting (Jamieson et al., 2011). As an instrument of the research, it was important for me to adopt an attitude of self-awareness and reflexivity. I became increasingly aware over the course of the research of the emotions that the voluntary turnover stories brought up for me (Finlay, 2009). I was influenced by the data, which was also influenced by me (Finlay, 2009). Issues, participants, and the data concerning them were viewed as co-constructed and became relevant through interpretive processes that were contextual, relational, and political (Gemignani, 2017). This necessitated that I have acute self-awareness to take responsibility for my situatedness within the research (see section 1.2) (Berger, 2015). I took up the role of self as an instrument through the active ongoing reflection of my own feelings, unconscious behaviours, and thoughts about the phenomenon and through my interactions with participants throughout the study (see Appendix A). I wrote about these experiences as part of my reflexive practice.

2.3.3.3 Sampling method

Researchers should act with intent in selecting the sample that is most productive to answer the research question (Marshall, 1996). The study aimed to explore lived voluntary turnover experiences, which necessitated a small but purposeful sample that would allow for the study of the phenomenon (Taherdoost, 2018). A purposeful and judgement-based sampling method (Durrheim, 2006; Marshall, 1996; Taherdoost, 2018) was adopted to select a specific sample of individuals who had experienced voluntary turnover. A purposive sampling strategy, conceived to intensify the understanding of select individuals (Devers & Frankel, 2000), meant

that individuals were selected based on specific criteria as defined by the concept of voluntary turnover. This also means that I included cases that I believed warranted inclusion because they were in line with the aim of the study (Taherdoost, 2018). The criteria for selection into the sample included:

- (1) Participants must have been employed by the organisation for a minimum of six months. This criterion was included to ensure that the participant had had sufficient time to experience the organisation and its culture before deciding to leave.
- (2) Participants must have been identified as high achievers with the potential for upward mobility in the organisation. This criterion was included to ensure that the participants' voluntary turnover constituted undesirable turnover for both the individual and the organisation. The direct line managers validated this criterion and communicated it to the internal talent management representative of the organisation.
- (3) Participants must have voluntarily resigned from the organisation prior to the interview taking place and not longer than twelve months from the interview date. This criterion was included to ensure that the memories informing the stories were fresh enough to be accessed at the level of detail and depth required for the study.

Zach (2006) recommends that participants should be selected explicitly to encompass instances in which the phenomena under study are likely to be found. The intensive methodology necessitated the study of a smaller number of individuals than is customary in quantitative research (Rennie, 2012). A total of seven participants who had undergone voluntary turnover were included in the final sample for the study, while a total of ten people were interviewed. Sample size, in multiple case study research, is determined by the number of cases required to reach saturation, that is, data collection until no significant new findings are revealed (Zach, 2006). Data saturation was reached after analysis of the seventh case (Cilliers & Terblanche, 2010; Marshall, 1996), which required an iterative and flexible approach to the research design. The point at which the data became saturated informed the final sample size, with the additional three sets of data not contributing to new codes or themes. The relatively smaller sample size afforded me an opportunity to study information-rich cases in depth to provide the greatest insight into the research question (Devers & Frankel, 2000) and to form an understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The sample consisted of participants who had been employed full-time in the organisation for a minimum of six months and who voluntarily resigned no longer than twelve months prior to the date of the interview. They had all been identified as high achievers by their managers with the potential for upward mobility and whose resignation was considered a loss to both the individual and the organisation. The talent management team member ensured the

appropriate identification of people who met these criteria for inclusion in the sample. The level of functioning in the organisation, age, race, or gender wasn't deliberately selected but rather emerged as a result of those who met the criteria and were willing to participate. They had varying degrees of experience, but all of them were considered either professionals or managers in the organisation. Their responsibilities ranged from contributing professionally to work tasks to managing teams of people in their respective functional areas. The table below depicts the demographic makeup of the purposive sample of research participants:

Table 0.1: Demographics of the participants²

Research Participant	Level	Age Range	Gender
1	Middle Manager	Thirties	Male
2	Middle Manager	Thirties	Female
3	Professional	Forties	Male
4	Middle Manager	Forties	Male
5	Middle Manager	Forties	Male
6	Professional	Forties	Female
7	Professional	Twenties	Female

2.3.3.4 Data collection method

Qualitative methods of data collection – observation and interviewing – are favoured by researchers working within the interpretive and constructionist paradigms (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, et al., 2006). This section will detail two important aspects of the data collection method that I used, namely the free association narrative interview (FANI) and myself as instrument. I used a semi-structured and in-depth interview as the method to collect the data.

² Job titles and race were excluded to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

The FANI was used (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008) to elicit stories and free associations in gathering data from the participants. The FANI draws on the psychoanalytic technique of free association and is based on four principles with the aim of not imposing a structure on the participant's narrative but rather co-create the interview process. I, therefore, also used myself as instrument in the co-creation of the stories. The narrative was structured according to unconscious logic, where associations tracked emotional motivations rather than rational intentions (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008). According to Clarke and Hogget (2009), the four principles that guide the FANI technique of socioanalytic interviewing include:

- The use of questions that are open-ended with the view to encourage the participant to discuss their experience and the meaning they derive from it.
- Elicitation of a story making it possible to look at the transferences, counter-transferences, and identifications in the relationship between the interviewer and interviewed.
- The avoidance of using the word "why" in the interview process prevents the elicitation of socially desirable answers by participants.
- The use of the respondents' ordering and phrasing to ask follow-up questions using the respondent's own words and phrases without offering interpretations.

The interviews were between an hour and two hours in duration and began with me clarifying the research aim, the reasons why the participant had been selected for the study, and my roles and the participant's role in the research. A broad question asking the participant to share their life story was asked first to gather a psycho-biography about possible family roles and relationships that might have been transferred into relationships that formed part of their lived voluntary turnover experiences (Cilliers & Mayer, 2019). I then asked open questions aimed at eliciting the voluntary turnover story. I asked the below questions to elicit the voluntary turnover stories:

- Tell me a bit about yourself. Where did you grow up, and how did you get where you are here now?
- You were identified as an achiever with high potential. How did that come about? How did you experience that?
- Tell me the story of how you left the organisation.

Some examples of further probing questions that were asked included:

- How did the people around you react?
- Who were the people around you at the time?
- I am hearing your words ...

- What was your relationship to ...
- Who does this person remind you of from your past?
- How was your experience similar to that of others?
- How was your experience different to that of others?
- Your story makes me think about ...
- What image comes to mind for you?
- What happened to confirm your decision to leave?

I followed the principles of the FANI technique in asking open-ended questions to elicit a story, avoiding asking why but rather using the respondents' own words to deepen an understanding of how the process unfolded. I used myself in the interview and made free associations with facets of the stories that were shared by the participants. On one occasion, I had the association of a cartoon, about characters called Tweety and Sylvester, with the way in which the participant was describing his relationship with his boss. Tweety is a yellow canary in the cartoon, and Sylvester is a cat whose mission is to hunt and eat Tweety. There is a particular scene where Sylvester shoots Tweety down during the hunt, and a ring of stars rotates around Tweety's head after being shot. Tweety was dazed, confused, and had just had the experience of being shot down. Sharing the image with the participant allowed us to explore more deeply the kind of relationship that the participant had experienced with his boss. After the interview, I explored my own reaction to the story that was shared and reflected on how the story might have triggered a childhood cartoon image for me. Adopting the FANI technique meant that I was intricately involved in the process of co-creating shared meaning in the stories, which, although congruent to the philosophical underpinnings of the study, necessitated a critical reflexivity on my part.

Gemignani (2017) considers reflexivity to be a trademark of qualitative research because it implies the relational nature of the qualitative inquiry, questions the possibility of finite observable reality, and attends to the contextual and discursive aspects of research and interpretation. Working reflexively meant turning the lens back on myself to recognise and take responsibility for my own situatedness within the research and the effect that I may have had on the setting and on the people whose stories were studied, questions asked, data collected and the interpretation thereof (Berger, 2015). I journaled about my own personal historical experiences and summarised my proclivity for and beliefs about voluntary turnover (see section 1.2) as part of my reflexive practice. Parallel to exploring my situatedness in the research was the expectation for me to pay attention to my reactions to the participants, conceptualised as countertransference (Berger, 2015). I made field notes after the interviews and explored my emotional reactions to the participants and my initial thoughts about what

they had shared. A discussion about my countertransference in the interactions is presented in Appendix A and Chapter 7. I, therefore, engaged a process of reflexivity to become as aware as possible of both my own situatedness in the research and my counter-transferences in relation to the research participants. My self-disclosure formed part of an effort at transparency and increased trustworthiness of the study (Clarke et al., 2009).

The possibility of “seeing” something can be an internal one; by taking in the projections of the other, we can create an internal place for these feelings that might allow us to put them into words or take some form of action (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009). This process can be described as containment in psychoanalytic terms (see section 3.9). I spent a little over two years reflecting on and containing the projections that were carried out in the stories that the participants had shared. There were occasions when I dreamt about some aspects of the participants' stories as though they had become my story (see Appendix A). This served as evidence that I had taken in projections from the stories into my own psyche and which I held, often with discomfort, in my working them through. In taking in the projections from the stories and containing them and considering my own historical patterns of and biases toward voluntary turnover, I was able to process these into meaning which through the process of this research became shared meaning. To enhance the rigour of my reflexivity, I processed the dreams with the support of a psychoanalytically oriented psychologist and critically debriefed my interpretations of the data with my supervisor. The data collection procedure that I used for the study is discussed next.

2.3.3.5 Data collection procedure

Data, which are collected by the researcher, are the basic material with which researchers work (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, et al., 2006). The data collection procedure that I used for the research is presented below:

- Potential participants who met the criteria for inclusion in the sample of the study were contacted by the gatekeeper, an internal HR representative on the talent management team from the organisation. The information sheet about the study was shared with the prospective participant. The HR representative provided a brief overview of what the study was about to the participant and asked if they would be willing to participate. The HR representative then emailed me the names and contact numbers of the people who were willing to participate in the study.
- I contacted the people whom the HR representative had sent to me to introduce myself, provide a more detailed description of the study and discuss the participant information

sheet with each of them again. I then confirmed their willingness to participate before asking them to sign the consent form to participate in the study.

- I then emailed the participants the information sheet and consent form and requested that they complete the consent form and return it to me before setting up a time and space to conduct the interview.
- Upon email receipt of the signed consent form, I arranged a suitable time and place to meet with each of the participants. I met with all the participants in a space that was neutral for both of us.
- I revisited my chosen FANI interview method prior to each of the interviews to re-familiarise myself with the guiding principles of the method and the examples of the types of questions that I would ask in eliciting the stories. This was to ensure that I was well-prepared for each interview.
- The FANI interviews were conducted at the agreed time and place. They took place in flexible work offices that were neutral to both parties, quiet, private, comfortable, well ventilated and that offered tea and coffee and other refreshments.
- The interviews were audio recorded using a digital voice recorder and later transcribed into written words by a professional transcriber after the interview. With the interview transcripts, the 'text' in question was a representation of an oral dialogue which took place between a research participant and myself as the researcher (Robinson & Kerr, 2015). The transcriber was required to complete a confidentiality agreement to ensure that the data collected were kept safe and confidential.
- Data in the form of field notes were recorded by writing up detailed field notes after each of the interviews (Cilliers & Terblanche, 2010). The self-reflective actions noted in the previous section were captured through journaling and a critical systems psychodynamics reflection on my engagement with the participants and this study as a whole (see Chapter 7). I also journaled about my own voluntary turnover experiences (see section 1.2). My experiences of having interacted with each of the participants are discussed in Appendix A, and I disclose reflective thoughts about my own experience of the research journey in Appendix B. My reflexive journaling formed part of the data. It provided additional space to reflect on the meaning that I had attributed to the stories, my experiences relating to each of the participants, and my own situatedness in the research.
- All the data were stored securely in electronic format and in a password-protected folder to ensure the confidentiality of the participants.

In qualitative research, the raw data and data set primarily consists of words and images in the form of field notes, audio and video tapes, and transcripts (Devers & Frankel, 2000). The

procedure that was set out to collect data for this study resulted in data consisting of field notes, audio recordings and transcripts of the recordings. The data analysis method that I employed to make sense of the data is discussed next.

2.3.3.6 Data analysis

The analysis involves a constant moving back and forward between the entire data set, the coded extracts of data that are in the process of being analysed, and the analyses of data that are being produced (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data were analysed using triple hermeneutics (Hofius, 2020) and the hermeneutic circle (Gyollai, 2020) in an iterative process of developing understanding. The triple hermeneutic interpretive method recognises both conscious and unconscious cultural meanings, and the interpretive is mediated by the minds of both the researcher and the researched (Alexandrov, 2009). This meant looking at myself as the researcher and exploring the content of my own mind as it mediated the interpretations that I was making (Cilliers, 2012b). In the hermeneutic circle, the meaning of the whole text informs the meaning of its parts, and the meaning of the parts illuminates the meaning of the whole (Rennie, 2012). The dialectical interaction between the whole and the part in which each gives the other meaning is the hermeneutic circle (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2010). This circular character of interpretation suggests that no interpretation is ever complete (Ciesielska & Kozminski, 2018).

The hermeneutic circle, dialogue, and the process of interpretation lead to a fusion of horizons as understanding takes place (Gadamer, 2004). New understandings prompt further investigation and allow for the totality of experiences to unfold (Ramsook, 2018). Developing hermeneutic understanding meant working with part and whole on various levels (Suddick et al., 2020). Psychosocial research can be defined as triple hermeneutics since it attempts to interpret the interpretive activity of both the actors in the studied field and the researcher in the context of their interaction (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009). I used simple hermeneutics (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009) to understand the meaning conveyed in the stories, double hermeneutics (Roberge, 2011; Schneiders, 1981) to interpret the systems psychodynamics of the stories, and triple hermeneutics in interpreting the systems psychodynamics of my own experiences in the context of the research process (see Appendixes A and B) (Clark & Hoggett, 2009; Alexandrov, 2009, p. 47). Triple hermeneutics themes with findings and discussions are presented in Chapter 7. The triple hermeneutics themes were mirrored in the working hypotheses in Chapters 5 and 6 and informed the integration of findings into two systems of psychodynamics models of voluntary turnover (see Chapter 7).

I engaged in the process of thematic analysis when working through the data. Thematic analysis isn't tied to any theoretical framework that pre-exists, so it can be used within different theoretical frameworks and can be used for different things within them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I, therefore, decided to integrate the thematic analysis phases of Braun and Clarke (2006) with the triple hermeneutic interpretive method. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis include 1) familiarising yourself with the data; 2) generating initial codes; 3) searching for themes; 4) reviewing themes; 5) defining and naming themes; and 6) producing the report. The six phases weren't viewed as a linear model where one cannot proceed to the next phase without properly completing the prior phase; but rather as a recursive process of analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2013). In this sense, they further enhanced the iterative dialogue in the hermeneutic circle. Triple hermeneutics and the integrated phases of Braun and Clarke (2006), as I applied them to the data analysis, are discussed below.

2.3.3.7 First/simple hermeneutic level of analysis

The first hermeneutic level of analysis of the data entailed becoming immersed in the stories that were shared during the interviews. Immersion usually involves the repeated reading of the data and reading the data in an active way – searching for meanings, patterns and so on (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It was at this first level that I entered into the analysis by adopting Braun and Clark's (2006) first phase of thematic analysis, which entailed familiarising myself with the data. I immersed myself in the data to become intimately familiar with it by reading and re-reading the stories and listening to the audio recordings. I analysed the data on a case-by-case basis to interpret the trajectories, dilemmas, conflicts, turning points, loose ends, repetitions and fixations, and resolutions as primary facets of the participants' subjectivity (Alexandrov, 2009). In some cases, I created flow charts incorporating key events along the voluntary turnover process. These assisted me in framing significant primary facets of the individual's subjectivity along a process and in listing my ideas about what I could see in the data.

I then moved to Braun and Clarke's (2006) phase two of thematic analysis, which entailed generating initial codes. The codes captured points of interest that I'd discovered whilst familiarising myself with the data. I worked through the whole data set and gave my full and equal attention to each item of data, identifying aspects of interest in the data items that informed patterns that were repeated across the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I coded, uncoded and recoded data as my understanding of the meaning in the stories was deepening and as patterns in the data across the different stories became clearer. I then moved to phase three in Braun and Clarke's phases to search for themes in the codes. This process involved sorting the different codes into potential voluntary turnover themes and collating all the

relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I used the software ATLAS.ti to code the data and collate the codes into possible clusters of meaning. Some of the codes that didn't fit anywhere were discarded, while others were organised into sub-clusters under the emerging themes.

2.3.3.8 Second hermeneutic level of analysis

I began my second level of analysis with Braun and Clarke's phase four of thematic analysis, which had to do with reviewing and refining the initial themes that were in the process of emerging. I considered the validity of the themes in relation to the entire data set and whether the themes 'accurately' reflected the meanings in the data set as a whole (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As I was refining the themes at this stage, I started to apply systems psychodynamics concepts and constructs to the emerging themes. I began to explore what was happening beneath the surface of the emerging voluntary turnover themes and formed interpretations using my theoretical paradigm at this level. I collapsed and merged some of the initial themes as I discovered them to be speaking to the same systems psychodynamics concept, construct, or dynamic process. I discarded others that I found lacking sufficient data to stand alone as themes. Others were organised as subthemes that portrayed the storyline of a main theme.

I then moved to the fifth phase in Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases, which was to define and name the themes for the study. I identified the 'essence' of what each theme was about (as well as the themes overall) and determined what aspect of the data each theme captured (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It was important to identify the story that each theme needed to tell and to consider how they fitted into the overall voluntary turnover story that I was telling about the data and in relation to my research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I checked and re-checked my naming of the themes against the data and codes. I named each of the themes using concepts and constructs from the systems psychodynamics paradigm and used words that captured the story that each of the themes was about. The names of the themes can be found in Chapters 5 and 6 which present the findings at the levels of the meso level, and macro and micro-levels respectively.

2.3.3.9 Third hermeneutic level of analysis

I explored my personal, emotional responses to the research at the third hermeneutic level (Finlay, 2009). Reflexivity (see section 2.3.3.4) here meant the development of an understanding of the effect that I had on the research process and the possible outcomes of the research (Robinson & Kerr, 2015). I explored my own experiences and ideas about voluntary turnover (see section 1.2 and Appendix B) and my transpersonal experiences of the

research participants (see Appendix A). Transpersonal experiences may be defined as experiences in which the sense of identity or self extends beyond (trans) the individual or personal to encompass wider aspects of humankind, life, psyche or cosmos (Walsh et al., 1993). I then revisited my themes, the stories they were telling, and the broader emerging story about the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover. Systems Psychodynamics is regarded as triple hermeneutics because it allows for the interrogation of the researchers' responses in terms of transference and countertransference and how the research and researcher co-informed one another (Steyn & Cilliers, 2016). I reflected on how my own experiences may have impacted the meaning that I had made from the data, which contributed towards a further deepened understanding of the phenomenon (see section 7.3).

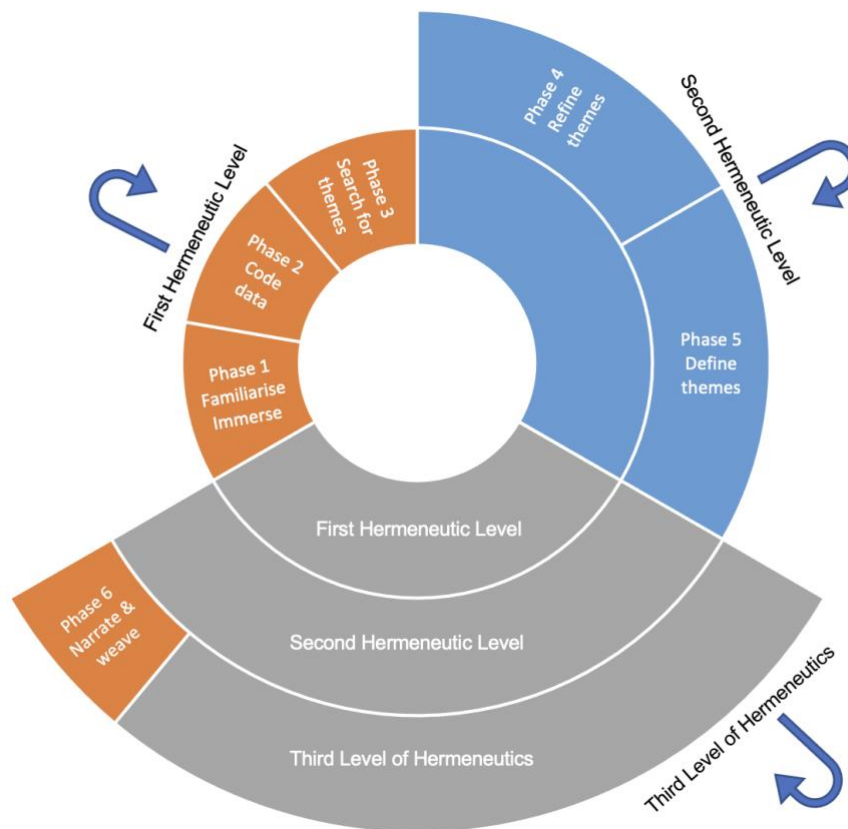
Finally, I moved to phase six of Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases to write up the themes with supporting data from the stories. It was at this phase that I weaved the analytic narrative together to produce a coherent and persuasive story about the data for the reader. I contextualised the themes and discussed them with reference to the systems psychodynamics literature (see discussion sections in Chapters 5 and 6). Writing is an integral part of the analysis, not something that takes place at the end (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I also used myself as instrument through the practice of reflexivity. I wrote about my transpersonal experiences of having related to the participants and to the research (see Appendixes A and B) and analysed these using systems psychodynamics as a lens. The themes at the third level of analysis mirrored some of the dynamics in the working hypotheses derived from the second level of analysis. Chapter 7 presents the triple hermeneutic themes together with critical discussions about how they both informed and were informed by the second level findings to culminate into the findings and recommendations for the application thereof (see sections 7.4, 7.5 and 7.6).

In weaving the narrative, I continued to move backwards and forwards in the hermeneutic circle as the act of writing enabled the further ongoing expansion of my understanding of the phenomenon. At times I reverted to Braun and Clarke's (2006) phase four to further refine themes that I had written about. At other times, and indeed throughout the research process, I reverted to Braun and Clarke's (2006) phase five to redefine and rename what the theme was about. Also, in moving between the parts of the text, the whole text and my self-reflections in the hermeneutic circle, my understanding of the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover gradually became clearer. This understanding culminated in two systems of psychodynamics models of voluntary turnover (see Chapter 7).

I developed a model that synthesises Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis into the triple hermeneutic interpretive method. The model illustrates the process of

moving through the hermeneutic levels, backwards and forwards through parts of the text and the whole, the theory and the data, and the relatedness between the researcher and the researched, and in an ever-expanding opening spiral of understanding. I named it the triple hermeneutic spiral model of understanding, which is presented below:

Figure 2.1: The Triple Hermeneutic Spiral Model of Understanding



Note. Developed from “Researching Beneath the Surface”, Clarke and Hoggett (2009), p. 47, and “Using thematic analysis in psychology”, Clarke and Braun (2006), *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, p. 16.

Below is a discussion about how the model is applied to analysis:

- The data analysis process begins at the first hermeneutic level, with phases one to three informing the approach to the first level of analysis. At this stage in the analysis, it is important to become intimately familiar with the data and to immerse oneself in it. The data is then coded according to interesting aspects that form repeated patterns across the data sets. The search for voluntary turnover themes using the coded data follows a process of collating, discarding, and ordering the codes.

- The second hermeneutic level is about adding a layer of interpretation to lived experiences and commences with phase four of the thematic analysis, which is about refining the emerging themes. Systems psychodynamics is introduced as the theoretical paradigm at this level, and the emerging thematic ideas are interpreted through the theoretical lens. Concepts and constructs are applied to the clusters of coded data during the refining process as part of developing a deeper understanding of the systems psychodynamics in the voluntary turnover themes. Phase five is then engaged to define and name the themes. The themes are specifically named to capture the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover that they represent in the stories.
- After working through the third level in the triple hermeneutic process to explore one's own situatedness in the research, phase six is engaged in narrating and weaving the themes into a coherent and convincing story. The writing of the findings forms part of the process of analysis and therefore necessitates moving backwards and forwards through the parts of the text and the whole and using the phases appropriate to each hermeneutic level. The third level of hermeneutic interpretation can be found in Chapter 7, which integrates the findings.

The model is designed as a spiral to demonstrate how understanding expands throughout the process in an iterative way, honouring the principle of the hermeneutic circle within and throughout the three different levels and their related phases of analysis. Each theme holds a piece of the story that informs the whole, and the whole informs the themes and codes as the pieces. The process, therefore, continues to unfold through the hermeneutic levels as understanding expands into a fusion of new horizons. It is colour coded to show the progressive flow between the hermeneutic levels and the ongoing interconnected cyclical movement backwards and forwards between the parts of the text and the whole. Trustworthiness strategies necessary for quality data and the ethical considerations for the study are discussed in the section that follows.

2.4 TRUSTWORTHINESS STRATEGIES AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The purpose of this section of the chapter is to orientate the reader to the strategies that were employed to ensure the trustworthiness and ethicality of the study. A theoretical discussion about the quality criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) is discussed in this section of the chapter. A critical

retrospective discussion about how I applied the trustworthiness strategies to the study is presented in Chapter 8.

2.4.1 Trustworthiness

A discussion about trustworthiness criteria and strategies that ensure data is of quality is presented in this section of the chapter (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative research, ensuing from a variety of disciplines, paradigms, and epistemologies, embraces multiple standards of quality, known as validity, rigour, or trustworthiness (Morrow, 2005). Trustworthiness, therefore, comprises multiple standards or criteria that ensure quality research that can be of value. The criteria for quality in trustworthy qualitative research include credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and authenticity (Krefting, 1991; Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004). These quality criteria are important considerations that increase the rigour of the study for it to be of value (Krefting, 1991). Just as there is a need to look at the accuracy and trustworthiness of various kinds of quantitative data in different ways, there is also a need to look at qualitative methods in different ways to ensure the quality of the findings (Krefting, 1991). For a study to be trustworthy, sufficient strategies should have been applied to address the quality criteria. The below discussion provides a theoretical overview of criteria that enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Guba & Linc, 1994; Krefting, 1991; Shenton, 2004):

2.4.1.1 Credibility strategies

Truth value in qualitative research is gained from discovering the human experiences of participants as they are lived and perceived (Krefting, 1991). Credibility, also referred to as truth value, establishes the degree to which the researcher is confident with the truth of the findings based on the design of the research, the informants and the context (Krefting, 1991). Familiarity with the research context and peer debriefings are among some of the techniques used to ensure quality research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The use of well-established research methods, adopting tactics to ensure honesty from the participants, the use of reflexivity in the research process, ensuring the credibility of the researcher, and providing thick descriptions of the phenomenon under study are further techniques that enhance the credibility of qualitative research (Shenton, 2004). Explanation building using existing theory also enhances the credibility of research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

2.4.1.2 Transferability strategies

Transferability is comparable with external validity and refers to the generalisability of inquiry (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Qualitative studies produce findings from a small number of individuals and contexts, making it impossible to demonstrate the applicability of the findings and conclusions to other contexts and populations (Shenton, 2004). Research meets the criterion of transferability when the findings fit into contexts outside of the study situation that is determined by the degree or goodness of fit between the two contexts (Krefting, 1991). This is achieved when the researcher provides sufficient information about the self and the research context, processes, and participants in order to enable the reader to decide how the findings may transfer (Morrow, 2005). While the findings for this research are therefore not intended for generalisation, the meanings and insights may be transferable to other contexts based on the readers' discretion.

2.4.1.3 Dependability strategies

Dependability on qualitative research is what reliability is to quantitative research (Morrow, 2005). Dependability implies consistency of the data, that is, whether the findings would be consistent if the inquiry were replicated with the same subjects in a similar context (Krefting, 1991). It is not possible to reproduce observations (de Gooijer, 2013), and while meeting the dependability criterion is difficult in qualitative work, care should be taken to enable a future investigator to repeat the study (Shenton, 2004). Techniques to enhance the dependability of qualitative research include ensuring that the research process is repeatable by other researchers and by creating an audit trail of the research design as it emerges (Morrow, 2005).

2.4.1.4 Confirmability strategies

Confirmability in qualitative research is comparable to the concern of objectivity (Shenton, 2004). It is the extent to which the findings form the product of the focus of the inquiry and not of the biases of the researcher (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Strategies aimed at enhancing the credibility of qualitative research include theoretical triangulation (Carter et al., 2014) and reflexive analysis (Krefting, 1991). Theory triangulation uses different theories to analyse and interpret data (Carter et al., 2014). Reflexive research encourages us to display in our writing/conversations the interactions between ourselves and our participants so that our work can be understood, not only in terms of what we have discovered, but how we have discovered it (Etherington, 2007). Lincoln and Guba (1985) also suggest keeping an audit trail to enhance the dependability of qualitative research. The audit trail can include raw data, data analysis

products, data reconstruction and synthesis products, process notes, materials related to intentions and dispositions, and instrument development information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

2.4.1.5 Authenticity strategies

Authenticity involves demonstrating fairness and ontological authenticity (Amin et al., 2020). The researcher must show a range of different realities (fairness), with depictions of their associated concerns, issues and underlying values to ensure authenticity (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Ontological authenticity refers to a demonstration of sophisticated understanding (Guba & Linc, 1994) and the enlargement of personal constructions (Tobin & Begley, 2004).

2.4.2 Ethical considerations

The ethical implications for practising psychosocial research are strong. Indeed, issues of ethics are at hand throughout the research process, from the conception of the research design to the analysis of data and presentation of the findings (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009). It was, therefore, important for me to address possible ethical concerns of the study before commencing with the research process. The ethics of social research have to do with the nature of the researcher's responsibilities in the relationship with those who are studied (Marvasti, 2004). Ethics represents a thoughtful and sometimes courageous commitment to creating trustworthy human relationships within the research enterprise (Haverkamp, 2005). The difficulties inherent in qualitative research can be alleviated by awareness and use of well-established ethical principles, specifically autonomy, beneficence, and justice (Orb et al., 2001). Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006) also make mention of the principle of nonmaleficence, which forms part of beneficence. The principles of ethical research and how they were applied to the study are discussed below:

- Autonomy is honoured through a process of informed consent (Orb et al., 2001). This translates to providing potential participants with clear and factual information about the study, conveying the methods of the study, the risks and benefits, assuring the voluntary nature of participation, and ensuring that participants understand that they may decline or withdraw from the study without penalties (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, et al., 2006). All the research participants signed an informed consent form prior to the interviews. Protection of individual and institutional confidentiality was ensured throughout the research process using pseudonyms throughout the reporting of the findings and through the safe and secure storage of the audio recordings, transcripts, and field notes. Both parties agreed that participation was voluntary, that confidentiality would be maintained, that the interviews could be recorded, and that participants could

withdrawal from the research should they wish to. The informed consent formed part of the participant information sheet.

- A second ethical principle closely linked with research is beneficence – doing good for others and preventing harm (Orb et al., 2001). Beneficence obliges the researcher to attempt to maximise the benefit that the research will afford to the participants in the research study (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, et al., 2006). I adopted a mindset of respectful curiosity during the interviews and held an awareness of how my input might impact the participants. My stance of respectful curiosity was instrumental in preventing me from projecting myself onto the participants. I took steps, including confidentiality and care during the interview, to prevent harm from coming to any of the research participants. The research was approved by an ethics committee at UNISA (ERC Reference #: 2019_CEMS/IOP_005), which undertook to assess the possible risks of the study and the potential harm that it could cause. The goal of the study was to enable better support for people undergoing voluntary turnover. The participants were all made aware that they could access the final research report, which could assist them in deepening their own insight and understanding of their experiences as a benefit. The potential benefit of the study to society at large was very strong.
- The principle of justice refers to equal share and fairness and is demonstrated by recognising the vulnerability of the participants and their contribution to the study (Orb et al., 2001). I treated participants with fairness throughout the research process. I acknowledged the benefit that I received from each of the participant's willingness to share their stories and to give up their time in service of the research. I experienced participants as willing to share their voluntary turnover stories, which in turn allowed them an opportunity to work through some of the painfulness of their experiences. As an experienced psychoanalytic coach in the role of researcher, I was able to provide some containment in the interview. Some of the research participants expressed that the interview process was cathartic for them. I also made participants aware that should they experience distress about what surfaced in the interview. They would be referred to an appropriate psychology professional to assist them in working the experience through. None of the participants requested additional psychological support post the interviews.

Ethicality in the research was further addressed by gaining approval for the research from the UNISA ethics committee (ERC Reference #: 2019_CEMS/IOP_005) and by obtaining authorisation from the HR Director of the organisation to conduct the research.

2.5 REPORTING OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this section of the chapter is to orientate the reader towards the writing style that I adopted throughout the research, the format in which the findings are presented, and how the cases were reported on. It also describes how I structured the findings according to the systemic levels of functioning. Phenomenological research begins and ends in the first-person plural, and with our responsibility to hearken the call of the other (Churchill, 2018). Zhou and Hall (2018) suggest that including more of the first-person pronoun contributes to the subjective experience to be incorporated into the evidence for the claims of the author and illuminates the author's constructive role in making the meaning more visible in a study. Staying true to the phenomenological approach, I adopted a first-person style of writing throughout my thesis. There is no standard format for reporting data in qualitative studies, and some researchers have presented their data in a variety of creative formats such as poetry, art, collages, film and photograph matrices (Butler-Kisber, 2018; Long, 2013). I opted for a traditional written format to report my findings, which enabled me to narrate and weave them into coherent stories about the phenomenon. The inclusion of narratives allowed me to provide rich, thick descriptions of my data and to stay true to the qualitative type of research and phenomenological approach that I adopted.

I reported on the cumulative cases as a collective and used themes to report the findings. The themes were reported on at the meso, macro and micro systemic levels, respectively. I introduced each theme with an overview of the theme before reporting the rich, thick, descriptive accounts of the participants. I made use of verbatim data from the participants as supporting evidence for each theme that I reported on. I applied systems psychodynamics concepts and constructs to the findings and wove together an interpretive discussion about the systems psychodynamics of each theme. The meso-level themes were narrated in Chapter 5, and the macro and micro-level themes were narrated in Chapter 6. I integrated the findings and reported these in Chapter 7, where the findings culminated into two systems of psychodynamics models of voluntary turnover and recommendations for organisations, consulting psychologists, coaching psychologists, and future research. I also provide a discussion about my personal experiences of having interacted with each of the research participants (see Appendix A) and with the research (see Appendix B). The conclusions, limitations, and a critical discussion of the trustworthiness strategies employed are discussed in Chapter 8.

2.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The research methodology, including the research approach and the design elements, was presented first. I discussed the research approach before presenting the research design. The

research design comprised the type of research adopted, the research strategy and the research method. A discussion about the research method, comprising the research setting, entrée and researcher roles, sampling method, data collection method, data collection procedure and data analysis, was provided. I then discussed the trustworthiness strategies that I adopted for the research and the ethical considerations. Finally, I presented a discussion about how I reported the findings. Chapter 3 presents the systems psychodynamics perspective to the reader.

CHAPTER THREE: THE SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMICS APPROACH

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with insight into, and an understanding of, the systems psychodynamics paradigm. It formed the psychological paradigm through which voluntary turnover experiences were analysed and described and are, therefore, central to the study. Systems psychodynamics encompasses a breadth of theories and constructs, and I, therefore, structured the chapter to allow for a broad understanding of the paradigm first before delving into the schools of thought, the meta-theory and finally constructs that form it.

The chapter begins with a discussion about the history and conceptualisation of systems psychodynamics to orientate the reader to the paradigm. It then flows into discussions about the schools of schools of thought that form the pillars of the paradigm. The three schools of thought on which the paradigm rests include psychoanalysis, group relations theory and open systems theory. Psychoanalysis is discussed with reference to classical Freudian psychoanalytic theories and concepts, Kleinian object relations theory and concepts, and Winnicott's holding and Bion's containment. Group relations theory as the second pillar and school of thought is then discussed, followed by open systems theory. The meta-theoretical frameworks of systems psychodynamics are then presented. These include CIBART as a framework, leadership and followership theory, attachment theory and transactional analysis theory. Finally, other relevant systems psychodynamics constructs that have been developed through the application of the paradigm to organisational development are presented.

3.2 HISTORY AND CONCEPTUALISATION OF SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMICS

The development of systems psychodynamics as a field of research and as a consulting stance is discussed below, followed by an overview of the conceptual framework.

3.2.1 The formative years

The field of systems psychodynamics originated in the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (THIR), which was founded in London after World War II. The THIR was registered as a charity in 1947 and, in the early years, brought together staff from different disciplines with the aim of finding ways of applying psychoanalytic and open systems concepts to group and organisational life (*Tavistock.Org*, n.d.). Eric Miller, Kenneth Rice, Elliott Jaques, Isabel Menzies, and Kurt Lewin, amongst others, were founders and contributors to the development of the THIR approach to group relations. The Tavistock approach, also known as the Tavistock

tradition, refers to a body of theory and practice developed over the past seven decades at the THIR and the Tavistock Clinic, which in recent years has come to be referred to as 'systems-psychodynamics' (Obholzer & Roberts, 2019b).

The inspired application of Kleinian psychoanalytic concepts developed by Bion and others was the beginning of Tavistock's tradition of understanding the nature and role of unconscious processes and communication in groups and organisations (Huffington et al., 2004). The THIR applied for and was granted funding for three projects with the aim of improving productivity in the post-war economy of Great Britain. The work from these projects and, later, a series of social experiments that became the Leicester Conference contributed significantly to the field of systems psychodynamics (Obholzer & Roberts, 2019b). The first Leicester Conference was initiated in September 1957 as the first experiment in Group Relations training in Great Britain (Brunner & Villari, 2004). At the time A. K. Rice, the director of the conference, was strongly influenced by his membership in a training group conducted by Bion in 1947-1948, as well as by Bion's theories (Rioch, 1970). This focus had a profound influence on the development of the Tavistock approach. The contributions of Kurt Lewin and colleagues to experiential learning also influenced the direction of the development of group relations conferences.

Systems psychodynamics was born with Miller and Rice's publication of the seminal volume of *Systems of Organisation* in 1967 (Gould et al., 2006). However, it was only later in the 1980s that Eric Miller, who at that time was the director of the THIR's Group Relations Programme, coined the term (Fraher, 2004). According to Fraher (2004), the term systems psychodynamics was as much an organisational strategy as it was an integration of theoretical approaches at the time. The Tavistock tradition refers to a heuristic framework for identifying and understanding what conscious and unconscious processes take place within and between groups of people (Lawrence, 1999b). It seeks to apply psychoanalytic concepts and methods to the study of organisations and, in doing so, extend the range of psychoanalysis from the individual body to the body of the group and the organisation (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009). The conceptual framework of systems psychodynamics is discussed below.

3.2.2 The conceptual framework of systems psychodynamics

The conceptual framework of systems psychodynamics refers to the marriage between psychodynamic ideas such as unconscious feelings, transference and countertransference, and system concepts such as boundaries, roles and tasks (Cardona, 2020). The systems designation refers to the open systems concepts that provide the dominant framing perspective for understanding the structural aspects of an organisational system (Cilliers, Rothmann, & Struwig, 2004). Systems theory examines the properties and dynamics of

entities as complex systems where each part interacts with other parts and the system as a whole to produce behaviour (Long, 2013). Psychoanalysis studies the hidden and repressed aspects of systems, whether individual or collective and ascertains how these beneath-the-surface aspects influence the system dynamics and behaviours (Long, 2013). At the heart of applied psychoanalytic work is the use of oneself as instrument by using one's own experience and feelings about the situation (Obholzer & Roberts, 2019b). The schools of thought that inform systems psychodynamics are discussed in the section that follows.

3.3 SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

Systems psychodynamics is an interdisciplinary field amalgamating a triad of influences (Fraher, 2004):

- the practice of psychoanalysis,
- the theories and methods of the field of group relations, and
- the task and boundary awareness of open systems perspectives.

Psychoanalysis, as the first of the three influences of systems psychodynamics, comprises classical Freudian psychoanalytical theory and concepts and Kleinian object relations theory and concepts. It also includes Winnicott's theory and concept of holding and Bion's theory and concept of containment. A discussion of classical Freudian psychoanalytic theory and concepts follows.

3.3.1 Classical Freudian psychoanalytic theory and concepts

Psychoanalysis is the first in the triad of theories to have influenced systems psychodynamics as a paradigm which is the conceptual framework that informs the study. Contemporary psychoanalysis is predicated on the value of authenticity and the idea of a true self hidden behind a veil of a false self (Diamond, 2013). In his paper, *The Origin and Development of Psychoanalysis*, Freud (1910) presented his ideas concerning symptoms of psychopathology, anxiety and defences. He referred to psychoanalysis as the process of tracing psychological symptoms as surrogates for repressed psychic material back to the original wishes in the unconscious mind. The premise of psychoanalysis is that people become stuck in their pathological symptoms because of repressed unconscious psychic material. Clinical psychoanalysis deals with those situations in which an individual has become stuck in repetitive patterns and cannot change over time due to being out of touch with aspects of him or herself (Birksted-Breen, 2016).

Freud (1933) provided a structural model of three main parts of the mind, with each part representing a specific function: (1) The id is located in the unconscious mind and consists of primal libidinal and aggressive instincts and drives. (2) The ego occupies both conscious and unconscious aspects of the mind, is the centre for logic and reason, and is concerned with avoiding pain or deriving pleasure by devising realistic strategies. (3) The superego, also occupying unconscious and conscious domains, assumes responsibility for establishing and maintaining a moral benchmark of right and wrong. The Oedipus complex is foundational to the development of the superego (Lapsley & Stey, 2011). It initially forms through the introjection of early authority figures of mother and father during infant development. According to Lapsley and Stey (2011), the incorporation of the father as a solution to the Oedipus complex for boys is so momentous that the superego as a new psychical agency emerges from within the ego, which thereafter retains the character of the father. The superego is the conscience of the personality, and it can retaliate against the imperfections of the ego by inducing guilt (Lapsley & Stey, 2011). Freud also used the metaphor of the iceberg to describe the human psyche, its small visible top representing the conscious mind and its submerged bulk, the unconscious (Kets de Vries, 2014).

Another metaphor that Freud (1962) used was that of a horse and rider, with the horse representing the id and the rider representing the ego. In extending Freud's metaphor of horse and rider to include a dressage judge, knowing what constitutes correctness in rider posture and execution of movements, the judge could represent the superego. It is the role of the rider (ego) to master the natural impulses of the horse (id) within the confines of what the judge (superego) deems to be appropriate. This would require clever strategizing on the rider's (ego's) part. This interplay is not without anxiety which in psychoanalysis is a central behavioural drive and is discussed in the section that follows.

3.3.1.1 Anxiety

According to Menzies (1960), anxiety informs all organisational behaviour. Stapley (2006) distinguishes between two stages of anxiety - signal anxiety and actual anxiety. The first stage of anxiety is referred to as signal anxiety. It occurs as a reaction when danger is initially perceived, and it yields a fight-or-flight response. Actual anxiety occurs after the signal anxiety but instead of a call to action, results in an increasingly regressed mental state where the use of fantasy, magic, and irrational methods of dealing with it is adopted.

Freud (1957) said that anxiety arises from the direct transformation of libido. Anxiety is therefore caused by unconscious internal conflicts, repressed libido, dynamics, and phantasies. He presented the idea that libidinal forces stemming from the id are repressed by

the ego, which prevents transformation of the libidinal forces, and defends against the anxiety. The unconscious therefore exercises continuous pressure on the conscious part of the mind. While he acknowledged that the process is not a simple one, he maintained that the ego is the actual seat of anxiety because this part of the psyche marks the intersection between the conscious and unconscious parts of the mind. Klein (1948) located the origins of anxiety in the death instinct and as a primary fear of annihilation. Her ideas about anxiety are discussed in section 3.3.2 of this chapter.

Anxiety is a state of mind in which more primitive, hence aggressive, desires than usual may prevail (Stapley, 2006). Klein (1948) distinguishes between two different kinds of primitive anxiety:

- Persecutory anxiety is located in the paranoid-schizoid position of Klein and arises out of the death instinct and fear of annihilation. A person experiencing persecutory anxiety feels that he or she is under attack and fears annihilation or rejection by others. Persecutory anxiety occurs when the ego is perceived to be under attack from forces from outside of the individual. The response to this attack is the projection of aggression outwards onto the dangerous/bad object. The paranoid-schizoid position is discussed in detail in section 3.3.2 of this chapter.
- Depressive anxiety, found in Klein's (1935) depressive position, is characterised by conflicting thoughts and emotions such as guilt for actions, an urge to make amends and fear of reprisal. The basis of depressive anxiety is the process by which the ego synthesises destructive impulses and feelings of love towards the same object. Depressive anxiety occurs in response to an awareness of the need to preserve both internal and external good objects that were previously experienced as being under attack from the internal force of the death instinct. The depressive position is discussed in detail in section 3.3.2 of this chapter.

Other relevant forms of anxiety are discussed below:

- Freud's signal theory of anxiety provides a basis for understanding free-floating anxiety. According to signal theory, whenever instinctual demands (or impulses) occur, these arouse painful feelings that were formerly associated with the punitive consequences of impulse satisfaction (Sappenfield, 1965). Wakefield (1992) refers to free-floating anxiety as an affect that is not about any external object in a way that is characteristic of other mental states such as fantasies or fears. Free-floating anxiety has the potential to attach itself to internal thoughts and objects to find relevance (Wakefield, 1992).

- Internalised values and psychological defences rid the ego of wishes that are felt to be dangerous or unacceptable and disturbing. According to Merced (2019), the mind attempts to balance fulfilling any given wish with the defences and values arrayed against it. When a wish is non-threatening, then minimal defences are needed, and there is no moral opposition to making wish fulfilment possible through adaptive compromise (Merced, 2019). However, if the prospect of a wish being fulfilled is too threatening, then defences and values counter it, and a maladaptive compromise emerges (Merced, 2019).

3.3.1.2 Defence mechanisms

Unconscious defence mechanisms employed to reduce anxiety are not regarded as good or bad in themselves. While they serve a necessary function in coping with stresses, they also have a downside in that they create blind spots in our thinking that eventually become evident to others (Stapley, 2006). Every individual is at risk that objective or psychic events stimulating acute anxiety will lead to the partial or complete abandonment of more mature methods of dealing with anxiety and subsequently to regression to the more primitive methods of defence (Menzies, 1960). A discussion about anxiety defences and definitions follows:

- Displacement is having a feeling toward one person but experiencing it toward someone else (Blackman, 2004). In displacement, one assigns to link A in a chain of associations the intensity initially associated with link B (Mijolla & President, 2019). For example, someone might displace hostile feelings that they have towards their boss onto a colleague or consultant.
- Stapley (2006) describes denial as a process of disowning aspects of a conflict, which is unconscious, and that creates an experience that the conflicts no longer exist (Stapley, 2006). Denial is the way the mind has of not paying attention to reality (Blackman, 2004). An employee, for example, might be in denial that he or she has not met the performance criteria for their role, believing instead that their performance standards had been met.
- Repression refers to the thought content of affect being made unconscious. However, when someone purposefully forgets something, this is called suppression (Blackman, 2004). Freud (1910) described repression as a process of motivated forgetting of wishes that are incompatible with the ego. He used a metaphor of a hall full of people attending a lecture to describe the structure of the mind and function of repression. The inside of the hall represented the conscious mind, and the outside of the hall the unconscious mind. A disruptive member of the audience represented an incompatible

wish to the ego. Repression was explained as the locking out, into the unconscious, of the disruptive member so that the lecture could continue undisturbed.

- Sublimation occurs when parts of the self that are considered to be unacceptable are redirected into acceptable areas (Stapley, 2006). Freud (1910) referred to sublimation (Sublimierung) as the redirection of a wish towards a higher goal. Sublimation is a constructive or helpful defence.
- Intellectualisation is the use of the intellect to defend against instinctual impulses (Mijolla & President, 2019). One becomes immersed in fallacious theory of behaviour, which helps to avoid facing feelings (Blackman, 2004). An example of intellectualisation might take the form of a group of psychoanalysts becoming so engrossed in the technicalities of an analysis that, without realising, they are using their intellectual framework and language as a defence against something potentially painful within themselves.
- Rationalisation is an unconscious process of manipulating our thoughts and opinions to avoid having to recognise what is unpleasant or forbidden (Stapley, 2006). One makes excuses (Blackman, 2004). A student may rationalise their failure to deliver on an assignment, for example, by making the excuse that the dog ate their book.
- Regression is when an individual reverts back to behaviour that is of a less mature level and where mentality regresses to a period of earlier life that was experienced to be less stressful and more gratifying (Stapley, 2006). One starts using many defence mechanisms that arose in the early stages of child development (such as denial projection, projective identification, and splitting) (Blackman, 2004).
- Idealisation is when one person thinks that another person is the greater of the two when clearly this is not true. People idealise others to relieve shame over inadequacy through the projection of narcissism; by integrating grandiose self-images with the images of an idealised parent imago; because of love and to avoid experiencing disappointments and; transference where the other person is seen as possessing aspects of a parent they idealised as a child, thereby forgetting later disappointments with their parents (Blackman, 2004).
- In identification, one's own desires are substituted with the desires of an external system (Stapley, 2006). It is the patterning of oneself after someone else who is thought to be great (the person is either great or a projection of imagined omnipotence) (Blackman, 2004). Identification is often seen in boys and men adopting a similar look and behaviour to that of a sports star that they would like to see as themselves. Freud (1917) also refers to identifications as the processes of taking a lost object into the psyche (see section 3.3.1.4).

- Identification with the aggressor is to find identification in an aggressor and with a desire to behave and be like the aggressor who is internalised in the mind (Stapley, 2006). In full-fledged identification with the aggressor, individuals impersonate the aggressor, transforming themselves from those threatened to those making threats (Kets de Vries et al., 2015). To survive an aggressive boss, one might adopt similar characteristics of the boss as if they are one's own.

Other important defences include splitting, projection, introjection, and projective identification. These are discussed under section 3.3.2 of this chapter about Kleinian object relations psychoanalytic theory and concepts because they are important to this specific theory. Transference and countertransference are additional defences that are central to psychoanalytic thinking and will therefore be discussed in depth below.

3.3.1.3 Transference and Countertransference

Freud (1910) asserted that transference arises spontaneously in all human relations, that it is an important bearer of therapeutic influences, and that the less one is aware of it, the stronger it will be. Transference, situations and relationships (including urges, feelings of guilt, and behavioural expectations) from the past are placed onto the image that is held of a current person (Blackman, 2004). It is not the past that gets played out, but rather a person's unconscious fantasies about the past that must be reworked in the present (Malawista et al., 2011). Transference is the psychological process by which the patient (in a therapeutic relationship with a therapist) unconsciously transforms novel situations into familiar, predictable ones (Malawista et al., 2011). Levy (2009) defines transference as a tendency in which representational aspects of important and formative relationships (such as with parents and siblings) can be both consciously experienced and or unconsciously ascribed to other relationships. Childhood experiences play an absolutely crucial role in personality development, particularly in the way people relate to others (Kets de Vries, 2006). Klein (2018) summarises the chief general characteristics of transference phenomena as: (1) They are inappropriate to the current situation. (2) They are repetitions of past experiences. (3) They are universal in interpersonal relationships. Therefore, a person (subject) exhibiting transference in a relationship experiences the other (object) in a way that is not representative of the actual object and which cannot be accounted for on the basis of the current situation alone but is based on previous interpersonal experience (Klein, 2018).

Diamond and Allcorn (2003) defined countertransference as a specific reaction to the client's transference and postulated that it functioned in a similar manner to that of transference. Countertransference refers to the therapist's (in a therapeutic relationship between patient and

therapist) complimentary emotional responses to the patient (Malawista et al., 2011). Originally it was viewed as the therapist's reaction to the patient, revealing unresolved conflicts in the therapist, but now it is seen more as a valuable diagnostic and therapeutic tool that provides the therapist with an emotional window or channel into the patient's internal and interpersonal world (Levy, 2009). The original view saw countertransference by an analyst as an obstacle to the work of psychoanalysis. Winnicott (1949) provided a broader understanding of counter-transference. He viewed countertransference as a normal part of the psychoanalytic relationship between patient and analyst and as something of value to be used as part of the work. Halton (2019) refers to countertransference as the state of mind in which other people's feelings are experienced as one's own. For the purpose of this research, countertransference is defined as an emotional reaction of the researcher to the research participant's transference, as a universal and useful phenomenon, and as a source of information about one's own and the others' feelings.

Transference and countertransference are both useful concepts and help make sense of how one is perceived and treated and also how one feels oneself (Obholzer & Roberts, 2019a). In psychoanalysis, the analyst, as the change agent, offers him or herself up to the patient and becomes the recipient of these transference reactions (Czander, 1993). Countertransference can be used, by consultants, to understand and explore the emotional aspects of people's experience in organisational life as a source of intelligence about the challenges they are facing (Diamond & Allcorn, 2003; Huffington et al., 2004). This greater awareness of problematic relationship patterns (transference and countertransference reactions) can also provide an opening to explore and work through difficult issues in the here and now (Kets de Vries et al., 2015).

In summary, transference and countertransference are central concepts to psychoanalytic inquiry, offering a lens into the source of interpersonal difficulties. In transference, past relationships and roles are inappropriately transferred into a current relationship as a defence. The other person (object) in the current relationship is related to as if he or she is someone else. The other's (object) unique history, values and identity are disregarded in the transference, which contributes towards interpersonal difficulties. The person onto which the transference is placed responds to the countertransference as a defence against what was unconsciously transferred. This has the potential to exacerbate the misconnection and reinforce the transference dynamics, which contributes further to interpersonal difficulties in the relationship. Clients are afforded an opportunity for change by becoming aware of their own transferences, and consultants can use their countertransference to gain deeper insight and understanding into the client's emotional life. In consulting to the transferences, through

the countertransference, the defences can be made conscious, allowing for people to relate to one another as they are rather than as someone else.

3.3.1.4 Loss

Freud's (1917) work on loss and melancholia forms an important part of classical psychoanalysis. It represents a specific psychodynamic process and is relevant because loss is an inevitable part of being human. Freud suggested that when a personal (or object) relationship is lost, the lost object can be regained nonetheless by identification. That is, the lost object is set up again inside the ego (Lapsley & Stey, 2011). The ego incorporates the object within itself (as an introjection), identifies with it, and thereby builds up its structure or character (Lapsley & Stey, 2011). The lost external object is internalised and related to as though the other is the self (Crockatt, 2006). The ego now becomes not just a repressing force, negotiating the interface of pleasure and reality principles, but becomes an active agency, projecting and introjecting, and forming identifications now described as 'abandoned object cathexes' (Crockatt, 2006). According to Chessick (1985), identification is the most mature mechanism of internalisation and a modelling process through which an individual becomes like another person in one or several aspects. It is part of the learning process but also a means of adaptation to a feared or lost object (Chessick, 1985). Kleinian object relations theory and concepts as part of the psychoanalysis school of thought are discussed next.

3.3.2 Kleinian object relations psychoanalytic theory and concepts

Kleinian object relations psychoanalytic theory and associated concepts and defences are core to the field of systems psychodynamics. The section commences with an introduction to object relations theory followed by a discussion of each of the defences. The defences of splitting, projection, introjection, and projective identification are discussed. The paranoid-schizoid position is then presented, followed by the depressive position. The section ends with a discussion about envy, jealousy, greed, and gratitude.

3.3.2.1 Introduction to Melanie Klein's theory of object relations

Object relations theory isn't a unified theory but a group or school of theories that understand the psyche as consisting of relations between "internal psychic objects" (Long, 2016). Melanie Klein's theory of object relations builds on Freud's classical psychoanalysis; however, it also departs from Freud's classical work in a number of ways (Klein, 1946). In classical psychoanalysis, the conceptual foundation is provided by the concept of drive (Mitchell, 1981), while object relations theory argues that the dominating feature of human psychology is the

impulse to form relationships (Stapley, 2006). Object relations theory provides a relationally based understanding of work in organisations and suggests people be object-seeking rather than pleasure-seeking as per Freud's ideas about anxiety and defences (Czander, 1993). Klein and Freud also shared similar but different views about the origins of anxiety, as discussed previously in this chapter. To recap, Freud (1910) viewed anxiety as a way in which the ego relieves itself of repressed wishes which have become too strong. Klein (1946) holds that anxiety arises from the operation of the death instinct, which everyone is born with, which is felt as fear of death and experienced as a fear of persecution.

Psychoanalytic object relations theory starts from the maturational premise of healthy, primary narcissism as a by-product of good enough parenting during infancy and early childhood (Diamond, 2013). Klein (1946) talked about a rudimentary yet unintegrated ego being present in the infant from the start of life. At first, the newborn infant can't distinguish between itself and the mother, instead experiencing the mother as an extension of the self. Winnicott's famous statement that there is no such thing as a baby refers to this two-person unit entity and the developmental interactions between them (Davar & Einstein, 2020). From the early relation of the mother and child in the maternal holding environment, a relationship grows through the ability of both parties to experience and adjust to each other's natures. In this relationship, the infant's rudimentary ego is gradually built up through repeated experiences of being nurtured. If we look at our adult world from the viewpoint of being rooted in infancy, insight into how our minds, habits and views were formed from early infantile phantasies and emotions and the complex adult manifestations thereof, becomes possible (Klein, 1959).

Klein's (1946) view holds firm that object relations exist from the beginning of life, with the mother's breast being the first object that the infant experiences. The breast is split in the mind of the infant into a good (gratifying) breast and into a bad (frustrating) breast. This splitting resulted in the mother becoming a loved object on the one hand and a hated object on the other. The need to cope with frustration and the ensuing aggression from the death instinct is one of the factors that lead the infant to idealise the good breast and good mother, and correspondingly to intensify the hatred and fears of the bad breast and bad mother, which becomes the prototype of all persecuting and frightening objects (Klein, 1975). This defence is called splitting and is discussed below.

3.3.2.2 Splitting

Splitting is defined as the splitting of an object, which could be a person, a value, or even a concept, into parts which are identified as either all good or all bad (Stapley, 2006). It is a defence which enables the individual to separate their negative and positive feelings toward

something, thereby reducing the complex and contradictory feelings associated with it (Krants & Gilmore, 1990). A person employing splitting may idealise someone at one time (seeing the person as all good) and devalue them the next (seeing the person as all bad) (Boag, 2017). Klein (1948) proposed that if we assume the existence of a death instinct, we must also assume that in the deepest layers of the mind, there is a response to this instinct in the form of fear of annihilation of life. Freud (1920) theorised that the death instinct (Thanatos) and the life instinct (Eros), both opposed and bounded, form a fusion that gives rise to sadism as a form of aggression. In order to escape from being destroyed by its own death instinct, the organism employs its narcissistic or self-regarding libido to force the former outward and direct it against its objects (Klein, 2002). This defence is called projection and is discussed below.

3.3.2.3 Projection

Projection originates from the deflection of the death instinct outwards and, in Klein's (1946) view, helps the ego to overcome anxiety by ridding itself of danger. Defensive (also known as classical) projection is defined as the act of perceiving in other people those characteristics that one wishes to deny in oneself (Newman, Duff, & Baumeister, 1997). It is also the process by which people attribute personality traits, characteristics, or motivations to other people as a function of their personality traits, characteristics, or motivations (Holmes, 1978). The process of projection essentially entails the splitting off of parts of the self and attributing them to the other person.

3.3.2.4 Introjection

According to Klein (1946), introjection of the good object (or the good breast), also used by the ego as a defence against anxiety, is vital for healthy ego development. The ego makes use of the introjection of the good object as a mechanism of defence (Klein, 1935). The breast is instinctively felt to be a source of nourishment and, therefore, in a more profound sense, of life itself (Klein, 1988). From the beginning, the ego introjects objects 'good' and 'bad', for both of which its mother's breast is the prototype (Klein, 1935). The soothing ministrations of the mother during the first year of life are incorporated by the baby (introjected), and thereafter the baby continues to gradually introject the mother to develop its own self-soothing capacity (Blackman, 2004). Introjection happens when some part of the world outside of us is taken in to become part of the self (Anderson & White, 2003). The internal objects that an individual develops over time profoundly influence his or her affective and cognitive states (Kets de Vries, 2006). The introjected object is often considered a component of psychic structure

(Blackman, 2004). The incorporation of object representations into the psychic structure manifests in the development of personality in the individual and culture in the collective.

Drawing from Klein's theories, Tavistock's research has studied how individuals in large bureaucratic organisations, faced with uncertainty and anxiety, set up psychological boundaries through projections and introjections that seriously distort organisational rationality and task (Gabriel, 1998). Hinshelwood (2013) alludes to the idea that unconscious phantasies, in terms of object relations, can be seen as motivating forces behind culturally shared attitudes to and the practice of work. He discusses the idea of introjected organisations forming an internal object of organisation-in-the-mind. Organisation-in-the-mind is individuals' perception of how tasks and relationships in the organisation are managed, organised and connected internally (Hutton et al., 2013). According to Hutton et al. (2013), people introject various aspects in relation to people and events in the organisation to form objects and part objects internal to the psyche. These internal objects and part objects inform sense-making for people in the organisation and come to represent aspects of the organisation-in-the-mind. They can come to form shared unconscious assumptions that inform the social defences (see section 3.8). The concept of organisation in the mind shows that more complex and varied objects are introjected, can take various forms, and are not necessarily limited to interpersonal relations.

Klein (1946) makes another essential link in that the introjected object can be experienced or felt as being in bits or splits (e.g. organisation-in-the-mind split into good and bad or even further fragments). This puts the ego in danger of splitting together with the fragmented internalised object. Excessive splitting of the ego weakens it and is therefore not sustainable for healthy ego development. Projective identification as a defence is discussed next.

3.3.2.5 Projective identification

Projective identification is a concept that, despite much imprecision, helps to clarify the phenomena of transference and countertransference and makes an important contribution to an analytic understanding of families, groups, and organisations (Shapiro, 1991). Wells (1980) describes projective identification as a psychological mechanism by which individuals unconsciously identify with an object (person, event, attitude) by externalising (projecting) split (disowned) parts of themselves. Long (2016) describes projective identification as an unconscious phantasy in which aspects of the self or an internal object are split off and attributed to an external object. It is different from projection in that the recipient of the projections comes to identify with the projections and act them out. In this sense, it can be understood to be a process of splitting, projection, and identification between objects.

Projective identification is a set of fantasies and object relations that can be schematically conceptualised as occurring in three phases: firstly, the fantasy of ridding oneself of an unwanted part of oneself and of putting that part into another person in a controlling way; secondly, the introduction of feelings in the recipient that are congruent with the projective fantasy employing an interpersonal interaction; and thirdly, the processing of the projection by the recipient, followed by the re-internalisation by the projector of the 'metabolised projection' (Ogden, 1979). When projective identification comes into play, one gets pulled into behaving like the person that the other perceives us to be (Obholzer & Roberts, 2019a). Petriglieri and Stein (2012) point out that projective identification is never a conscious strategy but rather an unconscious operation as instantaneous and compelling as it is out of awareness and control.

3.3.2.6 Paranoid-schizoid position

Death creates anxiety, thus leading to the developmental process of paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, first originating within the organism itself and defensively deflected onto external objects (Mills, 2006). The paranoid-schizoid position refers to a state of psychological splitting in which conflicting emotions are kept apart, and good and bad aspects of people or objects are also kept separate (Huffington et al., 2004). In the paranoid-schizoid position, the infant splits the mother into a good object and a separate bad object. The baby experiences the mother as good object when the breast is available to feed and comfort the infant. When the infant is frustrated and full of anxiety and fear of annihilation from its own death instinct, then the infant experiences the mother as bad object. The infant, not yet able to see the mother as a whole person with both good and bad parts, projects aggression from the death instinct onto and into the mother as bad object. The projection relieves the infant of anxiety stirred up by the death instinct and associated fear of annihilation. The threat of the projected aggression from the death instinct turning back on and annihilating the infant leads to the experience of being persecuted by the bad mother. The bad object is not only kept apart from the good object, but its very existence is denied, as is the whole situation of frustration and the bad feelings (pain) to which frustration gives rise (Klein, 1946). At this stage in the infant's development, it is too threatening to merge the reality and fantasy worlds, and for as long as the two are kept separate, the infant will remain in the paranoid-schizoid position. The paranoid-schizoid position is therefore characterised by the defences of splitting, introjecting, projecting, and projective identification.

These psychological processes are operational through what Klein referred to as phantasy. The psychoanalytic term 'phantasy' essentially connotes unconscious mental content, which

may or may not become conscious (Isaacs, 1948). Phantasy is both part of the stuff of – the mental corollary of – all instinct and is also inherently object-related (Crockatt, 2006). The phantasy underlying the defences of splitting and projection, in the most primitive form, is the wish to rid the self of the threat of annihilation stemming from the death instinct by placing it onto and into the external object. This, however, also implies that the narcissistic self-regarding libido has phantasies about taking in the life-giving Eros or life force for the self as a good object.

According to Obholzer (2019b), the paranoid-schizoid position is conducive to authoritarianism in organisations and manifests in the cutting off from the roots of authority and the processes of sanctioning authority. That is, formal processes of authorisation are disregarded, and people are deauthorised. In the paranoid-schizoid response, there is not just tension between opposite points of view but a breakdown into hostility and fear (Huffington et al., 2004). Decisions and actions are fuelled by an omnipotent inner world process, in denial and out of touch with reality, and power is overused to achieve one's end (Obholzer, 2019b). Leaders and teams will remain in this position unless they find a way to take back their projections that have been placed onto the 'bad' other. Just as the infant needs to work through the paranoid-schizoid position, so do employees, teams, and organisations to reach a place of reality integration. Working through the paranoid-schizoid position leads to the development towards the depressive position which is discussed below.

3.3.2.7 Depressive position

Working through the paranoid-schizoid position allows the infant to move into the depressive position as part of a natural maturational process of development. The depressive position refers to a state of psychological integration of love and hate towards another person or object seen realistically as having good and bad aspects (Huffington et al., 2004). It means coming to terms with the reality of the mother as a whole person made up of both the good and bad parts. The infant realises its dependence on the good mother for survival, but that this is the same mother that the infant has been attacking all along. According to Klein (1948b), this synthesis gives rise to feelings of mourning and guilt and the drive for reparation, which comes to the fore at this stage. It can be regarded as a consequence of greater insight into the psychic reality and of growing synthesis, for it shows a more realistic response to the feelings of grief, guilt and fear of loss resulting from the aggression against the loved object (Klein, 1946). The depressive position implies advancement in both emotional and intellectual life, further integration of the ego, and a better perception of the external world.

Some fluctuations between the positions always occur and are part of normal development, and the depressive position is not considered a final psychological state one reaches (Halton, 2019). No clear division between the two stages of development can be drawn because the modification is a gradual process, and the phenomena of the two positions remain for some time to some extent intermingled and interacting (Klein, 1946).

Taking back unacceptable parts of the self, previously experienced as belonging to others, can be a painful process for individuals, groups, or organisations in the organisational setting (Halton, 2019). The psychoanalytic consultant's role is not only to trace the projections to their source but also to make these available for reintegration in a way that is bearable for the person or team that has done the projecting. According to Halton (2019), a group functioning in a depressive position will value members' different points of view, can express a full range of emotions to members, and will have a greater capacity to encompass the emotional complexity of the work together, therefore leaving no single member to carry his or her fragment in isolation. This idea is expanded further in section 3.3.4 about group relations theory. Love and hate as the split and integrated emotions through the paranoid-schizoid and depressive position form only two important emotional aspects of Kleinian object relations theory. Envy, jealousy, greed, and gratitude are also central emotions to the theory and are discussed in the section that follows.

3.3.2.8 Envy, jealousy, greed, and gratitude

According to Klein (1988), everyone is born with some degree of innate envy, which is a destructive force stemming from the death instinct. She did acknowledge that deprivation in life can exacerbate envy but that it is something intrinsic and varies in people depending on the extent of the destructive death instinct with which the baby is born.

Although envy and jealousy, as terms used in everyday life, are often used interchangeably, they have distinct meanings in psychoanalysis. According to Curtis (2015), envy is about wanting what someone else has got but in a destructive way, wanting to take it from that other person to prevent them from having it, while jealousy is only about wanting what someone else possesses. Envy also typically takes place in a dyad, while jealousy involves three people. The breast is the first object of envy in early infancy and can be attributed to what Freud called the oral stage of development. Envy is associated with a paranoid-schizoid position. Jealousy, always involving a triad, is a characteristic of the oedipal complex, which follows from the depressive position in infant development. The essence of the Oedipus complex is the child's desire to have a sexual relationship with the parent of the opposite sex, accompanied by hostile feelings toward the same-sex parent (Kupfersmid, 1995). Jealousy is

stirred up by the son towards the father, as the third party in the triad, which leads to the wish for the baby to have the father as a powerful object inside of oneself.

Envy can also often be confused with greed. Greed is an impulsive and unappeasable craving that exceeds what is needed by the subject and what the object is able to offer (Klein, 1988). An essential difference between greed and envy is that greed is mainly bound up with introjection, and the destructive phantasies of scooping out and taking in the good object for oneself, whilst envy is about the destructive projection of the death instinct that aims to spoil and destroy. Envy is the angry feeling towards another person who possesses and enjoys something desirable, and implies robbing the object of what it possesses and spoiling it (Klein, 1988). In literature, envy is often referred to as the green-eyed monster and, in biblical text, as the deadliest of the seven deadly sins (Frank, 2001). This is for good reason because envy arises from the death instinct and is responsible for destroying the good object. There is nothing productive or good that comes from envy.

Gratitude underlies the appreciation of goodness in others as well as in oneself. It is essential for the building up of internal good objects and for healthy ego strength and integration. Ego strength is defined as the capacity for a positive attitude toward oneself and one's ability, self-esteem, emotional flexibility, relationships, and social interactions (Erikson, 1964). According to Klein (1988), the basis of gratitude is in the introjection of the good breast that enables the infant to feel gratitude for the good and loved object that is received as a gift. Klein (1988) hypothesised that the capacity for love gives impetus to the integration of the ego and is also necessary for the splitting of the loved and hated object. Integration of a good object into the self, which forms the core of the ego, necessitates the splitting of the external object because it preserves the good object inside until the ego is strong enough to enable the synthesis of both good and bad aspects. Excessive envy acts as a destructive force that interferes with the primal split between the good and bad breasts, which inhibits the building up of the good object and which stifles development. According to Klein (1988), the prevalence of good objects being introjected over bad objects and the 'triumph' of love feelings over hate feelings is necessary to mitigate the damaging effects of envy and allow the person to experience gratitude.

On occasion, difficulties in collaboration arise not so much from the desire to be a more potent worker but from a sense of being an inevitable loser in a competitive struggle (Halton, 2019). Obholzer (2019a) discusses the destructive impact that envy can have on organisational processes and leadership. Envy can interfere with the process of taking up leadership or followership roles when leaders attempt to mitigate its harmful effects in their work group. An overly democratic approach, as a response to mitigate envy, is adopted by the leader wishing

to put everyone on an equal footing and eliminate competition. However, this ultimately serves to undermine the manager's authority, capacity for perspective, and ability to lead. Envy also results in attacks on authority which are often led by the person who carries the most rivalry and envy in them. The group sets the person up to express his or her own envy and that of the group as an attack on the leader, while the others take on the role of helpless onlookers. The beauty of this particular destructive institutional constellation is that it not only gratifies unconscious wishes but also attacks the pursuit of the primary task, and this reduces the amount of pain arising from the work of the organisation (Obholzer, 2019a).

3.3.3 Winnicott's holding and Bion's containment

Winnicott's (1949) concept of holding and Bion's (1961) ideas about container-contained refer to different but related psychoanalytic concepts. Holding is concerned primarily with being and its relationship to time; the container-contained is centrally concerned with the processing (dreaming) of thoughts derived from lived emotional experience (Ogden, 2004). Winnicott's concept of holding is seen in the image of a mother holding her infant, creating a sense of continuity that allows for possibilities for the infant to work through developmental stages. The mother creates a holding environment of time and experience for the infant. Bion's idea of the container-contained addresses the dynamic interaction of predominantly unconscious thoughts (the contained) and the capacity for dreaming and thinking those thoughts (the container) (Ogden, 2004).

When the psyche of the containing object (the psyche of the container) takes up the contained (i.e. the projected, the not understood, the painful, the needy, as yet uncontained, unthinkable) from the subject, it must be capable of carrying out this metabolic, disentangling process within itself (Lazar, 2003). In the mother-infant relationship, the mother as a "container" contains the infant's unconscious projective material and yet unthinkable thoughts as that which is "contained". The container and the contained are interdependent and mutually influential. In a therapeutic relationship between a therapist and a patient, the therapist becomes a container for the client's unconscious thoughts as the contained. Similarly, an individual as "contained" is contained by the group as a "container" (Huffington et al., 2004). The "container" is not a thing per se but rather a process and a capacity for the unconscious psychological work of dreaming, operating in concert with the capacity for preconscious dreamlike thinking (reverie) and the capacity for more fully conscious secondary-process thinking (Ogden, 2004). The "contained" refers to thoughts (in the broadest sense of the word) and feelings that are in the process of being derived from one's lived emotional experience (Ogden, 2004).

Klein's concept and process of projective identification can be used to illustrate Bion's idea of container-contained. The infant, with both love and hate, projects his or her emotional experience into the mother (with the capacity for reverie), who then does the unconscious psychological work of dreaming or metabolising the unbearable experiences for the infant. Following this digestive, metabolic transformation, the container must find a way to feed these introjections back to the subject in small, digestible doses so that they can be re-integrated and used for mental growth rather than being expelled again as being mentally indigestible (Lazar, 2003). Psychological development from Bion's perspective of container-contained is about creating conditions that allow for mutual growth of the container (the capacity for dreaming) and the contained (thoughts/feelings derived from lived experience). According to Huffington et al. (2004), the breaking down of the containing function causes catastrophic anxiety about survival as the build-up of alpha elements must be transformed through a forceful explosion of growth.

It is this process of container-contained which has to take place in every consultant or supervisor and in every leader if he or she has the intention of being helpful to his/her "baby" (client, supervisee, client system, team, staff, organisation, company, nation or people) to grow and develop in a healthy manner, and to the extent to which the necessity of performing a containing function for those who are to follow his or her lead is both recognised and possible (Lazar, 2003). Unless the management of organisations is sufficiently stable to be able to provide a clear definition of purpose and a reliable container for the inevitably ambivalent feelings (of love and hate) of those they employ towards authority, then the organisation will express its disorder through individual and interpersonal disorder in its members (Stokes, 2019a). Clear role, task, time, territory, authority, and psychological boundaries are some examples of organisational structures that might contain anxiety. Where disorder takes the form of excessive splitting and projection and where persecutory anxiety is experienced, the organisation may be in danger of being bound up in the paranoid-schizoid position. According to Mawson (2019), providing containment for individuals as well as for organisations can shift functioning towards the depressive end of the positions. The depressive position marks improved reality testing and an increase in the potential for reparation of damage done from individual and interpersonal disorder and conflict.

3.3.4 Group relations and the theory of basic assumptions

Group relations is the second pillar after psychoanalysis in the triad of influencers of systems psychodynamics. Freud (1921) concluded that the psychology of groups is the oldest human psychology; and that what we have isolated as individual psychology by neglecting all traces

of the group has only since come into prominence out of the old group psychology and the field of group relations. The study of groups, with its roots in early psychoanalysis, has undergone significant developments over the past century. According to Dimitrov (2008), Le Bon and McDougall contributed towards the idea of a group-as-a-whole; Bion and colleagues revolutionised the study of group relations through their use of the self-as-instrument in consulting to groups; and Kurt Lewin and colleagues contributed with the idea of experiential learning. Bion (1961), after his experiences in World War II and at the Tavistock Clinic, wrote about his theory for analysing aspects of the unconscious group life in his book titled *Experiences in Groups*. His ideas were hugely influential in the development of group relations as a field of study. Although Bion himself wrote little further on groups (Stokes, 2019b), within the TIHR, a group of people led by A. K. Rice and principally supported by I. E. P. Menzies Lyth together with P. M. Turquet, R. H. Gosling, and E. J. Miller, pressed forward the particular version of group relations (Lawrence, 1999) called the Tavistock Model.

Groups are living systems, and group members are interdependent co-actors (subsystems) whose interactions form a gestalt. That gestalt is the 'élan vital' (vital force) of the group and becomes the object of study from the group-level perspective (Wells, 1980). Using a group-level perspective, a group is conceptualised as being more and less than the sum total of the individual co-actors (members) and their intrapsychic dynamics (Wells, 1980). Bion approached group work by looking at the group as a whole and saw the group as a field and as the site of neurosis, giving attention to the neurosis of the group (Hinshelwood, 2007) rather than isolating it in the individual.

According to Rosenbaum (2004), group relations theorists postulate that group identity or consciousness is experienced unconsciously by its members as maternal and as a representation of the mother that was internalised in early childhood. The mother metaphor can be viewed as a way of capturing unconscious wishes and fears related to early dependency needs that group life seems to evoke (Rosenbaum, 2004). Individuals must work with the tensions that are bound up with the fear of being engulfed and obliterated by the group on one extreme and the fear of being estranged on the other extreme (Wells, 1980). In the same way, an infant feels strong conflicting love and hate towards the mother, so too must individuals work with their feelings of love and hate for the group. The group represents the primal mother of the individual (Wells, 1980) in the unconscious mind. There is a clear connection between the competent functioning of an individual, essentially in a depressive state of mind, and an institution in workgroup mode (Huffington et al., 2004). Similarly, the paranoid-schizoid position functioning in the individual has much more in common with a basic assumption institutional state of functioning (Huffington et al., 2004), which represents the

group's neurosis. The basic assumptions and behaviours of a group in a state of neurosis are discussed next.

3.3.4.1 Basic assumptions behaviours theory

Bion distinguished two main tendencies in the life of a group: firstly, the tendency towards work on the primary task or workgroup mentality, and secondly, often unconscious, the tendency to avoid work on the primary task, which he termed basic assumption mentality (Bion, 1961; Stokes, 2019b). Bion (1961) argues that in every group, two groups are operating simultaneously: the workgroup mentality and the basic assumptions group mentality. He points to the group member's ability to manage shared tensions, anxieties, and relationships, as necessary for effective group functioning and with the outcome of a 'capacity for hard work that is also realistic'. The basic-assumptions mentality describes the state of the group that is taken over by strong emotions that divert the group from its primary purpose. The outcome of the basic-assumptions groups is stagnation (Bion, 1961; Stokes, 2019b). The opposing tendencies of the workgroup and basic assumptions group are the wish to face and work with reality but also the wish to evade it when it is painful or causes psychological conflict within or between group members (Stokes, 2019b).

Bion (1961) identified three basic assumptions behaviours of groups which include dependency, fight/flight, and pairing. Turquet (1974) introduced a fourth basic assumptions behaviour called one-ness, and Lawrence, Bain and Gould (1996) introduced a fifth basic assumptions behaviour called me-ness. The basic assumptions of group behaviours are discussed below:

3.3.4.2 Basic assumptions groups

- Basic assumptions group dependency (BaD): A BaD group operates as if it must depend on one leader who is experienced as omnipotent and omniscient in contrast to other members of the group, and the leader is made into a kind of god (Lawrence, 1999). It assumes that the employee, as a child, unconsciously experiences dependency on a parental figure or a system that is imaginary (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002). Groups subject to the dependency assumption experience feelings of inadequacy, neediness, fear of the outside world, and helplessness, which unite them (Kets de Vries & Cheak, 2014).
- Basic assumptions group pairing (BaP): The BaP group is one in which the mood is that of hopefulness and where two members pair, irrespective of gender, to bring forth a Saviour or Messiah, which can take the form of a leader, an idea, or some version of

utopia (Lawrence, 1999). Pairing assumes that individuals or subgroups, who are perceived as powerful, join forces as a way to cope with anxiety and isolation (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002).

- Basic assumptions group fight/flight (BaF/F): A BaF/F group is one of action, and the role of the leader is to mobilise fight or flight to preserve the group. The mood is one of paranoia, and all such feelings must be projected out of the group (Lawrence, 1999). Fight reactions manifest in aggression against the self, team members (with envy, jealousy, competition, elimination, boycotting, sibling rivalry, and fighting for a position in the group and privileged relationships with authority figures), or authority itself (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002). Flight reactions become manifest physically in avoidance of others, illness, or resignation and manifest psychologically as defence mechanisms (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002). Some examples include the avoidance of a situation that is perceived to be threatening or avoiding emotions that are experienced in the here and now and the use of rationalisation and intellectualisation to flight (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002).
- Basic assumptions group one-ness (BaO): The fourth basic assumptions behaviour, called one-ness (BaO), was added by Turquet (1974a). BaO is a mental activity in which 'members seek to join in a powerful union with an omnipotent force, unattainably high, to surrender self for passive participation, and thereby feel existence, well-being, and wholeness' (Turquet, 1974, p. 357). One-ness manifests from the group's wish for salvationist inclusion and can be understood as the team working towards cohesion in the belief that this strong united force will solve problems for the group (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002).
- Basic assumptions group me-ness (BaM): Lawrence, Bain and Gould (1996) proposed a fifth basic assumption called me-ness (BaM) as the opposite of BaO. They underline the understanding of BaM as a cultural phenomenon established through both conscious and unconscious shared social anxieties. When basic assumption me-ness is operative, the individual retreats into his or her inner own reality to exclude and deny the disturbing outer realities (Lawrence et al., 1996). The inner world becomes thus a comforting one that provides refuge (Lawrence et al., 1996).

A group in basic assumptions mode is concerned first with its survival in response to anxieties in the group. The group appears to be meeting as if for some hard-to-specify purpose upon which the members seem intently set (Stokes, 2019b) but are caught up in basic assumptions mode. The basic assumptions group interferes with the work task, just as naughty primitive impulses may interfere with the sensible work of a mature person (Stapley, 2006). Leaders and members of groups dominated by the basic assumptions activity are likely to lose their

ability to think and act effectively: the continuance of the group becomes an end in itself, as members become more absorbed with their relationship to the group than with the work task (Stokes, 2019b). Recognising basic assumptions as a collective flight from work can allow members to refocus their attention on the task and the unfolding institution (Shapiro & Carr, 2012).

Valency as a concept is important to understanding why groups enter some basic assumption modes more so than others. Bion (1961) refers to valency as an individual's readiness to enter into a combination with the group in making and acting on basic assumptions. According to Stapley (2006), everyone has a valency to act and enter into group life in one particular way more so than another. Some may have a greater valence for fight/flight, while others for dependency, for example. Collectively the group develops a greater or lesser valency for different basic assumptions behaviours that serve to defend against anxiety, but that divert the group away from its primary task. It is important for individuals to know the nature of their own valency, a group and organisational version of the need to know oneself, in order to be prepared for both the result and personal strengths and weaknesses as manifested in group situations (Obholzer, 2019a). Valency is discussed further in the section that follows and also in section 3.4.5 of this chapter.

3.3.5 Open systems theory

A third of the triad of influencers of system psychodynamics constitutes ideas from systems theory to which psychoanalytic concepts have been applied. Von Bertalanffy (1950) introduced the idea of open systems in biology. He alluded to the fact that living systems are open systems and that to maintain themselves, they need to exchange materials with their environment in the continuous building up and breaking down of their components. Systems theory views organisations, or a part of any organisation, as an open system with inputs, boundary controls, conversion controls, and outputs (Appelbaum, 1973).

An open system exists by exchanging materials with its environment. It imports materials, transforms them by means of conversion processes, consumes some of the product of conversion for internal maintenance, and exports the rest (Miller & Rice, 1975). For this conversion process to take place, the materials must first cross through the boundary of the system, which separates it from its environment. The work of conversion then takes place within the system before the output is exported across the system's boundary and out of the organisation (Miller & Rice, 1975; Rice, 1969). The boundary around a system of activities is a region called the boundary control region. In the boundary control region, one boundary sits between the internal activities of the system and the region of regulation and a second

between the region of regulation and the environments (Miller & Rice, 1975). Complex systems, which is the case for most organisations, contain multiple internal boundaries and are characterised by a number of identifiable subsystems of activities through which the various processes of the enterprise are carried out (Miller & Rice, 1975). Like a system of activities, an individual or a group may also be viewed to be an open system, existing only through a series of processes of exchanging materials with the environment (Miller & Rice, 1975).

Open systems theory applies to the micro, meso and macro systemic levels of human functioning. At the micro and individual level, Rice (1969) refers to the ego as located in the boundary control region of the individual psychic field and responsible for checking and measuring intakes, controlling conversion activities and inspecting output. In dyads and groups at the meso level, Ogden (1979) makes use of the concept of projective identification as a process to illustrate how psychic material is taken in from a projector, converted or metabolised by the recipient, and made available again for re-introjection by the original projector. It plays a significant role in the dynamics of groups insofar as the mental contents of one part of a group are put into another part and underlies such occurrences as the group's creation of a spokesman or a scapegoat (Shapiro, 1991). This also holds true for sub-groups interacting within the organisation as management coordinates the flow of work, communications, and people across the boundaries of departments and subsystems (Czander, 1993). At the macro and organisation-wide level, interactions take place across the organisation's boundary with its environment and with other organisations. Leadership is seen as a boundary control function that controls transactions between the inside and the outside (Miller & Rice, 1975). Boundaries are discussed in more detail in section 3.4 of this chapter which is about the CIBART model.

The systems psychodynamics approach views organisations as a series of subsystems relating to and mirroring one another and advocates the exploration of a non-rational, conscious and unconscious systemic process in order to gain a depth of understanding into organisational behaviour (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2000). It suggests that a range of complex feedback loops exist between the psychological needs of members, the various workgroups that people belong to, and the tasks and structural features of the organisation (Handy & Rowlands, 2017).

Within the conceptual framework of open systems theory, the individual, the small group, and the large group are seen as progressively more complex manifestations of a basic structural principle (Miller & Rice, 1975). In this sense, the unconscious systemic processes in relating across boundaries, from the micro through to the macro, can be understood as fractal patterns

that are self-similar across different scales. Agazarian (2012) makes use of the concept of isomorphy to explain this. System isomorphy means similarity in structure and function of all systems in the hierarchy and that knowing one applies knowing to all (Agazarian, 2012).

Because of isomorphy, all systems have equivalent structure and function; whatever one learns about any one system, like a group member, can be applied equally well to the group, to subgroups in the group, and to the personal dynamics of the person who becomes the member (Agazarian, 2012). Every system exists in the context of the system above it and is in the context of the system below it (Agazarian, 2012). Thus the hierarchy of living human systems is made up of a recursive sequence of system triads (Agazarian, 2012). The isomorphic nature of human systems, together with the concept of the associative unconscious (discussed in section 3.6.1 of this chapter), made it possible to access the micro, meso and macro systemic levels through the stories about the lived voluntary turnover experiences that were shared by the individual participants.

The three pillars of psychoanalysis, group relations theory and open systems theory, have been discussed in depth. The chapter follows with discussions about a systems psychodynamics related theoretical model, CIBART, that forms a meta-theoretical basis for the study. The CIBART model as a theoretical frame is discussed first.

3.4 THE CIBART MODEL

The CIBART model is a well-researched model that is used to analyse systems psychodynamics and to gain a deeper understanding of (un)conscious dynamics within organisations (Mayer et al., 2018). The psychoanalytic school of thought, including ideas about anxiety, identification, transference, projective identification, and containment, inform the dynamics in the constructs of conflict, identity, authority, role, and task that form part of the model. Systems psychodynamics was therefore applied in creating and understanding the CIBART model. The CIBART frame was developed out of group relations theory and through applying the idea of group-as-a-whole and the function of phenomenal roles and valency. Open systems theory which emphasises the functions of task and boundary, also informs the model. The original BART model (Cytrynbaum & Noumair, 2004; Green & Molenkamp, 2005; Hirschhorn, 2018) included four constructs, namely boundaries, authority, task and role. Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) expanded on the model to include an additional two constructs, namely, conflict and identity.

Koortzen and Cilliers (2002) briefly describe the six constructs represented in the CIBART mnemonic as unresolved conflicts between team members and between team members and

management. Teams need to resolve their identity, which is about who they are in relation to others, and members need to be able to identify with the group leader. Clear boundaries of task, role, time, and space are needed to contain anxiety and keep the group on task. Group members need to be formally authorised, authorise one another and authorise themselves to take up their roles. They need to be able to identify with their formal roles and with the unconscious phenomenal roles that the group projects onto and into them. Clarity about the primary task is further needed to prevent confusion and excessively high levels of survival anxiety. The CIBART constructs are discussed in detail below in the sections that follow.

3.4.1 Conflict

Conflict is a naturally occurring human condition that serves as the dynamo for performance, creativity, innovation and adapting to change (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005). Stapley (2006) refers to conflict as two or more drives that are opposed in a living situation and with different sets of antagonistic tendencies in-the-mind resulting in anxiety. Conflict can manifest intra-psychically within the individual, interpersonally between people within a group, and between groups and others in the broader organisational system (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005). When conflict is experienced between the inner and outer worlds (interpersonally or intergroup), there is a tendency to concentrate behaviour on differences rather than similarities (Stapley, 2006).

3.4.2 Identity

At the individual level, identity answers the question: 'Who am I?' (Henning & Cilliers, 2012). At the group level, Roberts (2019) refers to identity boundaries as the boundary between who is 'us' and who is 'them'? Stapley (2006) points out that in describing or inwardly feeling our 'self'; we are drawing a mental line or boundary across our experience, and everything on the inside of that boundary we are feeling or calling 'self' while everything on the outside of that boundary we feel to be 'not-self'. What Stapley (2006) means is that self-identity depends on where or how people draw psychological boundary lines. Individuals need groups to establish their identity, find meaning, and express themselves (Stapley, 2006). In this sense, identity forms in relation to others and not in isolation.

The group also needs individual members for its collective purposes – both to contribute to the group task and also to participate in the processes through which the group acquires and maintains its own distinctive identity (Stapley, 2006). At the team level, identity refers to characteristics that make the team, its members, their task, climate and culture unique from other teams (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005). It is directly influenced by the personality and style of the leader, the team's experience of leadership, and how individual leadership is allowed to

be taken up by the team members (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005). A lack of identification with the team and its performance and identity boundaries that aren't clear leads to high levels of anxiety in the team (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005).

At the organisation-wide level, the idea of organisation-in-the-mind becomes relevant to the discussion about identity. Organisation-in-the-mind refers to the idea that each member carries in his or her mind about the institution (Obholzer & Roberts, 2019b). It can be similar or different for people. The introjected organisation-in-the-mind forms in relating to the organisation but is also influenced by the individual's own psychic reality and pre-existing internalised objects. The way that the members of the organisation perceive the organisation-in-the-mind will determine the culture (Stapley, 2006), which also speaks to identity at the organisational level.

3.4.3 Boundaries

Boundaries are those dividing lines, sometimes abstract and sometimes concrete, which define what is 'in' and what is 'out' (Singer et al., 1999). They refer to the space that exists between different parts of the system (like the skin is the physical body's boundary, keeping it together and protected) (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005) and acts as the container for the workgroup (Green & Molenkamp, 2005). Setting organisational boundaries contains anxiety and makes for a workplace that is manageable and enjoyable to be in (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002). Stapley (2006) describes three different types of boundaries: spatial boundaries, temporal boundaries, and psychological boundaries. Spatial boundaries are formed around territory or physical space, temporal boundaries around time, and psychological boundaries around identity. Psychological boundaries, as discussed in the previous section about identity, provide a level of comfort and well-being (Stapley, 2006).

A fourth and central idea of systems psychodynamics is the concept of task boundaries. Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) refer to task boundaries as the agreed-upon job content and performance criteria applied at the micro, meso and macro levels of functioning. Where there are problems with the definition of the primary task, there are likely also to be problems with boundaries, so instead of facilitating task performance, they serve defensive functions (Obholzer & Roberts, 2019b). Without boundaries, relatedness and relationships are impossible because we become one, lost in each other, lost in organisations and lost in societies (Struwig & Cilliers, 2012).

Struwig and Cilliers (2012) discuss eight assumptions about boundaries; (1) Boundary management happens between people and in the minds of people and is, therefore, a

psychological process; (2) Constructs of identity, role, task, authority and capability define boundaries in the minds of people and organisations; (3) Each boundary construct contains conscious and unconscious aspects; (4) There are two aspects to each boundary, the in-lines and the out-lines', with in-lines being about what people or groups think they have, while the out-lines are what others think the person or group has in terms of identity, task, role, authority and ability; (5) People, groups or organisations can only control their in-lines, but they need to negotiate their out-lines; (6) For people in the same team or organisation to share an in-line, negotiation is necessary between them; (7) Physical and psychological boundaries are related and interrelated and; (8) Integration and differentiation are interrelated and complementary activities in organisations and lie at the centre of boundary management.

Stapley (2006) also refers to political boundaries as the degree to which the interests of the subsystems compete or align.

3.4.4 Authority and (power)

Authority takes up a marked place in psychoanalytic consulting because it has an acute influence on both formal and informal relationships that are formed and maintained in the organisation (Czander, 1993). Authority refers to the right to make an ultimate decision, and in an organisation, it refers to the right to make decisions which are binding on others (Obholzer, 2019b). The concept of authority, then, describes an interpersonal relationship wherein one individual, the organisational member, must accept a decision that is made by another individual, the manager or leader, permitting that decision to affect their behaviour (Stapley, 2006).

Power is different to authority in that it refers to the capacity to do the work, whether through personal resources such as skills or charisma and the availability of social, economic, historical, and material resources as these interact with the individual (Appelbaum, 1973). Czander (1993) refers to power as a perceptual phenomenon existing within the eyes of another and the perceiver. He attributes it to the personality of the perceiver, the field of perception, and to the attributes belonging to the perceived. Power is essentially a capacity that one person has to influence the behaviour of another person or persons so that the other person or persons do something that they would not have otherwise done (Stapley, 2006).

Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) distinguish three kinds of authority: (1) Authority that is given from above (by the organisation, manager, leader, and colleagues). (2) Authority from below (by subordinates). (3) Authority from within (by the individual or team itself):

- Formal authority is a quality that is derived from one's role in a system and exercised on its behalf (Obholzer, 2019b). It is defined as a right that is given due to rank or office occupancy (Czander, 1993).
- Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) refer to informal authority as being liked/loved/appreciated by colleagues. Authority from below is only possible through the personal authority that people make available to the system. In joining an organisation, the person gives over some control of their authority to that system. The personal authority ceded to the system has the potential to be sanctioned or eroded by others, depending on the level of informal authorisation. The withholding of authority from below, in the form of not sanctioning, means that full authority cannot be obtained, which increases the risk of undermining and sabotage (Obholzer, 2019b). Oberholzer (2019) points out that 'full authority' is a myth and instead makes use of the concept of 'good enough authority', implying ongoing acknowledgement of authorisation by persons in authority, but also and equally of the limitations of that authority.
- The way an individual takes up formal authority is called personal authority (Green & Molenkamp, 2005) or authority from within. Self-authorisation largely depends on the nature of the person's relationship with the figures in the inner world, in particular past authority figures (Obholzer, 2019b), but also on factors such as psychological makeup (personality), social identity, and cultural background (Green & Molenkamp, 2005).

3.4.5 Role and (valence)

Every individual who takes up a role in a workgroup, and by extension in an enterprise, is called upon to manage himself/herself in the role (1999), but taking up a role comes with a level of uncertainty and risk (Czander, 1993; Obholzer & Roberts, 2019b) and anxiety. If an individual's anxiety becomes unbearable, the person risks escaping by stepping out of the role (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002), which makes managing oneself in the role an essential ongoing work. Managing oneself in a role requires insight into and monitoring of one's state of mind and unconscious processes (Czander, 1993), but also an awareness of the conscious and unconscious processes of the group and organisation. A role acts at the intersection at the convergence of biography of the individual and the organisation with its tasks, organisational structures, unique history, and cultural norms (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005).

The role is defined as a mode of adaptation to authority, structure, culture, duties, and responsibilities (Czander, 1993) and is distinguished by normative, phenomenal and existential roles (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005; Czander, 1993; Obholzer & Roberts, 2019b). When

the roles are incongruent, the result is anxiety and underperformance (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005). Differences between the three roles are discussed below:

- The normative role is guided by the task, duty and responsibility and the objective job content (Mayer et al., 2018). It defines the duties to be performed, the parameters for completing tasks, the people and processes with which interaction must take place, and often the outcomes or deliverables that mark the tangible successful performance of the role (Green & Molenkamp, 2005).
- The existential role can be understood at the individual level in terms of how the person believes he/she is performing in the role, and according to Cilliers and Koortzen (2005), at the team level, it is about how the team believes it is performing. In this sense, the role is a defensive and binding function that links the person's intra-psychic life and external reality (Czander, 1993). The existential role is the role in which performance anxiety might be experienced (Cilliers, 2017).
- The phenomenal role contains the unconscious projections and projective identifications received from the other, as well as projections made onto the other (Cilliers, 2017). Roles are both given and claimed labels that create expectations about the kinds of behaviours expected of an individual in a role (Czander, 1993; Stapley, 2006). Phenomenal roles, therefore, contain unconscious projections. Obholzer and Roberts (2019) explain projective identification, as a function of the phenomenal role, as when group members split off an unwanted part of the self, for example, the troublemaker, and locate it in a group member who then acts out the uncomfortable role on behalf of the group.

In discussing roles, it is again crucial to note Bion's (1961) concept of valency, as discussed previously in this chapter (section 3.3.3). Bion borrowed the concept of "valency" from biology physics, where it denotes the proclivity of an atom to become combined with other atoms (Obholzer & Miller, 2018), as discussed in section 3.3.4. Valency refers to the innate tendency of individuals to relate to groups and to respond to group pressures in their own highly specific way (Stokes, 2019b). It plays a part in determining one's choice of profession (Roberts, 2019b) and normative role, but it also influences the phenomenal role that is both given and taken up. Valence for a phenomenal role is like an unconscious kind of suction of the individual into performing a role on behalf of others as well as themselves (Obholzer & Roberts, 2019b) and can be understood through the processes of projective identification. Long (2017) provides some examples of phenomenal roles as "the bossy one", "the nurturer", "the extravert", or "the streetwise one". Task is discussed next.

3.4.6 Task

Green and Molenkamp (2005) make the distinction between primary tasks, survival tasks and process tasks. The primary task corresponds with the mission of the organisation and is the function of work tasks that translate into the individual or group achieving their purpose. Miller and Rice (1975) refer to the primary task as a heuristic concept that allows us to explore the ordering of multiple activities. It is the basic component of work and acts as the driving force in the here and now that keeps the team employed (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005). An individual who is in touch with, or holds inside himself, a conception of the primary task will be very much involved in the here and now but will be trying to relate it realistically to the past and the future as he experiences it (Lawrence, 1999b). As such, a task that is core to leadership is ensuring that the primary task is in the minds of the membership of the organisation and considers that it needs ongoing review against the dynamic external environment to ensure adaption on an ongoing basis (Obholzer & Miller, 2018).

The survival task takes the form of unconscious basic assumptions of group behaviours, while the purpose of the process task is to attend to the survival task and provide an opportunity for the group to look at its own dynamics (Green & Molenkamp, 2005). The process task is, therefore, necessary to ensure that the group remains in touch with reality and working towards the primary task. As discussed previously, the primary work task exists simultaneously with the survival/basic assumptions behaviour group. As discussed in section 3.4.4, authority assumes a special place in psychoanalytical consulting because of its profound influence on relationships. Theories of leadership and followership, therefore, warrant inclusion in the chapter and are discussed next.

3.5 LEADERSHIP AND FOLLOWERSHIP THEORY

Poor management practices are a major source of voluntary turnover (Khatri et al., 1999) which implies leadership as an important consideration in understanding why and how people leave. The leadership role is a lonely role, and leaders must have followers in order to lead; any hanging back or turning away is a threat to their own fulfilment (Miller & Rice, 1975). Followers need to be able to identify with their leaders. The leader, to a large extent, sets the identity of the group comprised of followers, and so the relationship between leadership and followership is essential as part of the discussion about systems psychodynamics. As discussed in section 3.3.2, object relations theory sees relationships and relatedness at the core of object relations. Just as the infant develops in relation to the mother, so does the follower develop in relation to the leader. This section of the chapter provides a discussion

about leadership and followership, narcissism in leadership, and transference dynamics in leadership and followership relations.

3.5.1 Leadership and followership

The leadership of followers applies when an individual – not necessarily the designated leader or manager – acts or negotiates on behalf of others in the organisation (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002). According to Krantz (2019), leaders must secure two important features of organisational life – the need for a vision and direction, on the one hand, and the need for security and reliability on the other. Obholzer and Miller (2018) describe the core functions of leadership as creating a vision and strategy for the organisation and also holding awareness of the primary task, which is essential for reliability. Leadership is also about managing change and acting as an osmotic boundary-keeper between the inside and outside of the group or organisation (Miller & Rice, 1975), as was previously discussed in the section of this chapter about open system theory.

Leadership cannot exist without followership, and followership cannot exist without leadership, and each is dependent on the other for the continuity of their existence. The difficulties of accepting that love and hatred can be felt for the same person are intensified in the relations between managers (leaders) and the members (followers) of the enterprise they manage (Miller & Rice, 1975). Followership should be an active and participative process that ought to be informed by processes of consultation and involvement (Obholzer & Miller, 2018). Leadership should also be an active process of setting the vision and direction and holding awareness of the primary task as discussed above, but importantly in making oneself available for projective identification and processing of followers' projections (Cardona, 2020). In systems psychodynamic literature, much has been written about how excessive narcissism can hamper this important leadership function.

3.5.2 Narcissism in leadership

Freud (1914) conceptualised narcissism as the libidinal investment of the ego. Pulver (1970) argued that Freud's definition was proved to be so nonspecific and that the term came to be applied to many different psychic phenomena. Freud's (1914) definition denotes the attitude of a person who treats their own body in the same way in which the body of a sexual object is ordinarily treated (Freud, 1914). Drawing on Freud's work, Pulver (1970) defines narcissism as the libidinal cathexis of the self. That is the investment of psychic energy in the object of the self. While many definitions of narcissism exist in the psychoanalytic literature, Pulver's (1970) formulation of the concept lends to a more useful application of it to organisational life.

There's no place where the vicissitudes of narcissism are acted out more dramatically than on the organisational stage, where narcissistic leaders can find themselves, but followers must lose themselves (Kets de Vries, 2006). The narcissistic personality generally appears to be mild and gentle, but a closer examination uncovers resentment, anger, and rage simmering behind an attractive veneer (Czander, 1993). Kets de Vries (2020) describes malignant narcissism in leadership as being on the borderline between sanity and insanity; and presenting as a sense of superiority and entitlement, bound up with the dark influence of envy, a tendency to devalue others, a lack of empathy and with the need to take advantage of others. Narcissists are also the masters of polarization and act as though social norms do not apply to them. The narcissistic leader is debilitating because of the lack of mutual identification in his or her interactions with others, especially subordinates (Czander, 1993).

Employees are used by the narcissistic leader to regulate their own widely shifting sense of self-esteem (Czander, 1993). Narcissistic leaders demand idealising and adoring followers who reinforce their defensive and compensatory need for idealisation and grandiosity (Diamond, 2013). Diamond (2013) distinguishes constructive narcissistic leaders as having the capacity to reflect openly from reactive narcissists who are rigid and inflexible. Constructive and reactive narcissists are discussed in more detail below.

3.5.2.1 Constructive narcissists

Constructive narcissism develops in response to “good enough parenting”, where children are provided support and age-appropriate frustration (Kets de Vries, 2006). According to Kets de Vries (2006), a proper “holding environment” for children’s emotional reactions produce well-balanced, positive children who possess a solid sense of self-esteem, a capacity for introspection, and an empathetic outlook. Constructive narcissistic leaders are transformational and inspiring role models and are capable of assuming responsibility for their actions, and are less prone to blaming others (Diamond, 2013). They have a vision that extends beyond themselves, consult with others before moving forward, and value cooperation over solo performance (Kets de Vries, 2006).

3.5.2.2 Reactive narcissists

Reactive narcissism develops in people who have been damaged in some way when phase-appropriate development is interrupted, frustrating experiences are poorly handled, and when parents are either distant or overindulgent (Kets de Vries, 2006). Reactive narcissistic leaders are troubled by inadequacies, bitterness, anger, depressive thoughts, and lingering feelings of emptiness and deprivation (Diamond, 2013). Attempting to master feelings of inadequacy

and insecurity, they construct an exaggerated sense of self-importance and self-grandiosity, along with an associated desire for admiration (Diamond, 2013). Reactive narcissists lack empathy and are unable to understand what others feel and experience (Diamond, 2013), and those who attain leadership positions can have marked negative effects on their organisations (Kets de Vries, 2006).

3.5.3 Transference dynamics in leadership and followership

There are few universals in life, but transference is one: an absolutely ubiquitous element of the human condition, it's the way each of us processes information and organises experience (Kets de Vries, 2001). As discussed previously in this chapter in section 3.3.1, transference dynamics represent the degree to which past experiences from childhood shape and influence perceptions of others, particularly those in positions of authority in the present moment, often projected emotions from the past may distort present relationships (Diamond, 2013). The worker brings unconscious, unresolved family-oriented needs to the organisation, which are projected onto peers and authority figures as a defence against anxiety (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002). It is not uncommon for people to project feelings and images once attached to parent figures onto leaders, peers, and subordinates in organisational setups. Leaders then become objects with the potential to be idealised or vilified depending on what was attributed to the parental figures (Gabriel & Carr, 2002).

Cardona and Damon (2019) explain parental dynamics as when staff react to their managers as they did towards their mother, father, teachers or other significant figures from their childhood. Experiences of being judged harshly or humiliated at home or at school may affect work situations where performance is being judged, or judgement is anticipated. Where parents were harsh or neglectful, the staff member may be hypersensitive to criticism or to being overlooked. But transference dynamics don't only stem from the past of employees. They can also stem from the manager's past. Cardona and Damon (2019) provide another example of the manager who played the caretaker role in childhood due to absent parenting. These managers are at risk of taking up an inappropriate managerial role, either trying too hard to meet others' needs or, alternatively, warding off even reasonable requests. In this sense, managers can also transfer past experiences to their approach to managing and leading, which are inappropriate to the situation.

Two important subtypes of transference patterns are especially common in the workplace: mirroring and idealising (Kets de Vries, 2006) transference which are discussed below.

3.5.3.1 Mirroring transference

Mirroring transference refers to the individual unconscious desire for others to reinforce a need to be seen as omnipotent and grandiose, the narcissistic leader who requires admiring and adoring followers and who views him or herself as godlike (Diamond, 2013). According to Kets de Vries (2006), followers use leaders to reflect what they want to see, resulting in a collusive mutual admiration society between leaders and followers. Leaders tend to take actions to shore up their image rather than serving the needs of the organisation, which can be fatal in the face of change (Kets de Vries, 2006).

3.5.3.2 Idealising transference

Idealising transference is the opposite side of the coin (of mirroring transference) in which followers are in search of leaders to idealise and admire – the unconscious need for an all-powerful leader where followers feel safer and grander simply by being in his or her proximity (Diamond, 2013). According to Kets de Vries (2006), idealising transference is a kind of protective shield for followers as reactive narcissists can become dependent on the emotional fix received in their followers' admiration. Followers project their fantasies onto their leaders, and leaders mirror themselves in the glow of their followers (Kets de Vries, 2006). The results of idealising transference are impaired reality testing by the leaders who find themselves in a hall of mirrors reflecting their idealised selves. The power and strength of the leader are based on the weakness and hopelessness of the follower (Rioch, 1975) in the idealising transference scenario and where reactive narcissism characterises the leader.

3.6 ATTACHMENT THEORY

Attachment theory, with its emphasis on relatedness and internalised working models, is related to systems psychodynamics and formed a meta-theoretical basis for the study. Contemporary attachment theory has strong object relational elements that also bear a resemblance to Freud's theory (Lapsley & Stey, 2011). Central to attachment theory is the role of relatedness between a mother and a child in psychological development. It says that with increasing maturity, self-reliance comes to replace reliance on the mother as the attachment figure, and as a result of sufficient 'mothering experience', the individual can come to 'mother' the self yet remains disposed to seek attachment to others (Gosling, 1999). In this sense, the mother or primary caregiver can be understood to be taken in as an internalised object which is congruent with the views of Melanie Klein's object relations theory. As discussed in section 3.3.2, object relations view people as object seeking with mother as primal object. Both attachment theory and psychoanalytic theory see emotional problems as the result of the

interference with the innate potential for interrelatedness, seeing the meaning of behaviour in terms of its interpersonal function (Fonagy & Target, 2007).

Attachment theory is the joint work of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth (Bretherton, 1992). The need for attachment, beginning in infancy but lasting throughout life, involves the process of engagement with other human beings, the universal experience of wanting to be close to others (Kets de Vries, 2006). Attachment theory is concerned with the fears associated with separation and loss in relationships. An emphasis on fearful arousal and the relational modulation of that arousal lies at the heart of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1982). It is a two-person theory of conflict and offence which emphasises the coping or defensive processes required to deal with fearful arousal within a particular set of attachment relationships (Lyons-Ruth & Spielman, 2004).

Bowlby concluded that to grow up mentally healthy, the infant and young child should experience a warm, intimate, and continuous relationship with the mother in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment (Bretherton, 1992). Attachment theory holds that humans, like other mammals, are born with a strong, evolved tendency to seek care, help and comfort from members of the social group whenever they are facing an overwhelming danger and whenever they are suffering from physical or emotional distress (Bowlby, 1982). Bowlby referred to these emotional bonds as attachment systems, which function to protect vulnerable individuals from potential threats and to regulate difficult emotions following events that were experienced as threatening.

The attachment system evolves from the continuous transactions between the infant and people and objects in its life, from which the child develops an internal working model (IWM) (Briggs, 2015). The IWM is conceptualised as a cognitive structure based on generalised memories of past interactions with the attachment figure and providing expectations as to his/her future responses to the child's attachment needs (Liotti, 2004). Attachment systems emerge as a way of managing stressful, threatening, and challenging situations and emphasise the defences required to cope with fearful arousal within a particular set of attachment relationships (Lyons-ruth & Spielman, 2004). Since the mind never properly separates from the body, the very nature of thoughts will be influenced by characteristics of the primary object relation (Fonagy & Target, 2007). According to Briggs (2015), these mental representations of early relationships are unconscious in the sense that they develop and function spontaneously but are capable of being brought into conscious awareness as development progresses.

Attachment behaviours lie at the origin of attachment representations, and these symbolic representations contain within them vestiges of sensations and predispositions that make the unconscious emergence of attachment experiences (Fonagy & Target, 2007). These representations allow a person to cope constructively with stressful events, maintain self-esteem and emotional stability, and contribute constructively to mutually satisfying close relationships (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2013). Secure attachment styles are distinguished from insecure, with insecure attachments comprising avoidant, ambivalent (Briggs, 2015) and disorganised subtypes. In contrast to an intrapsychic theory of defence, attachment theory locates the ontogeny of defences in an intersubjective field (Lyons-ruth & Spielman, 2004). Parental behaviour that is somewhat insensitive, that is, rejecting and intrusive or inconsistent and self-preoccupied, is related to the infant's display of avoidant or ambivalent attachment behaviour when needing comfort (Lyons-ruth & Spielman, 2004). Attachment defences manifest as attachment avoidance, attachment ambivalence, and disorganised IWM's (Liotti, 2004; Lyons-ruth & Spielman, 2004; Shaver, Mikulincer, & Chun, 2009; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2005). The three insecure attachment sub-types as IWM's are discussed below:

- Attachment avoidance reflects the extent to which a person distrusts the goodwill of the relationship partner. The individual strives to maintain self-reliance and creates emotional distance from the other. The attachment avoidance IWM chronically relies on deactivating strategies for dealing with attachment insecurity. Deactivation strategies involve inhibiting one's desire to be close to the other and suppressing any threat that might activate the attachment system. The focus of these strategies is to maximise distance from others, strive for self-reliance and suppress distressing thoughts.
- Attachment ambivalence or anxiety attachment reflects the degree to which a person worries that a partner will not be available in times of need. The person adopts hyperactivating strategies of making an intense effort to attain proximity to attachment figures and ensure their attention and support. Here people compulsively seek out proximity and protection and become hypersensitive to the possibility of rejection. Anxious people may try to establish intense proximity and intervene supportively even when a partner doesn't want help, which can generate negative emotions, increase conflict, and end in hurt feelings.
- Disorganised attachment differs from avoidance and anxiety attachments. Not only is there the expectation of a negative consequence in asking for help as in the avoidant, but also a multitude of dissociative, dramatic, and contradictory expectations. The simultaneity of approach and avoidance attitudes towards the caregiver results in a lack of organisation and orientation in the infant's overall attachment behaviour. There

is a strong link between disorganised behaviour and parents' unresolved mental trauma, and where parents are available sometimes but not at other times. People may become disorganised, dramatic, and frightened to ask for help when this IWM is activated.

Secure individuals, who are low in both attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety, seem to possess the perfect balance between individual-level fight or flight responses and the ability to effectively recruit help from close others (Ein-Dor & Hirschberger, 2016). Securely attached individuals' positive IWM's and sense of felt security also sustain effective care provision in non-family situations (Shaver, Mikulincer, & Chun, 2009).

In adult life and in organisations, attachment theory offers a lens through which deep insight can be attained into organisational dynamics of leadership and followership, authority and power, organisational politics, and organisational culture. According to Kets de Vries (2001), leaders with detached styles have the potential to fuel a highly politicised corporate culture. A detached style causes the leader to avoid contact with others and, by default, delegate the management of their firms to second-tier management but without clarity of authority or responsibilities. This results in a leadership vacuum and jockeying for power between departments. Problems of coordination, cooperation, interdepartmental rivalry, and vacillating strategy often result (Kets de Vries, 2001). People with a detached disposition can be divided into two subgroups, namely, schizoid and avoidant (Kets de Vries, 2006). Schizoid leaders are likely to be detached and aloof but also unconcerned about their isolated style. Avoidant leaders, although they maintain their distance from followers, have a desire for closeness, but the fear of rejection inhibits them from relating.

3.7 TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS THEORY

Transactional analysis theory, although not part of the theories of systems psychodynamics, is related to the field though its focus on ego states and formed part of the meta-theoretical framework for the study. Just as in Freud's tripartite model of the mind, transactional analysis recognises three parts of the personality, which are referred to as ego states. There is the superego, the Parent ego state, and the Top dog, whose nucleus is composed of the internalised demands and judgements of parents and other authority figures (Wilber, 1978). And there is the infantile ego, the Child ego state, and the Underdog, consisting of all the feelings of helplessness and dependence that the person felt as an infant (Wilber, 1978). Finally, and fortunately, there is the mature ego, the Adult ego state, the authentic self, capable

of seeing present reality and capable of basing its decisions on objective facts and not on the threats of the Parent/Top dog nor the archaic fears of the Child/Underdog (Wilber, 1978).

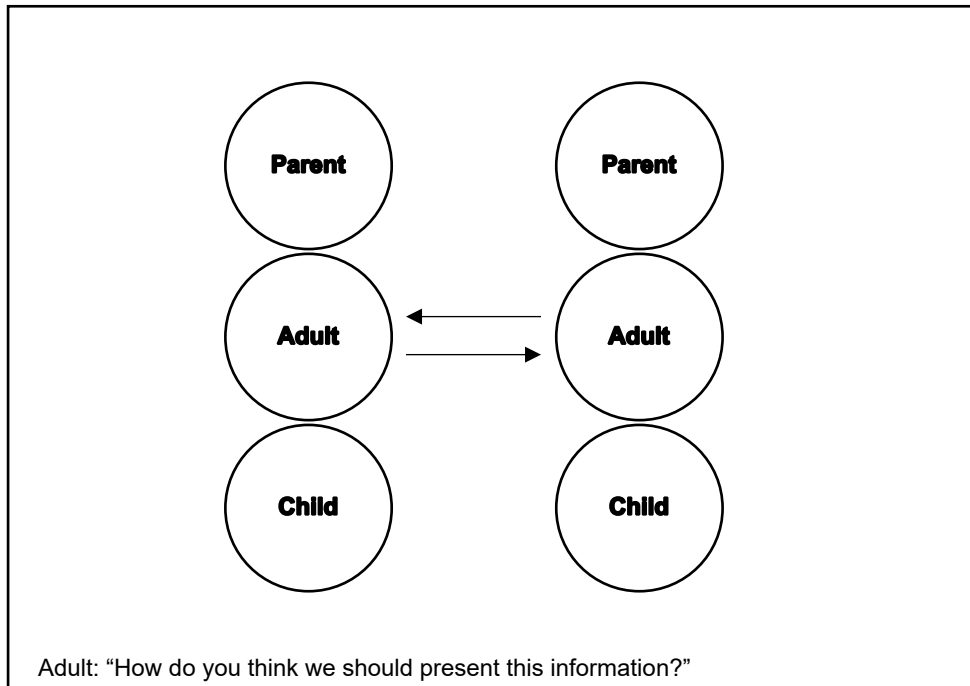
The Parent ego state can be divided into two functions, namely, the Nurturing Parent and the Critical Parent. According to Solomon (2003), the Nurturing Parent is the soft, loving and permission-giving function, while the Critical Parent contains the prejudiced thoughts and beliefs that were learned from one's parents. The Child ego state can also be divided into two parts: the Free Child ego state (also referred to as the Natural Child) and the Adapted Child Ego state (which contains the Rebellious Child ego state) (Solomon, 2003). The Free Child is the seat of spontaneous feelings and behaviour and can be playful, authentic, expressive and emotional (Solomon, 2003). The Adapted child is that part of the personality that has learned to comply with messages from the parents growing up but can also take the form of the Rebellious child when messages from the parents are rebelled against. The Rebellious Child is still, however, a response to the parents' messages, and so it is a kind of adaptation on its own (Solomon, 2003).

According to Emmerson, Bertoch and Checketts (1994), the goals of applying transactional analysis theory at the intra-psychic level of functioning involve increasing the Adult, reducing the Critical Parent and Adapted Child, and increasing the Nurturing Parent and the Free child. The result would be a person operating from a mature state where decisions are objective, where there can be an experience of spontaneity and freedom, and with the capacity to nurture oneself rather than self-flagellate. The Free Child, along with the Adult, is the seat of creativity (Solomon, 2003), whereas the Adapted and Rebellious child and the Critical Parent are inclined to stifle the authentic self and, with it, the capacity for creativity. According to Wilber (1978), the Parent and Child messages as recordings in the mind cannot be erased. However, when recognised into awareness, the Adult ego then has the opportunity to switch them off and remain in the Adult ego state. Working towards the emancipation of the Free Child and the Adult ego state is, therefore, core to the purpose of the application of transactional analysis to psychological development in a coaching or a therapeutic relationship.

When in the process of communicating, it is possible for people to transact to and from a variety of combinations of the different ego states as described above. Identifying the ego state that one is transacting from is central to the application of transactional analysis theory toward the development of improved interpersonal functioning or inter-group functioning. Some transactions result in clear and productive communication, whilst others result in communications that are confusing and conflict-producing. According to Solomon (2003), communication through the lens of transactional analysis theory can take place through straight or complementary lines of transactions or through crossed lines of transactions. When

people use straight or complementary transactions, communication can continue indefinitely, but when people cross transactions, then communication breaks down (Solomon, 2003). Figure 3.1 below illustrates transactions taking place through straight complimentary lines and where the transaction takes place between two adult ego states.

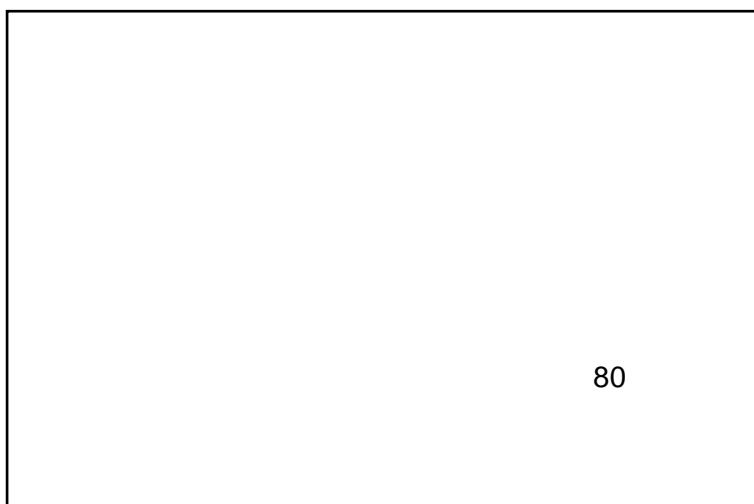
Figure 3.1: Straight Line or Complimentary Transaction

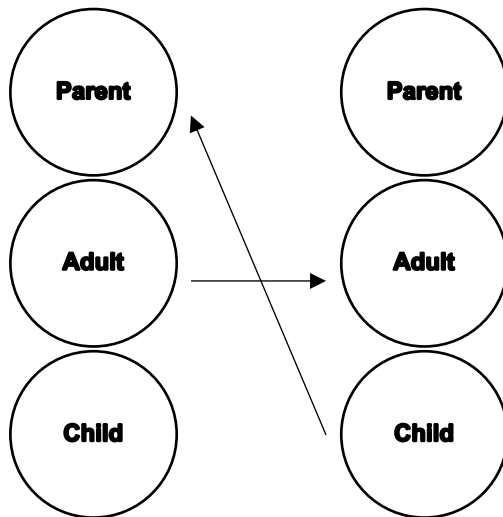


Note. Illustration of a complementary transaction. Solomon, C. (2003). Transactional Analysis Theory: The Basics. Transactional Analysis Journal, 33 (1), 15-22.

The above transaction can be characterised as mature, authentic, and sustainable communication with the potential for creative insight and problem-solving. Figure 3.2 below illustrates a crossed transaction where one party is transacting from the adult ego state while the other transact from the rebellious child ego state.

Figure 3.2: Crossed Line Transaction





Adult: "How do you think we should present this information?"

Note. Illustration of a crossed-line transaction. Solomon, C. (2003). Transactional Analysis Theory: The Basics. *Transactional Analysis Journal*, 33 (1), 15-22.

Solomon (2003) provides an example of how the different parts of the personality might interact. Below figure 3.3 provides examples of how the different parts might interact.

Figure 3.3: Interactions of the Parts of Personality

Nurturing Parent: Go ahead, play and have fun!

Critical Parent: Now, don't you DARE get yourself all messy!

Adult: This sand looks really interesting. I can make a castle.

Free Child: WOW! Look how tall my castle is!!!!

Adapted Child: I better not get my clothes dirty.

Rebellious Child: I don't CARE if I do get dirty! (While dumping a bucket of sand on his/her head)

Note. Examples of how different parts of the personality might interact. Solomon, C. (2003). Transactional Analysis Theory: The Basics. Transactional Analysis Journal, 33 (1), 15-22.

Social defence theory, another important meta-theory of systems psychodynamics, is discussed next.

3.8 SOCIAL DEFENCE THEORY

A social defence is a shared configuration of emotions that promotes cohesion between multiple groups in an organisation (Armstrong, 2015). The idea of social defences against paranoid and depressive anxiety has grown from a working hypothesis put forward by Jacques into a theory of social defences against the distressing and unbearable emotions aroused by organisational tasks and dynamics (Long, 2006). Jacques (1953) proposed that one of the primary cohesive elements binding individuals into institutionalized human association is that of defences against anxiety emanating from the psychotic developmental level. Two years later Jacques (1955) named the term 'social systems as a defence against anxiety'. Menzies (1960) applied the theory to a hospital with a view to helping in the development of new methods of carrying out a task in a nursing organisation. She proposed that the intense anxiety evoked by the nursing task precipitated regression to primitive type defences (Menzies, 1960).

A social defence systems comes into existence when members of an organisation align their personal defences with each other and with the structure and culture of the organisation (Armstrong, 2015). The characteristic feature of the social defence system is its orientation to helping the individual avoid the experience of anxiety, guilt, doubt and uncertainty (Menzies, 1960). Systems psychodynamics theory suggests that psychodynamic defence mechanisms influencing individual thoughts, feelings, and behaviour, also operate collectively, thereby influencing organisational structures, decision making and routine (Handy & Rowlands, 2017). Objective features of organisational life symbolise and are imbued with psychological aspects of members, and over time, the social defence system is built up as members enter into unconscious agreements to diminish task-related anxiety (Krants & Gilmore, 1990). Once defence mechanisms become communally endorsed, they are generally accepted as rational and socially appropriate responses to organisational issues (Handy & Rowlands, 2017) and can be understood to be social defence systems.

In this sense, the idea of organisational culture is really the idea that an organisation can have a personality (Long, 2019) with its unconscious social defences serving the psychological needs of the collective. Organisational culture is defined as (i) a pattern of basic assumptions, (ii) invented, discovered, or developed by a given group, (iii) as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, (iv) that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore (v) is to be taught to new members as the (vi) correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, 1990). Schein (1990), in writing about organisational culture, refers to the organisation as an open system, with stressors from changes in the external environmental forcing people inside the organisation to adapt. New members entering from the outside of the organisation will also bring with them their previously held assumptions. Just as members of a group don't easily give up the elements of their identity and learned defence mechanisms, groups also don't easily give up some of their basic underlying assumptions. This makes culture change a challenge.

Considering also that larger organisations comprise multiple departments or groups, different sub-cultures are likely to develop as silos in the system. As a consequence, the many different systemic links between the different areas in an organisation and its stakeholders are not made accessible to conscious decision-making (Long, 2019). According to Long (2019), these create "wicked problems" because they are inaccessible and unsolvable by only one or two disciplines or links in the system. Organisational cultures may then develop that defend against the possible impact of these problems through avoidance or denial that they can do anything (Long, 2019).

In summary, the idea of organisations as social defences provides a lens into collectively colluded upon unconscious defences in organisations. These can be conceptualised as the personality of the organisation and provide deep insights into underlying assumptions that inform organisational culture. They also manifest in policies and practices that the organisation adopts to defend against anxiety. When sub-cultures develop in silos, the result can be wicked problems in that they can become unsolvable within the silo or even across two functions. The organisation responds with more primitive defences that serve to add to the issue while alleviating the level of anxiety for organisational members. The three pillars and relevant meta-theory of systems psychodynamics have been discussed. The section that follows focuses on the construct level and presents other relevant systems psychodynamics constructs.

3.9 OTHER RELEVANT SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMICS CONSTRUCTS

This section of the chapter provides a discussion about other important systems psychodynamics constructs that are relevant to the study. These include ideas about the associative unconscious, representation, and authorisation. The idea of the associative unconscious was derived from the psychoanalytic school of thought and was discovered through the expansion of socioanalytic inquiry. The constructs of representation and authorisation originated from group relations work and were developed out of the THIR in broadening the application of systems psychodynamics to organisational development. The constructs are discussed below.

3.9.1 The associative unconscious

As Freud and others discovered, there are hidden aspects of human mental life which, while remaining hidden, nevertheless influence conscious processes (Halton, 2019). Freud (1910) described the unconscious as that part of the mind where unconscious wishes are repressed. In this sense, Freud presented the idea of the repressed unconscious as a personal repository for unwanted wishes. Carl Jung (1959) departed from Freud (1910) in his ideas about the unconscious and coined the term collective unconscious. The collective unconscious is a part of the psyche which can be negatively distinguished from a personal unconscious by the fact that it does not, like the latter, owe its existence to personal experience and, consequently, is not a personal acquisition (Jung, 1959). In addition to the personal unconscious, Jung (1959) asserted that there exists a second psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. He called this the collective unconscious, which consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic contents (Jung, 1959).

Long and Harney (2013) differentiate an unconscious specific to social grouping that is distinct from Freud's personal repressed unconscious and described it as the associative unconscious. They argue that the associative unconscious is vital to understanding socioanalytic phenomena. Long and Harney (2013) describe the associative unconscious as a set of processes and as the product of an interconnected network of thoughts and symbols able to give rise to many feelings, impulses, and images and, importantly, able to give rise to meaning. Human groupings share these in such a way that the whole network is not available to any one individual with their limited brain power but only able to be discerned through shared associations and connections – aided perhaps by computers, the media, art, and writing, yet relying on the human capacity for creativity through those associations that can only come through lived experience (Long, 2019).

The associative unconscious is a dynamic system of meaning-generating processes, both conscious and unconscious, which, being evolutionary processes, extend back in time and project forward infinitely into the future (Long & Harney, 2013, p. 19). Through the associative unconscious, all experience is linked (Long & Harding, 2013). The premise of this study rested on the notion of the associative unconscious and the process of free association as part of the interview technique used. The epistemological assumption of a subjective shared reality is central to socioanalytic research. Through the associative unconscious, interpretation is informed through experience and experience is understood in the presence of, or alongside, others (Long & Harding, 2013). Abductive reasoning proceeds by way of a logic of association which sustains the process of making sense of what had been puzzling, unsettling, and disturbing (Long, 2013). Through abductive reasoning, systemic knowledge is generated through the thoughts and associations of its members.

3.9.2 Representation

Representation refers to the authority that is given to a person who crosses a boundary on behalf of another, department or group, or organisation (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002). Effective representation requires thought about who is best able to take up the role of representative based on explicit criteria such as being articulate, diplomatic or senior enough to be taken seriously by other people involved in the negotiation (Mosse & Roberts, 2019). Another form of representation can be found in the context of the group as a whole. Through the process of projective identification, the group unconsciously colludes to use the member with the greatest valence to carry and represent an object (in the form of a role) on behalf of the group (Ettin, 2004; Hinshelwood, 2007; Wells, 1980). Wells (198) discusses the scapegoat as an object that the group-as-a-whole uses to carry the guilt on behalf of the group. The group member

who is used as a scapegoat represents the guilt and the shame of the group. Another member might be used to play the role of joker, thus representing the silliness as an aspect of but on behalf of the group.

3.9.3 Authorisation

In addition to distinguishing different kinds of authority, the systems psychodynamic approach also distinguishes three levels of authorisation, namely representative, delegated, or plenipotentiary authority (Czander, 1993; Obholzer & Roberts, 2019b). Representative authority suggests limited authorisation to share information about the system across the boundary; delegated authority implies more freedom to share, but with a clear boundary around what can be shared; and plenipotentiary authority provides absolute freedom to cross the boundary and to use one's own sense of responsibility to make decisions (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002). When an employee is sent to communicate, negotiate, or sell across the boundary of his or her own system without a clear indication of the level of authority, it creates anxiety that hinders rational decision-making and reporting back to colleagues inside the boundary (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002).

3.10 APPLYING THE SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMICS APPROACH

The systems psychodynamics approach makes it possible to tackle conflict, stress and dysfunction head-on in organisations (Huffington et al., 2004). Amongst others, the systems psychodynamics approach can be applied to issues in navigating change or in developing the management skill of psychological presence (Cardona, 2020); to address deep issues that inhibit leaders from leading and followers from following and also to power and authority issues (Cilliers, 2019; Kets de Vries, 2001, 2006, 2020); in the analysis of group and organisational culture (Menzies, 1960; Napier, 2017); to improving productivity in the interrelatedness of people and technology (Bamforth, 2013); to address unconscious bias in groups (Long, 2019); and importantly to enhance the functioning of teams (Cilliers, 2019; Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005; Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002). It is an approach applicable to working with teams presenting with conscious and unconscious conflicts, unhealthy splitting and exclusion dynamics, issues with authority, integrating diverse members, and teams using excessive individual and group unconscious defences (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002).

The systems psychodynamics approach is significant in placing the exploration of nonrational, unconscious, and systemic processes at the centre of its work (Huffington et al., 2004). Consultants applying the systems psychodynamics approach need to be aware of and selectively interpret the hidden dynamics of the client organisation and the workgroups that

undermine its effectiveness, oftentimes focussing on relatedness and how authority is psychologically distributed, exercised, and enacted (Gould et al., 2006). This requires a psychoanalytic approach beyond that of the individual and their childhood experiences that consider the relatedness of people in groups (Czander, 1993). In adopting this approach, the consultant becomes a part of the client system rather than viewing it as some 'thing' out 'there'. The consultant uses the self as an instrument and provides a containing function for the client (Smith et al., 2003) and uses a systemic approach to broaden the concept of clients as the relationship between client and consultant evolves to include individuals, groups, and organisational units at different times (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002).

Applying this approach in consulting requires considerable knowledge and expertise from the consultant to work with the complexities at the different organisational levels. Lowman (2002) discusses competencies relevant to consulting at the individual level, such as executive and individual coaching and intervening in job and career-related problems; competencies applicable at group level include assessment of functional and dysfunctional group behaviour, assessment and development of teams, the formation of new work teams, intergroup assessment and interventions, group boundary assessments and interventions, and identity (racial, gender, ethnic) group management; at the organisation, wide level Lowman (2002) refers to evaluating corporate management philosophy, organisational culture, the nature of systemic stresses, and navigating change as relevant consulting competencies.

3.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter began with a discussion about the formative years and conceptual framework of systems psychodynamics. Classical Freudian psychoanalytic theory and concepts, Kleinian object relations theory and concepts, Winnicott's holding, and Bion's Containment were discussed as part of psychoanalysis, which forms the first pillar of systems psychodynamics. Group relations theory and open systems theory were discussed as the second and third pillars and schools of thought that underpin the paradigm. The meta-theories encompassed by systems psychodynamics were then discussed. The CIBART model was then discussed first, followed by theories of leadership and followership. Attachment theory was then presented, followed by a discussion about transactional analysis theory. Finally, other relevant systems psychodynamics constructs of the associative unconscious, representation and authorisation were presented before concluding the chapter with insights into the application of systems psychodynamics. The following chapter conceptualises voluntary turnover for the reader.

CHAPTER FOUR: VOLUNTARY TURNOVER

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Voluntary turnover is the phenomenon of inquiry in this study and is, therefore, central to the thesis. It has been conceptualised and understood in a multitude of ways, including but not limited to a rational process, as a dynamic process, as the critical outcome of a series of input variables, and as an economic choice. Most people have had the experience of quitting a job at some point in their life, sometimes with ease and at other times through an arduous process. Porter and Steers (1973) asserted nearly half a century ago that much more emphasis should be placed in the future on the psychology of the withdrawal process. I argue that voluntary turnover as a phenomenon is an inherent part of the human experience and represents a psychological process. Some of the causes of people leaving their jobs open a window of awareness into the dark underbelly of the uses and abuses of power by leaders. There is no denying that voluntary turnover can evoke strong emotions in those who have endured it, with each possessing a story to tell that is fraught with frustration.

The purpose of this chapter is to conceptualise voluntary turnover for the reader and provide a contextual and relevant overview of its meta-theoretical evolution and understanding. It begins with a historical account of turnover research followed by a conceptualisation of turnover and an expanded taxonomy of turnover. A discussion of theoretical models of employee turnover is presented with specific reference to content and process models of voluntary turnover. Some of the leading causes of voluntary turnover are discussed last before concluding the chapter.

4.2 HISTORY OF TURNOVER RESEARCH

Turnover has been a focus of research for a century and continues to be of interest as a result of its impact on organisations and workers (Rothausen et al., 2017). The questions that challenge social scientists and practitioners alike are “Why do people leave?” and “Why do they stay?” (Mitchell & Lee, 2001). It is typically the occasions where people choose to leave that concern organisations and organisational theorists (Morrell, Loan-Clarke, & Wilkinson, 2004). These occasions are of particular interest because of the assumption that they might have been preventable. Skilled employees play a critical role in an organisation’s ability to achieve its strategic goals (Harden et al., 2018), and the loss of these skills has its downfalls. Naidoo (2018) lists some of the defeats of voluntary turnover as depleting human capital from organisations, the loss of return on investment from a productive employee, and disruption to

operations. In short, turnover is costly to organisations (Nolan, 2015). It's not surprising, then, that employee retention has the attention of top-level managers (Mitchell & Lee, 2001) and social scientists (Du Plooy & Roodt, 2010; Naidoo, 2018; Paltu & Brouwers, 2020).

Most research on voluntary turnover has focused on dissatisfaction-induced and rational decision-making processes, with some attention paid to external market influences (Harman et al., 2007). March and Simon (1958) inaugurated the first formal turnover theory (Lee, Hom, Eberly, & Mitchell, 2017). They also developed the first conceptual model to explain turnover. Their model indicates that job satisfaction is the principal lever affecting 'employee perceptions of the desirability of movement' (Morrell, Loan-Clarke, & Wilkinson, 2001). Expanding upon March and Simon's ideas, Mobley (1977) introduced a process model that explains how job dissatisfaction and perceived alternatives manifest in the voluntary turnover decision-making process. Their theory implies a rational decision-making approach to understanding how people leave. Mobley's model was later expanded by Mobley et al. (1979) to account additionally for personal, organisational and labour market factors. Over the years, the perceived desirability of movement has come to mean job (dis-) satisfaction, whereas the perceived ease of movement has been construed as perceived or actual alternatives (Lee et al., 2017).

Around the same time as Mobley, other turnover theorists were working with turnover factors as mediators of job dissatisfaction and as predictors of turnover. According to Porter and Steers (1973), every individual brings to their job a unique set of expectations. They were of the view that meeting the expectations of employees mediate withdrawal and turnover. Price (1977) contributed a content model of turnover that focused on antecedents of job dissatisfaction as predictors of turnover. His model triggered further extensive research on antecedents as predictors of turnover as researchers sought to mitigate voluntary turnover factors and prevent it from occurring. By the late 1970s, researchers had reached an understanding of turnover as a linear, mostly rational and predictable phenomenon until the introduction of Sheridan and Abelson's (1983) cusp-catastrophe model. Sheridan and Abelson (1983) introduced a four-dimensional, dynamic cusp-catastrophe model of employee turnover that departed from the previous linear process models to adopt a more dynamic view. Their model accounted for changes in multiple factors and resulting in dynamic non-linear changes in turnover behaviour. At the same time, Jackofsky (1984) made a connection between performance and turnover. Jackofsky (1984) suggested a curvilinear relationship, such that turnover is most likely among both low performers and high performers (Trevor et al., 1997).

Lee and Mitchell (1994) introduced an entirely new way of understanding the turnover process with their unfolding model of employee turnover. The unfolding model of turnover accounts for

shocks as jarring events that evoke thoughts of leaving (Lee et al., 2017) and adopts Beach's (1990) heuristic image theory of turnover decisions. Mitchell and Lee (2001) also made a notable contribution to the understanding of turnover when they introduced job-embeddedness as a retention construct. Job embeddedness implies factors of psychological attachment to explain why people stay. In linking to ideas about why people stay, Maertz and Campion (2004) introduced a framework of eight motivational forces and drew on the attachment concept to explain retention.

4.3 CONCEPTUALISATION OF EMPLOYEE TURNOVER

Employee turnover has been defined differently over the years. Abbasi and Hollman (2000) define turnover as the rotation of workers around the labour market; between firms, jobs, and occupations; and between the states of employment and unemployment. Rice, Hill and Trist (1950) defined labour turnover as how employees pass through a company and as a distinctive social process with a unique pattern according to the particular institution. Theirs' is the only definition that sought to account for turnover as a social process. Mobley et al. (1979) also define employee turnover as a process within which the employee decides to leave the organisation. These conceptualisations of voluntary turnover limit it to a cognitive behavioural process for people and don't account for unconscious systemic dynamics. For this research, I approach turnover from a systems psychodynamics stance and, therefore, propose that a conceptual understanding of turnover should account for conscious and unconscious systemic dynamics. As such, I assume turnover to be a social phenomenon informed by conscious and unconscious systemic (micro, meso and macro) psychodynamic processes.

4.4 EXPANDED TAXONOMY OF TURNOVER

There is more to turnover than just defining it. This part of the chapter provides an expanded taxonomy of turnover by distinguishing voluntary from involuntary turnover, avoidable versus unavoidable turnover, and functional versus dysfunctional turnover. This is important as it locates the focus of this study on a particular type of turnover, namely voluntary turnover.

4.4.1 Voluntary vs involuntary turnover

Some turnover is voluntary (the employee quits); some are involuntary (the employee is fired) (Muchinsky et al., 2005). Voluntary turnover occurs when the decision to leave the organisation is at the employee's discretion (Naidoo, 2018). Involuntary turnover is when the

employee is retrenched or fired from the organisation against their will or when the employee is deceased. It is not always easy to make the distinction between voluntary and involuntary turnover as some employees resign due to pressure from their managers (constructive dismissal), thus complicating the classification of this turnover as voluntary or involuntary (Masoga, 2013). Choice as a distinctive action taken by the individual distinguishes voluntary turnover from turnover. Although the choice as action is taken by the individual, it forms part of a system of influences and happens through a series of interconnected conscious and unconscious process.

4.4.2 Avoidable vs unavoidable turnover

Voluntary turnover is further distinguishable by avoidable and unavoidable turnover. According to Heneman and Judge (2008), avoidable turnover is that which potentially could have been prevented by specific organisational actions, such as pay raise or a new job assignment. If turnover is generally avoidable, this offers the potential for directed intervention and, thereby, prevention (Morrell et al., 2004), which makes it necessary to distinguish it from unavoidable turnover. Unavoidable turnover happens in cases where it is not preventable, such as in the case of the death of an employee or a spouse's relocation. If it is unavoidable, it will be better to concentrate on managing the phenomenon by reducing its cost (Morrell et al., 2004).

4.4.3 Functional vs dysfunctional

Whilst the loss of high-performing and skilled employees is bad for organisations, not all turnover is bad. Dalton, Krackhardt, & Porter (1981) distinguished between functional and dysfunctional turnover. According to Dalton, Krackhardt, & Porter (1981), dysfunctional turnover occurs when the individual wants to leave the organisation, but the organisation would prefer to retain the employee, and functional turnover occurs when the individual wants to go and that leaving is deemed to be beneficial to the organisation. Functional turnover could result from a negative evaluation of the individual by the organisation, or a change in the organisational structure where the specific skills of the individual are no longer needed. A discussion about theoretical models of employee turnover follows.

4.5 THEORETICAL MODELS OF TURNOVER

Although there is no standard framework for understanding the turnover process as a whole, a wide range of factors have been found useful when it comes to interpreting employee

turnover, and these, have been used to model turnover in a range of different organisational and occupational settings (Morrell et al., 2004). Turnover models can be classified as content models (explains why employees leave) and process models (explains how employees leave) (Sharma & Singh, 2015). This research aimed to develop an in-depth understanding of voluntary turnover as a process. In line with the aim of this research, a brief history of content models is provided, followed by a more in-depth and detailed discussion of process models.

4.5.1 Content models

Content models focus on factors that cause employees to quit, incorporating constructs such as attributes of the job, organisation, and individual, as well as alternative opportunities (Zimmerman et al., 2019). The content models included in the discussion were selected based on their influence and gravitas of contribution to the field of turnover research. March and Simon's (1958) model is discussed as the first formal turnover theory, followed by Mitchell and Lee's (2001) theory of job-embeddedness, Maertz and Campion's (2004) motivational forces model, and finally, Zimmerman, Swider and Boswell's (2019) more recent Five-Factor Model.

4.5.1.1 March and Simon's (1958) model of employee turnover

March and Simon (1958) inaugurated the first formal turnover theory, promulgating foundational constructs underlying employee decisions to participate in organisations (the converse of leaving) – namely, the perceived desirability and ease of movement (Lee et al., 2017). According to Morell et al. (2001), Simon and March's (1958) model is based on equilibrium theory which says that as the organisation's offers of inducements (for example, pay) increase, this reduces the employees' propensity to leave and vice versa. Morell et al. (2001) list some of the limitations of the model as being static, overemphasising the importance of pay, and lacking accounting for 'non-instrumental' (other than pay) forms of commitment (for example, moral or career). As a content model, it offers little sense of the processual dimension of turnover (Morrell et al., 2001). Despite these limitations, March and Simon's (1958) two-factor model of perceived desirability and ease of movement, with job satisfaction as the primary influencer of one's desire to move, laid the foundation for much future research and the development of other perspectives of turnover.

4.5.1.2 Mitchell and Lee's (2001) job-embeddedness theory

Job embeddedness was introduced by Mitchell and Lee (2001) as a new turnover construct and comprises a broad set of influencing factors on employee retention. Job embeddedness is the net of influences in both work (on-the-job) and nonwork (off-the-job) domains that

discourage employees from leaving their jobs (Burrows et al., 2022). It represents an employee's investments made on and off the job (Zimmerman et al., 2019) and seeks to answer the question, "Why do people stay?". According to Holtom and O'Neill (2004), job embeddedness has three critical aspects:

1. The extent to which an employee's job and community are like or fit with the other aspects of his or her life space.
2. The extent to which employees have links to other people or activities.
3. The ease with which links can be broken, i.e., what employees would give up if they left, especially if they had to physically move to another city or home.

Research shows a negative relationship between job embeddedness and turnover intentions (Holtom & O'Neill, 2004; Jiang, Liu, McKay, Lee, & Mitchell, 2012; Purba, Oostrom, Born, & Van Der Molen, 2016). The study by Holtom and O'Neill (2004) found that job embeddedness in healthcare workers accounted for retention over and beyond the traditional measures of perceived desirability and ease of movement. The study by Purba et al. (2016) showed that job embeddedness mediated not only turnover intentions and actual turnover but that it also mediated levels of trust between employees and their supervisors. Their study implied that voluntary turnover also has something to do with attachment formation to an authority figure. The practical implication of these studies is that attachment, as a psychological process, is important to consider as part of a retention strategy for organisations. The research facilitates an understanding that voluntary turnover is indeed psychological and systemic in nature in that attachments to communities, people and activities, and the strength of these attachments, influence voluntary turnover decisions.

Attachment theory, which is discussed in Chapter 3, explains how and why different attachment styles form and the implications of these. Understanding how people form and lose their attachment to organisations as communities, to work groups as potential mothers-in-the-mind, and to people and activities as psychoanalytic objects in the mind is missing from all of these studies. Early development of the attachment system in childhood is likely to bare on the extent of a person's job embeddedness. For example, a person who has developed an anxious attachment style may form stronger links with comfort objects than the person who has developed an avoidant attachment style. This would inform the psychological processes of voluntary turnover beyond just knowing that attachment has something to do with it. The above studies show that attachment, which informs job embeddedness, has something to do with the rate at which and process through which people leave their jobs. The studies don't answer the 'how?' question about the unconscious psychological processes involved.

The introduction of job embeddedness as a turnover construct significantly shaped thinking about why people choose to stay in their jobs because it breached the conceptual gap from desire and ease of movement to deeper psychological processes. This research created an understanding of the psychology of attachment formation and loss in the voluntary turnover process as part of the psychological processes involved. Freud's (1917) ideas about loss were discussed in section 3.3.1.4 of Chapter 3.

4.5.1.3 Maertz and Campions (2004) eight motivational forces model

Maertz and Campion (2004) attempted to integrate process and content turnover models in their research. They identified eight content motives to stay or leave one's job. Their eight motivational forces are listed below:

1. Affective forces (emotional responses toward the organisation that cause psychological comfort or discomfort);
2. calculative forces (rational calculation of future goal attainment);
3. contractual forces (obligations to stay and psychological contract with the organisation);
4. behavioural forces (psychological cost of quitting brought on by investment in membership with higher costs motivating staying and lower costs opposing membership motivating quitting);
5. alternative forces (belief about attainability and value of alternatives);
6. normative forces (expectations of salient others);
7. moral/ethical forces (maintaining consistency between behaviour and values); and
8. constituent forces (individual attachment to coworkers or groups within the organisation).

Interestingly they found that those who quit with no job alternative had more negative affect than users of other decision types. Being willing to leave with no alternative job implies emotional pain to the extent that a person would be willing to be unemployed rather than endure staying in the position. Maertz and Griffeth (2004) describe affective forces as motivational tendencies involving emotions and assume that people are pleasure-seeking and pain-avoiding by nature. In psychoanalytic theory, it is assumed that the course of mental processes is automatically regulated by the 'pleasure-principle': that is to say that any given process originates in an unpleasant state of tension and thereupon determines for itself such a path that its ultimate issue coincides with a relaxation of this tension, for example with avoidance of 'pain' or with the production of pleasure (Freud, 1920).

Based on the motivational framework of Maertz and Campion's (2004) content motives, Maertz and Boyar (2012) developed the Turnover-Attachment Motivation Survey (TAMS) that consists of eighteen scales. At the time of publishing, Maertz and Boyar (2012) postulated that the TAMS was the most comprehensive model-based turnover antecedent survey to date, facilitating more fully specified research models and more systemic diagnoses of turnover causes. Findings from their research (Maertz & Boyar, 2012) supported behavioural inertia against quitting, psychological dissonance, cost of quitting, supervisor continuance attachment, and coworker continuance attachments as significant predictors of turnover behaviour.

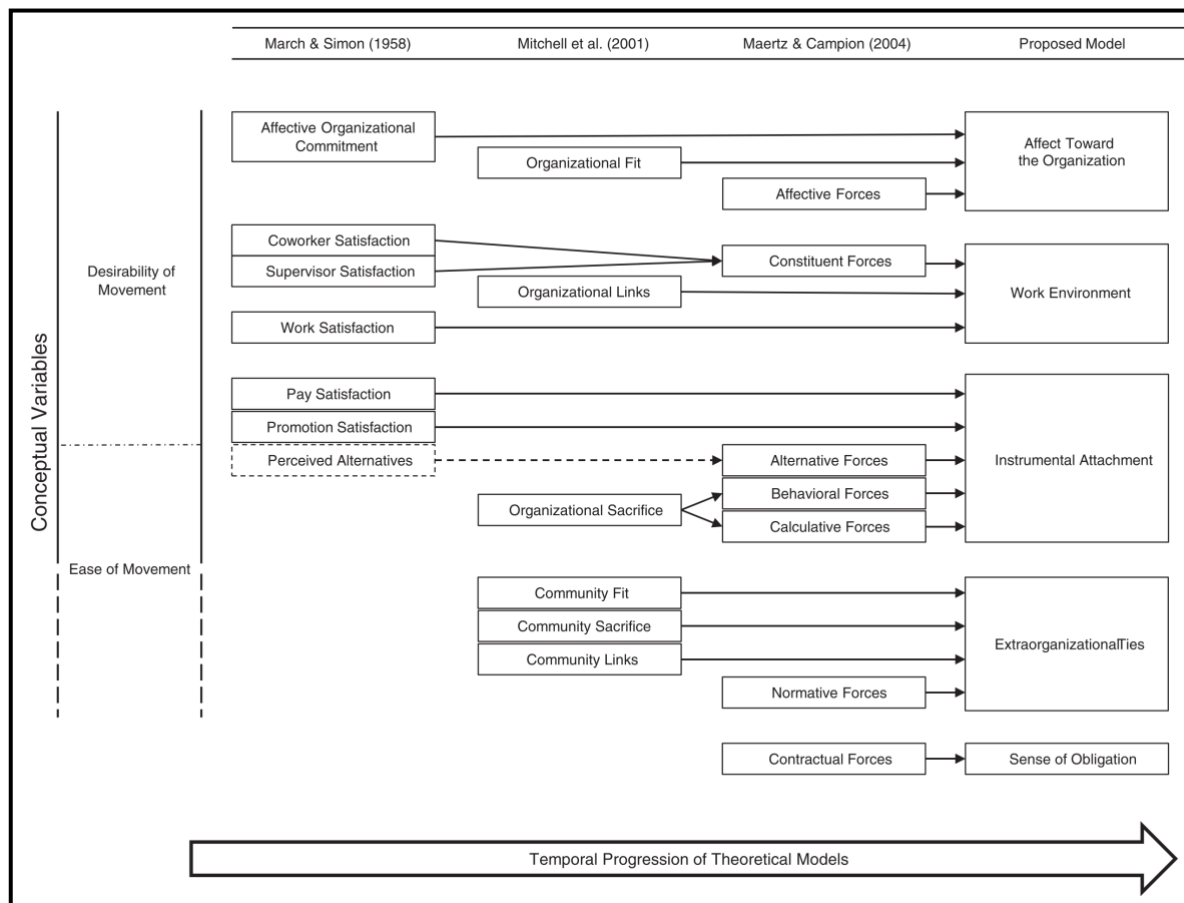
4.5.1.4 Zimmerman, Swider and Boswell's (2019) five-factor model

Contrary to Maertz and Boyar's (2012) view of their model being comprehensive, Zimmerman et al. (2019) argued that there are too many turnover constructs measuring the same thing. They sought to consolidate rather than expand the number of turnover antecedents and hypothesised five factors to be related to employee-search behaviour and actual turnover decisions. These factors are listed below:

1. affect toward the organisation;
2. work environment;
3. instrumental attachment;
4. intra-organisational ties; and
5. sense of obligation.

The research confirmed the factor structure of their model with the implications for future researchers to test the uniqueness of new predictors of turnover (Zimmerman et al., 2019). Their proposed five-factor model is presented below alongside March and Simon's (1958), Mitchell and Lee's (2001), and Maertz and Campion's (2004) content turnover models:

Figure 4.1: Content Models of Employee Turnover



Note. Source: “Synthesising content models of employee turnover”, by Zimmerman et al. (2019), *Human Resource Management*, 58, p. 102.

While content models have provided useful ideas about constructs that predict turnover, process models seek instead to explain how it occurs. This research was concerned more with the processes of voluntary turnover; process models are therefore discussed in more depth in the section that follows.

4.5.2 Process models

Researchers have developed numerous process models to help understand how people leave their jobs. Process models focus on the sequence of steps that employees go through during the process of quitting, such as developing feelings of dissatisfaction, thinking about quitting, searching for alternative employment, and then quitting their current jobs (Zimmerman et al., 2019). A discussion of four process models of turnover follows in this section of the chapter. Mobley’s (1977) intermediate linkages model accounts for irrational impulses and affect,

although these were not yet researched or understood. The Mobley et al. (1979) expanded model makes provision for a broader systemic understanding of voluntary turnover. Sheridan and Abelson (1983) cusp-catastrophe model provided a departure from the traditional linear and predictive modelling of turnover to account for a more dynamic process. Lee and Mitchell's (1994) model adopts a heuristic approach to conceptualise the turnover process and accounts for the dynamic interplay between internal psychological factors relating within and relating outwards to shocks encountered in the outer world. A detailed discussion of the four process models follows.

4.5.2.1 Mobley's (1977) intermediate linkages model of voluntary turnover

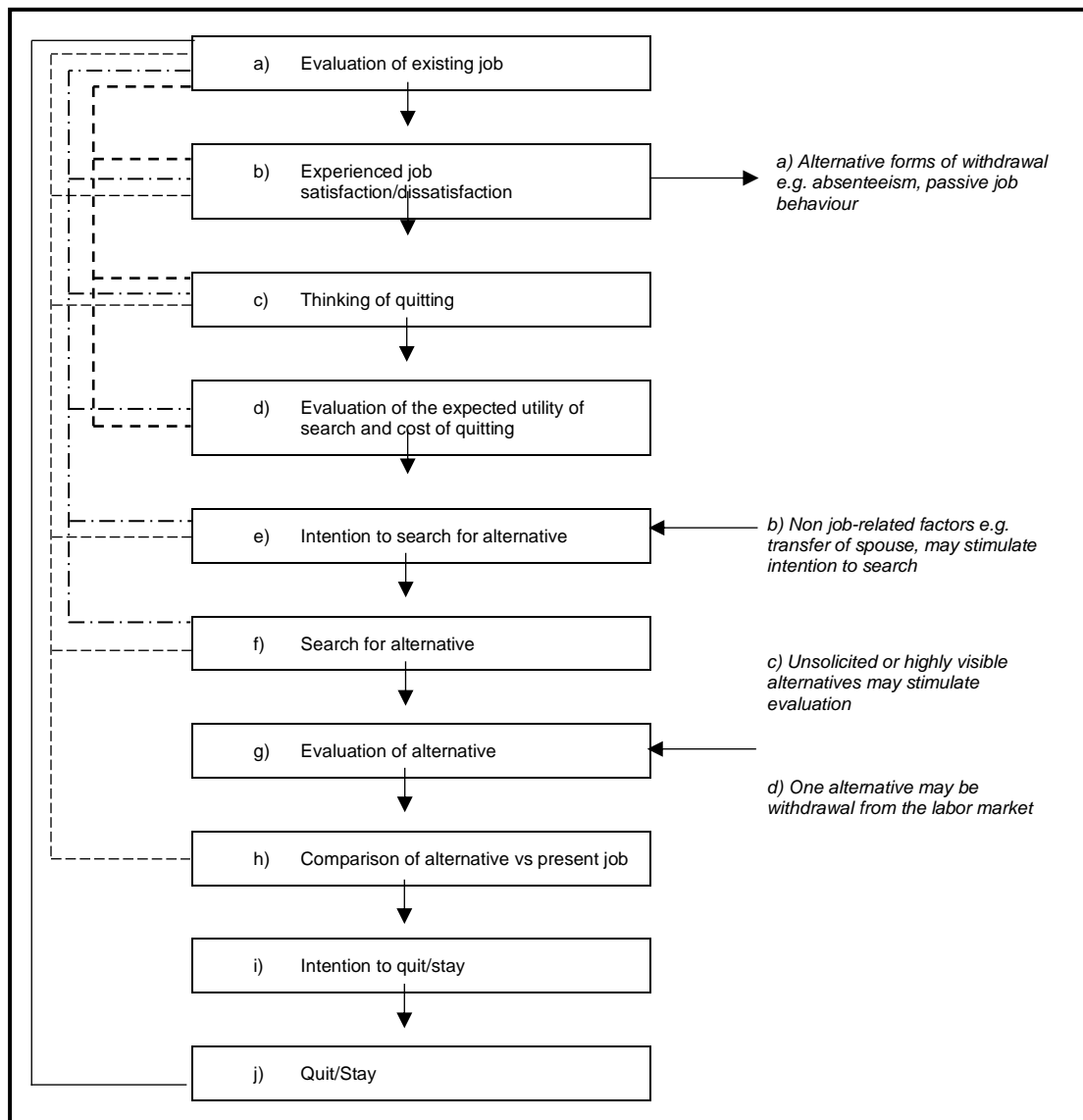
Mobley (1977) developed the intermediate linkage model as one of the earliest process models of voluntary turnover. Whilst March and Simon (1958) identified factors of the desirability of movement (influenced by job satisfaction) and ease of movement, it was Mobley (1977) who refined the immediate links between them and eventually with voluntary turnover. Morrell et al. (2001) differentiate two schools of thought about voluntary turnover, the psychological school and the labour market school. Understanding this split of schools of thought about turnover helps to clarify and locate the split in the origins of the two-factor model identified by March and Simon (1958). Within the psychological school, analysis of labour turnover is geared towards explaining or predicting individuals' decisions to leave (Morrell et al., 2001). The labour market school of thinking accounts more for the economic and objective measures of opportunity in the labour market. Job satisfaction is attributed to the psychological school of thought and is assumed to be the primary underlying influencing factor of desirability for movement. Ease of movement, the second factor in Simon and March's (1958) model, can be understood to be the result of the labour market, where greater availability of opportunities equates to greater ease of movement.

Mobley's (1977) process model illustrates turnover to be a decision-making process with a sequence of steps in the withdrawal process. A discussion of Mobley's (1977) turnover process follows with reference to figure 4.2 below. According to the intermediate linkages model, the turnover process begins with an evaluation of the current job. This evaluation results in the employee experiencing either job satisfaction or dissatisfaction in their role. The experience of job dissatisfaction inevitably leads to thoughts about quitting the job and an evaluation of the expected utility of searching for alternatives. Job dissatisfaction may also manifest as absenteeism or passive job behaviour. If the possibility of finding a comparable job is promising, then the employee may begin the search for alternatives. Once alternative options have been located and evaluated, these are typically compared to one's present job,

which results in an intention to leave or stay. The employee then actions their decision. He noted that the sequence of steps followed in the process might differ for people according to the degree to which the process is conscious (rational). He also noted that impulsiveness (as an irrational response) might prompt the decision to quit sooner than working through all the steps in the process. These assumptions imply that there are unconscious, irrational aspects of voluntary turnover as a process that are unexplained by rational decision-making models.

Mobley's (1977) intermediate linkages model is presented below:

Figure 4.2: Intermediate Linkages Model of Employee Turnover



Note. Source: Adapted from “Intermediate linkages in the relationship between job satisfaction and employee turnover” by Mobley (1977), *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 62, p. 238.

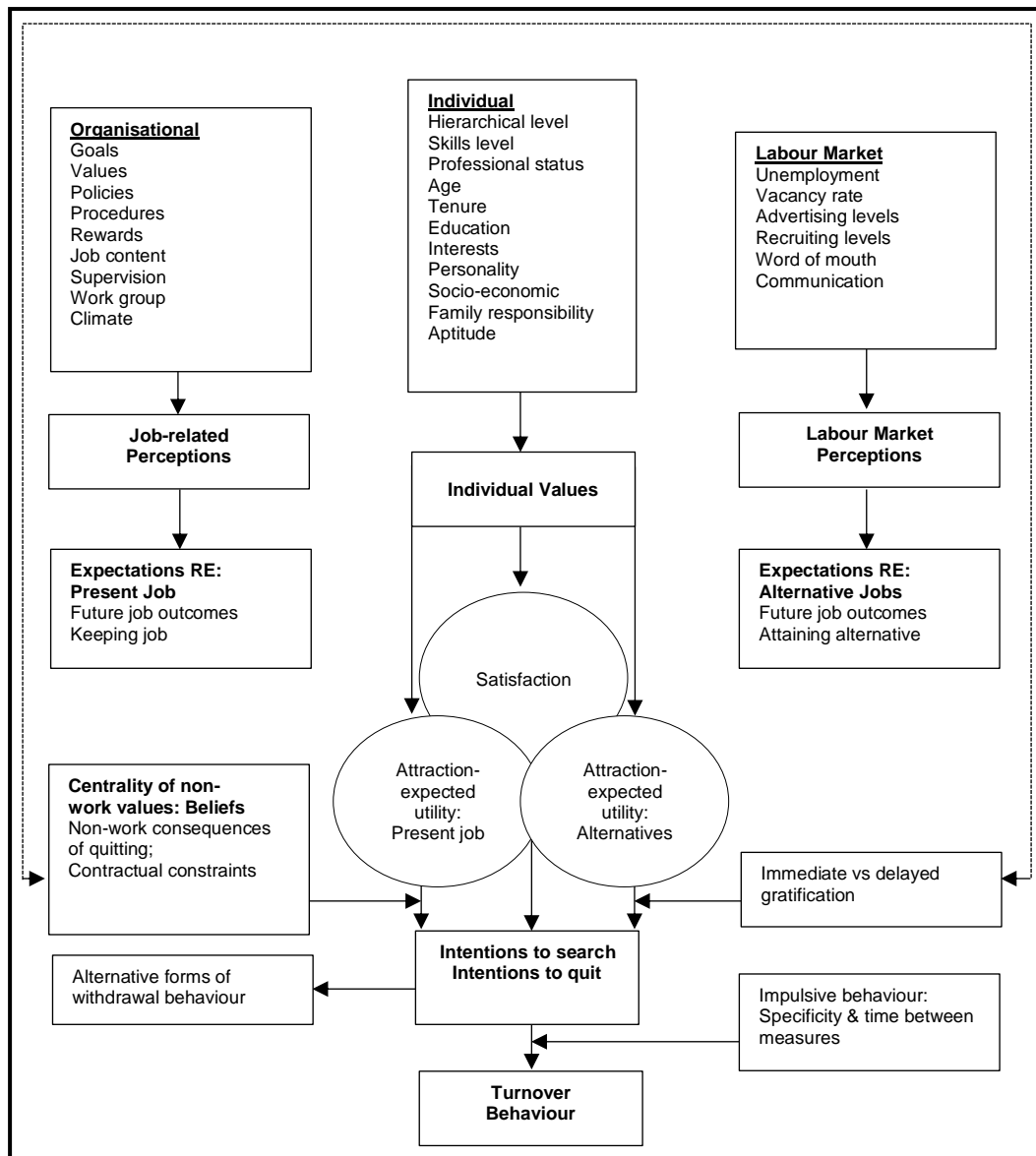
4.5.2.2 Mobley, Griffeth, Hand and Meglino’s (1979) expanded model

Mobley et al. (1979) expanded on the intermediate linkage model to provide a more comprehensive model to explain turnover. According to Youngblood et al. (1983), a comprehensive model should include, at a minimum, individual, organisational, and labour market domains of antecedents. These domains were added to the original model, which only considered job satisfaction and alternatives in the labour market as potential antecedents in

the process. At the individual (micro) level, the model accounts for demographics, intrinsic factors such as interests, personality, aptitudes, and values, and occupational hierarchical level, skill level, status, and professionalism. At the organisational (macro) and group (meso) levels, the model considers organisational values, policies, practices, rewards, job content, supervision, workgroup, conditions, climate, and size of the organisation. At the economic labour market level, the model accounts for factors such as levels of unemployment, vacancy rates, and levels of advertising and recruitment.

The core of the expanded model involves anticipated job satisfaction and expected utilities of the present and alternative jobs, which were theorised to combine in a multiplicative fashion to predict the intentions to search and to quit, which, in turn, predicted eventual turnover (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). The consideration of variables at micro, meso and macro systemic levels implies systems thinking. The expanded model also accounts for the possibility of impulsive and non-rational behaviour influencing intentions to quit and actual quitting. Impulsive and non-rational behaviour, indicating unconscious behaviour, is also acknowledged to exist in the turnover process yet remains unexplained. Systems psychodynamics, as a paradigm, explains unconscious irrational behaviour, and this research addresses the gap in knowledge in this regard. The expanded model is presented below:

Figure 4.3: Expanded Model of Employee Turnover



Note. Source: Adapted from “Review and conceptual analysis of the employee turnover process” by Mobley et al. 1979, *Psychological Bulletin*, 86, p. 517.

4.5.2.3 Sheridan and Abelson’s (1983) cusp-catastrophe model

As a departure from traditional cause-and-effect linear type turnover models, Sheridan and Abelson (1983) introduced a more dynamic perspective of the turnover process. Sheridan and Abelson (1983) presented their cusp-catastrophe model of employee turnover for analysing a dynamic withdrawal process over time. It is less of a model about the decision-making process and more about the phenomenon of turnover per se, which includes psychological rather than

economic factors (Morrell et al., 2001). Catastrophe theory, which informs the model, is the study of the many ways in which continuous changes in a system's control parameters or variables can result in discontinuous changes in one or several outcome variables of interest (Chow et al., 2015). According to Sheridan and Abelson (1983), employee termination may represent an abrupt behaviour change and can, therefore, be understood to be a discontinuous change.

The cusp-catastrophe model has two control variables and one behavioural outcome and has been the most commonly applied form of catastrophe model in the social sciences (Chow et al., 2015). In Sheridan and Abelson's (1983) cusp-catastrophe model of employee turnover, the outcome variable of interest is job termination. The two control variables include levels of organisational commitment and levels of job tension as psychological factors. The primary features of the model include the bimodality of a behavioural response, divergence, hysteresis, and bifurcation. These features are discussed with reference to figure 4.4 below:

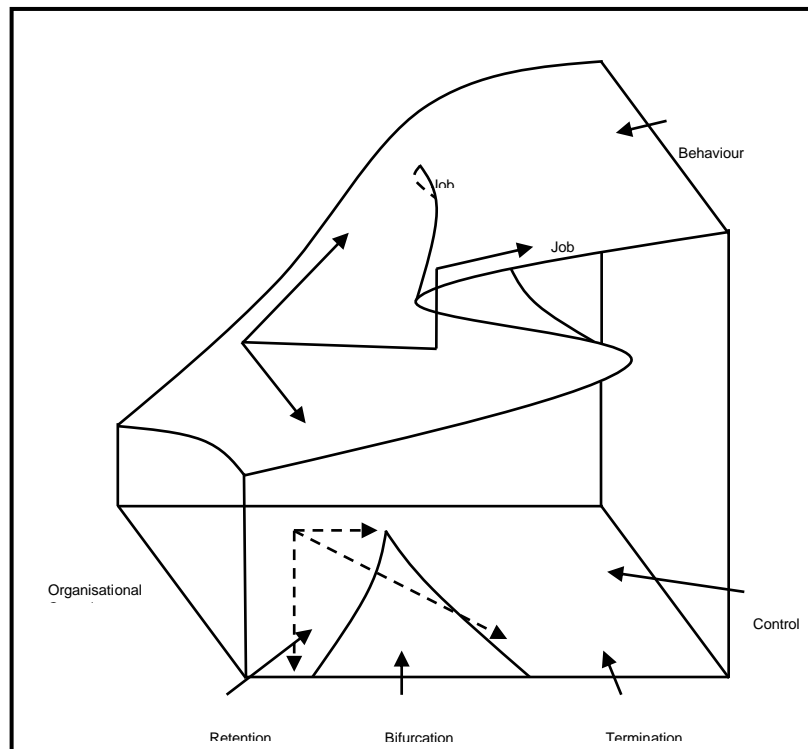
- The bimodality of behavioural responses in this model refers to retention on one end and job termination on the other. Turnover is a discontinuous variable characterised by abrupt change and a 'delay rule', which reflects the idea that employees try to stay in employment for as long as possible (Morrell et al., 2001). Once employees feel they can no longer stay, they abruptly change from retention to job termination (voluntary turnover) (Morrell et al., 2001).
- The hysteresis zone, presented as the fold in the behavioural surface, represents the transitional state of disequilibrium from retention to termination. It is about the difference in job tension, job dissatisfaction or job stress that triggers a sudden change from employment to job termination. A slight increase in tension could take the person from the retention end of the behavioural spectrum towards the job termination end, but from that point, a smaller reduction in tension than what the increase represented is needed to bring the person from the job termination end back to the retention end of the spectrum. The differences in the increase vs the decrease in tension that yields different behavioural outcomes inform the dynamic nature of turnover as assumed by the model. Tension can be understood as anxiety from a systems psychodynamics perspective.
- The shadow of the hysteresis zone is projected onto the control surface as the bifurcation plane (Morrell et al., 2001). On either side of the bifurcation plane, there is more stable behaviour in the retention plane or the termination plane (Morrell et al., 2001). Bifurcation implies that continuous changes in the independent variables yield

sudden qualitative changes in behaviour that can result in job termination as the catastrophe.

- Divergent behaviours may occur on opposite sides of the bifurcation plane (Morrell et al., 2001). The implications are that, as employees near this bifurcation plane, very small changes in the control variables (here, 'job tension', 'job dissatisfaction' and 'job stress') may cause a discontinuous change from retention to termination (Morrell et al., 2001).

According to Morrell et al. (2001), the cusp-catastrophe model makes two significant contributions to turnover research. The first contribution is that turnover is a discontinuous dynamic phenomenon which calls into question the traditional, linear content models of prediction and process models of rationalisation. Secondly, the model demonstrates the possibility for alternative conceptualisations of the turnover phenomenon, indicating possible directions for future research outside of the dominant paradigm. Socioanalysis studies social phenomena by looking beneath the surface (and the obvious) to see the underlying dynamics and how these dynamics are interconnected (Long, 2013). It accepts the notion that the unconscious plays a significant role in the construction of reality (Cilliers & Mayer, 2019). Systems psychodynamics, as a research paradigm, allowed for the exploration of the role of unconscious dynamics in the social phenomena of voluntary turnover. Socioanalysis and systems psychodynamics recognizes the dynamic nature of human behaviour stemming from the unconscious. They don't prescribe to traditional rational assumptions of time as a linear process either, but rather acknowledge the unconscious to be timeless and dynamic. These assumptions are shared with the cusp-catastrophe model of turnover. Socioanalysis and systems psychodynamics therefore have the potential to make a significant contribution to understanding in depth the dynamic and non-linear psychodynamic processes that the cusp-catastrophe assumes to exist. The Cusp-Catastrophe model of employee turnover is presented below:

Figure 4.4: The Cusp-Catastrophe Model of Employee Turnover



Note. Source: Adapted from “Cusp-catastrophe model of employee turnover” by Sheridan and Abelson 1983, *Academy of Management Proceedings*, 26, p. 420.

4.5.2.4 Lee and Mitchell's (1994) unfolding model

Lee and Mitchell's (1994) unfolding model of voluntary turnover draws from Beach's (1990) image theory. Image theory suggests that decisions are made based on the extent to which alternatives fit with images (Mitchell & Beach, 1990). It makes provision for three kinds of internalised images or desired end states against which to make decisions. These images are hierarchically arranged so that the desired end state at one level feeds and informs the desired end state at another level (Hollenbeck et al., 1994). The images are listed below according to the level of hierarchy:

1. The value image is the first image and refers to principles that can be understood as personal values, ethics, morals, and guiding beliefs about what is appropriate.
2. The second image is called the trajectory image and refers to future aspirations about what the decision-maker hopes to achieve.

3. The third image that informs decisions is the strategic image which refers to the plans of how the decision-maker intends to realise the trajectory image.

Alternative images that people encounter from the external world are screened and adopted, and integrated into one's internal images, or they are rejected. Adoption decisions imply adding new trajectory images to one's internal images, and adoption is informed by compatibility with one's internalised value image. Similarly, the adoption of strategic image decisions follows from one's internalised trajectory image and is informed by compatibility with one's trajectory images. Images are first screened and assessed for compatibility with internal images and merit or profitability before they are adopted. In the case of progress decisions towards future aspirations, a new strategic image may be adopted to replace old ones that are longer compatible with one's trajectory image.

Lee and Mitchell's (1994) unfolding model of turnover follows four possible decision paths, but not all necessarily lead to a voluntary turnover decision. A shock to the system initiates the decision paths. The shock causes the employee to reflect on the meaning of the event concerning his or her job. A shock to the system is theorised to be a very distinguishable event that jars employees toward deliberate judgments about their jobs and, perhaps, to voluntarily quit their job (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). The shock can be experienced as positive (a job offer that was unsolicited), negative (issues around performance) or neutral (Masoga, 2013). The event must have caused the employee to think about leaving to be considered a shock. The social and cognitive context that surrounds the experienced shock provides a frame of reference within which employees interpret the shock, called the decision frame (Lee & Mitchell, 1994).

Lee and Mitchell's (1994) four decision paths that depict the unfolding model of employee turnover, as illustrated in figure 4.5 form the discussion below:

Decision path 1: The decision path starts with a shock to the system, which can be personal (an illness, marriage, pregnancy etc.), job-related (getting a new boss, change in job content etc.) or related to the organisation (mergers and acquisitions, restructuring etc.). The shock initiates a probe into one's memory to determine if a past experience that resembles the current situation exists and which might inform the present decision in the form of a script. A script is a plan of action based on past experiences or social expectations (Sharma & Singh, 2015). In cases where a past script is available and deemed appropriate for application to the current situation, the employee will likely transfer and apply the same script to the present situation and act it out. In cases where there isn't a script available, then the employee moves to the second decision-making path. The enactment of the decision to quit is fairly automatic

and script-driven (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). It requires little mental deliberation suggesting an unconscious process of transference.

Decision path 2: A shock also initiates the second decision path, but in this path, there isn't a script to inform an automatic decision. The absence of a script prompts an evaluation of the compatibility of the shock with existing internal value, trajectory, and strategic images. Incompatibility of the shock with internal images leads to image violation and prompts the person to either change the internal image or leave the organisation. In cases where the shock doesn't violate the person's internal images, he or she will stay. Negative shocks are more likely to initiate this decision path because this path focuses on leaving without a specific job alternative (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). If this decision path results in what the person believes to be a good (appropriate) quit, the entire experience may develop into a script to be used the next time that the same (or a similar) shock occurs (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). The violation of images prompting this decision path pushes the employee to decide.

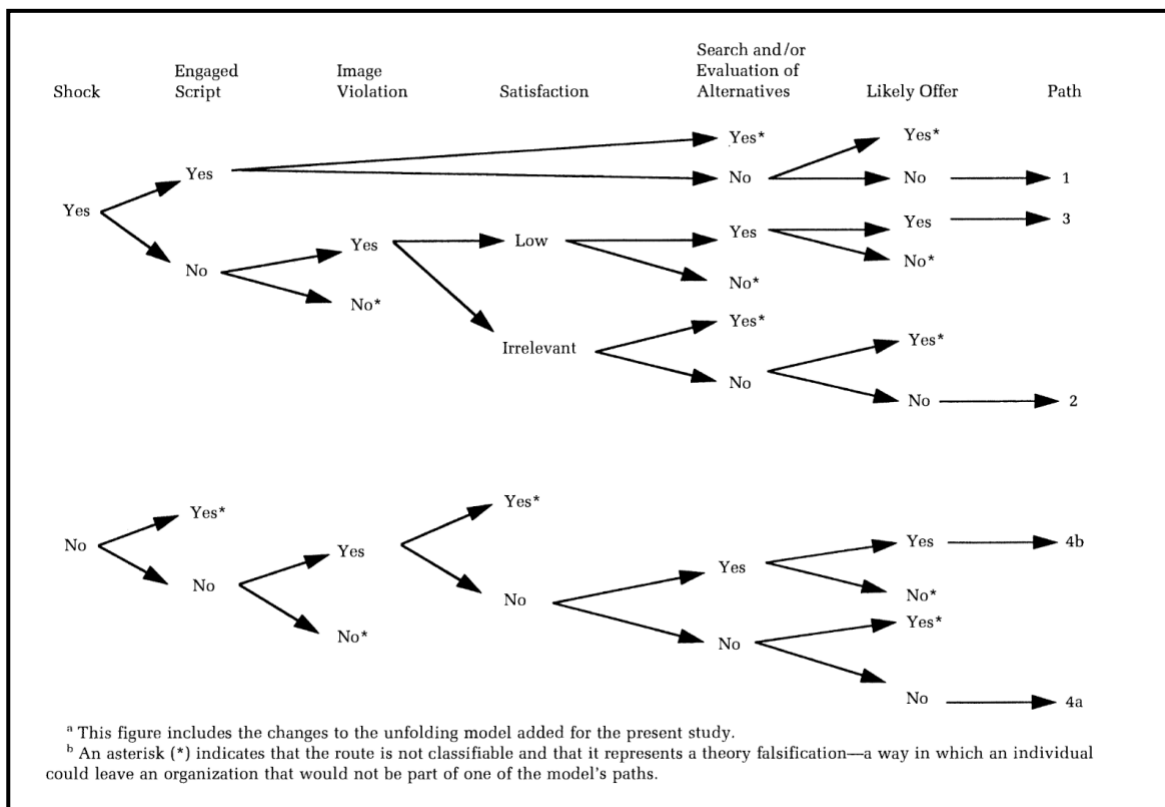
Decision path 3: As is the case of the previous decision paths, a shock initiates the process and subsequent memory probe for a script. In the absence of a script, the employee evaluates the shock for compatibility with one's internal images. An evaluation of incompatibility between shock and images results in dissatisfaction and a subsequent search for alternatives. Where alternatives exist, the person evaluates these for compatibility with the one's images. In cases when the alternatives are incompatible with any one of the internal images, the alternative is rejected. Where the person evaluates any of the alternatives as compatible with all three internal images, these may be considered. An economically rational analysis of surviving alternatives is made by comparing these to the current status quo. The alternative that optimises expected utility is predicted to become the enacted outcome (Lee & Mitchell, 1994), thereby informing the decision to stay or quit. Decision path three is considered a pull decision based on the compatibility and economic utility of alternatives.

Decision path 4: Unlike the other decision paths, this path doesn't begin with a shock. Over time some employees will reassess their commitment to the organisation, which can happen routinely or randomly. This path starts in one of two ways. Over time the employee or the organisation incurs changes. These changes result in the incompatibility of the job with either value or trajectory images. Incompatibility with either or both images leads to questions about current and anticipated future job satisfaction. If lack of fit continues, the image is either changed or job dissatisfaction results (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Job dissatisfaction can lead to quitting without considering the alternative (decision path 4a); or the initiation of a job search, evaluation of the compatibility of alternatives, an economically rational analysis of surviving

alternatives against the status quo, and a decision to leave or stay (decision path 4b). Both decision paths 4a and 4b are initiated by job dissatisfaction in the absence of a shock.

The unfolding model of voluntary turnover is presented below.

Figure 4.5: The Unfolding Model of Voluntary Turnover



Note. Source: “The unfolding model of voluntary turnover: A replication and extension” by Lee, Mitchell, Holtom, McDaniel, and Hill (1999), *Academy of Management Journal*, 42, p. 451.

The decision paths in the unfolding model account for whether a shock to the system occurred or whether job dissatisfaction initiated the process of leaving. The model also classifies decision paths as push, pull or script-driven. It also accounts for mental deliberation involved in each decision path which implies the degree of conscious or unconscious thought processes involved in the decision-making process. These factors are presented in table 4.1 below, which provides a heuristic summary of the unfolding model:

Table 0.1: A Heuristic Summary of the Unfolding Model

Mental Deliberations	Shock	
	Present	Absent
Minimal	Decision Path #1: Script Driven	-
Moderate	Decision Path #2: A push decision	Decision Path #4a: Affect initiated
Extensive	Decision Path #3: A pull decision	Decision Path #4b: Affect initiated

Note. Source: Adapted from “An alternative approach: The unfolding model of voluntary turnover”, by Lee and Mitchell (1994), *Academy of Management Review*, 19, p. 70.

This study aimed to understand the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover. Researchers apply systems psychodynamics as a lens to study conscious and unconscious processes, which makes process models relevant to this study. The systems psychodynamics lens also considers the micro, meso and macro systemic levels of dynamics. The expanded model by Mobley et al. (1979) provides for systemic analysis in the form of personal, organisational and labour market factors, although only in the rational and conscious mind. Systems psychodynamics as a research paradigm makes use of heuristic concepts similar to Beaches (1990) heuristic image theory. Compatible images are split from incompatible images in Beaches' (1990) model. Another central system psychodynamics heuristic concept is transference, where one transfers past experiences to the present as if the current situation represents a past situation. Transference may speak to the scripts that are automatically employed in the decision-making process. Thus, exploring the relationship to a past object might illuminate how the decision in relation to the current object may be inappropriate to the situation. The value image may be likened to the systems psychodynamics construct of the superego, that part of the mind that determines right from wrong. Also, the trajectory image could be likened to the concept of the ego-ideal and the strategic image to the rational ego function that seeks pleasure and avoids pain. Some of the leading causes of voluntary turnover are discussed in the section that follows.

4.6 CAUSES OF VOLUNTARY TURNOVER

People leave organisations for a variety of reasons. Job dissatisfaction is a factor, but focusing on it as the dominant cause is incomplete and limited (Holtom et al., 2005). Research shows some causes of voluntary turnover, such as toxic leadership (Paltu & Brouwers, 2020; Sun & Wang, 2017), organisational culture (Jacobs & Roodt, 2008; Kwakye, 2018), stress and burnout (Du Plooy & Roodt, 2010; Naidoo, 2018), and perceptions of organisational justice (Tayfur et al., 2013). A discussion of these causes follows.

4.6.1 Toxic leadership

The well-known saying that people don't leave bad jobs; they leave bad bosses suggests poor leadership and management as a possible cause of voluntary turnover. A worker's immediate supervisor often wields considerable power over his or her daily life, and a bad supervisor can make work life a living hell for some workers (Weaver & Yancey, 2020). Research by Paltu and Brouwers (2020) showed that toxic leaders who are abusive, authoritarian, narcissistic, self-promoting and unpredictable are likely to cause turnover intentions in their followers. In another study, Erkutlu and Chafra (2017) found a negative relationship between leadership narcissism and job embeddedness. Their research suggests that healthy attachment to leadership by leadership is important for retention, yet narcissism in leadership inhibits this. Narcissistic relationships contain low levels of empathy and emotional intimacy (Campbell et al., 2011), which, from a systems psychodynamic perspective, suggests inhibited capacity for containment or holding. True narcissists know how to use and abuse people, and they regularly put that knowledge into practice (Kets de Vries, 2001) (see section 3.5.2). It would make sense then that followers would have difficulty in forming healthy attachments to leaders exhibiting high levels of narcissism.

The consequences of industrial (corporate) psychopathic behaviour (especially in managerial positions) are extreme, both financially (for organisations) and emotionally (for their co-workers and subordinates) (Saneka, 2020). Apostel, Syrek, and Antoni (2018) consider turnover intention as a coping response to a threat to the employees' self-esteem. In systems psychodynamics terms, this threat to the employees' self-esteem might be understood as a threat to a healthy ego and to identity, and with the potential for fragmentation and a breakdown of a sense of self. Toxic leaders displaying narcissistic tendencies such as a lack of empathy and being well-versed in abusing people are a likely threat to the healthy ego strength of their subordinates. It makes sense that employees who have a well-formed sense of self would engage in turnover intention as a flight defence under a narcissistic leader. It may also be that employees' ego identities become fragmented to a point where they are no

longer able to hold their sense of self together in the context of the narcissistic leader relationship. Narcissism was discussed with specific reference to leadership and followership dynamics in Chapter 3 about systems psychodynamics.

Leadership style is also a cause of either heightened levels of turnover intention or job-embeddedness. There is ample research to suggest that with a transformational leadership style, one can expect lower levels of turnover (Alatawi, 2017; Amankwaa & Anku-Tsedee, 2015; Sun & Wang, 2017). Transformational leadership refers to the leader moving the follower beyond immediate self-interests through idealised influence (charisma), inspiration, intellectual stimulation, or individualised consideration (Bass, 1999). It elevates the followers' level of maturity and ideals as well as concerns for achievement, self-actualisation, and the well-being of others, the organisation, and society (Bass, 1999). Transformational leadership style provides a stark contrast to the toxic leadership characteristics of abusiveness, authoritarianism, narcissism, self-promotion, and unpredictability. The research evidence (Disque, 2020; Erkutlu & Chafra, 2017; Ozdemir, 2017; Paltu & Brouwers, 2020; Weaver & Yancey, 2020) supports the notion that people leave bad bosses and that toxic leadership is a cause of voluntary turnover. Organisational culture as a cause of voluntary turnover is discussed next.

4.6.2 Organisational culture

It's not uncommon to hear people talk about a toxic corporate culture as a reason for leaving their jobs. Organisational culture is a combination of symbols, language, assumptions and behaviours that manifest themselves in a work setting (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007). It is a hidden but unifying force that provides meaning and direction; it is also a system of shared meaning or systems of beliefs and values that ultimately shape employee behaviour (Rashid et al., 2003). Organisational culture is also often referred to as the personality of the organisation. It guides the way individuals and groups in an organisation interact with one another and with parties outside (Kwakye, 2018) and dictates how employees function (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007).

The below studies provide evidence for culture as a cause for people choosing to leave their organisations. Kwakye (2018) found bureaucratic cultures to have a significant influence on turnover intentions. Bureaucracy implies a hierarchy of power, structure, and control as features of the organisational culture. Jacobs and Roodt (2008), in their study about culture and turnover intentions, reported a significant negative relationship between positive experiences of organisational culture and turnover intentions. In another study, Ahmad (2012) found person-environment fit to be a significant mediator of the relationship between

organisational culture and staff turnover intentions. The type of organisational culture and the degree of fit between the person and the culture can be said to be a cause of voluntary turnover. Stress and burnout, as another leading cause of voluntary turnover, are discussed next.

4.6.3 Stress and burnout

Stress is another reason why people decide to quit their jobs. Work-related stress is a pattern of physiological, emotional, cognitive and behavioural reactions to some extremely taxing aspects of work content, work organisation and work environment (Houtman & Jettinghoff, 2007). Chronic stress at work can lead to burnout, with research by Du Plooy and Roodt (2010) showing burnout to be positively related to turnover intention. Burnout is a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with other people in some capacity (Maslach et al., 1996). Cilliers (2019) views burnout from a systems psychodynamic stance as a syndrome representing the conflict between life and death and indicating that something in the system is being killed off or pushed out and regarded as worthless. Stress and burnout can therefore be said to cause voluntary turnover, and from a systems psychodynamics perspective, the pushing out of the 'used up' person by the system in the unconscious. The fragmented employee having worked under a narcissistic leader might be an example of the 'used up' person who is then pushed out of the system. Perceptions of injustice and unfairness are another cause for voluntary turnover that warrant discussion.

4.6.4 Perceptions of injustice and unfairness

Systems of justice have been in existence since before the ancient Grecian times. Humans need fairness, and the experience of being unfairly treated is likely to evoke a behavioural response. Research has shown that people who feel fairly treated are more satisfied with their pay and jobs, more committed to their work organisation, more trusting of their leaders, and more likely to engage in citizenship behaviours that go above and beyond their job description (Bobocel & Hafer, 2007). On the contrary, research (Hausknecht et al., 2011; Simons & Roberson, 2003) also shows that perceptions of injustice explain variance in distal work outcomes of job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and turnover intentions.

Employee's perceptions of fairness are influenced by their consideration of a number of key aspects of organisational life, such as how resources are distributed (distributive justice), how decisions are made (procedural justice), and how people are treated interpersonally (interpersonal justice) (Bobocel & Hafer, 2007). Tayfur et al. (2013) found a link between

distributive justice and turnover intentions. Research by Riollo and Savicki (2006) showed lower levels of perceived procedural justice to be predictive of turnover. Simons and Robertson (2003) provided evidence of the causal chain of perceived interpersonal injustice that leads to dissatisfaction with supervision, lower levels of organisational commitment, and subsequent increased turnover intentions. Many employees leave organisations, partly due to the fact that equal opportunities are not offered (Kwakye, 2018). When people feel unfairly treated, they are more likely to leave their jobs. Perceptions of injustice and unfairness can, therefore, be another cause of voluntary turnover.

4.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter aimed to conceptualise voluntary turnover from the literature and expound its meta-theoretical roots. It began with a historical overview of turnover research followed by definitions of employee turnover. An expanded taxonomy was provided to distinguish voluntary from involuntary, avoidable from unavoidable and functional from dysfunctional turnover. Content and process models were discussed as theoretical approaches to understanding turnover, followed by a brief overview of some of the leading causes of voluntary turnover decisions. The following couple of chapters presents the research findings, with Chapter 5 reporting on the findings at the meso-group level of systemic functioning and Chapter 6 focusing on the macro and micro-level findings.

CHAPTER FIVE: MESO-LEVEL FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Systems psychodynamics is systems driven and adopts a relational approach to understanding how different parts of the system interact. It is by attending to the organisation of a group's systemic properties and dynamics of its emergent processes that we gain access to the whole (Ettin, 2004). The findings describing the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover are consequently reported on a meso (group), macro (organisational) and micro (individual) level, with this chapter focusing on the meso level. The relational dynamics in the meso-group mirrors and are mirrored by the whole macro-organisational level culture as well as in the micro-individual level of experience (Cooper & Mack, 2012). The research findings are therefore firstly presented at the meso-group level of functioning where interaction between parts and whole can be readily seen. Using a group-level perspective, a group is conceptualised as being more and less than the sum total of the individual members and their intra-psychic dynamics (Wells, 1980). The analysis of the group-as-a-whole as a distinct and essential level of human functioning in groups has long been seen as critical to the study of group behaviour (Rosenbaum, 2004). The group is primary – even psychoanalysis is not an individual psychology but a pair psychology (Hinshelwood, 2007).

The systems psychodynamics described at the meso level in this chapter are mirrored in the macro-organisational culture and experienced by the individual at the micro-level in the process of voluntary turnover. The levels of macro-organisational culture and micro-individual experience findings are presented in Chapter 6. The meso-group findings are presented in this chapter below as seven CIBART themes. The CIBART model was explained in Chapter 3 (section 3.4). It was chosen to present the group-level findings because the six constructs have been well-researched and applied to the group level of systems psychodynamics (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002). In addition to the seven CIBART themes, toxic leadership dynamics as a section is presented with three themes. It is common to identify narcissism at the top of organisations (Campbell et al., 2011), and toxic leadership is a primary cause of voluntary turnover (Paltu & Brouwers, 2020). The interrelationships of followers and leaders are among the most significant of human relationships (Rioch, 1975), and it was, therefore, relevant to consider toxic leadership on the meso-level for this study.

Each of the ten meso-level themes is presented first by describing the meaning of the theme as grounded in the data (referred to as 'findings'), then by applying a systems psychodynamics discussion and interpretation of the events, and finally by proposing a working hypothesis. Abduction results in a working hypothesis which suggests a work in progress (Long, 2013). It

is interrogative, the existential working hypothesis, rather than a final answer, that is the ultimate goal of psychoanalysis (Long, 2013). The working hypothesis relates to the research objective and proposes a possible understanding of the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover from a group level of analysis. Where relevant, literature is used to support the interpretations.

5.2 CIBART THEMES

Data were analysed by applying CIBART as a systems psychodynamics framework relevant to understanding group dynamics. The seven CIBART themes, as they are grounded in the verbatim interview data and understood in systems psychodynamics terms, are discussed in this section of the chapter. The themes include Conflict – Shame on you!; Identity – Not my father!; Boundary – Vulnerable and exposed!; Power – Dogs and bones!; Authority – You listen here!; Role – The sins of the father and of the mother!; and Task – Where’s the captain? The discussion commences with theme one below.

5.2.1 Theme one: Conflict – Shame on you!

Research participants shared experiences of conflict as part of their voluntary turnover process. Conflict dynamics manifested interpersonally between research participants and their leaders. It also manifested intra-personally in cases where participants were used as go-betweens for a group and a leader in conflict and for leaders above who conflicted with one another. The conflict was described as unexpected, consistent, violent, and dizzying, and it caused participants to feel excluded, shamed, stifled, bullied, deflated, tired, angry, and not good enough. Participants were also left feeling conflicted in themselves, stuck, silenced and fearful to speak out and voice their thoughts.

5.2.1.1 Findings

One of the participants (C3³) described his interpersonal conflict with his leader as “the first time in my life I’ve had kind of sort of had conflict with a person”⁴. He identified as an agreeable and reasonable person and made it clear that conflict was something unusual for him to

³ Pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity of the participants in the study. The letter C was used as an acronym for Case followed by the Case number to indicate the research participant in discussion.

⁴ The verbatim text is presented in colour to distinguish it from other text for the reader.

experience, yet he experienced ongoing conflict with the newly appointed leader of the division. The conflict had to do with hiring decisions made by the leader, but which excluded C3 from opportunities for promotion and personal development. C3 said that “I tried to articulate a very sort of very well thought out email and trying to keep it diplomatic and he just shot me down from a dizzy height”. He said about the experience that “you felt you were just being stifled and ja bullied in a sense”. In describing the leader, he said, “big time arrogance, ja”! When another leadership position became available, C3 applied for the role but was declined on the basis that the leader sought to bring in an external person. The position was, however, never filled, leaving C3 suspicious and with the experience that the director of his division was intentionally stifling his growth. He said about the vacant role for which he was declined that “the person somehow never joined so it was just, it didn’t feel authentic”. About being denied the role, C3 noted that “then your ultimate director sort of stifles you a bit and doesn’t give you the kind of opportunities you know”. He was left with the experience of having been excluded and bullied and having his career intentionally stifled by his leader.

Another participant (C1) described a conflict between himself and his leader. The conflict had to do with his leader having flouted the work processes that C1 had put in place. C1 had worked hard to develop and implement a process into the organisation, but his director was not adhering to it and was instead experienced by C1 as overriding the process. Reflecting on when the implementation of his processes wasn’t held up by the leader, C1 exclaimed, “hold up, where’s the profile? What am I benchmarking... I’m fine with having that fight with a peer from another function, but I shouldn’t be having this fight with you (referring to the leader)”. The conflict left C1 with the experience of feeling exhausted at having to fight with his leader, who should have been supporting him. He described the experience as “lots of fighting, and you’re doing it professionally obviously, you’re not coming in screaming, but you are saying no, no, no, no, no, wait, again, again, which is exhausting”. C1 was saying that the conflict was repetitive and ongoing and that it made him exhausted. This created a sense that he was not supported by his leader to fulfil his role and task.

Another participant (C4) experienced a conflict situation with a senior colleague in which he felt disrespected and humiliated. He had been promised a promotion as part of his professional development, but the role was awarded to an external candidate instead. The senior colleague knew about it but declined to tell him despite having spent time together on an international business trip. The senior colleagues had withheld the information from C4. C4 recalled, “I am on a trip for work for business. Okay. I heard from someone who is outside the business...

when I landed, I confronted Sally⁵. I went to her office and said Sally, I am disappointed, this is what I hear". In describing his experience, he concluded, "well it was very simple, I was out. Done. Disrespectful. Done". He was saying he felt humiliated and that this incident and what it represented for him was a deciding moment in his voluntary turnover process. After the conflict C4 reported, "I slowly started questioning whether you are good enough, whether you have the right skills", referring to himself. He was left feeling disrespected, carrying feelings of shame and humiliation, disappointed, and questioning whether he was good enough.

C4 described another conflict that manifested in the triad between himself and a colleague as a pair against the same senior colleague in the situation described above. The senior colleague had instructed him to spend less time with the colleague that he had paired with: "she told me that I should stop spending as much time with Patrick" (C4). C4 experienced the senior colleague as attempting to split him and "Patrick" to maintain control, noting "okay, so, divide and conquer. So, basically, I must spend less time with Patrick". The pair approached their senior colleague and had a conflict with her which was about her attempt to split them to have power over them. In describing the conflict, C4 said that "Patrick said who do you think you are kind of saying that? What is your game plan? Patrick tuned her straight"! Ultimately, C4 was left feeling that games were being played with his career, saying, "so typical of corporate, a lot of games there and I will tell you exactly what I am thinking, I am not playing stupid games!" He was left feeling belittled, angry, and distrustful after the conflict.

C7 talked about the constant conflict between her manager and the leader above her manager. She said that "it was dramatic every single day. It was a question of Susan and June having an altercation". The leader of her work group shouted at her manager in front of the others and in a condescending manner, "she was literally like screaming at June, the head office girls were listening, I felt uncomfortable" (C7). The top leader of the workgroup would also summon C7 into her office for long walks to the canteen to offload about C7's manager to her, essentially undermining her manager. During a walk to the canteen, the top leader asked C7 what she thought about her screaming at June. C7 replied, "I don't want to be in the middle of things and stuff but if I were you, I would have had that conversation behind closed doors". Complicating the matter further, C7's manager would do the same and offload to C7 about the top leader. C7 was left with the experience of being caught in the middle of the conflict dynamics between the two leaders above. She said, "I told her no, don't put me in the

⁵ Pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity of the participants in the study. All the names used in this study are pseudonyms.

middle and it ended up being a huge thing” (C7). In describing how the experience left her feeling, she reflected: “I felt like after I said something about the altercation, I couldn’t really comment on anything else so I would just say mm, ja, well, kind of not give a comment on anything”. C7 also confirmed that “it placed me in a very difficult position”. She was left with the experience of having to carry the conflict on behalf of the leaders above, of being too afraid to voice her opinions after the conflict, and of having lost her sense of agency.

As a concluding example, C2 talked about the conflicts between her professional work group and her leader, saying, “I felt like piggy in the middle because I was trying to maintain his reputation with them, they’re bitching and moaning”. She felt torn in the conflict between the camps of those in the business divisions, those in the group, those who were with the senior leader of their function, and those who were against him. She went on to describe the conflicts in her professional, functional workgroup as “the function divisions, the function departments in themselves across different divisions, did not trust group at all, and it made life quite difficult”. She was saying that her professional work group was split into different camps and that the levels of trust were very low between them. In a separate incident, she reported how her leader had sworn her to secrecy, which prevented her from imparting important information to a colleague that would have helped to prevent the colleague from failing in her role: “I also felt very conflicted because I would have wanted to have told her myself, but I couldn’t, because he swore us to secrecy in that meeting” (C7). She had the experience of split loyalty between the director and the group and between the director and a member of the group. The experience left her feeling silenced, carrying the conflict, and feeling conflicted within herself.

5.2.1.2 Discussion

The findings resemble conflict, as explained in systems psychodynamics literature. Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) refer to conflict as splitting in differences which can manifest intrapsychically between people in a group or between groups. The emotive reactions of participants to their day-to-day experiences relate to what Kets de Vries (2006) describes as the plethora of destructive actions taken by leaders, many of which are incomprehensible from a rational point of view. These emotive responses signal that what really goes on in organisations takes place in the intrapsychic and interpersonal world of key players below the surface of day-to-day behaviours (Kets de Vries, 2006). In this study, conflict manifested as an interpersonal conflict between participants and their leaders and between participants and senior colleagues. It also manifested intra-personally, where participants were caught in the middle between a work group in conflict with their leader and between leaders above who were in conflict.

Interpersonal conflict manifested above the surface between followers and leaders when the leader was experienced as denying the follower an opportunity for promotion and professional growth. In these conflicts, the leader was experienced as a bully and as stifling of the follower's career growth (C3). Below the surface, the experience of being purposefully denied something good points to anxiety that is persecutory and which is a characteristic of the paranoid-schizoid position (Klein, 1946). The experience of the leader as arrogant and inauthentic suggests reactive narcissism in the leader (Kets de Vries, 2006). The experience of having been bullied and excluded by the leader points to below-the-surface systems psychodynamics of splitting of good and bad by the leader, denial by the leader of his own badness and in service of his narcissism, introjection of the good by the leader to serve his omnipotent view of himself, and projection of the bad and persecutory anxiety onto and into the follower below (Cilliers, 2012). Badness was represented by not being good enough for a promotion or advancement.

Interpersonal conflict between leaders and followers also manifested above the surface as the leader undermining the work that followers had done (C1). In these instances, followers experienced the conflict as frustrating, ongoing, and exhausting. Below the surface, this can be interpreted as a repetition compulsion dynamic where the leader deauthorises the follower repeatedly, thus creating ongoing experiences of conflict. Freud (1920) ascribed repetition compulsion to repressed elements in the unconscious. People become obliged to repeat traumatic experiences (such as conflicts) rather than remembering them (Chu, 1991). The leader was experienced as attacking the primary task of the follower that was necessary for the survival of the follower's role in the organisation. Such an attack would have evoked survival anxiety in the follower who, in defending against the anxiety, engaged fight as a basic assumptions behaviour against the leader. The fighting formed part of the voluntary turnover process.

The conflict resulted where authority figures were experienced as withholding information that affected followers' future prospects in the organisation (C4). In this instance, the follower had the experience of being disrespected and was left with feelings of shame and anger. Below the surface, this can be understood to comprise a power play. Knowing was used as a form of power over the other who's not knowing rendered him powerless in the situation. Group members act as proxies in which to deposit disowned (split) parts of themselves. Each group member can become a receptacle for the projected parts of their cohorts (Wells, 1980). C4 had to carry the not knowing on behalf of the group and, in so doing, carried the shame and impotence, which was reflected in his experience of having been disrespected. Conflict manifested above the surface when authority was perceived to be playing games by attempting to split the pair below. Below the surface, the leader could be said to have assumed

the existential role of a powerful mother to split the pair as though they were children who were forbidden to play with one another. Each member has a part to play in the group's unfolding drama (Wells, 1980). The role of mother served the senior colleague in her attempt to break up the pair below to maintain power and defend against the threat that the pair posed. The followers below reacted as rebellious children, and, through crossed lines of a child-to-parent transaction, the conflict ensued (see transactional analysis Chapter 3, section 3.7).

Conflict lastly manifested above the surface between a group and a leader (C2 and C4), between two leaders above (C7), and within a split work group (C2), with participants feeling stuck in the middle. In these conflict situations, participants were left feeling caught in the middle, silenced and fearful of speaking out as if they had become paralysed in the conflict situation. Below the surface, the participants carried the conflict and the splitting in the conflict on behalf of the system (C2 and C7). By carrying the splits, the followers became fragmented and were split into bits, thus weakening the ego strength of the followers undergoing voluntary turnover (see section 3.3.2). This fragmentation left the research participants with feelings of powerlessness and with the experience of having been shamed and silenced. It can be said that the person in the middle was carrying the annihilation that was being projected by the parties in conflict, and in doing so, was having the experience of losing one's agency to act, becoming stuck in holding the annihilation and fragmentation on behalf of the group.

5.2.1.3 Working Hypothesis

Experiences of being unfairly denied an opportunity for promotion by a leader; of being bullied and silenced by a leader; of repeated deauthorisation by a leader; of exclusion from knowing about pertinent information that threatens a sense of being good enough; and of being used as the in-between person creates inter-personal and intra-personal conflict and shame for followers. The conflict and shame experiences lead to increased levels of paranoid anxiety and subsequent primitive defences. Splitting, denial of the bad in oneself, introjection of the good, and projection of the bad onto the other then form the conflict dynamic fundamental to voluntary turnover. Leaders use their positions of power in the conflict dynamic to project powerlessness onto and into followers, which silences and shames them. Fight is employed as a group defence. The fight, which the group carries on behalf of the system, becomes difficult for followers to sustain as their ego fragments. The fight in the conflict becomes difficult for followers to sustain as their ego fragments. The defence of fight in the conflict, unsustainable because of the weakened ego, turns to flight out of the organisation and manifests as a sublimation defence against the unworkable powerlessness and shame. At the

group level, followers are projected out of the organisation as containers of the shame and powerlessness that are not worked with by the leader and the group.

5.2.2 Theme two: Identity – Not my father!

A theme of leadership behaviour that was experienced by followers to contradict the identity of individual, group and professional identities emerged. Research participants were clear about how they identified themselves and their work groups and professions and expressed the issue of leaders behaving in ways that were not reflecting these identities. Participants identified themselves as fairness guardians, compliance enforcers, pragmatic problem solvers and fixers, and analytical thinkers, as authentic and non-materialistic. Work and professional groups were identified as the fairness police and the analytical problem solvers. Incongruent with these identities, participants in the study experienced their leaders' behaviour as unfair, disregarding the rules, detached from the reality of the problems to be solved, as superficial in thinking about problems that required solving and experienced their leaders' intentions as shady and materialistic. Participants were left having to question who they were and whether they could identify with their leaders. They were left with the experience that it would be too difficult to abandon their own identities, which were also represented by the identity of their work and professional groups to which they belonged.

5.2.2.1 Findings

One of the participants (C1) described himself as number one on the Enneagram⁶ and as a person who is fair, "I'm a 1, a very strong 1 ...I am very much a person who is on the fairness side of things". For him, his chosen profession represented his identity as the enforcer of fairness and compliance. He viewed himself as a perfectionist with high ideals of fairness for all. He expressed concern for issues of unfairness and non-compliance in the way that some people in the organisation were being paid and said that "they (the leaders) weren't willing to fix that". In experiencing the unfairness and non-compliance issue, he said, "I have to pull myself into my thinking and I want the world to be a perfect place, but this isn't an example of where I'm being overly dramatic". He had to question himself. He said about the compliance issue, "it's back to the compliance thing, I can't be that person" (C1). C1 went on to say, "I can't subscribe to that, it's too hard". He was saying that to continue to belong to the

⁶ In the Enneagram model of personality, the Enneagram 1 is described as the *reformer*, the perfectionist, and the idealist and with the managerial orientation to do things by the book (Kale & Shrivastava, 2003).

organisation would mean that he would have to change his identity from compliance enforcer to non-compliance endorser and from fairness idealist to someone complacent and complicit as an unfairness propagator.

Another participant (C2) identified her workgroup as the fairness police. C2 said about her work group, “we’re the fairness police”, and that “trust is our commodity”. She was saying that the work group and profession to which she belonged represented fairness, and that trust, because of upholding fairness in the organisation, was what gave the profession power. C2 went on to describe a series of incidents where her leader treated people unfairly. She said, “when I see my leader treats people unfairly, it doesn’t matter that you haven’t done it to me. What matters is that you’re capable of it, and that now you’re displaying values that don’t connect with me” (C2). She was saying that the behaviour that her leader exhibited did not represent her identity or the identity of her profession. The leader’s behaviour was experienced as undermining trust as a source of power, and she could not identify with the leader because of how he behaved versus who she was. Research participant C4 similarly described the illegal actions of some senior leaders who had recently been exposed to their wrongdoings. C4 said about the leaders, “so, these are your leaders, how does that define you as a person”? He was saying that in staying at the organisation, he would have had to forfeit his own identity to identify with the leaders there, but that he could not.

In the same vein, C7 described the difficulty of not being able to identify with her leader. C7 said about her leader that “I can’t identify with her because some of the, like the stuff that she says sometimes ...it’s not the person I am”. C7 went on to describe the leader as “shady” and “materialistic”, saying, “those are not the values that I have, I mean if you’re fine with like doing these shady stuff”. C7 also said about her leader that “she is very materialistic and that’s how she shapes her life”. She was saying that she identified as a person of integrity and openness and that she was not a materialistic person, yet she experienced her leader as lacking integrity and being superficial. When her leader attempted to advise her on how she should live her life and be in the world, C7 said that “I’ll listen to you but you’re not kind of doing me any favours by telling me all of this”. She was saying that she had to tolerate her leader’s attempts to have her identify with the leader but that she could not identify with her leader.

C3 identified himself as saying, “I’m quite a pragmatic person, I’m quite an analytical person”. C3 said about his career choice that “my engineering problem solving background is pretty much focused on sort of problem solving and solutions, and that’s got me here”. He was saying that he identified as someone who was an analytical problem solver and that this characterised the identity of the profession to which he belonged. C3 said about the leader of his division that “he was a sort of superficial sort of on the surface type of leader who didn’t have a depth

of knowledge”, implying that his leader was not analytical. C3 also said, “you’re only as good as your leaders I suppose”. He then said that the functional division to which he belonged had become stuck, saying that “I think that’s where things started falling through the cracks, eventually ja, going nowhere” (C3). He attributed the cause of the stuckness to the superficiality of the leader of the division, who did not look at things practically nor employ analytical skills to solve problems. The leader rather made decisions from a position of grandiosity and denial of the working realities in detail. C3 was left feeling stuck in a function that was stuck and with which he could no longer identify.

5.2.2.2 Discussion

The personality and the style of the leader have a direct influence on the identity of the group, the team's experience of leadership and how individual leadership is allowed to be taken up by the team members (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005). According to Cilliers and Koortzen (2005), when people struggle to identify with the leader and the team, and where the boundaries of identity are blurred, this leads to high levels of anxiety in the team. Participants experienced their leaders behaving incongruently with their own identities, which created an identity conflict for them. The leaders' identities, as experienced by followers, manifested above the surface in acts of unfairness, non-compliance to the rules, inauthentic and superficial approaches to addressing real problems that needed solving, materialistic ambitions, and as underhanded and manipulative dealings with people. The identity clash that individuals had, in experiencing their leaders behaving in ways that could not be identified with, caused heightened levels of anxiety.

Beneath the surface and in the unconscious, followers were experiencing anxiety at the impossible task of identifying with the authority above. Stories about how followers differentiated themselves from their leaders point to the systems psychodynamics of followers splitting the good from the bad, introjecting the good as part of their identities and projecting the bad onto the authority figures with whom they could not identify. Stapley (2006), in discussing the politics of identity, points out that if I wish to feel good about myself on any dimension, it is helpful if the not me is seen as bad. Identity-defining splits between authority figures and followers included fair followers versus unfair leaders, moral followers versus immoral leaders, compliant followers versus non-compliant leaders, authentic deep problem-solving followers versus inauthentic and superficial leaders, open and transparent followers versus shady and non-transparent leaders, and grounded followers versus materialistic leaders.

Cilliers and Henning (2021) refer to collective identity as consisting of conscious and unconscious thoughts and feelings and transferences (including connections, attachments and understanding) manifesting beneath visible organisational structures. Collective identity manifested in the structures of the workgroup and associated profession. In many of the cases, participants described the identities of their work group and profession as collective identities, yet they had experienced the leader's behaviour contradicting and splitting off from these collective identities. A conscious identity split between the leader and collective manifested in leaders breaking the rules and behaving in ways that were unfair to people, while the work group and profession were about promoting fairness and compliance. Another conscious identity split was found when the leader's approach to problem-solving was experienced as superficial and lacking depth, while the collective professional identity was about real analytical and deep problem-solving.

In the unconscious, the workgroup and profession to which participants belonged may have been experienced as mother-in-the-mind (Rosenbaum, 2004; Wells, 1980). Motivated by the desire to pair with mother, followers underwent a process of identification to become part of the collective work group and professional identity to which they belonged. Yet, the leaders' behaviour was threatening the collective identity as mother-in-the-mind. The threat that leaders' behaviour poses to the collective identity as mother-in-the-mind raised levels of survival anxiety for followers, as if father was killing mother. Followers' attachment systems may have been activated in response to the threat that the leader posed to the collective identity as mother-in-the-mind and group as good object of identification and of attachment for the followers. In this sense, followers undergoing voluntary turnover were having the unconscious experience of leader as father abusing the profession as mother-in-the-mind and on whom survival depended. Followers projected envy onto the leader as father-in-the-mind with the unconscious desire to annihilate father and have mother for the self. Unable to tolerate the anxiety and denigration of the mother-in-the-mind by father in this system, followers sought to find the mother as a professional work group with whom identification would be possible in another system. Flight served as a defence in exiting the system in search of the mother who isn't denigrated by father and with 'whom' the ongoing process of identification could remain possible.

5.2.2.3 Working Hypothesis

Followers desire to identify with their leader and also with the professional workgroup to which they belong. The leader and workgroup are fantasized as good objects in the mind. When leaders behave incongruently to the professional individual identity of their followers, the result

is increased levels of survival anxiety. Defences of splitting followers and leaders into good and bad, denial of the bad by followers, introjection of the good by followers and projection of the bad onto leaders are employed. This makes identification with the leader as a mature psychological defence against anxiety impossible. Further to this, when the leader portrays an identity that is incongruent with the collective professional workgroup identity, the leader is split off from the group in the mind of the follower. An oedipal situation emerges where the leader takes on the representation of the bad father while the collective professional workgroup represents the good mother in the object relationships. The threat that the abusive father poses to the good mother in the mind results in increased levels of survival anxiety. Envy is projected onto the leader by the followers as if the leader represents the father to be annihilated in the oedipal dynamic. Flight is then used in defence to exit the organisational system in search of continued attachment to the good mother as the collective profession which can be identified with and which ensures survival.

5.2.3 Theme three: Boundary – Vulnerable and exposed!

A theme of blurred boundaries and boundary violations emerged from the stories. Blurred boundaries manifested in role, task, and time boundaries. Psychological boundaries were also experienced to have been violated. Participants who took up acting roles in addition to their current role experienced ambiguous role and task boundaries. The blurred task boundaries created performance anxieties for participants because promotion into the acting role was dependent on their performance on their tasks. These are also discussed under the theme of tasks further on in the chapter. In cases where there were no time boundaries in place for promotion into the higher role, participants were also left feeling strung along. When the higher role was awarded to someone else, the participants were left struggling with feelings of not being good enough. In cases where psychological boundaries were violated, participants had the feeling of being unsafe and were left feeling fearful of coming under attack. The lack of clear top leadership role boundaries and incoherence to the organisational structure was experienced as reckless by the followers. It made participants feel exposed and vulnerable in the system. Participants were left with the experience of confusion, vulnerability, fear, and a sense of feeling unsafe because of blurred and violated boundaries in the system.

5.2.3.1 Findings

C5 reported blurred boundaries of role, task, and time. In being afforded an opportunity to step up into a more senior role “he (the MD) said listen he was going to give me an opportunity, obviously it’s not like a guaranteed thing and we need to assess your performance and how

you're going to manage this" (C5). Speaking about the role that he was attempting to step into, C5 said, "it's difficult because where you're now seen as the reviewer and the person that the other guys now need to report in to, it's like, it does become blurred". C5 went on to say that "I'm given the like level of authority, but I'm still expected to carry out those duties and activities that are supposed to support". He was saying that he experienced a split between leadership tasks and supporting tasks but that it was unclear which he was supposed to engage. C5 said that "you were on the same level as before and now you effectively have to direct some activities (tasks) down here and then he responds to you but like you're still a FM and how does that work because you feel like no". C5 also experienced a lack of clear time boundaries within which promotion to the higher role would take place, which was evidenced by his reflections on what he might have done differently. C5 said that "the communication would've been critical in the sense that okay cool, let's go through this, you are giving me an opportunity, now is there a time frame"? He was saying that the promise of the promotion did not have any time boundaries around it. He had to continue to take up his current and promised higher role but without a clear role, task, or time boundaries and which formed part of his voluntary turnover dynamic.

C4 also talked about blurred boundaries of role and task in his voluntary turnover story. C4 was promised a promotion to an executive-level role in his department, saying, "I was next in line to be the managing executive or managing manager". When the two executives above him left the organisation, he took up the task responsibilities of the executive role but continued to perform his current role at the same time. C4 said that "when they left it kind of was left up to me and John to manage the individual teams. So, we had no one above us. We kind of communicated directly with the MD". C4 was saying that he was playing the role of the executive but without a clear role and task boundaries having been put in place for him by the MD. C4 said that "it was only about a year, maybe a year and half, two years after they moved on and they had been gone for a long like a year". He was saying that he was fulfilling the role of the executive without any formal authorisation for a substantial amount of time, yet his description of the time boundary suggests that it was blurred. He then heard that someone from outside of the organisation had been hired into the role that he had been experiencing to have taken up in his mind. He was left with the experience of doubting his competence and questioning whether he was good enough, saying, "slowly I started questioning whether you are not good enough, whether or not you have the right skills" (C4).

C6 talked about how everybody knows everything about what is happening in the organisation and that there is no confidentiality. She said that "mm after leaving I still know everything that's going on there" (C6). C4, in discussing a major event that was happening in the organisation,

said that he knew what was going on even before most of the top managers knew about it. C2 said that even though she had left the organisation that people still phoned her and told her about everything that was going on, but that this made her feel uncomfortable and that she “didn’t want anything coming back to her”. As if knowing posed a risk of annihilation. C7 said about the leader of her work group, “obviously she did cross a lot of boundaries and she shared a lot of information with me”. In talking about how people were feeling in her work group, C2 said that “people don’t feel safe, and I know at the moment psychological safety is like a big buzz word in HR, but it’s real. It’s really real. People don’t feel safe”. She was saying that there were insufficient boundaries of confidentiality of the information and that the containing function of psychological boundaries had been breached. She and others were having the experience of being fearful that their knowledge about things in the organisation would make them targets for attack.

C7 talked about how she was encouraged by a senior leader in her division to cross as many role and task boundaries as possible. She shared a story about a truck saying, “so he’s like, C7, he doesn’t want me to stay in my lane, like June is very statutory reporting and doesn’t want to do anything else, and you know Sue is also like very in her lane” (C7). The senior leader was telling her that she should cross as many role and task boundaries as possible and framed this as a way for her to achieve growth in the organisation. In discussing how the top leadership of the organisation had embarked on a restructuring project, C1 said that “the whole way that they went about it, I think, was, what’s the right word, reckless”! He likened the restructuring to a renovation of a home with no thought about the people who had to live in the house. C1 said that “you don’t just submit a kitchen plan, and no one knows how it fits in or why this wall is now being knocked down or what’s going on. So, then people can just waltz in or there’s a weather issue or whatever”. He was saying that the top leadership, in their approach to restructuring the senior leadership team, had broken the boundaries of role, task and authority that were supposed to provide containment and safety. C1 had the experience that the organisation was unnecessarily exposed to risk because of the way in which the leaders had restructured.

5.2.3.2 Discussion

Structure provides containment for anxiety and provides safety for the team, whereas boundaries of time, space, and task boundaries that are unclear create high anxiety (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005). In some of the cases, the research participants were promised a promotion into a more senior role but without a formal role, task, or time boundaries in place. They were expected to fulfil both their current as well as future roles. There was no formal role boundary

to distinguish their current role from the acting roles, and both had to be taken up simultaneously. The participants experienced unclear task boundaries, having to deliver on the tasks in both their current as well as acting roles. There was also no time boundary within which a transition formally into the more senior role would take place. They held the assumption that formal promotion into the expected role was dependent on how they performed, which created very high levels of performance anxiety. Containing this anxiety was difficult because of the lack of clear role, task, and time boundaries for the promotion. Participants were seduced by the promise of a promotion that would essentially transform the acting role into a permanent role, yet that promise never materialised. Instead, their acting roles were awarded to external candidates.

The experience left them feeling strung along, needing to prove themselves worthy, and with heightened levels of performance anxiety. Hope and dependency were used as defences against their performance anxiety until reaching the tipping point in the decision to quit. This point was reached after the psychological contract had been broken, and the promised role was awarded to someone else. Participants were left with the experience of shame, self-doubt and questioning whether they were good enough. It was as if they had been subjects of a failed experiment that was set up by their leaders, but which created the experience of shame for them in the end. Research by Shongwe and Cilliers (2020) discovered interrelated aspects of people in acting roles becoming containers for systemic toxicity, employment and psychological contracts being violated, being placed on hold, seduced, bullied and traumatised. These aspects of experience were also present in the micro-level experiences of participants in this study (see section 6.4).

Psychological boundaries were furthermore violated through the unsolicited sharing of confidential and potentially damning information with participants who underwent voluntary turnover. This made the research participants feel as though they were in danger and had become potential subjects for an attack. They were experiencing feeling psychologically unsafe, which served as evidence of persecutory anxiety manifesting in a boundaryless organisation. It was as if participants were becoming guilty of crimes that they had not committed themselves and were in danger of carrying the shame simply by knowing about them. They had to work hard not to introject the guilt associated with the unsolicited information that was shared. As if knowing represented becoming guilty and knowing meant having to carry the guilt and the shame on behalf of the system. This would have created a double bind in that the guilt was neither theirs to carry nor was it resolvable through reparation, yet they had to carry it. The knowing was unsolicited, and participants were therefore not guilty

yet were having the experience of being guilty with the impending punishment of shame because of their knowing.

Boundary is the container for the workgroup (Green & Molenkamp, 2005), yet the process of a senior leadership restructure left participants with the experience that the organisation was open, exposed and vulnerable. The boundaryless nature of incoherent role and task boundaries at the top leadership restructure was mirrored in the experiences of leaders in acting roles below (see section 6.2.5). Just as the role and task boundaries of the top leaders were blurred, so were the role and task boundaries blurred for those working towards a promotion below.

5.2.3.3 Working Hypothesis

Insufficient boundaries and boundary violations create heightened levels of survival and performance anxiety. The anxiety is defended against through regression, dependency on the leader and hope which inhibits rational thinking and personal authorisation of the follower to establish the necessary boundaries (see section 6.4). The leader above, caught up in a mirrored boundaryless state, maintains control over those below in a state of dependency. The leader projects uncertainty, feelings of shame, and anxiety onto and into followers, who play them out as projective identifications. The lack of clear boundaries and breached psychological boundaries make this projective identification dynamic possible. Those in a boundaryless and dependent state become containers for feelings of not being good enough and shame which is carried on behalf of the group. The unconscious phantasy for the group is that the shame might be carried out of the system in a scapegoated object. Voluntary turnover is, therefore, not so voluntary as an above-the-surface interpretation suggests. Rather, it is a symptom of unconscious scapegoating dynamics, facilitated by a lack of boundaries and associated anxiety and dependency, in which the scapegoated object is ejected from the system.

5.2.4 Theme four: Power – Dogs and bones!

While power and authority are closely connected, are often spoken about interchangeably, and are organised together under authority that forms part of the CIBART model, they are different concepts from one another, and each has a distinct meaning. Power is about the capacity to do work and is attributed to the person, whereas authority is about the right that someone has to make decisions and comes from both external sources and from within (see section 3.4.4). I discovered dynamics about both power and authority as distinguished concepts and decided, therefore, to present them as separate themes. Power emerged as a

central and frequently recurring theme in the voluntary turnover stories. Three sub-themes for power emerged from the analysis of the data, which included the disempowered leader above, the disempowering leader above and the struggle for power from below. These sub-themes are presented in the sections that follow. The sub-themes about power, as the capacity to do work and coming from within, are discussed with interpretations and followed by a working hypothesis about power dynamics in the voluntary turnover process.

5.2.4.1 The disempowered leader above – the castrated top dog

The disempowered leader above manifested in followers' experiences of them lacking the personality attributes needed to be powerful, failing to take a stand on issues, and lacking the necessary qualifications for the role they occupied. Disempowered leadership above also manifested at the level of the leader's peer group and with the leader above being controlled by peers at the leader's level of functioning. Voluntary turnover participants had experienced frustration and anger at their leader, above perceived to be lacking in power. They felt vulnerable with nobody above to fight for their cause. One of the participants resorted to feeling sorry for the leader above as though he was a beaten and castrated dog (C1). The summative effect of the disempowered leader above was an angry, frustrated, and sorrowful group of followers.

5.2.4.2 Findings

Some of the voluntary turnover participants experienced their leaders above as lacking in power. C1 described how the leader of his business function lacked the personality to challenge the others at his level of functioning in the business. He said that "he's lacking the ballsiness to just say this is what I believe" (C1). Lacking ballsiness implied that the leader had been castrated in the unconscious. Reference was also made to the leader's Enneagram personality type as being unsuitable for the tasks that were required of him to deliver in his role. C3 said about his immediate manager that "he was totally unqualified for the role". C2 spoke about the leader above being disempowered within his peer group, saying, "I could see that it was going to be an absolute dog show, because the director did not have it under control". She went on to say that "I do feel sorry for him because some days he looks like a beaten dog" (C2). In talking about how incentive bonuses were distributed to people in the business, one of the participants said that the finance employees received much higher incentives than the rest of the service division employees. C2 said that "he wouldn't push back because the finance director was more powerful". She went on to say about her leader that

“he doesn’t have the balls to fight for it”. The leaders lacked personal power and were disempowered in their peer group above.

5.2.4.3 The disempowering leader above – the dog with our bone

All the voluntary turnover research participants shared stories of having been disempowered by their leader. Disempowerment of followers by their leaders manifested in how and why they were selected to attend a leadership development program. It also manifested in leaders withholding information from followers and cutting followers off from questioning the leader. The disempowerment of followers by their leader also manifested in leaders excluding followers from contributing their expertise and claiming the work of followers to be their own. Disempowerment further took place through leaders withholding budget from followers that were necessary to get things done and through failing to motivate fair and equitable salaries compared to other colleagues and the industry at large. The experiences of being disempowered left followers feeling used and devoured by the leader, disrespected, shamed, and devalued. Some participants felt intense anger towards the leader at having been disempowered. The summative effect of leaders disempowering their followers was a breakdown in trust, the conflict between followers and their leader, and followers withholding their expertise to retain some control over how the leader was experienced to use them.

5.2.4.4 Findings

C2 reported having a disempowering experience in both the method and purpose for which she and others in her work group were selected to attend a leadership development program in the organisation. Selection into the program wasn’t based on performance or potential, but rather the whole work group was selected to attend the leadership program. The stated purpose for attending the program was to learn about the content of the program to support the development of others. C2 said that:

“We all went there with mandates of you’re going to be here to understand the content, so that when you go back to the office you can now talk the multiplier language for example. It was not the intention to empower, enable or up-skill us”.

The reason for selection onto the lead program was experienced as disempowering.

The leaders above were also experienced as disempowering through repeated patterns of withholding information from followers below. C1 said about the director of his function, “he comes back from a meeting with the board, what did he say, no, nothing. How? How is that possible they didn’t say anything”? C1 also said:

“We’ll often ask, listen, is there anything that’s going down that we need to be aware of, and then the next day, we hear there’s a new Role Title. So, he’ll say no, not really, and then we’re appointing a new Role Title”.

C1 went on to say that not even the internal recruitment team knew about the new appointment that was made. C3, in referring to his director, said that “they will have a two-hour meeting, come out and not really provide any input into you know what we focus on and how do we change”. When C3 questioned his leader, “instead of having a conversation, he cut off like saying this is it and don’t dare question me”. C4 said about his leader who had hired someone into the team that “nobody said anything to me and now its public knowledge. She never told me about it”. The new hire had affected his prospects of a promotion in the business, yet his leader didn’t give him the information but rather left him to find out for himself from a source outside of the organisation. The withholding of information by leaders from their followers left them with feelings of frustration, anger, afraid of asking questions, and in the case of C4, the experience of shame.

In some cases, followers had the experience that their leader above was taking their expertise power to further the leaders’ own interests. C1 was hired into the organisation as an expert in his field, yet his director excluded him from meetings where his function should have been empowered to contribute upward. C1 said, “but where you’re the ultimate expert in the organisation and then you’re excluded due to many reasons, and leadership saving face”. Saving face implied that the leader above needed to present himself as the expert in all things to avoid feeling shame. C2 said, “there were times when he would take my work as his own”, as she described the parasitic relationship with her director. C6, in describing an award that her leader received, said that “75% to 80% of the stuff that was in there was stuff that me and my team had done”. She was also having the experience of the leader above taking power from the team below. C7 experienced the leader as using her for her ideas and then claiming them to be her own. She said that “that’s also what upset me with the work that I did for her because Peter gave it back, and she changed like one sentence. So, it was like I am doing the work and she didn’t change one sentence” (C7). C7 also said about another piece of work that she had done herself but which her leader took credit for “I literally did all the standards from scratch”. The experiences of being disempowered by the leader above left followers feeling disempowered, voiceless, angry, and as if their power was being devoured by the leader above.

Monetary power in the form of budgets and salaries was also used as a disempowering means in the experiences of followers. C1 said, “you don’t have any mandate to do anything. My budget was literally zero. So, there’s no budget for anything that’s training, nothing, for the rest

of the team. So, you can't work". C2 noted, "I was fighting for budget for my own team to be developed". She also described how she was paid a salary far lower than the rest of the people in her work group, yet she was a highly qualified and experienced professional in her field and held a senior role in the organisation. Eventually, before leaving the organisation, C2 recalled how "I had reached a state where I thought I was useless", although she knew she was capable of more. Her feeling useless served as evidence of her experience of her personal power having been depleted. C6 said that after leaving the organisation, "I'm in a much better position now, to a manager role, to a higher salary". She implied that she became empowered after leaving the organisation as a disempowering place to work. The experiences of participants having been disempowered through the withholding of budgets and salaries left them feeling helpless and useless.

5.2.4.5 The struggle for power from below – digging for the bone

Participants shared how they knew that their power had been robbed by them and how they attempted to get their power back from the leaders above who had robbed it. Some participants grilled their leader implying making things very hot and uncomfortable for him. Others made use of a culture survey to attack the leader who was experienced to have taken their power. Some followers would cry and scream and froth at the mouth at the leader, like a disempowered child throwing a tantrum. Some participants withheld their expertise and intentionally stopped sharing ideas with the leader. Others split functions into powerful strategic and impotent operational and identified with the strategy to claim some power.

5.2.4.6 Findings

The experience of having been disempowered by the leader above led some of the participants to act out. It was as if they were attempting to retrieve the power that had been lost to the leader. C1 described how he and his work group experienced their leader as "he shuts off when he's with us, and it's a power struggle thing". C1 went on to say, "we are grilling him, and there is some heat coming from it and its not becoming easier because it's like one of those things like a dog with a bone". He added, "we realise there's a bone now. So now we're going to dig and dig, we're not letting go" (C1). C1 and his work group were aggressive and persistent in the pursuit of their power that had been experienced as having been taken by the leader. C6 described how she gave her leader a poor rating on a culture survey in retaliation to her taking the credit for work that she and her team had done. C6 said in the research interview that "she got the award and we all pretended to be happy for her, and then we had the culture survey, and I wasn't particularly kind on my comments". When I asked her

why she decided to use the survey method rather than speaking to her directly, she said, “it was anonymous”. She was afraid to challenge her leader to take credit for work that she and the work group had done.

C2 described the reactions of a colleague who had been disempowered by the leader of their work group through the withholding of budget, saying that “she would cry, she would be very emotional, she would scream, she would froth at the mouth with anger, and he did nothing about it”. C2 described how the leader responded to the tantrum by saying, “ah Rachael it’s going to be okay and be sweet. The minute she walks out the door there would be no delivery, and she sees straight through that shit”. Another tactic that was employed by followers in the struggle for power with the leader was to withhold their expertise. C7 shared a story where her leader had called her in to ask her for her ideas, and she said that:

“I was not sharing ideas with her because I was like you’re just using me for my intellectual property now and you’re going to go to Peter and like oh, Peter, this is your idea and present it as if it your idea, but we actually worked on it together”.

C7 withheld her expertise and ideas to hold onto her personal power that she experienced as having been taken from her by the leader and used for the leader’s own power gain. C5 described how power was split according to strategic and non-strategic functions. He said, “each division had potentially two finance managers. One being strategic and one being a little more focused operationally” (C5).

5.2.4.7 Discussion

According to Oberholzer (2019), power can stem from internal or external sources and is attributed to the person rather than the role. In some cases, the leader above was disempowered through the experience of the leader lacking the personality attributes needed for the role. These leaders were experienced as not challenging enough, lacking nerve, and not having the personality to attend to their work tasks successfully. Other attributes of leaders that contributed towards disempowerment of the leader included a lack of formal qualifications and a lack of work experience that was deemed suitable for the function in which they operated. The leaders above were also experienced as having been disempowered in their peer group by more powerful members of the group.

Followers had the experience of being disempowered by their leader above. The leader above was experienced as withholding development opportunities for empowerment from followers. Followers experienced being used to empower others while they became disempowered. Disempowerment of followers by the leader also manifested in the leader withholding

information as a source of power. Some leaders took credit for the work that followers had performed, leaving followers feeling as if their power had been consumed by the leader. Leaders hired people with expert power into the organisation and then inhibited them from exercising that power. It was as if the leader was purchasing expert power and then consciously and unconsciously acting out the phantasy to take it for the self. Some leaders withheld the monetary budget that was needed for followers to do their work. One participant experienced being underpaid by her leader and felt disempowered as a result.

Having had the experience of being disempowered by the leader above, followers acted out in different ways in attempts to take their power back from the leader. In some cases, the followers would fight with the leader and question his actions and non-actions. The leader would respond by cutting off from the followers to hold onto the power. Others attempted to disempower the leader in the struggle of having their own power taken from them. This manifested in giving the leader poor performance ratings on an anonymous survey. One person cried and frothed at the mouth in anger and frustration at having been disempowered by the leader above, and some followers withheld information and ideas from their leader in the struggle to hold onto their power. It was as if power and shame were intricately connected and that leaders above were taking power from followers below to avoid having the experience of shame.

5.2.4.8 Working hypothesis

Disempowered leaders, unable to empower their followers, disempower their followers to defend against their survival anxiety and the shame of their impotence. They introject power from followers and project impotence onto and into them. Followers, in turn, experience survival anxiety and shame at being disempowered. To defend against their anxiety, followers first engage fight against the leader, then use me-ness to withhold power from the leader, and finally regress to a childlike state of dependency on the leader. The disempowered follower must depend on the leader, while the leader depends on the follower for power. The dependency that the dynamic creates in both the follower and leader results in an inescapable double-bind that keeps both the leader and follower locked into a disempowering dependency dynamic. Followers use flight as a final defence to escape from the disempowering double bind, which manifests above the surface as voluntary turnover. The leader has the phantasy that the shame of impotence will be absolved in the follower leaving. Voluntary turnover, therefore, becomes a phantasy object of emancipation for both the follower and the leader.

5.2.5 Theme five: Authority – You listen here!

A theme of authority emerged from the analysis of the voluntary turnover stories. Sub-themes that were identified for authority included the deauthorised leader above, the de-authorising leader above and the struggle for authorisation from below. These sub-themes are presented below, followed by a discussion and working hypothesis.

5.2.5.1 *The deauthorised leader above*

A sub-theme of the leader above, having been deauthorised, emerged. The deauthorisation of leaders above manifested in leaders being deauthorised by other leaders above and in leaders being deauthorised by followers below. Deauthorisation of the leader above manifested in a top-down mirroring dynamic of leaders above, deauthorising leaders below and so forth. Accusations of non-performance as well as bypassing reporting lines of authority downwards in the hierarchy, were used by leaders to deauthorise other leaders below. Leaders were also deauthorised by their followers. Followers reported leaders as not being qualified, having no clue, drowning in their role, and lacking the formal experience needed to take up their respective leadership roles. Leaders doing the deauthorisation of other leaders were left feeling comfortable, while the deauthorised leaders below were left with discomfort. The comfort and discomfort were also passed down the reporting lines. Deauthorised leaders were experienced by followers to be drowning, incomplete, as if something was missing in them, and as being clueless. Followers of the deauthorised leaders experienced frustration, discomfort, and sadness. The summative effect of the leader above, having been deauthorised, was a frustrated, sad, and uncomfortable followership and leadership.

5.2.5.2 *Findings*

C7 said about the top leader of her work group, “Peter was comfortable coming straight to me and asking me for things”. He was prepared to ignore the reporting lines of authority, and he “dealt directly with me”. This made C7’s immediate manager and the manager at the second to top-level uncomfortable, who then approached Peter claiming, “no Peter, you need to go through us and not straight to C7”. The second in charge to the top-level leader of the workgroup would also undermine her direct report, who was C7’s direct manager, by saying to C7, “look, this is what your boss has drafted. I don’t like it”. The top leader of the division was undermining the authority of all the leaders below him, and the second-in-charge leader was undermining the authority of the leader below her. The pattern of de-authorisation cascaded in a top-down mirroring effect with the violation of authority reporting lines and the accusation of incompetence and non-performance having been used in the process. The

dynamic left the deauthorised leaders and their followers feeling uncomfortable while the deauthorising leader at the top could experience comfort.

C1 expressed that the top leader of his work function was not competent for the role of director. C1 said that “you need someone for this size of organisation who is very technically strong”. He also went on to say, “don't just throw him in there and then be surprised that he's drowning”. He was saying that the leader was weak and drowning because of his technical weakness. C1 implied that his leader was lacking in expertise to do his job, saying that “there's some basics that he's just missing”. The director of that business division did not have any formal qualifications that were specific to his function in the organisation. The lack of formal qualifications and the followers' experience of his failure to stay afloat in his role prompted his deauthorisation from the followers below. C2 said about the same leader that “he's not a professional expert”. She went on to say about his performance that “he's nowhere, he's nowhere, it's very sad”. C1 and C2 were deauthorising their leader above, with accusations of incompetence and non-performance having been used in the process.

C3 described his direct manager as a weak appointment that undermined confidence in the whole system, noting that “he was very much unqualified for the position, and he hadn't even had relevant experience. I had to try and report to him for a year or two but when you speak to him, he's got no clue”. C3 was frustrated at having to report to someone whom he had experienced as having no clue. C4 similarly described frustration. His frustration was about having to report to someone who was both his junior and less knowledgeable than he was, saying, “it got a bit frustrating when you had somebody that was trying to be above you, judging product and technical attributes of a product, being wrong about it and still try to be the leader about it” (C4). He implied that even though the leader lacked seniority and expertise, she had attempted to claim expertise as a form of authority nonetheless. The leaders above were deauthorised from below because of their lack of qualifications, and experience and subsequent failure to deliver in their roles.

5.2.5.3 The deauthorising leader above

A subtheme of the leader above, having deauthorised the followers below, emerged. The deauthorisation of followers by leaders manifested in followers being excluded and denied the opportunity to exercise their formal authority. It manifested in leaders showing disregard for the work processes that had been developed and implemented by followers. Leaders also allowed the CEO and senior leadership team, the highest authority in the system, to believe that certain followers were useless. Deauthorisation of followers is further manifested in leaders requiring followers to perform certain roles and specific tasks but without the formal

authorisation needed to do so. The experiences that followers had of being deauthorised by their leaders left them feeling hamstrung, inadequate, directionless, and suspicious of their leaders. They were also left with the experience of having been undermined by their leader and feeling purposeless in their roles. Followers who had been required to perform a role or a task but without formal authority had the experience of having been set up to fail by their leader and as if they were required to become magicians to survive. The summative effect of leaders having deauthorised followers was the impossibility for followers to adequately take up their roles and deliver on their tasks.

5.2.5.4 Findings

Followers described how they were excluded and withheld from opportunities to exercise their authority in role and task by their leader. C1 said that “there’s a difference being brought in to fix a problem and then you’re allowed, not necessarily to fix the problem”. He went on to say, “the issue is that now you’re not involved, and if that’s your functional area then you should use that person”. He had been excluded by his leader from contributing towards strategic conversations at the board level that had to do with the functional area that he headed up (C1). The leader also deauthorised other experts that formed part of his function. C1 relayed how his leader had said to other senior leaders that “I’m going to rather use an external agent because I want this to land well”. Instead of authorising his internal talent acquisition team, the leader implied to the senior leaders in the organisation that they would not perform adequately. The leader deauthorised his internal talent acquisition team. C3 described how he wasn’t authorised by his leader above, saying, “if you’re not been given the authority or mandate to go in a certain direction then it is what it is”. C4 described a situation where his leader “tried to do her authority thing”, implying that the leader was deauthorising him to make decisions.

The leaders above also deauthorised followers by flouting and disregarding work processes that followers had developed, which was also a source of conflict (see section 5.2.1). C1, in referring to the continuous flouting of processes by his leader, said, “he should have been helping me to drive that, he should have told the others and his team up there that this is how we’re doing it”. He was saying that his leader was deauthorising him in his role, which left him with the experience of having been undermined and questioning his purpose for being in the organisation. Followers were also deauthorised by leaders who led other higher authority figures in the organisation to believe that their followers were useless. C2 described how her leader deauthorised a colleague to the senior leadership team and highest authority in the organisation. She said that “they allowed the CEO to believe that she was useless. He

damaged an amazing leader's reputation to the most important person in the room". She was left with distrust of and disdain for her leader.

Followers described how they were expected to perform in roles and on tasks but without the necessary backing from the leader and formal authority to do so. C5 experienced having not been authorised by his leader. He said that "you're expected to operate and exercise authority but without the role title". He was saying that he had to perform a role but that he was not authorised in the role. To exacerbate the issue, the role that he was performing was an acting role and one that he aspired to take up formally. He was denied the authority needed to perform within the role that he desired as a promotion. C1 remembered how a colleague was expected to roll out a major initiative across the business but without any formal backing or authorisation by the leader. C1 described how "you can't expect one person at the third level of the organisation to just magically push something through the whole business". He was saying that the leader above wanted certain outcomes from those below but didn't authorise them formally to perform the tasks that were necessary.

5.2.5.5 The struggle for authority from below

Having been deauthorised in different ways by their leaders, followers attempted to gain authorisation through different means. The struggle for authorisation between leaders and followers manifested in followers telling the leader what he must communicate upwards. It also manifested in followers requesting other senior leaders to tell the leader what can and cannot be said. When the experience of deauthorisation was experienced as unfair, followers fought back by telling the leader what he can and cannot do. Followers struggled for authority by drafting rational emails to the leader. Having witnessed the leaders deauthorising others in public, one follower took to providing her leader with feedback about her deauthorising behaviour. The struggle for authority from below left followers feeling frustrated, silenced, horrified, and with the experience of having been treated unfairly. The summative effect of the struggle for authority from below was a frustrated and angry followership and rebellious leadership.

5.2.5.6 Findings

C1, having been deauthorised by his leader through the exclusion of him from opportunities to act within his role, said to his leader that "you need to listen because this is what you need to go and tell them". He was struggling with his leader to have his authority exercised. C2 would say about her leader, "he can't say that! Please can you just say to him to not say shit like that". C2 was referring to a legal issue that her leader inappropriately discussed amongst

a group of other senior leaders. C2 would also call her leader when she experienced him to be acting unfairly “I said to him you can’t do that, because it’s just not fair”. She had a legal background, and so in her mind, she was an authority on legal issues. She was using her legal authority in a struggle for authority with her leader, whom she experienced to be deauthorising of others through acts of unfairness.

C3, having had his authority withheld from him by his leader, said that “I tried to articulate in a very well thought out email and trying to keep it diplomatic”. He was attempting to gain authority from his leader by reasoning with him. C7, after witnessing the top leader of her work group publicly deauthorising her immediate manager, was asked by the top leader if anything was wrong with what she had said. C7 said to her, “Bernice, with all due respect but maybe you could have had that conversation behind closed doors”. C7 went on to say in the interview that “I’m not saying that because I want to hurt you, I’m saying that because I also think that people are going to have the image of you that’s maybe not the right image to have”. C7 was providing the top leader feedback in response to the experience of witnessing her publicly deauthorising her manager and to prevent further deauthorisation.

5.2.5.7 Discussion

Authority is the right to make an ultimate decision, and in an organisation, this right translates to the right to make decisions over others (Obholzer, 2019b) (see section 3.4.4). In the hierarchy, authority flows from the top and is delegated downward (Hirschhorn, 2018). This top-down authority is referred to as formal authority from above. Green and Molenkamp (2005) distinguish formal authority from personal authority. Formal authority may be derived from a group or a body or from an individual, such as one’s immediate supervisor or manager, while personal authority is the way an individual takes up their formal authority (Green & Molenkamp, 2005). Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) distinguish a third kind of authority as informal authority from below and which is given to those above by subordinates. Informal authority can also come from the side and from colleagues working at the same level in the organisation.

The leaders above were deauthorised by their leaders, culminating in a cascading and mirroring deauthorising dynamic between leaders and followers. The deauthorisation of followers manifested in the leaders’ exclusion of the followers, with their specialist expertise, from engaging upwards beyond the level of authority that the leader held in the organisation. Leaders deauthorised their followers by flouting the work processes that their followers had put in place to achieve the work that they had been formerly authorised to do in the system. Leaders moreover attempted to deauthorise followers’ personal authority by attempting to control the relationships that they could and couldn’t have with other colleagues. As if a parent

was dictating to a child who they were and weren't allowed to play with. Followers experienced leaders as deauthorising because the leader did not trust them to fulfil their role to achieve a good enough outcome, rather outsourcing their purpose to an external agency.

Followers had to struggle for authority which manifested in them having to reaffirm their professional standing in the organisation to the leader. In doing so, followers attempted to authorise themselves by transacting from a parent ego state with their leader, telling the leader what the leader can and cannot do, or must and must not do, thus taking up a position of parent in relation to a child in the transaction (see section 3.7 on the transactional analysis). The containing function of leadership became unavailable to process difficult psychic material for followers. Catastrophic anxiety about survival is stirred up if the containing function breaks down or when it has to be substantively transformed through a forceful explosion of growth in the contained (Huffington et al., 2004). In some cases, followers even took it upon themselves to be providers of feedback to the leader about the leader's own behaviour, assuming a nurturing parent ego state. This also positioned them as an authority in relation to the leader in an unconscious attempt to manipulate the leader out of authority. In cases where the nurturing parent ego state was assumed, followers had taken up a containing function in relation to the leader, making containment of their psychic material by the leader even more difficult.

5.2.5.8 Working hypothesis

Deauthorised leaders deauthorise followers in a sequential mirroring and leapfrog patterned deauthorisation dynamic. Deauthorisation creates high levels of survival anxiety as decision-making rights needed for task performance are undermined. Followers defend against their anxiety by assuming a parent ego state in relation to the leader and also manipulating the leader out of authority unconsciously. The result is conflict and further deauthorisation of the follower by the leader in a struggle for authority between the two. This makes transacting from an adult-to-adult ego state impossible and a rational shared understanding of the issue of deauthorisation difficult. In followers transacting from a parent ego state in relation to the leader, the containing function that the leader ought to provide becomes unavailable. Voluntary turnover is a symptom of excess unprocessed alpha elements within the follower, and the act of leaving represents a forceful explosion of uncontained and unprocessed projective material. The explosion propels the follower and the unprocessed psychic materials across the organisational boundary and out of the system in a growth object-seeking dynamic by the follower.

5.2.6 Theme six: Role – The sins of the father and of the mother!

Theme six is about leaders failing to manage themselves in their role and scapegoating their followers. Every leader who takes up a leadership role in a workgroup is called upon to manage oneself in the role. According to Lawrence (1999), managing oneself in a role is done in two ways: by managing oneself in relation to one's work tasks and activities and also by managing one's relationship with other role holders. The leader's failure to manage self in relation to other role holders is discussed in this section, while the leader's failure to manage self in relation to work tasks is discussed under the theme of Task in section 5.2.7. Leaders were experienced as failing to manage themselves in their roles. This manifested in some leaders becoming stuck in playing the role of the coach instead of the director, which caused followers to feel angry, frustrated, and directionless. The leader out of role also manifested in the leader playing the role of advisor instead of decision maker, which made followers feel that the leader was avoiding accountability. The summative effect of leaders falling out of their role was a followership who were, in turn, forced out of their role as scapegoats in relation to the leader who was out of role.

The scapegoating manifested in leaders attributing blame for failures to their followers. It also manifested in leaders tarnishing the reputation of followers by making other leaders believe that they were useless and incompetent. Another manifestation of scapegoating was the use of, and inappropriate sharing of, private and confidential information. Followers in informal acting roles were also blamed for poor culture survey results when the results had been consistently bad since before assuming their informal acting roles as leaders. Followers were forced into taking a defensive position to guard their feelings of competence. They were left feeling devastated, feeling that their competence was under threat of attack by the leader, as if they were losing their sanity, in danger, and used. They experienced their leader as lacking integrity and as untrustworthy. The summative effect of leaders scapegoating followers was a breakdown in trust between followers and leaders, followers having to play roles in relation to the leader that made them feel bad, and ultimately in followers leaving the organisation.

5.2.6.1 Findings

Some participants had the experience of their leaders playing roles that weren't appropriate for the formal roles they held, such as coach or advisor. C1 had the experience of his leader failing to provide direction or make decisions because "he plays the role of coach because that's the role he played before". Another research participant (C2) who reported to the same leader reiterated the leader's lack of decision making saying that he is "not making brave enough decisions". The leader adopted the role of a coach in which it would be inappropriate

to make decisions on behalf of the other and set the direction, yet this caused him to step out of his role as leader in relation to his team. C1 said about his leader that he “wants to be the trusted advisor to senior leaders, right, influence them blah blah blah”, but that you can’t be both the coach and tell him, right, you need to put your head on the block”. He was saying that the leader in taking up the role of the coach towards his team and role of trusted advisor towards his seniors was out of role as a leader of their function. C1 emphasised that the role of coach was “not for the person who needs to deal with ER issues as well because there’s a wrong and a right and a yes and a no”. He was saying that his leader was stuck playing a role that was incongruent with his formal role.

C2 reflected on her relationship with her leader as being a teacher-student relationship. She noted, “I could never learn from him; I was teaching him all the time; I was teaching him constantly on how to be a good director”. She was saying that in having to take up the role of the teacher in relation to her leader, he had become unavailable to teach her. C2 said about her leader that “I felt that I was managing him” as if she was also having to take on the role of manager in relation to the leader who ought to have been doing the managing. C7 described how her leader had failed to take up the role of mentor to support her professional development. In referring to a conversation, she had had with her manager, she said, “I said give me growth, give me learning and development” (C7). She experienced her manager as hoarding and not sharing opportunities for her to grow. It was as if the manager had taken up the role of miser in relation to her. C7 said about the director of her function that “I call her out so she can make those improvements... but I also heard from HR that she might be a bit intimidated because I do, I’m the only one who has a voice to call her out when she’s wrong”. C7 had, in turn, taken up the role of coach as a mentor in relation to her leader.

C3 referred to a member of the senior leadership team, saying, “it’s got to be an honest and authentic leadership you know. I think that’s where I believe Adrian of HR could play a stronger role within the larger organisation because these divisions have been allowed to be too siloed”. C3 was saying that the leader failed to manage himself in the role of the one who ensures diligence in people practices, accountability, and open communication. C3 then described how an HR executive in his business function was supposed to play the role of impartial and independent council. The executive’s close relationship with the director took her out of this expected normative role. C3 said that:

“You should be going, allowed, or have the ability to go to the HR exec within the division and have any conversation about anything being anonymous and, and and and; and but ja I got a feeling towards the end that the HR exec was too close to the hip to the function director”.

C3 felt that he had been thrown under the bus saying, “what parts of our conversation were confidential, what parts she threw me under the bus I don’t know but I was being honest about my frustrations, my feelings, my issues”. He was saying that the HR Executive played the role of betraying informant rather than confidant to him.

Participants described experiences where colleagues and leaders were thrown under the proverbial bus. C2 said seeing one of her colleagues being scapegoated by her leader was one of the deciding moments for her to quit her job and leave:

“When I saw, from the outside looking in, what happened to Fran, it gutted me. That was one of the moments that made me decide, there were a few, that was one of the moments that made me decide to leave. He threw her under the bus and our leader helped him, and the responsibility of our function’s director is to help our functions leadership. They allowed the CEO to believe that she was useless, which is another form for me how they throw you under the bus”.

In the above scenario, the scapegoated colleague was used to carry the uselessness on behalf of the group of leaders. C2 went on to talk about the credibility of other colleagues in her function, saying, “even the leaders in the Group HR team, so Spencer, Shereen, Sphiwe, Sally, those guys, their credibility was being tarnished”. In having their credibility tarnished, they were scapegoated as the incompetent ones. Referring to another director C2 said, “he was another one that was thrown under the bus and our director was involved”. C3 said about the same director, “I don’t know I guess it was just gently pushed out the door”. The actions of the leaders of throwing others under the bus made participants question his ethics, values, and his integrity. C2 reported feeling useless, incompetent, and as if she was unable to deal with the complexities of her role towards the end of her tenure at the organisation: “I had reached a state where I actually thought I was useless”. C2 said about her leader, “I just don’t think he’s a good guy. I wouldn’t say I can work with somebody if they’ve got that indicted sense of unfairness inside them”.

C4 shared how he and a colleague in acting roles had been used as scapegoats for poor culture survey feedback results. C4 said that “I took it (the feedback) as attributed to us; I don’t think it was actually specifically meant at us, but we needed to deal with it. People were like it is you guys making them unhappy. C5 described his experiences of being used in an acting role of safety net, which had been scapegoated by the MD. C5 said that “was it a case of, okay let’s see how far you would go in terms of doing this before you know we say okay cool, listen, we’re bringing someone else in”. He said, “it’s a safety net you know, we’re keeping ourselves safe still by having him on but ja” (C5). C5 said about his experience, “I mean you

feel like you're being used you know. You're not going to get something at the end of the day, and you know is it worth it at the end"? C4 and C5 had been in acting roles, working for the same leader, and both acting roles had been scapegoated.

C7 explained how she had to play the role of mediator to the senior leader in her work function after the leader had a conflict with C7's immediate manager. She said, "after the whole interaction she was like come, walk with me to the canteen" (C7). C7 then said, "so then she goes, was there anything wrong with what I said"? C7 went on to say, "I feel like I'm in a really crap position because I'm in the middle of all these women". She went on to say, "I've been doing from the time Sally joined, been acting as a mediator between all these women and I'm just tired of it – I don't want it anymore" (C7). She was used in the role of mediating counsellor by the leaders and as a container for the conflict. C7 was left fighting for her integrity during the final stages of her leaving as the leader instructed HR to check her boxes before she left.

5.2.6.2 Discussion

Czander (1993) views roles as holding the structure of the organisation together, which permits the tasks of units and the organisation at large to be carried out. The leader who is out of role is likely to lack the capacity for containment because the role boundary is not being effectively managed (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005). Participants described leaders having stepped out of their leadership roles through the transference of past roles into the present. Some of the roles that leaders slipped into included the roles of coach without direction, student without knowledge, subordinate to be managed, and betraying informant instead of impartial counsellor and confidant. In stepping out of role, the leaders above inadvertently became unavailable for containment of difficult emotions experienced by followers below, instead using their subordinates as containers for their difficult psychic material. Followers experienced heightened levels of anxiety as the containing function of the leader in role had been broken and as they were forced out of role in relation to the leader.

The leaders had repeatedly thrown people under the bus, killing them off in the unconscious, and had become untrustworthy. Roles are distinguished into three kinds of roles including the normative (formal role), existential (identified with role) and phenomenal roles (projective role from the group) (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005; Czander, 1993; Green & Molenkamp, 2005). Roles provide vehicles that bridge and anchor the group, and people use roles to find psychological security, often by exchanging and depositing unwanted parts (Wells, 1980). People with the valence for any particular phenomenal role will carry it on behalf of the group (Green & Molenkamp, 2005). Followers were used as scapegoats by their leader to carry unwanted bad feelings. They experienced their leaders as incompetent and out of role, yet they were

scapegoated as being incompetent by their leaders. They were made to feel incompetent and useless and unsafe, and conflicted by leaders who used them to feel competent, secure, and harmonious. Leaders out of role used followers out of role to deposit unwanted parts into them and to project them out of the organisation.

5.2.6.3 Hypothesis

When leaders fall out of role, followers are forced out of role in turn, breaking the container-contained function in the leader and follower role relations. The lack of containment causes followers to experience survival anxiety which is defended against by transferring past roles into the role relatedness with the leader, for example, the teacher, the manager, the mentor, the mediator, the safety net and so forth. Followers in taking up phenomenal roles, for which they have a valence to carry, are forced out of role in relation to the leader. The forced stepping out of role breaches the role boundary, which enables a process of projective identification making the follower the receptacle of an actor for bad feelings of incompetence, danger, and conflict. Followers are projected out of the organisation under the guise of voluntary turnover. Voluntary turnover is, therefore, a symptom of leaders out of role scapegoating followers.

5.2.7 Theme seven: Task – Where’s the captain?

Followers experienced leaders as not performing their primary leadership tasks and as having a negative impact on the overall performance of the workgroup. They experienced becoming stuck and overwhelmed by task complexity and overload. Participants experienced working hard yet feeling that there was no progress towards goals. They were very busy achieving nothing. The lack of progress against goals was attributed to leaders being incapable of understanding the task and unable to give clear definitions to tasks. Leaders and other group members were experienced to collude to do just enough to prevent getting fired and not too much that others might be shown up. Participants experienced leaders and their followers as passengers on a ship or an aeroplane without direction. In some cases, participants experienced their leaders to have intentionally stifled them from performing their tasks. This caused them to feel insane and question the reason for their existence in the organisation. It was as if leaders and followers were colluding in anti-task behaviours, which threatened the survival of the organisation and its members. The summative effect for participants was high levels of survival anxiety, a loss of meaning and purpose, overwhelm, feeling insane and questioning the reason for their existence in the organisation.

5.2.7.1 Findings

C3 experienced the leadership above him as not performing their tasks. C3 said about his leader, “a lot of things were said but you know commitments and follow-through wasn’t really there”. He went on to say that “it became three to four years of just I suppose going forward without really marking off key objectives and goals for the organisation” (C3). C1 said about his leader that “I do think honestly that there’s a gap there”, referring to the task performance of his leader. C2 said about her leader that “he’s nowhere”. C3 said about his leader that “he was very much unqualified for the position, and he hadn’t even had relevant experience for that”. C2 and C3 were saying that their leaders were incapable of performing their tasks. C3 bemoaned his leader's lack of task performance, saying, “you can’t just leave it to one man’s devices, I suppose there needs to be external check ins”. He was implying that his leader wasn’t performing his task yet was left to his own devices regardless.

In referring to existing leaders in his function, C3 said that “they do enough to not be fired but they don’t do enough to really move the company forward”. C3 said that “they’re not going to cause waves; they’re not going to stick their neck out”. He was saying that people were colluding in anti-task behaviour to stay safe. A metaphor of leaders as passengers was discussed during the interview when C3 said, “so within the structure there are also passengers”. The captains had become passengers headed for a crash site. C3 said, “how we hold our leaders and our culture and our business accountable is how we define ourselves”. In describing why he decided to leave the company, he said that “it’s a like a big ship and to change direction now is very difficult you know so I just needed to get off the ship”. C2 said about her function, “in the past our function created safety, security, accountability, ownership. It’s all gone”. She was saying that her function was failing at their task, which resulted in people feeling unsafe. The experience of leaders being caught up in excessive anti-task behaviours made participants feel unsafe.

C1 had the experience that he was prevented from being able to perform his task. He said, “you’re stifling that person, you’ll not be able to deliver”. C1 described how the senior leaders had roundabout discussions to rationalise why they couldn’t enable him to perform his task, saying, “there’s roundabout discussions finding reasons why not”. In referring to his task, he said that “it’s very textbook stuff”. He was saying that it was simple and that the roundabout discussions that the leadership team were having were a defence against him executing his task. C1 said that “it is a place to question your sanity for like why, we don’t need grading and performance management and what, yes, you do”. He was hired to perform these tasks yet wasn’t allowed to perform them. He also talked about other colleagues who were hired to perform tasks but then weren’t allowed to. C1 said, “and because those skills aren’t allowed

to do their job, there's a lot of other similar skills in the business that sit almost in a similar situation". He felt that leaders used excuses to prevent him from performing his task, which caused him to question his sanity and reason for existing in the business.

C3 had the experience that his leader didn't understand the task, nor was he able to define it. He was frustrated at the resulting lack of forward progress at the organisation, saying:

"So, definition and understanding what you are trying to achieve and then you know, how you can logically get to that point and hold yourself accountable that to me is the key ingredient to move the company forward and it's not happening and that's the big reason I left you know".

C3 continued to describe how instead of creating clear task definitions and planning for what needed to be done, his leader overloaded him with new tasks, saying:

"I kept having new initiatives, new projects and it was just totally unrealistic to expect execution and delivery on these projects. It's just too complex, there's just too much they wanted to change at the same time. They keep trying to make prioritisations, concessions and let's focus on this but I don't think they're tackling it correctly".

C3 was saying that because the leadership did not understand the task and had failed to plan and prioritise tasks, he had instead overloaded him with tasks which overwhelmed him.

C5 also had the experience of being overloaded with tasks when he had to take up an acting role in conjunction with his current role, saying:

"Moving into that role was taxing you know because still trying to do my stuff, step up and take on more senior tasks and not to take on the other more junior objectives and tasks. So those are the kinds of conflicts I would have".

He was experiencing task overload in having to take on more senior tasks in an acting role as well as continue to manage the tasks in his current role (C5).

5.2.7.2 Discussion

The normative primary task is the formal or official task, the operationalisation of the broad aims of the organisation, and is usually defined by chief stakeholders (Obholzer & Roberts, 2019b). The survival instinct of the group members is the foundation for off-task behaviour

(Green & Molenkamp, 2005). Anti-task behaviour is typical of groups under the sway of basic assumptions, whereas the primary (normative) task corresponds to the overt work-oriented purpose of Bion's sophisticated workgroup (Obholzer & Roberts, 2019b). The lack of clarity in organisational goals, tasks, and superior/subordinate relationships may increase anxiety and activate defensive behaviours (Dimitrov, 2008). Participants experienced their leaders and other group members to be colluding in me-ness as a defence against their survival anxiety. Nobody would stick their neck out, and so everybody unconsciously agreed to allow the other to fail at their primary task. People were allowed to do just enough to not get fired yet the organisation was not achieving its goals. The collusion meant that organisational members had become passengers on a rudderless ship.

Turquet (1974) points out that failure to hold the primary task boundary inevitably leads to the dismemberment of the group. It is the authority boundary, in conjunction with the task boundary, that helps the task become clear and for the work to be taken on successfully (Green & Molenkamp, 2005). The authority and task boundary had become compromised as leaders lacked the understanding needed to define and delegate tasks and as they colluded in me-ness as an anti-task behaviour. When the primary task boundary is clear, then task performance is possible. Unclear task boundaries, however, lead to confusion and to anti-task behaviour (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005). Instead of being provided with clear task boundaries, followers were either inhibited from performing their tasks or overloaded with tasks by their leaders. Oberholzer and Roberts (2019) describe the failure to prioritise tasks as a way to avoid dealing with disagreements. Instead of clarifying and prioritising tasks, leaders instead overloaded followers with tasks to avoid disagreements with them. Followers, in turn, experienced annihilation anxiety as though the unsolvable complexity would kill them. Unable to see a way through the complexity, followers eventually used flight to get out of the organisation as if they were getting off a sinking ship.

5.2.7.3 Working hypothesis

Leaders collude to engage in the anti-task behaviour of me-ness to defend against their own performance and survival anxiety, but which severs the boundary between authority and task. Engaged in me-ness, leaders fail to provide clear task boundaries and inhibit followers from performing their tasks. Followers experiencing survival anxiety engage in fights to have their tasks authorised by their leaders, but the severed boundary between authority and task makes the fight futile. Leaders overload followers with tasks instead of working to understand and prioritise the tasks needed for the group's performance. Task overload causes annihilation

anxiety in followers who employ flight out of the organisation as a defence against being annihilated in the unsolvable complexity. Voluntary turnover is a symptom of defended against survival and annihilation anxiety where followers are overloaded with tasks by leaders who collude in anti-task behaviour and avoid addressing issues of performance. People are unconsciously killed off and dismembered from the system under the guise of voluntary turnover.

5.3 TOXIC LEADERSHIP AND FOLLOWERSHIP DYNAMICS

Kets de Vries (2021) makes use of the saying that the fish rots from the head in illustrating how the dynamics of leadership affect the dynamics of followership. True leadership requires the identification of some problem requiring attention and action and the promotion of activities to produce a solution (Stokes, 2019b). This requires continuous attendance to the primary task and careful boundary management. When groups and leaders enter into basic assumptions mentality, a collusive interdependence between the leader and follower develops where the leader will only be followed for as long as he or she fulfils the basic assumptions task of the group (Stokes, 2019b). Institutions become dysfunctional, and their leaders lose their minds not only at the expense of members but also on behalf of members (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2020). Once colluding in basic assumptions mode with the group, the group causes the leader to lose his mind resulting in a dysfunctional system. It is the leader, as the head of the fish, who needs to be vigilant to attend to the primary task and the process task on an ongoing basis to maintain functionality in the system.

The proverbial rotten head of the fish then points to a leader who is off task and unconsciously colluding with the group in basic assumptions mode. While the dynamics of the group do influence the dynamics of the leader, it is the leader who must ultimately stay on task and keep the group on task. Followers also emulate the behaviour of leaders through a process of identification, suggesting that the behaviour of the leader determines the behaviour of the followership to some extent too. In essence, the dynamic of the leader determines the dynamic of the group, and toxic leadership can wreak havoc on followers. Toxic leadership is conceptualised as narcissism, detachment and bullying in the leadership-followership dynamics. Toxic leadership themes discussed include narcissistic leadership of naked emperors, detached leadership, and a bullying leadership. The findings, discussions and working hypotheses for each of the themes are presented below.

5.3.1 A narcissistic naked emperor of leadership

A theme of a narcissistic naked emperor of leadership emerged from the stories. Research participants described experiences of having been excluded from promotion into leadership roles. They explained how leaders would only select people into leadership roles in their teams whom both idealised them and mirrored their behaviour. Leaders were experienced to be building empires of followers, whose inclusion was dependent on telling the leader what he or she wanted to hear, acting like the leader, and in so doing, forming bonds of favouritism with the leader. An example of acting like the leader included the killing of some heads because that's what the leader did. The killing of heads became a criterion for inclusion in the in-group. This made those who were included feel safe. Participants who were excluded because of their honesty with the leaders were left feeling guilty, unsafe, and isolated. They formed part of the out-group. Leaders were experienced to be making bad decisions because of only being told positive things by the adoring in-group and not hearing the concerns of the out-group. The out-group experienced the leaders as superficial and inauthentic.

5.3.1.1 Findings

C3 had the experience of his senior leader choosing other leaders to work under him because they would tell him only positive things. C3 said that “the guy got appointed into a position that I was interested in...I suppose it's a leader choosing a leader underneath them that just tell him positive things, starts not holding him accountable, is not honest with him”. C3 felt guilty for showing his displeasure instead of blindly praising the director. He said, “I tried to internalise and tried to hold myself responsible and accountable for the one-on-one interactions you know, body language and showing my displeasure” (C3). Referring to the relationship between a senior leader and the director C3 said, “the authenticity got lost, I think she got too close, and starry eyed and looking up at him and you know didn't make the correct judgement calls on various issues”. Rather than using their personal authority in the role of follower, the members of a group can become pathologically dependent, easily swayed one way or another by the idealisation of the leader (Stokes, 2019b). C3 experienced the leadership as inauthentic.

C4 talked about kingdoms that were established within the organisation, saying, “people create these kingdoms or whatever you want to call it. Pyramids, so that they are protected”. He was saying that those on the inside could feel safe and protected while those on the outside were unsafe and without protection. C6 repeatedly had the experience of being denied opportunities for promotion. She made sense of this by saying, “favoritism, they know them. So, yeah, that's when I thought that you know what, I really need to start looking elsewhere”

(C6). She went on to articulate what happens in the process of being excluded saying, “you’re seen as a senior person yet when positions come up for you to go into, people that are less experienced and haven’t really done much but have a direct ear to the person hiring, they get it” (C6). She was saying that one needed to be close to a director to be considered for a promotion.

C3, in speaking about how hiring decisions were made, inferred that one needed to resemble the leader in some way to get the job. He said that “it’s uncomfortable but I suppose if I’m sincere, it was a black director, and he employed some black’s underneath him” (C3). He was saying that the director was making hiring decisions that were based on race as a mirror. C3, in referring to a senior leader’s relationship with the director, said that “I got the feeling towards the end that she was too close to the hip to the director”. C7 shared her experience of identifying with the head of the function in her hope of a promotion. She said, “I think me and him think quite the same. So, we’re all over the place in our thinking, we kind of know what we want in our mind”. She went on to say that “John says listen to a book, we listen to like the same Christian pod casts and up until that level of detail” (C7). In relaying a conversation she had had with a colleague, she said, “you’re John’s superstar, John loves you, everybody loves you and you’re doing so well”. C7 then referred to the manager, that reported to the head, saying, “she was hell of a difficult, everybody loved me, she was the last person to love me”. Although she believed that she was the same as the head, she didn’t resemble the thinking or behaviours of the manager below him and who would be responsible for promoting her.

C7 distinguished herself from her manager two levels up, saying, “I love being efficient, I hate wasting time during the day”. C7 said about the manager, “she would come every single day saying C7, come with me to the canteen. Literally like the slowest walk to the canteen”. The same manager had asked C7 for feedback about the way in which the manager had handled a conflict situation. C7 said, “it was a difficult conversation, and it didn’t need to be out in the open”. She gave honest and sincere feedback to the manager instead of telling her what she wanted to hear. The manager later ensured that she was not considered for a promotion to a more senior role. C7’s manager had said to her, “if you want to stay and do Mary’s job, I will completely over-rule the head of the function and say no, you can’t do this job, this role”. C7 said about the manager that “she literally isolated me. C4 said, “if you want to succeed you got to kill some heads”. He went on to say that “the likes of people that kill some heads make sure you are safe and secure. As opposed to being kind, courteous” (C4). He was saying that killing heads was an accepted leadership behaviour to be mimicked to get promoted.

5.3.1.2 Discussion

Idealisation of a leader became a pre-requisite for inclusion in the in-group and promotion into senior leadership roles, while an indifferent attitude to the leader resulted in exclusion to the out-group. Criticism and challenges of the leader, which are an essential and healthy part of group life, became impossible (Stokes, 2019b). Idealising transference dynamics manifested in followers telling their leaders only positive things, not holding them to account, and refraining from giving them honest feedback. It manifested in leaders becoming starry-eyed in the face of other senior leaders and in the loss of authenticity (see section 3.5.3). It also manifested in favouritism and in people getting close to their leaders with the view of getting promoted. The experience of being outside of the idealising transference dynamics left voluntary turnover participants feeling excluded, stifled in their careers, frustrated, rebellious, and unfairly treated. Pyramids of idealising transferences were created in leadership structures with precise requirements of upward idealising transferences to fit in. The idealising transference dynamics excluded those people who did not partake in them.

Mirroring transference manifested in hiring decisions that were based on the resemblance between the leader and the role applicant. It also manifested in senior leaders getting too close to other senior leaders in forming cliques. Mirroring transference also manifested systemically as an exclusion factor for promotion and in the form of systemic mirroring dynamics of the deauthorisation of others. A mirroring dynamic of leaders deauthorising followers was discussed in section 5.2.5 in the hypothesis about authority and deauthorisation experiences of followers. The killing of heads formed a systemic mirroring behaviour that referred to a game of divide and rule as the game to be mirrored. Participants had their sincerity and openness abused after their refusal to mirror senior leaders. They were excluded from opportunities for promotion and unfairly treated. They had to reflect on their own identities and choose to either betray themselves or mirror the desired behaviour of senior leaders. Refusal to mirror the senior leaders resulted in exclusion from opportunities for promotion and, ultimately, in voluntary turnover.

5.3.1.3 Working hypothesis

Narcissistic leaders use followers in service of their grandiosity which creates inclusion and exclusion dynamics. Followers who engage in idealising transference as a defence are included through opportunities for promotion into the leadership team to feel safe. Those who provide honest feedback on shortcomings are excluded from feeling unsafe. Followers also engage in mirroring transference as a defence against their survival anxiety. Like the idealising transference, it makes them feel safe in the omnipotence of the narcissistic leader. Followers

who stand in their identity and who refrain from engaging in mirroring transference are excluded from the society of mutual adoration by narcissistic leaders. The out-group comes to represent impotence, while the in-group represents omnipotence. The in-group projects impotence onto and into members of the out-group who are projected out of the organisation in service of a shored-up powerful self-image of members of the in-group.

5.3.2 A detached leadership

Effective leaders tend to the needs of members, recognising that meeting appropriate dependency needs is important work (Krantz, 2006). To meet these dependency needs, some level of interaction with both the emotional lives of followers as well as with the working realities is needed. Some participants who underwent voluntary turnover as a process experienced their leaders as absent. They were experienced to be emotionally detached, unavailable and uncaring. A detached leadership manifested in leaders being unaware of followers' whereabouts or their aspirations and potential. It manifested in experiences of leaders who have failed to understand the needs of their followers and in avoidance of leaders by followers to protect themselves from being hurt. An emotionally detached leadership left participants with the experience that they were unimportant, not listened to, that their personal needs were not considered, and that leaders lacked an understanding of the dynamics in the organisation.

Followers also experienced leaders as detached from the working realities that they faced. This manifested in leaders not knowing where followers were or what they were doing. It also manifested in leaders making unrealistic requests for followers to roll out projects without having considered the context. Leaders' detachment from the working realities below manifested in leaders discounting ideas for improvement from followers and in top leadership avoiding having conversations about the working realities in the divisions. Leaders' detachment from the working realities left followers feeling that they needed to be magicians to perform and that leadership was not available to support them. The summative effect of an emotionally and contextually detached leadership was a followership who felt unsupported, vulnerable, psychologically unsafe, and at risk of damage to their dreams and aspirations. The trust was broken.

5.3.2.1 Findings

C2, in summarising why she decided to leave, said, "it was just the fact, of the lack of connection". When C2 asked her leader if he could assist in connecting her with another professional in the group from whom she could learn from she said that "he did nothing". C2 went on to say, "It's just, it's as if there's no human connection". She had worked hard to

understand if the issue was about her but said that “I think he treats everybody like this, I think he’s disconnected from everyone” (C2). C2 experienced the leader’s emotional detachment as damaging to their relationship, saying that “his lack of involvement in my life, and lack of care made a big dent in our relationship”. This manifested in her avoidance of him which she described as “I reached a stage where I would only deal with him on an absolute necessity basis because he really wasn’t interested. Like, you would tell him things and he would forget” (C2). C2 went on to attribute his detachment to his personality, saying, “he doesn’t listen, his Enneagram says that he doesn’t listen, which he told me”. She experienced his detached style as a lack of support, which left her feeling vulnerable and psychologically unsafe.

C3 shared the experience of leaders being detached, saying, “I don’t believe the leaders that are actually leading the company actually understand the dynamics and the issues that are at play”. He was saying that he experienced the leaders as detached from the emotional dynamics in the organisation. C4 had the experience that the leaders in his business division weren’t interested in connecting with his emotional needs and aspirations. C4 repeated the voice of his leader, saying, “C4, we are going to keep you right because we need you, but what about what I needed as a person”? He was saying that leaders’ attachments to the company’s needs meant detachment from their needs as a person. C5 had the experience that his feelings were not accounted for during his process of leaving. He said that “communication was varied as to why they were bringing this other person in and then when you resign then they think oh, we will no longer recruit for this person, we will give you the position” (C5). It was as if the leadership had no regard for his feelings because of a lack of emotional awareness and connection.

C2 said about her leader that “he didn’t know what I did three quarters of the times, and neither did he know my potential”. She implied that the leader was detached from her working context and tasks. C1, in describing his leader’s approach to rolling out a large organisational initiative, said that “you can’t expect one person at a third level of functioning to just magically push something out through the whole business”. He was saying that the leader was detached from the reality and implications of the work that followers needed to perform. C2, in describing her leader’s style, said that “he’s quite disengaged, like he does not get involved, he just lets you carry on, and not very supportive”. In referring to a colleague who was clearly overloaded with work, C2 said that “you’ve got somebody who is senior, senior, senior doing the work of three people and he (the leader) has not met with her once”. She was saying that the leader was detached from and unaware of the possible stress and burnout implications of overloading her colleague with work.

C7, in referring to her leader, said that “he doesn’t know what happens at the bottom, he’s all helicopter level and has this view on everything, and then there’s this view that the divisions have, but we have that skewed”. She was saying that the leader’s detachment from the working realities in the organisation created a misalignment of perspectives between top leadership and those within the working context. C7 went on to describe a conversation that she’d had with a colleague, saying, “I know he is in his bubble all the time and maybe he doesn’t have a true reflection of what you guys do”. She was aware that her leader was detached from the realities of her colleagues’ work context. C3 described a bureaucracy of leadership in his function, saying, “if you don’t speak to some resource senior you can see he’s not doing anything about it”. He was saying that his words to his leader about the working realities were falling on deaf ears. C3 went on to say about the top leadership that “they end up having conversations about not about what’s actually transpiring and so it just diminishes trust and I suppose comfort in the system”. He had the experience of leaders at the top being detached from the realities below.

5.3.2.2 Discussion

The idea of the container-contained addresses the dynamic interaction of predominantly unconscious thoughts (the contained) and the capacity for dreaming and thinking those thoughts (the container) (Ogden, 2004). In a similar way that container-contained means the mother as container for the infant’s unconscious psychic material, it is also a function of leadership. This maternal containment is necessary for leaders in aiding followers to digest difficult unconscious thoughts (beta elements) and to transform these into conscious phenomena (alpha elements) that are more manageable and that create meaning for followers. For children of mothers who are incapable of providing maternal containment, it makes the child feel that their sensation is deprived of meaning (Groth, 2016), and the same goes for followers of leaders who are without the capacity for containment. Participants experienced their leaders to be uncaring, having no human connection, lacking involvement in their lives, and as disinterested in them. They were also experienced as being emotionally out of touch with the dynamics in the business, out of touch with the psychological needs of followers, and unaware of how their actions impacted the emotions of followers. The maternal container-contained function of leadership was unavailable. As a result, followers ended up avoiding their leaders to avoid pain and disappointment, and they experienced a void of meaning in relation to the leaders.

Western (2017) asserts the importance of leadership to provide both a paternal and maternal-containing function. The ‘Father’ as ‘paternal metaphor’ provides structure, task boundaries,

and authority and focuses on the external world (Western, 2017). To provide paternal containment, it is necessary for leaders to be in touch with the working realities that followers must face. Some examples might include knowing what projects followers are working towards, what structure and processes they entail for successful execution, intervening where work processes or structure are insufficient for containment, and so forth. From the followers' stories, it became evident that leadership was detached and out of touch with the paternal aspects of containment too. Participants had the experience of leaders being out of touch with their working realities. Leaders did not know what followers were doing and at times expected them to execute on projects without connecting to the context, and the processes and structures needed. Leaders were experienced as living in a bubble and paternally detached from the working realities of their followers.

5.3.2.3 Working hypothesis

When leaders are detached and unavailable to provide maternal and paternal containment to followers, followers experience unbearable levels of frustration and survival anxiety. It becomes impossible for the followers to digest difficult unconscious thoughts into rational meaning-making phenomena, which results in a void of meaning and the experience of frustration. As a defence against their anxiety which is unresolvable in relation to the leader, the leader becomes the avoided object onto which bad feelings are projected yet remain unresolved. The result is a gradual psychological process towards a greater void of meaning in the context of both the work of followers and their relationship with the leader. Followers of detached leaders become containers of the unprocessed alpha elements in their relatedness. Voluntary turnover, therefore, represents a symptom of both a search for meaning by those undergoing it and an explosion of unprocessed alpha elements across the organisational boundary (like the dynamic described in section 5.2.5).

5.3.3 A bullying leadership

A theme of followers being bullied by their leaders emerged from the voluntary turnover stories. The bullying manifested in leaders using their power to silence the voices of their followers. This killed the communication between leaders and followers. It manifested in people fleeing from one business division to another to try and escape the bullying. The bullying manifested in people becoming overwhelmed with anxiety and having panic attacks. It manifested in leaders forcing their followers to disclose information about their private thoughts. Bullying also manifested in leaders manipulating their followers and in-game playing, where people were divided with the leaders' intent to control them. The bullying left followers

feeling anxious and fearful, as small as a little child on a playground, oppressed and silenced, and needing to escape. It also left some followers feeling guilty, as though they deserved to be bullied. It left them feeling threatened, disrespected, and fragmented. The summative effect of bullying of followers by their leaders was a breakdown in communication, mental health issues for those being bullied, disempowered people who felt that they could no longer contribute, and fragmentation of the sense of self.

5.3.3.1 Findings

C1 said about his leader, “[he was a bully in a sense](#)”. When asked if he might be prepared to talk more about his experiences of being bullied, he said that:

“I suppose a bully is a bully. You see them in the school playground whatever you know, it’s more from a mental perspective using your power to squash debates, to squash engagement, saying well this is how it’s going to be because I’m the boss kind of thing”.

C1 was saying that his leader used his position of power to oppress his voice and to make him feel small. In describing how the bullying manifested, C1 said, “[he just shot me down from a dizzy height, so that was my first negative experience](#)”. He went on to say, “[instead of having a conversation it’s just, it’s cut off like saying this is it and don’t dare question me](#)” (C4). C4 talked about an MD of a business division who was feared by many people saying:

“Some left to our division to get away from her. So, all of a sudden, all these people that had to run away from that division, to get away from the MD, were now back being overseen by her. Jason left straight after that”.

C4 went on to describe the effect of the bullying on a colleague, saying, “[Andrew had a panic attack](#)”. C1 and C7 were both describing senior leaders who were bullying followers.

C6 said that she was afraid of her leader and described her relationship with her leader as abusive. She said, “[so, in a way, and I suppose as in an abusive relationship, you go, well, I probably deserved it because I backchatted or something. And you start rationalising in your head why you got what you got](#)” (C6). She was saying that she had taken abuse from her leader but blamed herself for it. C2 said to me that “[people who are leaving are saying that they feel like abused housewives](#)”. C7 described how she was bullied by the senior leader in her function. C7 relayed a conversation that her manager had with her saying, “[if you don’t go and tell John now that you’re thinking of leaving, I will go and tell him](#)”. C7 replied to her boss, saying, “[you cannot threaten me](#)”. C7 said, “[you’re putting me in a really bad position because](#)

my thoughts aren't gathered". She went on to say, "I would never have gone to his office that day if she hadn't threatened me that she would tell him" (C7). In contrasting her experience to what a good leader should be like, C7 said that "if you're a good leader I feel like you would empower people, you would treat them with respect and it's super clear how she talks to us". She was saying that her boss threatened her, forced her to disclose information to the most senior leader in her work function and that her thoughts had been fragmented.

C2, in referring to two senior leaders, said, "I honestly believe that she's a psychopath, and I think that John is borderline as well". She described the leaders' absolute disregard for the feelings and lives of people in the decisions that they were making. In referring to her direct leader C2 said, "he didn't seem very empathetic around it, but he knows the right things to say. That's why I also think he's a bit of a psycho". She was saying that her leader used the right words but that his words were not sincere or reflective of his inner experience. C4 discussed the lengths that a senior leader in his business division went to control people. C4 said, "she created some environment where separations were put into place and people were divided so that she could control this thing and that is how people do what they do". He was saying that the leader was manipulating and bullying people as a way of maintaining control.

5.3.3.2 Discussion

Workplace bullying can have wide-reaching negative effects, affecting both targets of this behaviour, others who are aware of its occurrence and the organisation as a whole (Vranjes et al., 2021). Stokes (2019) refers to bullying in organisations as a form of scapegoating of certain individuals who are subjected to intolerable pressures that often drive them out of the organisation in one way or another. According to Cilliers (2012), anxiety is projected to and fro, in the bullying dynamic, between role-holders to avoid feelings of badness. Kets de Vries (2006) describes bullies as abrasives and lists the primary defensive mechanisms used as isolation, projection and rationalisation. Bullies are pros at remaining untouched by the effects of their own unpleasant activities (isolation), scapegoating others when things go wrong (projections), and finding excellent reasons why they're not themselves to blame (rationalisation) (Kets de Vries, 2006).

Cilliers (2012) articulates the dynamic process of bullying as the splitting of good and bad as a defence against persecutory anxiety, denial of the bad by the bully, projection of the bad and persecutory anxiety onto the other as the victim, and projective identification as the bad projections are taken into the victim who must carry and act them out on behalf of the other and the system. Bullying is, therefore, a symptom of unresolved pain in the larger system. Leaders used their positions of power to dominate followers, silence them, brutally shoot them

down like game in a hunt and manipulate them into submission. Followers had the experience of feeling guilty as if they deserved the treatment that they had received. This served as evidence of the leader having projected anxiety and bad feelings into them. They were left with confusion and with the experience of having been abused. This served as evidence of them having introjected the persecutory anxiety. Followers tried to escape their bullies by flighting to other parts of the organisation and by flighting out of the organisation.

5.3.3.3 Working hypothesis

Leaders bully followers into avoiding working with their own vulnerability and persecutory anxiety. They split out the badness of being voiceless, guilty, and confused and deny these experiences in themselves. The bullying leaders project their badness and persecutory anxiety onto and into followers like arrows catapulted towards animals in a hunt. The followers, with a valence to carry the silence, guilt and confusion, introject the bad projections and persecutory anxiety and are left feeling silenced, guilty, confused, and persecuted. Followers carrying the bad projections are projected out of the organisation by leaders in the bullying and scapegoating dynamic, which manifests above the surface as a voluntary turnover decision.

5.4 MESO-LEVEL WORKING HYPOTHESIS

The general aim of the study was to explore the lived voluntary turnover experiences of people to develop an in-depth understanding of the systems psychodynamics involved in the process. In line with this aim, the lived experiences of voluntary turnover were explored, described, and discussed in themes, each theme with its own hypothesis. I formulated a meso-level hypothesis that flowed from and synthesised the meaning of each of the hypotheses about the meso-level themes. The poignant dynamics underlying each of the themes were noted and included to form a synthesised understanding of the meso-level systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover. The meso-level working hypothesis is presented below:

Voluntary turnover is a group defence against the shame that isn't worked within the group, and which ensues because of toxic leadership and followership dynamics and from dysfunctional CIBART dynamics in the group. Voluntary turnover represents a phantasy object of emancipation from shame for the group, but it perpetuates the scapegoating dynamics and voluntary turnover as a phenomenon.

Conflict about being excluded, bullied and repeatedly deauthorised by leaders creates shame in followers. Leaders behaving in ways that make it impossible for followers to identify with them makes for the experience of shame to belong to the group. Insufficient boundaries of

role, task, and time and violated psychological boundaries make people feel exposed, vulnerable, dependent, and ashamed. Parent-to-parent transactions in persistent deauthorising dynamics make containment of the shame of being deauthorised impossible. Experiences of disempowerment create feelings of impotence, dependency, and shame. To be forced out of role and off task is shame-making. When leaders engage in me-ness and the boundaries of authority and task are severed, inhibiting task performance, this also makes for a shameful experience. Toxic leadership and followership dynamics that prevent shame from being worked with include narcissism, detachment, and bullying. Mirroring and idealising narcissistic transferences create powerful members of in-groups and impotent and shameful members of out-groups. Detached leadership, unavailable for containment, results in members of the out-group carrying the unprocessed alpha elements on behalf of the group as a whole. Leaders bully followers who are members of the out-group by projecting their persecutory anxiety and bad feelings onto and into the impotent members as scapegoats. Toxic leadership and followership dynamics perpetuate the unworked shame in the group as impotent members of the out-group are scapegoated on behalf of the group as a whole.

5.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The meso-level findings of the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover were presented in this chapter. Themes from the qualitative analysis of the seven case studies were identified and discussed using CIBART themes, followed by specific themes about toxic leadership. The presentation of findings, discussions and working hypotheses of the themes culminated in an integrated working hypothesis about the meso-level systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover in line with the aim of the study. The macro and micro-level findings, discussions and working hypotheses are presented next in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER SIX: MACRO CULTURAL ASSUMPTIONS AND MICRO EXPERIENCES

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is about the macro and micro-level analysis of voluntary turnover through a systems psychodynamics lens. It focuses on describing the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover as evident in the culture of the organisation and in the micro-level individual experiences of it. Organisational-level cultural themes are presented first. For each theme, the meaning of the theme as grounded in the data is presented as findings, followed by a systems psychodynamics discussion of the theme, and concluded with a working hypothesis for the theme. Then, an integrated working hypothesis for the macro-level findings is formulated. The

micro-level themes follow and are similarly presented, starting with a data-driven description of the theme, an interpretative discussion, and a working hypothesis for each of them. An integrated hypothesis for the micro-level findings is also formulated. The chapter concludes with a summative reflection on the macro and micro-level themes that were presented.

6.2 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURAL THEMES

Individuals cannot bear to face the realities of organisational failures or even the realities of power abuse within the organisation or fear losing their positions or their own power (Long, 2019). It is simply too anxiety provoking. Social systems as a defence against anxiety is a theoretical perspective that highlights the way in which organisational structures and patterns of behaviour are designed to protect the individual against anxiety (Huffington et al., 2004). Once defence mechanisms become communally endorsed, they are generally accepted as rational and socially appropriate responses to organisational issues (Handy & Rowlands, 2017). When defences become collectively ingrained in this manner and unconsciously accepted as the way things are and should be done in the organisation, it constitutes the behavioural assumptions that underlie the culture of the organisation. While some of these defences are helpful, others are destructive because they cause secondary problems (Long, 2019). For instance, executive teams may defend themselves against staff members' anger that resulted from the executive teams' decisions about changes to organisational structure (Long, 2019), as was the context of the organisation in this study (see section 2.3.3). I applied the systems psychodynamics theoretical perspective of social defences to the data and discovered six voluntary turnover organisational cultural themes. The themes present the unconscious behavioural assumptions of the organisation and how these contribute toward the voluntary turnover of its members. The organisational cultural themes follow.

6.2.1 A culture of devalued people inside

A macro-level organisational culture theme of devalued people inside emerged from the stories. Value was attributed to people outside of the organisation, while those inside the organisation were devalued. A culture of devalued people inside manifested in the underutilisation of skills held by employees of the organisation. It manifested in the company advertising posts with fancy titles, yet not knowing what to do with the valuable skills once inside the organisation and so stifling them. This had a systemic and knock-on effect in that other people in the organisation were then stifled from utilising their skills. It also manifested in leaders failing to recognise the value that people were creating in the organisation. A very interesting manifestation of the theme was the trend for leaders to recruit externally rather than

internally. The shared assumption was that newness as fresh innovation had to be imported into the organisation and was therefore assumed to not exist within the organisation. It also manifested in people only starting to feel valued once they had resigned from the organisation. As if the closer they moved towards crossing the organisational boundary, the more valuable they became.

A culture of devalued people inside the organisation made people experience a sense of purposelessness and feel less than ordinary. They felt as though they were only considered as an afterthought rather than being recognised and valued. The summative effect of a culture of devalued people inside was the underutilisation of valuable skills inside the organisation and the projection of value onto people on the outside. It made people inside feel invisible and useless resulting in them leaving the organisation.

6.2.1.1 Findings

C1 implied that people inside the organisation with valuable skills were often overlooked and underutilised. C1 said that “the company has the right people; they should start utilising it quite soon. Otherwise, they’re going to be utilised somewhere else”. C1 went on to say:

“I guess coming in, you didn’t know, and that’s also where it started to get it. So, head of reward, head of engagement, which is quite a progressive title to start with, so you presume that if a listed company appoints that, that they’re quite impressive”.

C1 was saying that looking in from the outside, the window dressing was all in place and that the company looked to set up to attract high-value-adding talented people. On officially joining the organisation, C1 said that “but coming in you almost felt no one knew why you were being appointed. I was appointed but now I have to explain why I am here”. He had the experience that once he entered the organisation, it was as if his value was taken away. C1 implied that the problem was endemic to the organisation when he said, “because those skills aren’t allowed to do their job, there’s a lot of other skills in the business that sit in a similar situation”.

C2 talked about how the organisation lived by the motto of ‘ordinary people doing extraordinary things’ but that people no longer felt they were doing anything extraordinary. She said that “the fact that ordinary people that are doing extraordinary things is not there anymore”. When I asked her if ordinary people are made to feel ordinary, C2 replied, “I felt less than ordinary”. She went on to say, “I reached a state where I actually thought I was useless”. C2 was having the experience of feeling that her value was not seen or utilised towards meaningful work, and that led her to feel devalued. In discussing her relationship with her leader, C2 said, “I can’t continue working for someone who doesn’t see the value in what I am doing”. She went so far

as to make a connection between the devaluing of people by her leader and the share price of the organisation on the stock exchange. C2 said, “the minute analysts and investors hear that the CHRO is up to shit, the share price does this (drops)”. C2 said that “everybody knows if you go to the organisation, you will not get trained, you will not get developed”. She was saying that people on the inside of the organisation are devalued.

C3 grappled with the extent to which he was valued too. C3 said that “I always felt a sense that I was valued but certain things didn’t equate you know”. Despite having been a top performer, he was repeatedly declined promotions. C3 said that “I might have stayed if they gave me some recognition for it, but they didn’t, so what’s the point”? He went on to describe his experience of being offered another role but without any recognition of his value. C3 said, “change of title pretty much. It would’ve been a different position but ja it was just kind of an afterthought”. While he felt valued in the sense that his leaders knew about the value that he had to offer, he didn’t feel that his value was allowed to find expression in the organisation. In describing why he was repeatedly declined for promotions, C3 said, “the business leadership wanted external sort of people coming in to perhaps bring something different”. C3 went on to say, “they weren’t going to bring someone internally because the story was, we need new, inside, fresh blood from the outside”. People on the outside of the organisation were assumed to have value to add, while people on the inside were assumed to be old and stale.

C4, who worked in a completely different business division to C3, shared a similar experience. He was declined an opportunity for promotion that had been promised to him and that he had been working towards. C4 relayed what his leader had said to him, saying, “C4 we need, we want to get more outside experiences. Pretty much verbatim. We want somebody with outside experience and knowledge to put freshness into the division”. He was saying that the value that people had to offer was projected onto people outside of the organisation but at the expense of people on the inside becoming devalued. C4 said:

“Bang! That then set my mind up. So, you are looking for somebody that has got outside experience, to bring into the group. Overlooking people who had been loyal for 10 years. I got you. No problem. So that then had put the nail in the coffin”.

He was referring to his decision to leave. C4 went on to say about his leaving that “in a defining way that the only way I am going to get better at what I do, okay, is with other experiences and different experiences”. He made a connection in his mind that if he wanted to be of value, then he would need to find his value through different experiences that were located outside of the organisation. As if the value of people belonged outside of the organisation.

C5 shared a similar experience that was underpinned by the assumption that value belonged to people on the outside. In relaying a conversation that C5 had had with his MD about having been declined a promotion, C5 said that “higher up they are deciding to recruit for a commercial executive. They’re going outside to recruit for someone coming in”. In describing what the experience had done to him, he said, “I felt that listen, maybe there’s no room for me here”. He was saying that he felt that the organisation no longer valued him and that value belonged to people outside of the organisational boundary. C5 went on to say, “I put my resignation in, then it was you know, we will offer you the role”. As such, his value was only seen once he resigned himself to the outside of the organisation. Referring to his leader, C5 said, “he didn’t see the true potential that I had”. C5 had a realisation about how talent was being managed in the business, saying, “the penny dropped in terms of how we are managing talent you know in the business”. Interestingly C5 had just been awarded a senior role to move back to the organisation after having experienced working in another business for the past year. He said about his going back that “I am seeing it as an opportunity to bring value back to the organisation and you obviously see the merit in that” (C5). He was saying that he had bought into the assumption that his being on the outside had made him of greater value and with greater potential to add value.

C6 described how she received recognition only after she had resigned from the business. C6 said that “I do feel the value that I add, it’s just that you’re being finally recognised out there (once out of the organisation)”. She went on to say, “you get those when you leave, you know, it’s like, you’re only finally recognised when you’ve actually made the decision to go” (C6). She was saying that only once she had left did the company start to recognise her value. As if she was progressively becoming increasingly valuable as she was exiting the organisation to cross the boundary to the outside. She had said that she felt as though she had a cloud over her head but that once she left the organisation, the cloud stayed behind. C6 said:

“It [the cloud] hasn’t followed me, it’s still there. I don’t want to go back into that cloud, I feel like I’m breathing clean air here. So, what’s more important to me, financial, money and like my self-esteem and sort of happiness here”.

She was saying that not only did she earn more money but that she was feeling more of value in herself since leaving the organisation.

6.2.1.2 Discussion

The defences of splitting and projection (Klein, 1946) seem evident in the data above. People were split along the boundary line of the organisation, with value being projected onto and into

people on the outside of the boundary while people inside were devalued. Value came to represent newness, freshness, and innovation, which implied that devalued represented old, stale and less than ordinary. The shared assumption was that people inside of the organisational boundary lacked value, despite having been recruited as valuable people when they joined. People on the outside were imported as value-adding objects. As a result, participants experienced increased levels of survival anxiety because they were inhibited from utilising their skills and felt they had to justify their reason for existing in the organisation. Remaining inside of the organisation implied coming to terms with being less than ordinary, which implies a narcissistic injury to participants. Yet, leaders and the organisation at large continued to assume that newness, freshness, and innovation could only be sourced from the outside. This resulted in participants introjecting the bad object of having been devalued.

Participants introjected oldness, staleness and less than ordinariness and were having the experience of being these things. Instead of challenging the assumptions held about where value resided and what it had come to represent, participants fled out of the organisation and across the boundary towards where the value had come to be located in their minds. Some even had the experience of becoming valuable upon leaving the organisation. Value as a good object was sought after by some participants who left the organisation in pursuit of the value that existed in their minds to be on the outside.

6.2.1.3 Working hypothesis

The system splits value and projects it as newness, freshness, and extraordinariness onto people as objects outside of the organisation. Those on the inside introject the badness of oldness, staleness and being less than ordinary and have the experience of being devalued in the organisation. Voluntary turnover represents participants' collusion in introjecting the devaluation which forms a cultural assumption that to be on the inside means to be devalued. The desire to be valued results in people leaving the organisation in a value object-seeking dynamic where value is located on the outside. People undergoing voluntary turnover were used as scapegoats to carry the devalued oldness, staleness and less than ordinariness out of the organisation. Voluntary turnover came to represent crossing the threshold from devalued to valuable, and as such, it could also be understood as a transitional object towards the restoration of healthy ego strength.

6.2.2 A culture of cruelty shrouded in niceness

A culture of cruelty shrouded in niceness emerged as a theme from the stories. It manifested in leaders abdicating responsibility to deal with people whose roles had become redundant,

instead leaving them to free float in the organisation. It also manifested in leaders abdicating responsibility to confront issues of non-performance in others, instead giving those people more freedom to eventually hang themselves. It manifested in leaders' avoidance of having performance conversations with people. It is also manifested in a culture where people are not retrenched. Rather they are left to their own devices to try and survive in the organisation. The competition to be the nice guy was such that nobody wanted to have difficult conversations that might frame them as being the ugly guy. A culture of cruelty shrouded in niceness left people with the experience of frustration and of causing frustration for one another. Nobody wanted to have an uncomfortable conversation, so the discomfort was left with those who were avoided in the pursuit of niceness. The misfits were left feeling as though the only option available to them was to symbolically "kill" themselves by ending their being in the organisation. The summative effect of a culture of cruelty shrouded in niceness was a cruel and dangerous experience of voluntary turnover for the avoided people and a safe experience of being the nice one for those who avoid difficult conversations. The system worked the odd ones out with niceness.

6.2.2.1 Findings

C1 describes how the organisation deals with people who struggle to fit in or who find themselves incapable of performing the role into which they were hired. C1 said, "what they're horrible at the organisation, is dealing with the odd ones". C1 went on to say, "you either then address the problem and say listen, you're not the oke (person) for it, we need someone else, and we need it at a higher level or whatever the case may be". He was saying that nobody in the organisation was prepared to have a difficult conversation when someone wasn't working out. C1 went on to describe how avoidance of having difficult conversations was really about people competing with one another about who can be the nicest. C1 said, "they think they're trying to be nice. They're always trying to be the nice guy, but I think what's bad is a lot of the times, when you're trying to be the nice guy, you're actually the opposite". C1 described a situation in which a person was left alone as a misfit in the organisational structure and when nobody was prepared to do anything about it. The shared sentiment was to let him be even though he didn't have a place in the system. C1 said about the person, "he gets frustrated because he's actually in charge of nothing. He puts his hand up for random shit that he's not actually involved in. So, he frustrates everyone, he's frustrated, he feels undervalued because you're trying to be nice". In describing what should be done about it, C1 said:

"It's like not giving the patient any medicine because it tastes bad. You'll get better probably, just live through some, like small, teeny, bad experience to solve a much

bigger issue. But no one has that discussion because it's too hard. So just no one speak about that guy, just leave him there".

C1 went on to describe an aspect of the culture at the organisation, saying, "and they'll tell you, we don't retrench people here". C1 explained what the shared assumption of not retrenching people really meant by saying, "you think you're being nice but you're not". The culture of wanting to be the nice guy by not retrenching people was endemic to the organisation. C2 described how instead of dealing with the non-performance of her director in the business, the senior leadership team left him to hang himself. C2 said, "I think they see through him, but they also can't do the work themselves". C2 went on to relay a conversation that she had had with one of the senior leaders of the business, saying, "you're giving him all the rope in the world, but you need to know what you're doing. I said, he's going to use that rope to hang himself. And he said, he just looked at me and smiled". C2 was saying that instead of proactively dealing with the issue of a senior leader who was incapable of performing in his role, he was left to his own devices to destroy himself. C3 described another senior leader who, although he was not performing, was left to his own devices to eventually self-destruct because nobody wanted to have the difficult conversation. C3 said, "they appointed someone who is black, and it would be hell of uncomfortable to get rid of such a person". He went on to say, "you're probably going to give them more of a chance than you would give somebody else you know... I believe" (C3). He was implying that to fire a person who was black might be interpreted as a morally unjust and ugly act to commit, and so the task was avoided.

C4 relayed how he had had a misfit and emotionally challenging employee in his team who eventually left. C4 said, "I lost a designer at the time. Thank the Pope, because he was the hardest, hardest to work with I had in my life". In describing the employee, C4 said, "the problem was that he could not take criticism, and this was from the day he started before I was line manager to the day he left". He was isolating the problem as belonging to the individual and was abdicating himself from the issue. C4 described how he experienced the employee's reaction to criticism saying, "if you criticise his work, he almost went into a thing where he was like, I will kill myself". What the employee was really saying, though, was that his levels of survival anxiety were so high that he anticipated being cut out of the organisation, so he thought to rather symbolically kill himself out of the organisation instead. C4 said about the designer's leaving, "okay, but he left, and we had this new young designer. Fantastic. I tell you what, that changed everything". The phantasy that C4 seemed to hold was that the old emotional one would leave to be replaced by a younger new one with whom no difficult conversations would be necessary. Instead of actively providing leadership to the emotional

misfit in the team, he was left to his own devices to symbolically kill himself off and end his being in the organisation. It was too much hard work to have difficult conversations and reach beneath the surface of the designer's cries for help. It was easier to leave him be and be the nice guy who abdicates responsibility for taking up the leadership role. Interestingly C4 himself underwent voluntary turnover as a process after the designer left. While everyone around him knew that the role he had aspired to was awarded to an external candidate, nobody wanted to be the one to tell him.

6.2.2.2 Discussion

Krantz (2006) proposes that betrayal in service of a higher purpose is inherent in organisational life and deeply linked to the capacity to lead (Krantz, 2006). In essence leaders must make unpopular decisions for the greater good of their organisations even though these might feel like a betrayal. Krantz (2006) explains how virtuous betrayal is about revealing truths that may be difficult to expose. Revealing difficult truths is necessary to upset the emotional equilibrium that has been established in a system to effect change. Leaders, however, when confronted with irreconcilable conflicts between the institutional and personal, face the challenges of betrayal (Krantz, 2006). A culture of cruelty shrouded in niceness is really about the shared assumption that leadership ought not to engage virtuous betrayal, but rather portray the self to be nice. Leadership was about fostering a positive self-image in the system which could be interpreted as a narcissistic pursuit that made the leadership functions of boundary management, containment, and virtuous betrayal impossible.

Leaders suppressed the need to engage with the task to create boundaries around roles and tasks for free-floating misfits in the organisation. They avoided the leadership task of attending to the process task that was needed to bring people back to primary task behaviours. The process task provides an opportunity for members of a group to become aware of and acknowledge their own dynamics. These include becoming aware of dependency in the group, pairing, fight or flight, and oneness behavioural dynamics, how the group competes, how it relates to authority, and the dynamics in interpersonal relationships, with the view to understand the meaning of behaviour of an individual for the group, or group behaviour as such (Green & Molenkamp, 2005). Instead, leaders retreated into basic assumption me-ness and watched on as others journeyed towards self-destruction in their anti-task behaviours. Leaders also repressed their death drive (Mills, 2006) in pursuit of portraying the self as hero rather than a villain, which was evidenced by a collective who refused to retrench people. All these leadership tasks would have constituted embracing virtuous betrayal to disrupt the

equilibrium so that change could take place towards a new direction. Yet, leaders, in pursuit of looking and feeling good, abdicated virtuous betrayal in their roles.

For the individuals who were left free floating, they experienced free-floating survival anxiety, which made them attempt to latch onto any task of potential meaning and purpose that came their way. Others experienced these attempts as role and task boundary violations which made them feel frustrated and conflicted. For some, the survival anxiety became such that the phantasy of killing the self out of the organisation seemed to be the only way out. The culture supported powerful leadership as representing nice people, perfect and clean from any ugliness. Those who were left without role and task boundaries for containment, straying blindly into a far-off distant anti-task behaviour, became victims of the system's failure to endorse virtuous betrayal as a key aspect of leadership. The system eventually worked them out in service of the preservation of the narcissism (see section 5.3.1) that had come to represent leadership in the organisation. A culture of cruelty shrouded in niceness is about the system killing people off nicely in the unconscious.

6.2.2.3 Working hypothesis

When leadership abdicates their responsibility for virtuous betrayal in service of their narcissism, then the system unconsciously colludes to assume what good leadership looks like. In this case, good leadership came to represent being the nice guy. The system subsequently becomes stuck because difficult truths are suppressed, and aggression is repressed in service of the self-image of niceness. The system is deprived of an opportunity for change and a new direction. The misfits, non-performers and redundants experience heightened levels of survival anxiety because of the lack of containment from leadership. To defend against their survival anxiety, they transgress the role and task boundaries of others in the system, which creates conflict. The systemic and repressed aggression that sits below the surface of the niceness is felt and introjected by the misfits, the unaware non-performers, and the redundants. The introjected aggression that ought to belong to the system manifests in people having the experience of killing themselves in their leaving the business. The others who remain can be left to feel nice and omnipotent. In the unconscious, the system uses specific members to carry the aggression out of the system in a scapegoating dynamic characterised by the split between nice and ugly. The ugly system perpetuates voluntary turnover through the phantasy and competition to be omnipotently nice.

6.2.3 A messiah culture

A theme of a messiah culture in the organisation emerged from the stories. It manifested in people becoming overly identified with the organisation to the extent that it determined how people experienced themselves. It also manifested in the organisation becoming a belief system for some. A messiah culture further manifested in the prescription of a specific language and the attributed meaning to words that were endorsed as the language of the business. It manifested in employees idealising the organisation with the shared sentiment that the culture there is simply amazing. Senior leaders preached the good word of the organisation and affirmed that it indeed had the most powerful values of any other organisation in the JSE stock exchange land. It also manifested in participants telling themselves convincing stories about how good the organisation was despite their experiences suggesting otherwise. Some participants had the experience of feeling guilty for going to interviews with other organisations, as though the act represented a betrayal and a sin. Some participants worshipped senior leaders in the business and blindly believed whatever was told to them. One leader issued a participant with a formula that promised her to become as great as he was in solving money matters. Participants experienced exhaustion, as though they had been depleted after having sacrificed themselves for the organisation. Most experienced conflicting feelings of awe for leaders and the organisation but also experienced guilt at the thought of betraying them. The summative effect was a membership of employees who were controlled through the organisational culture.

6.2.3.1 Findings

C2 described what it was like to work in the organisation, saying:

“I found that the organisation defined who I was. When I had a good day at the organisation, I loved the person I was. When I had a bad day at the organisation, I detested the person it made me to be”.

She was saying that she was consumed by the organisation and that her experience of it defining who she was and how she felt about herself consumed her too. It had become a totalising force in her life. C2 went on to relay what the organisation meant to her. She said, “I believe in that organisation, I believe what it stands for, and I believe it could be the market leader”. She had clearly placed her faith in the organisation as a great saviour and ultimate prize winner. She also described how a specific language had been indoctrinated into the organisation through the leadership development program that had been set up. C2 said, “so that when you go back to the office you can now talk the multiplier language”. The totalising

culture in the organisation went so far as to prescribe appropriate words and their associated meaning. C1 said about the organisation, “I felt that business took everything out of me, and I, I would have given everything. I’m on the extreme end of self-sacrifice”. She was speaking as though she would have given up her life and soul for the organisation, as if it was a great messiah in her mind.

C6 said about the organisation that “the organisation is amazing; you know the culture”. C6 talked herself into believing that the organisation was amazing to defend against her anxiety about looking elsewhere for a new role. C6 said, “so you go (say to yourself), The organisation is such a great company, and I don’t really want to leave, and I’m not going to find another company like this to work for”. Only after having left the organisation did she come to the realisation and acceptance that “the organisation is not the be all and end all of employers. It’s just a business and there are other businesses out there that are just as good” (C6). She said that she was idealising the company to cope with her anxiety. She also felt uncomfortable going for interviews with other organisations. C6 said, “you like say, it’s a good company so just stay where you are, you’re good and not have to go out there and interview and lie that you’ve gone for interviews”. She felt that she was being dishonest and betraying of the organisation by interviewing with other companies. As if the organisation demanded complete blind loyalty.

C7 described some of the interactions and feelings that she’d had with the head of her business function. C7 said about one such conversation:

“He (the head of the function) was like, you know C7, we have the strongest values in any JSE listed company. Then he started quoting bible verses and he was like you know, the bible says, ‘consider it pure joy when you face your trial in many kinds”.

The head of the function was saying that she should have faith and know that the company culture was the number one and best. Interestingly C7’s father pastored a church for ten years, and she listened in awe of him preaching from the pulpit too. She had idealised her father, and she seemed to idealise the leader as a kind of messiah too. She described her relationship with the head of the function, saying:

“I would work whatever hours because he was super (human), I mean I would do anything for John. Like, I will be honest, I would even stay there (at work) until morning if I had to do something that he asked for”.

She idealised and idolised him as a kind of superhuman saviour. C5 also described an organisational culture that compelled people to work really hard. C5 said, “the organisation is

amazing you know, the culture". C5 went on to say, "there are times when you are under pressure, under the whip and you have to deliver, but that goes with the territory". He was saying that the culture demanded people to work really hard. C7 looked to the head of her function as if he held the power of truth. C7 said that "you (referring to the head of the function) could have said this guy is purple and I'd be like yes John, this guy is purple". C7 then described how she did see some of the leaders' flaws. C7 said:

"As I went through the process, I could see things that he wasn't doing one hundred percent right, he fell lower and lower and became more human, but I wasn't like – how can I say it – like I still worshipped him like I did before kind of thing".

She not only idealised him, but she worshipped him as though he was a Messiah. C7 went on to describe how clever the leader was and how he had access to special formulas to understand money. C7 said, "then he gave me this little triangular formula and cause and effect, understand cash, architectural thinking, C7 – that's what you do"! My association with the triangular formula was that it represented the communion that one receives from a priest in a church.

6.2.3.2 Discussion

Organisational culture is deemed to be the heartbeat of company success, and organisational culture is believed to be very susceptible to leadership influence (Western, 2019). This was certainly the case for this organisation, where a Messiah culture was clearly endorsed and influenced by the leadership. Western (2019) describes the Messiah leadership discourse as a form of control through culture that replaced earlier leadership discourses of the controller by command and control and the therapist discourse that focussed more on creating humane places of work. The values of the organisation were preached as gospel truth and revered as the highest form of value system out of all the companies on the JSE stock exchange. In a Messiah culture, getting employee engagement to share the values and vision of the leader meant they would work long hours and bring their whole committed selves to work without the need for supervision, monitoring or coercion (Western, 2019). This was certainly the case for this organisation and its leadership, as evidenced by the stories that were shared. Motivation came from the organisational culture as a form of social coercion to conform to community norms, even so far as the adoption of a specific language. To establish these strong and seductive cultures, charismatic leaders were required who could set out visions and values persuasively, gaining loyalty and commitment from employees (Western, 2019). This was true of the charismatic leader described in C7's stories, who was part of the most senior leadership team in the organisation.

Through the promotion of a strong and prescriptive value system and culture, the organisation came to represent a powerful force that controlled the lives of the people who worked in it. To belong to the organisation as a member, it was necessary to identify with it, adopt a belief system about it, idealise it as the greatest place to work and as the most powerful, and acknowledge its leadership as the source of truth. The organisation in the mind came to represent omnipotence for members. Thinking about leaving or attending interviews with other organisations invoked intense feelings of guilt. The guilt suggests a depressive position having been adopted along the voluntary turnover process. The depressive position is characteristic of the infant's development towards reality testing, integration of splits and ownership of bad projections (1948b). It was as if the organisation-as-a-whole, with its Messiah leadership, had come to represent the mother-in-the-mind of members (Rosenbaum, 2004). Like how the meso group represented mother-in-the-mind (see section 5.4). The depressive position is about taking back projections and integrating the self in relation to an object. This suggests that the member, before seeing and acknowledging the flaws of the organisation, may have been caught up in the paranoid-schizoid position. Movement to and from the positions is part of life. In taking back their projections of omnipotence and power, members would have become empowered to think for themselves, choose how to live their lives and make better decisions for their careers. Reality integration allowed for sanity to prevail and for emancipation from a system that sought to control their lives.

6.2.3.3 Working hypothesis

A messiah culture requires its members to submit to and idealise the organisation and its leadership, with its values, truths, and languages, but which controls its membership. Members must identify with an omnipotent organisation and place powerful projections onto and into the organisation. Members deny and repress the impotencies of the organisation into the unconscious mind to defend against their survival anxiety. As if members represent an infant, in relation to a split organisation-in-the-mind as good or bad mother, who is caught in the paranoid-schizoid position. The organisation comes to represent the idealised parent for members who identify with it and feel powerful through it. When members integrate the impotencies of the organisation into the conscious mind, their personal agency and rational thinking in relation to the organisation is restored as the organisation becomes a whole object. Members of a Messiah culture are retained through the shared assumption of the organisation as omnipotent object to be idealised. When members integrate the powerful and impotent parts of the organisation-in-the-mind, the system loses its control to retain them. The system dismembers itself of those members who no longer share the assumption of the organisation as omnipotent Messiah. The impotence and the members carrying the realisation of it are

denied by and from the system and repressed to the outside of the organisational boundary by the collective. Voluntary turnover is, therefore, a social defence against integrating the reality of the organisation-as-a-whole as impotent and omnipotent object in the conscious mind.

6.2.4 A culture of stagnated growth

A culture of stagnated growth emerged as a theme from the stories. It manifested as a loss of faith in the company strategy. It also manifested in leaders sticking to old ways of doing things and not allowing innovation or change. Furthermore, it manifested in the company not growing in value for a period of more than five years. It had stopped moving forward and failed to achieve its goals. It manifested in a breakdown in communication between the bottom and the top of the organisation, and with employees having the experience that leaders did not want to hear difficult truths that they had to offer. A culture of stagnated growth manifested in leadership and an organisation that was not holding itself to account. The experience of the company repeatedly failing to deliver on projects became the norm. It also manifested in a bureaucratic type of culture where it became impossible to introduce anything new. Another manifestation of a culture of stagnated growth was the devaluation of company shares that were held by employees, yielding them meaningless. It made people feel stuck, frustrated, despondent, devoid of meaning and purpose and tired of having to fight for change. The summative effect of a culture of stagnated growth was the experience of a lack of progress towards any goals and a bureaucracy of demotivated people looking for jobs elsewhere.

6.2.4.1 Findings

C1 explained how the company had become stuck and wasn't innovating anymore. He also talked about his expectations about the new company strategy that was about to be released. C1 said about the strategy, "I don't think it's going to be this new, I don't think it would be a strategy that's totally new. It's very blerrr like whatever". C2 said about her function, "it's not progressive. So, something you might be able to connect with, so they're moving back to". She was saying that forward-thinking was absent in the organisation and that leaders were relying on old ways of doing things rather than moving with the times. C3 said about the company, "unfortunately where the company hasn't grown in five years it's kind of meaningless in a sense you know". C3 went on to say, "I believe the company has got itself into such a state where moving forward is difficult, it's going to require massive change". C3 was saying that the organisation was stuck, it wasn't progressing towards goals and that he doubted whether it might be possible for the organisation to change. C3 talked about his experience of

having to work with the stuckness saying, “now you’re fighting this corporate bureaucracy culture where you know he is not going to do anything about it. How on earth are we going to move forward”? The stuckness made him feel despair at having to fight something much bigger than himself.

C3 attributed the stuckness to broken communication between the top leadership and the rest of the organisation. C3 provided a solution saying, “we need forums where people at the bottom can talk about people at the top in a way that moves the company forward you know”. He implied that the body of the organisation was silenced and made invisible by the leadership. C3 went on to pose the questions, “how do we change our entire business to run off these principles and good leadership practices, and how do we hold our leaders and our culture and our business accountable to how we want to define ourselves”? He was saying that he identified as an accountable professional, this was how he defined himself, yet the leadership and the company were experienced as lacking accountability. C3 said “so if the company is not executing on its strategy, not meeting its sort of, its road map of where it wants to be, it keeps failing on these projects you know you ask yourself why”? The lack of company progress left him in a state of questioning. C6 said “I’m still sort of stuck, so you start having that sinking ship feeling”. C7 also had the experience of feeling stuck, saying “I feel stuck, like I don’t know where I can go, and after we spoke about it he’s like you’re actually right, you are stuck”. People were having the experience of feeling stuck in a stuck organisation.

C3 said that “most of what has just happened is just keeping the business floating in terms of existing stuff. In any of the new stuff really battling. Battling, battling and I think that’s where they will carry on losing staff”. He was saying that people who were stuck and fighting for anything new were becoming frustrated and that they would leave the business as a result. Company shares were once a powerful retention strategy, but due to the stagnated growth, these had become worth very little. C3 explained that “so the financial remuneration aspect of the share options had significance and now it’s kind of just a piece of paper that you can file away and it’s probably never going to have an impact on your life”. He was saying that because the company had become stuck, and the share price had taken a fall. This had a direct impact on people who worked at the organisation in that they were becoming poorer. The blame was attributed to a leadership that was stuck and who wouldn’t change. Interesting that two of the three espoused values of the organisational culture were passion and value. Both appeared to represent the antithesis of the lived experiences that participants had of the organisational culture having become stuck and devalued.

6.2.4.2 Discussion

Obholzer (2019) explains what's needed for an organisation to provide containment. Agreement about the primary task as well as remaining in touch with the nature of the anxieties projected into the organisation as containment is needed. Otherwise, members of the organisation defensively block them out of awareness. In this sense, attention to both the primary task and process task is needed. The evidence provided in the voluntary turnover stories suggests an organisation unconsciously colluding on anti-task behaviours and a lack of will for the leadership to attend to the process task of bringing these to awareness. In the minds of those who were undergoing voluntary turnover, the organisation had not been realising its strategy or marking off any significant goals. Attempts to introduce new ideas or bring anti-task behaviours to awareness were simply not allowed by the system, which was determined in its old ways.

Members adopted the unconscious assumption that everyone was always on-task. This eliminated any need to attend to the process task of becoming aware of the unconscious anxieties projected into the organisation as container. The unconscious anxieties that the organisation was holding were about performance and collective lack thereof. Unconscious collusion can become endemic in a culture (Long, 2019). Leadership had become split off from the bottom of the organisation and attempts from the bottom to make anti-task behaviours conscious in the system were silenced. The organisation had become overly anti-task without awareness nor the means to attend to its process task because of the split between leadership as the top and the rest of the organisation as the bottom.

Those at the top with formal authority and power to initiate the process task and to manage the boundary around the primary task were unaware as if they had become gurus who could no longer learn anything new. While the Messiah culture was ramping up performance anxieties, the leadership weren't attending to the process task or managing the boundary around the primary task. The increased anxieties were experienced by members as causing them to work harder but not getting anywhere as a collective. As one participant (C3) said, "there was a lot in the organisation that was happening, and I just felt like we're getting nowhere". Apart from the loss of meaning and purpose, the anti-task behaviours caused a financial loss for employees in the form of devalued shares. The organisation became stuck in its busyness yet not going anywhere. The organisation's anti-task behaviour was dominated by me-ness. The organisation had, in previous years, achieved substantial growth and had become identified as a growing and innovative company. This was, however, no longer the case which triggered an identity crisis for participants.

6.2.4.3 Working hypothesis

When the top leadership of an organisation becomes stuck in me-ness as an anti-task behaviour, then attending to the process task of what is projected into the organisation becomes difficult. Leaders in a state of me-ness fail to provide a containing function through both unattendance to the process task and lack of boundary management of the primary task. This creates heightened levels of survival anxiety that is projected into the organisation. In defence of the anxieties, the organisation splits itself along the lines of top leadership and bottom employees. The power is projected from the bottom to the top, but the top, caught up in me-ness and the narcissistic need to shore up their self-image, goes into denial about the lack of progress and accountability. Employees below experience a void of meaning about untransformed organisational alpha elements and lack of growth. Remaining in the organisation requires of members to assume that the organisation is always on-task. When members attempt to introduce reflective thinking and raise awareness of anti-task behaviours, the organisation that is gripped in survival and performance anxiety is unable to tolerate these truths. The organisation silences and denies those members as if they themselves represent the un-faceable truth that threatens its survival. The organisation kills off these members in the unconscious by projecting them out of the organisation to alleviate its systemic survival anxiety.

6.2.5 A detached culture

A theme of a detached culture emerged from the stories. It manifested through narcissism and greed in top leadership, becoming functionally detached from the body of the organisation. It also manifested in an emotionally detached leadership yielding the container-contained leadership dynamic immobilised. Narcissism was evident at the level of top leadership in the form of an elite old boy's type club, with an in-group of elite leaders and an out-group of lesser employees. The top leadership structure had built themselves extravagant offices that were positioned at the very top of the organisation's buildings, with the employees left working in mouldy and cramped old offices below. The theme also manifested in the top leadership having installed a separate lift. This was done so that top leaders did not have to walk through the offices of workers below to access their 360-degree glass offices above. It also manifested in a greedy head of the body paying themselves inflated bonuses while the rest of the organisation earned in the bottom ten percentile. Voluntary turnover participants in a detached culture were left with the experience of being excluded, feeling used in service of the leaders' narcissistic ambitions, feeling as though they were unimportant, and as though the leaders were in denial of what they were doing. The summative effect of the detachment was an

organisational disconnect from the primary task, a lack of emotional containment, and the experience of followers that leaders were overly self-involved and greedy.

6.2.5.1 Findings

The office block that the top leadership had built for themselves was referred to as the ivory tower. C1 described the ivory tower saying, “it’s very glass, wall to wall, 360 glass, just glass everywhere, so it’s totally different from anywhere else in that whole building”. My association to the wall-to-wall glass was that it could easily shatter. C1 went on to describe how the top leadership had installed a separate lift to access the ivory tower so that they didn’t have to walk through the masses below. C1 described the employee’s offices below as “crap and having mildew and issues with drains”. He was saying that he experienced the top leadership structure as detached in their sense of self-importance in relation to the rest of the organisation. C3 referred to the leadership of the organisation, saying, “old boys club you know, look after ourselves, look after our interests”. He was saying that the leadership identified as a group of elites comprising an in-group and the rest of the members of the organisation forming part of an out-group.

C1, in trying to make sense of his experience of the elitist top leadership structure, said, “I don’t know if it’s a rush that comes with it or the hormones that with being at the top that you suddenly are even more elevated to think of yourself and not the rest”. He was saying that top leadership thought that they were better than the rest and that they had become self-absorbed in their powerful positions. C1 said about what happens to leaders at the top that “it’s hand off hands when you get to that level”. In telling the story of how one of the top leaders in the business made his way up the proverbial corporate ladder, C7 said, “he literally walked into the company, like modelled at the company to earn money for his tuition”. She was speaking with a sense of adoration for the senior leader. It was as if the senior leader had embodied the narcissism of the organisation, which was also represented in his story about his route to power. The participants were implying that the top elites were filled with self-importance and that they had been declared to be untouchables.

Participants also described the top leadership of the organisation as greedy. C1 said about the top leadership, “this year they paid themselves all these wonderful bonuses. The four of them earned 100 million in shares as well”. C1 then described how the rest of the organisation was remunerated, saying, “if you look at the percentile distribution, we’re paying in the bottom 10%”. C2 described how leadership had endorsed one business division to generate revenue from illegal and uncertified sales agents. C2 said that “there were a whole lot of people that didn’t have the certification up to date, and they were selling financial products in essence”.

C3 said about how the directors are remunerated, “so you see sort of the directors getting remunerated at ridiculous levels and whatever share option you get really mean nothing”. He was saying that while top leadership was looking after themselves financially that everyone else was not being rewarded. C4 described a scandal that had unfolded that was to do with some of the top leadership acting illegally in cahoots with a supplier to bypass import duties on goods. C4 said, “SARS has got some targets on their back. It was not legal”. To add to the scandal, the leaders involved were discovered to have owned a luxury holiday house together with the supplier in cahoots. The organisation had become a get mega filthy rich project for a few at the top but at the expense of the many below.

C1 described how the top leadership structure didn't fit with the structures below, as if it was detached in function. C1 said, “it's like weird random strings hanging to some shit below it. Now the rest are confused and no one there is still taking accountability”. He was saying that there was a lack of role and task boundaries connecting the primary task of the organisation throughout. In discussing how the top leadership of the organisation had embarked on the project of restructuring, C1 said that “the whole way that they went about it, I think, was, what's the right word, reckless”! He likened the restructuring to a renovation of a home with no thought about the people who had to live in the house. C1 said that “you don't just submit a kitchen plan, and no one knows how it fits in or why this wall is now being knocked down or what's going on”. He was saying that the top leadership had little to no regard for the feelings or experiences of others in the organisation. C3 said:

“You can have a structure that on high level looks 100% and that is pretty spot on, but how the structure needed to inter-operate and to link with each other and ja who is responsible for what, and, and. I think that's where things started falling through the cracks eventually”.

He was saying that role, and task boundaries connecting the primary task of the organisation had become detached. C2 said that “I don't really think the leaders know the shit that Peter is doing. And if they do, they claim ostrich”. This implied detachment from role of task within the membership of the top leadership mesostructure, which reflected the detachment at the macro-organisational level.

Participants had the experience that the top leadership had also become emotionally detached from the rest of the organisation. C1 said about the top leadership “they are very emotional and hormonal, I think as a senior leadership team, you are supposed to keep yourself and each other in check”. C1 also said about the top leadership group that “I think the leadership team needs a serious reality check because they are on a very bad bandwidth”. He was saying

that they were out of touch with what was going on in the organisation. A bad bandwidth implied a lack of connection. C2, in referring to her leader at the top of the structure, said, “he was so caught up in his own swirling vortex of shit that was going on with him and the execs, whatever, that he actually didn’t, it didn’t even cross his mind (to ask how I am)”. She was saying that her leader offered no emotional understanding or support because he was too involved with what was happening with himself in his peer group of leaders above. C3 said, “I guess it crashes because it doesn’t function because if you don’t have authenticity in terms of engagement you know”. He bemoaned the emotionally disengaged style of the top leadership. C3 went on to say about the lack of engagement that “they end up having conversations not about what’s actually transpiring and so I think it just diminishes trust and I suppose comfort in the system”. They were saying that the top leadership was emotionally detached.

6.2.5.2 Discussion

The theme of a detached culture manifested out of narcissism and greed and as a functionally and emotionally detached top leadership. Huffington et al. (2004) define narcissism as a concept that broadly means being in love with oneself at the expense of relationships with others. In the classical sense, it is considered an early stage of development when the libido is invested in the self or the ego, that is love for the self (Czander, 1993). Extreme narcissism in leadership is characterised by egotism, self-centeredness, grandiosity, lack of empathy, exploitation, exaggerated self-love, and failure to acknowledge boundaries (Kets de Vries, 2006). Leaders were experienced to have been in love with themselves and having pursued ambitions of self-importance and grandeur. They were experienced by participants to have exploited the members of the body of the organisation. Top leadership had split off from the rest of the organisation to make themselves exclusive and inaccessible yet had structured themselves without role and task boundaries in mind. The split-out top leadership manifested in the development of an exclusive ivory tower accessible only to some, which caused them to be experienced as narcissistic and detached from the body of the organisation.

The top leadership were experienced by the participants to be greedy at the expense of the body of the organisation. Bion (1961) highlights the role of greed in a dependency culture. He likens a dependency culture to a parent-child relationship where the parent must satisfy the child’s needs. The group designed to perpetuate the state of dependence means that the individual is being greedy in demanding more than his fair term of parental care (Bion, 1961). The greed in this organisation was experienced by members to have existed in the top leadership structure. This would have posed a fundamental conflict for followers because, in the unconscious, the top leadership ought to have been fulfilling their needs as good enough

parents or authority figures. Greed, frustration and envy so easily replace a loving relationship (Menzies, 1960), hence the breakdown in trust and disengagement between the top leaders and the rest. The lived experiences of participants frame the top leadership as greedy children dependent on the body as parent. With greed goes the urge to empty out the mother's breast and to exploit all the sources of satisfaction without consideration for anybody (Klein, 1959). While the greed at the top may have been in response to their need to not be deprived, it was the body which ended up anxious about being deprived and feeling robbed. The body as child was also robbed of the possibility for containment and holding by the head.

The narcissism and the greed suggested a self-absorbed and exploitative top leadership structure that had become detached from the body of the organisation. The boundaries connecting the roles and primary task through the organisational structure had become disconnected. This was evidenced in the design of the top leadership structure with its missing links to the tasks of those below. Authority over some of the functions of the body was missing from the top structure. As if a body had a head with bits of brains that were missing. This speaks to a lack of paternal containment, which, according to Western (2017), provides structure, task, boundaries, and authority and focuses on the external world. Without good enough paternal containment, maternal containment of the body by the head of the organisation became compromised. The container of top leadership had become unavailable. The container is the capacity for the unconscious psychological work of dreaming, operating in concert with the capacity for reverie and the capacity for more fully conscious secondary process thinking (Ogden, 2004). The head of the body had become incapacitated to process what ought to have been contained on behalf of the body of the organisation.

The contained, like the container, is not a static thing but a living process that in health is continuously expanding and changing (Ogden, 2004). It refers to thoughts and feelings that are in the process of being derived from one's lived emotional experience (Ogden, 2004). The body of the organisation was experiencing that the head as top leadership had become emotional and hormonal. They had become emotionally self-involved yet emotionally detached from the body of the organisation. This incapacitated the leadership from being available to process the thoughts and feelings of the body of the organisation. The contained grows as it becomes better able to encompass the full complexity of the emotional situation from which it derives (Ogden, 2004). The culture of stagnated growth previously presented in this chapter may also have been a symptom of the container-contained function has become unavailable. Anxiety levels were high because of the breakdown in both the paternal and maternal functions of the head of the organisation. The narcissism and greed of the head of

the organisation had caused it to become detached from the body resulting in a detached culture lacking in containment.

6.2.5.3 Working hypothesis

High levels of narcissism and greed in the top leadership structure of the organisation drive competition for power. The top leadership structure competes with one another for power but also with the body of the organisation. Caught up in their me-ness anti-task behaviours, and rivalry dynamics, the top leadership becomes structurally and emotionally detached from the body of the organisation. The result of the anti-task me-ness is the breakdown in and disconnect between role and task boundaries needed for paternal containment. This inevitably leads to a breakdown in the capacity for maternal containment, which yields the container-contained function between the head and the body incapacitated. The possibility for expansion of the contained is inhibited, thus stunting growth. It is as if the body of the organisation, although in a dependency culture with the head, becomes abused by the object that ought to be containing it, like what a child might experience in a relationship with an abusive parent. The lack of containment also leads to high levels of catastrophic survival in the system. The system unconsciously locates those with a valence to carry the catastrophic anxiety and projects them out of the system to relieve itself. In a detached culture, voluntary turnover is a symptom of the explosive expulsion of uncontainable stuff of the contained in a macro systemic projective identification process.

6.2.6 A paranoid-schizoid culture

A paranoid-schizoid culture dominated the organisation. It manifested in the splitting of top leadership from middle management. Communication between the head and the body of the organisation had become strained and contrived, leading to a breakdown in trust. The body was fearful and defensive toward the head, and the head was defensive towards the body. The paranoid-schizoid culture manifested through the shared assumption that the route to power was to divide and rule. This created splits between groups of people who formed in opposition to other groups. The result was many negative things happening in the business, such as a breakdown in communication and infighting. It manifested in top leadership referring to the need to bust the silos across the organisation yet leaving the body to carry the uncertainty about how this would be done. Power was not only split up and down in the organisation but also laterally. The splits between business functions emerged as strategic Finance versus non-strategic HR. The paranoid-schizoid culture made people feel that there was a heat of anger in the organisation and that it was unsafe to speak out. It made them feel

anxious about the uncertainty of not knowing how a possible restructuring might play out. People also had the experience of feeling disempowered and disenfranchised if they formed part of a non-strategic function. The summative effect of a paranoid-schizoid organisational culture was in-fighting and competition for power in a self-destructive dynamic.

6.2.6.1 Findings

C1 said, “once you hit like that middle management kind of level it’s amazing people, but for me I have an issue with top leadership”. In his mind, the organisation was split with an idealisation experience of the body of the organisation and a denigration experience towards the top. C1 went on to say about the top leadership, “so there’s definitely an us and them feeling in the organisation”. Top leadership had become defensive towards the body of the organisation and vice versa. Communication had become strained in that members of the body of the organisation had to submit written questions to the top of the organisation as the head. The head would decide on which questions to answer, formulate a response, and send it out to the body. C1 said that they answered the questions badly, “which is a problem because it just adds fuel to the fire”. He was implying that there was anger burning in the body of the organisation below. C1 said that “a member isn’t going to stand up in that forum (the top leadership) and challenge the CEO. It’s not going to happen. If it were, you might get clouted”. He was implying that there was also an anger burning at the top of the organisation. Other participants also shared experiences of persistent year-after-year culture survey results of fear of retribution and said that people were afraid to speak up. C2 also shared that there was a collective feeling in the organisation of not feeling safe.

C3 referred to the organisation as a pyramid in which the top triangle was split off from the bottom. C3 said that “there being a great divide and no or very little connect between the top of the triangle and the rest of the pyramid”. C4 shared stories of a prevailing culture of divide and rule in the organisation. C4 said that the culture that had been formed “created some environment where separations were put in place and people were divided”. C4 went on to say about the divide and rule culture that “you had a lot of people divided which creates negative things in the business hey”. One negative that he highlighted was the impossibility of rising from the bottom to the top of the organisation because it was divided. C4 said, “you try to change from the bottom up, but it is very hard to change from the bottom up”. C1 and C3 referred to the organisation as being siloed. C1 explained how the leadership team attempted to resolve their anxiety about the fragmented organisation by saying, “we’re going on a silo busting mission”. C1 said about the statement made by the top leaders, “you don’t tell people we are going on a silo bust but then don’t tell people where that goes and what does that now

mean". The top leadership had implied they were going to change the structure of the organisation but didn't say how or when. This left the body of the organisation feeling anxious about impending change and forced them into a regressive state of dependency.

C5 spoke of the mistrust that that he had developed of top leadership. C5 said about the broken communication and uncertainty about change, "it just creates a bit of mistrust. That's where you know mistrust comes into play. Like you said you know like what's, what is the game at play here". He was saying that there was a feeling of mistrust towards the top leadership body. Apart from the splitting between the top leadership structure and the bottom, the divisions and functions of the business were also experienced as split. C1 said, "they've intentionally regarded HR as a non-strategic function". He was talking about the split between the finance function as strategic and versus the HR function as non-strategic. C1 went on to say, "they never saw HR. It was only seen as an ER function which means hire and fire. There was a certain view of HR, that it's not at finance level, it's not a strategic player, it can never be". C1 went on to say, "the fact is they've grown so much, and they've suppressed HR". The power split between the HR and Finance functions was clear. C3, who did not form part of the HR function, said about it, "HR... I have been there at the organisation for eleven years; I suppose it's a bit of a non-entity in terms of our division". He was affirming the power splits that were experienced by those participants who did form part of the HR function.

Interestingly the strategic versus non-strategic split was also evident within the finance function. This was evidenced by C5's sharing that "each division had potentially two finance managers. One being strategic and one being a little more focused operationally". This illustrates the fractal nature of meso-level power dynamics reflected in the macro and vice versa. Just as the meso was split along strategic and non-strategic binaries (see section 5.2.4), so was the macro.

6.2.6.2 Discussion

In the paranoid position, people cope with intense anxieties and threatening fears by relying on the primitive defences of splitting and denial to externalise disturbing feelings, particularly aggression and envy (Krantz, 2006). Managers acting out of this position are notable for their grandiosity, persecutory perceptions and inflexible thinking (Krantz, 2006). This was evidenced in the overly bounded and contrived approach to communication between the head and the body of the organisation. Schizoid splitting is normally associated with the splitting off and projecting outwards of parts of the self which are perceived as bad, thereby creating external figures who are both hated and feared (Halton, 2019). The paranoid-schizoid organisational culture is therefore characterised by aggression, envy, splitting, denial, and

projections onto the other. In this case, the aggression was between the body and the head of the organisation, and the power splits were between functions at both meso and macro levels.

According to Crockatt (2006), the narcissistic nature of early anxiety and primitive defences is emphasised in the paranoid-schizoid position. In this case, the link between the detached culture and the paranoid-schizoid culture was evident in the narcissism and associated need for grandiosity and competition for power that was prevalent in the detachment and in the splits. People and objects are experienced and perceived as split into different good and bad elements and confused with the self (Crockatt, 2006). People in the organisation had been divided into good and bad groups through splitting. To feel good, it was necessary to deny the badness in one's own group, introject the goodness, and project the badness onto the other group. It was as if people had to choose which camp they belonged to and identify with that camp, thereby confusing the self with good or bad elements. How people were positioned in either group defined, in a sense, their identity and how they needed to identify in relation to others in other groups.

6.2.6.3 Working hypothesis

Organisations caught up in a paranoid-schizoid culture create the experience of splitting, aggression, and envy for members. The organisation becomes split horizontally and laterally at the macro-level of systemic function with breakdowns in communication and capacity for containment of the system. Groups are split along the lines of perceived power, and members are forced to identify with the group to which they have been positioned in and in relation to. The organisation becomes gripped in persecutory anxiety. To defend against this anxiety, groups are forced to deny the bad in the group and self, to introject the good strategic and powerful, and to project the bad operational functioning and powerlessness onto the other and other group. The organisation as good object comes under an envious attack from within. The organisation in competition with itself yet locked into the paranoid-schizoid position, suffers casualties in the form of fragmented members who become dismembered from the body of the organisation. Good members become disenfranchised and projected out of the organisation as powerless objects which serve as collateral damage for an organisation at war with itself.

6.3 MACRO-LEVEL WORKING HYPOTHESIS

This research sought to explore the lived voluntary turnover experiences of people to develop an in-depth understanding of the systems psychodynamics involved in the process. In line with

this aim, the lived experiences of voluntary turnover were explored to be described and understood at the macro systemic level of functioning. The theory of organisations as social defences informed the analysis, interpretation, and formulation of working hypotheses for each of the six macro-level themes. I integrated the meaning in all the macro-level working hypotheses and synthesised these into a working hypothesis about the macro-level systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover. The macro-level working hypothesis about the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover is presented below:

High levels of narcissism among leaders make for high levels of competition for power. Caught in rivalry dynamics, the head of the body engages me-ness as an anti-task behaviour and becomes unavailable for maternal or paternal containment. The boundary between task and authority is severed, and alpha elements of the body remain untransformed into meaning, creating anxiety and frustration for its membership. Members project their anxiety onto the organisation, which is defended against collectively. The head of the organisation projects value onto people outside of the organisational boundary with the phantasy to introject them as power objects, while members inside introject the de-value. Leaders compete to be nice to shore up their self-image which takes them off task. In defence of its failings, the organisation comes to represent an omnipotent messiah. Paradoxically though, instead of saving its members, they become caught up in a disempowered dynamic. They must lose themselves in the power of the organisation as saviour or lose themselves from the organisation in the realisation that it is just an organisation with both potency and impotency.

The anti-task defences and uncontained competition for power from the head of the organisation cause it to become detached and greedy at the expense of the body. Fragmented and split, the organisation is caught in a paranoid-schizoid position, splitting itself up and competing with itself for power. Those undergoing voluntary turnover form dismembered bits of the body who hold the reality integration of the potency and impotency of the organisation. They are projected out of the organisation in defence against the denied shortcomings, the unspeakable impotence and the un-faceable power abuses and failures in the system. People are voluntarily turned over and out of the organisation as collateral damage to an organisation at war with itself for omnipotence. This reflects Long's (2019) view that systems adopt social defences to cope with non-performance and power abuses and fears.

6.4 THE INDIVIDUALS' VOLUNTARY TURNOVER EXPERIENCES

While the meso group-level systems psychodynamics are mirrored in and by the macro-organisational level, it's the individuals at the micro-level who are having personal experiences

in the meso and macro contexts. According to Long (2017), the personal experiences of people are considered to be long-term introjected aspects of the social environment and of relationships with others. The individual can be regarded as 'holding' particular aspects of the social environment (Long, 2017), and it is through the person and interactions between persons that the dynamics of the social system can be expressed consciously or enacted unconsciously (Long, 2017). This section of the chapter explores the micro individual level experiences of people having undergone voluntary turnover as a process. The micro individual level and personal experiences are organised under four themes, namely desire and trauma, emotional responses to the trauma, defences against anxiety, and coming to awareness in leaving. The themes are presented in order of a micro-level process of voluntary turnover. The findings and discussions are presented for each of the themes, followed by a working hypothesis about the micro-level voluntary turnover process.

6.4.1 Desire and trauma

Research participants all had the personal experience of having a desire for growth in the form of a promotion. They were excited at the prospect of a promotion and held hope that it would materialise. With their desire, they also experienced fear and dread at the prospect of being denied the promotion as a good object. One participant described the process of working with his desire for the promised promotion as an emotional struggle. The expectation of a promotion was created through conversations that were had between managers and the participants, yet in all the cases, the promotion was denied. Some participants were led to believe that they were different, special, and uniquely deserving of the promotion. Others had the expectation of promotion created through their individual development planning process. One participant had the expectation of a promotion that was based on her tenure, work experience and professional contribution to the business. In all cases, their expectations for promotion were dashed. Individuals had the experience that they had been groomed to receive a good promotion that would affirm their sense of being good enough, but that it was then taken away from them. They felt betrayed, belittled, robbed, and bitterly disappointed about the failed expectation of a promotion. The summative effect was a traumatic experience of psychological injury and loss.

6.4.1.1 Findings

Participants had the personal experiences of having the desire to be promoted in the organisation and of having an expectation for growth. C1 bemoaned the fact that there were not any director-level roles in his function. C1 said that "I would have thought that in five years

I could potentially work to a directorship role". He said he would have considered staying on if he had been promoted to a more senior role. C4 shared his desire, saying, "so, now I am, I wanted to be the next manager in line. I have worked for that. That is where my expectations were. That's what my individual development plan has been saying for eight years". C7 shared about her strong desire for growth, saying, "what was really important on this journey was that I need to learn, every day I need to be learning something new". C7 went on to describe how she had a desire for a promotion, saying that "if there was a chance that I can stay, I'd like to do Jane's job, I'll be fine, I'll take it". Jane held a more senior role than she did, and she wanted to be promoted upwards in the organisation. All the participants shared a desire to be promoted to a higher role.

With a desire for upward progression, the expectation that it would transpire had also been set. C4 shared his expectation that "my individual development plan was always to get to the level of kind of executive management". When a gap opened due to some senior managers having resigned, that's when C4 expected that the promotion would finally happen for him, yet the promotion didn't transpire. C5 shared how his manager had created an expectation in him that he was standing in line for a promotion. C5 said about a conversation that he had had with his manager that "he did say listen, there is a potential move for you to a senior position in like the not-so-distant future". C5 went on to say about his manager that "he's then told the MD of the division that listen, he wants me to step into that role, and he's been grooming me for that role to take over". The role was offered to him in an acting position rather than permanent and was then later awarded to an external candidate. C5 was disappointed, saying "the key thing that it's come down to is managing expectations with people you know and not like I said creating something like dangling a carrot and then it's sort of taken away". He had the experience of the promotion having been taken away from him, as though he was robbed, which caused trauma.

C6 talked about her desire for a promotion and subsequent disappointments each time she was rejected. C6 said, "it creates an expectation. I was one of the longest serving managers, probably, I mean business partners, probably the most experienced in the IR field". Her tenure of service, expertise and professional reputation in the business had created an expectation for her that she would be promoted. She endured a long and arduous process of applying for promotions in the business yet was denied at every turn. The rejection experiences created trauma each time. C7 discussed the expectations that the head of her business function had created in her. C7 said about the head's desire for her, "I want you to like learn as much as you can, I want you to get involved and I can see you can do something different". He was saying to her that she was different and special and that he wanted her to grow. This created

a strong expectation for upward growth for her. C7 said about herself, “it was absolutely clear that I wasn’t there to just like tick the boxes”. She went on to describe how her manager created a direct expectation for her growth. C7 said:

“Mary and Peter were thinking of putting Jane into Sally’s position, and me taking over Jane’s role. So, Mary asked me how I feel about that. So, I said obviously it’s going to be a promotion for me, and I wouldn’t mind at all”.

In all the cases, an expectation for a promotion had been created, but then the promotion was denied. The rejection experiences were traumatic.

6.4.1.2 Discussion

People take up different roles during a career, with each one coming to represent different things at different times. The span of roles can be transitory, ranging from moments to a lifetime, and roles can be achieved, acquired, assigned, or ascribed to us (Green & Molenkamp, 2005). In the cases of voluntary turnover among the research participants, the current role had come to represent a transitional object towards a higher role as the desired good object. Participants had their desires authorised by their managers through conversations and official individual development planning processes. They also authorised themselves to step up towards a future desired role through professional work experience, tenure, and reputation that had been acquired in the business. In this sense, they felt that they had achieved the future desired role that should have been assigned to them by their leaders. Hirschhorn (2021) suggests that desire lies between anxiety and excitement and between pain and pleasure. The excitement is in the prospect of gaining what one wishes, and the anxiety and pain are the conditions of not yet having it (Hirschhorn, 2021). Excitement had to do with the pleasures in the phantasy of having the good object, while the pain was about the anxiety that the good object was not in hand yet, so to speak. The participants had to work to avoid pain in pursuit of pleasure.

Hirschhorn (2021) proposes that the complex character of desire provokes in its train three emotions; excitement, danger, and dread. This was true for participants who initially reported experiencing excitement at the prospect of a promotion. They were also filled with a sense of danger in that they had to risk their ego strength and hope for a promotion as they stepped forward into the possibility of being promoted. They were also filled with dread at the possibility that they might not be awarded the desired promotion. Being denied the promotion would pose a risk of psychic trauma. According to Hurvich (1989), fears of disintegration of the ego and of the self are implications of annihilation anxiety and bounded with trauma. All the participants

had their promised promotion denied them despite having worked through an arduous process of desire and expectation. The participant's desire was killed when their promotion expectations were dashed. Participants had the experience of being denied the good object of a role promotion by authority. It was lost, and the loss was experienced as psychic trauma as manifested through the rejection experience. The emotional experiences that participants had of the rejection trauma are discussed in depth in section 6.4.2 of this chapter.

6.4.1.3 Working hypothesis

Current roles come to represent transitional objects when there is a desire for a promotion into a future role. The desired role comes to represent a good object that constellates with the ego ideal. The lack between the current and desired future roles creates anxiety, and the ego ideal becomes further split from the ego in the process. When participants face rejection in being denied the good object of a promotion, they not only face loss of the good object but also sustain a narcissistic injury. The desire, expectation, and rejection cause people to incur a painful rejection trauma characterised by injury and loss.

6.4.2 Emotional responses to the trauma

Participants experienced a range of emotions prior to the rejection trauma that had to do with their desire. These emotions were discussed in the previous section (section 6.4.1). This section focuses on emotional experiences at the time of and post the rejection trauma. The participants felt a sense of shame and humiliation at being denied the promotion that they had been working towards. The shame and humiliation turned to anger for some whilst others became apathetic in their response. They also experienced anxiety, loss, and sadness after having been denied a promotion. They had the experience of feeling belittled and placed beneath others in the system because of the failed expectation for a promotion. The rejection also caused participants to feel self-doubt and to question whether they were in fact good enough. They had experiences of having their confidence knocked out of them repeatedly with each rejection. They described a stressful and emotional journey in the struggle with their sense of not being good enough. Bound up in the rejection experiences were intense feelings of paranoia. Participants questioned whether the authority figures above them were punishing them through the denial of the promotion. They felt that private conversations may have been leaked. The emotional experiences after the trauma can be summarised as shame, helplessness, overwhelm, anger, apathy, and purposelessness.

6.4.2.1 Findings

Participants felt shame and humiliation when they learnt that the desired role had been denied or awarded to someone else. C4 said “yeah, I was not going to be treated like that by anyone. I felt properly disrespected”. He was experiencing that he had been shamed and disrespected in the process. C4 was also angry, saying “I was angry, but never disrespectful angry”. He was saying that even though he felt that he had been disrespected, that he didn’t disrespect others in his anger. C6 having also experienced shame at being denied the desired object of a promotion said that “well, you’ve got to swallow your pride”. She felt as though she had to keep applying for future roles because her current role represented a lack of growth which she had become ashamed of. C6 said:

“I almost didn’t want the positions to come up because then it would put me in a position to have to apply and go through the whole motions for somebody else to, under me, younger than me, less experienced than me, get the role and be put back in my chair”.

She was filled with dread about the looming rejection experiences. As if she was dammed if she stayed in her current role and dammed if she attempted to step up. She was stuck in a double bind. The denial of the promotion on each occasion made her to feel beneath the others, of lesser experience, belittled and placed in the system as a child is placed into a chair somewhere in the back of the classroom. C2 said “then a bit of apathy kicks in, so what’s the point of pursuing that and sort of it just dies down slowly after that you know”. He had experienced apathy and a loss of meaning after being denied the promotion.

The rejection experiences also caused participants to experience self-doubt. C4 said “slowly started questioning whether you are good enough”, referring to himself. C4 went on to say:

“Whether or not you have the right skills? Whether you have done enough that you needed for personal growth wise to be able to do this? Whether you are the right leader? You want to lead but can you lead? I do not know”.

C4 was filled with self-doubt about whether he was good enough for the promotion. C5 said “so you know, and it really puts you in a process where you’re second guessing yourself and then you’re going through it again”. He resigned having had a stressful and emotional struggle about whether he was in fact good enough or not. Reiterating his experience, C5 said “I have been doing this for so long and now, all of a sudden, it’s not either good enough for them! I’m resigning”! C6 said that “it’s also a lot of stress and emotion, emotional stress that you go through and then ja”. C6 shared how the rejection and failed expectations for a promotion knocked her confidence. C6 said “and then you take a knock in your confidence straight away

and then again, and again and again and like, your confidence levels become really... and that's when you start heading into the cloud and wondering is it me"? C6 said "it's like an abusive relationship". In an abusive relationship the abused partner keeps coming back for more abuse. C7 also had the experience of self-doubt following her rejection from a promotion opportunity. C7 thought at the time that "maybe I'm being delusional about me being able to do the role". All the participants had strong feelings about not being good enough because they were denied the promotion.

Participants also felt anxious, persecuted and paranoid in the process of having their expectations for a promotion failed. C2 felt that her leader was persecuting her through withholding opportunities for growth. C2 said about her leader "every year he would like, dangle the carrots and then it wouldn't happen". C3 said about his leader that "your ultimate director sort of stifles you a bit and doesn't give you the kind of opportunities you know". C7 said "I felt like they were cutting me off". Participants had the experience of being persecuted by authority figures having been denied the promotion. They also felt paranoid in their sense of being persecuted. C3 experienced paranoia that he'd confided in a senior leader in his business function, but that he suspected that she might have broken his confidence. C3 said "it's very murky grayish to discuss". Things weren't clear but he had his suspicions. C5 said about his paranoia that "that's where you know mistrust comes into play. Like you know like, what's the game at play here". As if the authority was playing a game of cat and mouse with him when it came to the promotion that he had been promised.

C7 described paranoia about needing to be aware of who had said what to whom. C7 said that "I went into her office, and I say hey, I'm kinda now fishing about, I don't want to get Peter into crap and now reveal that I had this conversation with him". She had had a conversation with the head of the function but didn't want her immediate manager to know about it.

6.4.2.2 Discussion

Organisations are interpersonal places and so necessarily arouse those more complex emotional constellations that shadow all interpersonal relations such as love and hate; shame and guilt; contempt and pride (Armstrong & Huffington, 2018). Participants experienced shame at being rejected. Shame and guilt are two states (often occurring together) that maintain the relationship of the self to significant others (Lewis, 1988). The shame was about feeling bad about oneself and feeling less than in relation to others. Desire and purpose are intertwined (Hirschhorn, 2021) and as desire became unfulfilled and the current role became meaningless, the participants lost their sense of purpose and became apathetic. Unpleasant experiences and the lack of enjoyable ones increase ambivalence, diminish trust and hope

and confirm anxieties about inner annihilation and external persecution (Klein, 1940). Annihilation anxiety of a traumatic moment is an overwhelmed state of helplessness (Hurvich, 1989). There are innumerable and in every case specific forms which the dreaded attack may take; but the root of persecutory fear in the paranoid individual is the fear of annihilation of the ego – ultimately by the death instinct (Klein, 1948). Participants lost hope and felt mistrustful towards authority. They felt overwhelmed, under threat of annihilation and persecuted by authority in the system. The rejection trauma had come to represent both a threat to the self and a punishment by authority.

In some cases, participants made the decision to leave immediately while others stayed on to have repeated traumatic experiences of rejection. In the case of two participants who made the decision to leave immediately, their shame turned to anger more quickly than for the others who endured a drawn-out voluntary turnover process. Participants who stayed on to experience repeated rejection traumas felt that they were caught on a hamster wheel, suggesting apathy and purposelessness. Others felt that they were caught under cloud of doom that was following them suggesting the experience of overwhelm and helplessness. They couldn't discharge or master the trauma of the rejection and subsequent destruction of the desired good object and threat of annihilation of the self. Participants felt bitter, disappointed, and betrayed, as though they had been robbed. Participants reported a loss of interest in the world, going through the motions and apathetic, all felt dejection, and all struggled with a lowered sense of self-regard which suggests melancholia (Freud, Strachey, Freud, & Rothgeb, 1953) after the loss.

6.4.2.3 Working hypothesis

The rejection trauma of being denied a promised promotion causes people to feel persecuted by authority figures as significant others in the social context, and under threat of annihilation. With the trauma comes feelings of shame about being not good enough. Annihilation anxiety, as the death instinct, is turned inwards towards the self, causing intense feelings of helplessness and overwhelm. It is also turned outward in anger toward authority. People then experience apathy and purposelessness as the once meaningful transitional object of the current role becomes meaningless in the context of the lost good object of a promotion and with it the loss of desire.

6.4.3 Defences against anxiety

Participants initially expected and hoped for a promotion but had to depend on their leaders to judge whether they were good enough to be awarded the desired role. They persevered

and pushed hard to prove their worthiness to their leaders who in turn denied them the opportunity for a promotion. The participants fought with their leaders about having been rejected and experienced them to be dishonest, inauthentic, and bad after having rejected the participants. It was as if the good leader as good parent on which they had depended became the bad parent that was punishing them. Some of the participants turned their anger inwards and blamed themselves for not getting the promotion. They questioned whether they were good enough for the role. To cope with the painfulness of the loss participants engaged in repetitive behaviours and described getting caught in circular patterns of anxiety.

6.4.3.1 Findings

Initially, prior to the rejection trauma, participants had to rely on hope that they would be awarded the promotion and trust that authority would provide it to them. C4 said “I always knew that I was pushing, so I felt like, I did deserve it”. C4 went on to say “I wanted to be obviously the next manager. I have worked hard for that. That was where my expectations were”. He was pushing in hope because he felt he deserved the promotion and because the expectation had been created. C5 had had a conversation about the promotion with the MD of his business division which created hope but also some uncertainty for him. C5 said “having the conversation with the MD at the time he said listen, he said he was going to give me an opportunity, obviously it’s not like a guaranteed thing and we need to assess your performance”. The conversation made him hopeful but there had been no agreement about the performance criteria that he had to meet or about time boundaries for promotion into the desired role. He became dependent on the MD to pass him off as good enough for the promotion. C5 said about his experience that:

“I’m doing it and giving it my all but then I’m not seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. I’m doing all of this and kind of meeting their, ticking all the boxes of the role but I’m not being called by the role title, so you feel like sho, you know why is it not being given to me”?

C7 said that “everybody was saying C7, we love you superstar whatever, but nobody told me or gave me future growth”. She felt she deserved the promotion and experienced people around her affirming her hope for the opportunity, yet no growth was forthcoming. She was forced to depend on authority in the hopes that she might be awarded a promotion. C7 said “I’ve literally tried to build a relationship with Susan and made her see that she can count and depend on me”. In effect though she was dependent on her leader for the promotion that she desired. C7 went on to say, “in the end of the day that happened [the rejection] and I don’t know what I did that was so bad for her to say no, I will overrule Peter, and get somebody

else". C7 said "up until this day Susan calls me Peter's child. If she is looking for Peter, she'll be like have you heard from your father today"? She was dependent on authority as a child is on a parent. C7 relayed the words of her leader saying, "her manager took care of her really well...", implying that C7 needed to be a good girl and take care of the leader if she wanted a promotion.

Participants fought back against authority after having been rejected. C3 said "it's the first time in my life I've sort of had a conflict with anyone". C4 also confronted his leader about being rejected saying, "when I landed, I confronted Sue". C3 said about his leader "we just didn't see eye to eye", after he had confronted his leader about the rejection. C3 was saying that the leader had become bad in his eyes. He went on to say that "your ultimate director stifles you and doesn't give you opportunities", implying that the leader had become a bad authority (C3). C3 said about the leadership, "it's got to be an honest, authentic leadership you know". C3 implied that the leadership was dishonest, inauthentic, untrustworthy, and bad after the rejection trauma. C7 said about her leader that "I just wanted you to be a better leader, that's what I told her, I said just be a leader". C3 referred to his leader after he'd been rejected saying "big time arrogance ja". Participants experienced leadership to be bad after they had been denied the promotion that they desired.

Participants were left questioning themselves after the rejection trauma. C4 said:

"Slowly started questioning whether you are not good enough, whether or not you have the right skills? Whether you have done enough that you needed for personal growth wise to be able to do this? Whether you are the right Leader? You want to lead, can you lead? I do not know. If you can why then look for somebody else? All those fun questions start coming into to your mind".

C4 said "I tried to internalise, I tried to hold myself responsible and accountable for one-on-one interactions", as he grappled with blaming himself for being denied the promotion. C5 said about the rejection experience that "it really puts you in like a process where you're second guessing yourself". C5 went on to say, "I have been doing this for so long and now all of a sudden it's not good enough". C6 said about the self-doubt and loss of confidence that she experiences that "it's something that I projected onto myself. No one's necessarily told me, it's stuff that I've put onto myself". C7 also experienced self-doubt after having been declined the promotion that she desired. C7 said "there's a lot, but maybe I'm not the best person, but I think I have a relatively okay emotional intelligence. She was grappling with feelings of not being good enough. It was as if securing the promotion would have been an affirmation of

being good enough while remaining in the current role, having been denied the promotion, had the meaning of being not good enough.

Participants also spoke of getting stuck in repeating patterns of behaviour. C3 said “also I think when you are in life, I suppose raising kids and sort of I lost sight of myself a bit you know. Going through a bit of a mid-life crisis”. C3 went on to say “so I was looking back, it’s easier to just be on the hamster wheel. If you work ten years in an organisation its tick over, tick over, tick over”. He was saying that after he’d been denied the promotion several times that he had fallen into a state of repeating the same thing day after day. He was going through the motions. C6 said “you kind of get disheartened”, referring to the repeated experienced of being rejected. She went on to say, “it’s sore, and I think the other thing that really hurt is that a lot of people thought I’d get the role”. She went on to say, “and especially from my history of having so much rejection, you’re kind of already planting that seed in your mind, well, you’re not going to get it” (C6). C6 described a circular pattern of anxiety and trauma saying:

“It’s like just stuck in a circular pattern of anxiety and just going round and round. And the whole stress around waiting for the phone call, am I going to get rejected, what am I going to do if I get rejected”.

She was stuck in a pattern of trauma that was repeating itself and she struggled with the stress of not being able to control or stop it.

6.4.3.2 Discussion

Regression and dependency formed the initial defences that participants employed against their anxiety of desire and expectation for a promotion. It was as though they had become good children waiting for the good breast. The dependency inhibited participants’ rational capabilities to set clear task and time boundaries that were needed to clarify performance expectations with the leader. They used hope as a container for the excitement and anticipated pleasure of obtaining the desired object which represented the ego ideal. They were caught up in the fantasies of primary narcissism and of becoming good enough through being awarded the good object of the promotion. Like the infant who suckles on his thumb in fantasy of the mother’s breast. They then had the rejection trauma which formed a narcissistic injury and the experience of persecutory and annihilation anxiety that needed to be defended against. They engaged fight as a defence against their persecutory anxiety as they experienced the leader to be punishing them.

After fighting with the leadership, participants became split in themselves, with their current role representing the not good enough self and the denied desired role representing the good enough self. They introjected the not good enoughness of the current role and projected good enoughness onto others in the organisation. They blamed themselves for behaving badly and introjected persecutory anxiety in the process. The ego ideal had been annihilated and the annihilation was also introjected. Freud (1921) refers to the ego ideal as a split off part of the ego but which comes into conflict with the ego. The ego became fragmented and split into bits as participants struggled with their feelings of being not good enough in their inner conflicts. Authority was also split into good enough and bad. Badness was projected onto the persecuting authority as punishing parent while the good parent was introjected to console the damaged ego. Participants entered a paranoid-schizoid position after they had been rejected from the desired promotion and felt that they had come under attack from authority.

The loss that they experienced through the rejection trauma was painful. Participants engaged repetition compulsion as a defence against working with their loss. Four participants remained in the system after the initial trauma to experience repeated rejections. They were repeating the trauma as a repetition compulsion defence against the painfulness of the trauma until they decided to leave. The other three participants decided to leave more quickly after their rejection trauma which had caused external and internal conflicts. Those who left at the time of the rejection trauma might have also experienced a repetition compulsion dynamic but in an alternative system. Clinical experience has demonstrated that trauma which has been repressed is often repeated (Chu, 1991). Freud (1920) describes how trauma is repressed by the ego, which is resolved to hold fast to the pleasure-pain principle, that it is avoidance of pain in pursuit of pleasure. The ego represses the painful trauma, in this case, rejection and the associated narcissistic injury and losses, into the unconscious which become repeated rather than remembered.

6.4.3.3 Working hypothesis

People regress to an infantile state using dependency as a defence against the anxiety of their desire for a promised promotion. They fantasise about becoming the desired future role, which is driven by their primary narcissism. Hope acts as a container for the excitement about the desired future role. When faced with the rejection trauma they experience a narcissistic injury and persecutory and annihilation anxiety. Fight with authority forms the first defence followed by splitting authority into good parent and bad parent. Badness is projected onto authority and the good parent is introjected to console the wounded self. The self is split into good enough for the desired role and not good enough for the desired role. The not good enough is

introjected together with the annihilated ego ideal while the good enough self is projected onto others. The ego becomes fragmented making it difficult to deal with the painfulness in the loss of the desired good object. The trauma is repressed into the unconscious as a way of coping. This produces a repetition compulsion dynamic as a defence against working through the loss. Rejection traumas are repeated until the person comes to work through and remember the loss.

6.4.4 Coming to awareness in leaving

The participants described their experiences of coming to awareness in their leaving. They experienced waking up to truths about what their future might look like in the organisation versus the fantasies they'd held. They came to the realisation that they needed to do something different, which implied coming to awareness, and that they had been repeating patterns of behaviour. Coming to awareness manifested in participants leaving the organisation to grow up, and in the loss of identity that was left behind. Participants who had left around a year or just under at the time of the interview felt a greater sense of maturity and self-confidence after having left. Those who had recently left were still in fight mode. They had to lose themselves from the organisation to find themselves. Coming to awareness in leaving also manifested in participants using their voluntary turnover, and the boundary that it placed between them and the organisation, to process their losses. They experienced losses of interpersonal connections and in their identities. The summative effect of coming to awareness in leaving were individuals in the various stage of processing their loss, working with who they were becoming, and rebuilding their confidence.

6.4.4.1 Findings

C1 in speaking about how he came to awareness during the process of letting go of hope as a defence said, "it leaves little hope for something else, it's just the truth". He was saying that he had to come to terms with the reality that the organisation was not going to offer him a promotion that he had hoped for. C2 said "and then you have to wake up and say no, no, no this is essentially you've got one life and you're wasting it". She was coming to terms with the reality that her fantasy of growth was not going to transpire in the organisation. C2 went on to say, "I was triggered by my lack of learning, growth, not being sure of my future in terms of my progression". C5 said "you know it's pointless doing the same thing and expecting different results. No point in going in again and things playing out the same way. It's a recurring thing". He was describing how, until he came to awareness of what was holding him back, he also had found himself on a meaningless repetition of the sameness in his trajectory. C7 in coming

to a place of reality integration said, “I was starting to think maybe I held this misconception of me being this superstar in the group”. She was waking up from her infantile fantasies of omnipotence that had been stoked with primary narcissism. Participants were coming to accept reality through the processes of losing their desire, hope, dependency and in coming to awareness of patterns of behaviour that had become repetitive.

C1 said about his leaving that “I would have stayed probably [clears throat] at least longer, ja, because I was planning initially on making the organisation at least my five-year home”. It was as if he was saying that he left home prematurely in search of himself. Like a teenager leaving home to find oneself in the world. C5 spoke about his coming to awareness, about his state of hope and dependency that he was caught up in, and how the hope and dependency had inhibited his rational thinking. C5 said about the experience “I think reflecting on it I could have been more direct in terms of you know, guy’s let’s sit down let’s look at this. Where is this actually going”. He was saying that he had realised his dependency but only after having left the organisation. C5 had grown up in leaving saying “I’ve really grown in the last ten months, and I think you know I’m now looking at things through a different lens and a more mature lens”. He described how he had developed confidence in growing up after having left the organisation. C5 said “I think that confidence and maturity really came through in the sense that look, I’m, I have changed, I’m not the same person I was when I left”. He had been out of the organisation for close on a year at the time of the interview. Participants were needing to let go of hope and dependency in leaving which formed part of a developmental process of maturing. C7 said “I was starting to think maybe I held this misconception of me being a superstar”. She was saying that she had woken up to her fantasy about being omnipotently powerful and popular.

C2 said that “at the organisation I felt like it very much connected with the heart of who I am, whereas at my new organisation it’s a job”. She left with the expectation to find herself in her leaving but was left with the experience of having lost herself. She had only been out of the organisation for a couple of months. C3 said about his role that he left:

“It’s part of your identity it’s sort of a comfort blanket in a sense that you know when you speak about yourself, you introduce yourself. You are part of this and you’re happy to be part of this and I suppose that gets taken away now”.

His identity was bound up with his role and the organisation which was experienced as a comfort blanket. It was as if a child had had his comfort object taken away as part of a developmental process. Paradoxically participants had to lose themselves to the organisation to find themselves. In processing the loss of their identity to the organisation, they were coming

to a place of reality integration. C5 talked about his losses and sadness saying, “you got through this process and then you make your mind up and then you make peace with it”. He had to make peace with saying goodbye to friends he had made and at having to leave the organisation behind. C6 talked about her experience of loss in leaving saying, “and sadness, like I said, I’ve made good friends there, and not seeing them every day is sad. I don’t really want to lose those connections”. It was as if only in leaving the organisation could the losses, then be worked with.

6.4.4.2 Discussion

At the heart of psychoanalysis is the work of making the unconscious conscious which implies coming to awareness. The process of coming to awareness is about acknowledging and understanding the ego defences employed against anxiety. It also entails working through and remembering difficult experiences that were repressed into the unconscious as avoided painful objects. Coming to awareness is also about the processing of alpha elements into beta elements through the container-contained function. It is about coming to an understanding of the beneath the surface forces from which behaviour stems. It is not the symptom that is worked with but rather the underlying cause which is hypothesised to be in the unconscious. Freud, in his paper about the origin and development of psychoanalysis, makes the connection between symptoms and repressed emotions as psychic trauma. According to Freud (1910) symptoms originate as remnants, as precipitates of affectively toned experiences, which for that reason were later called psychic trauma.

Participants came to awareness when they realised that authority in the system was not going to take care of their needs, and that they would have to set boundaries as rational adults. They had to drop their infantile regression and dependency in this part of the process. With awareness of their regression and dependency came rational agency which allowed for decision making and the decision to leave. In this process hope as a container for the excitement and primary narcissism was lost. It became unavailable as a defensive and containing function. The fantasy of a good parent being there to take care of their desires was transformed into the reality that participants were adults responsible for negotiating and navigating life and work. It was as if the baby having the fantasy of suckling on the breast full of milk had woken up to realise that the thumb belonged to the self. Participants had to retrieve the bad projections that they had given to authority.

Most of the participants also had experiences of coming to an awareness that they had been stuck in a pattern of repeated behaviour. This marks the process of working through and remembering parts of the rejection traumas that had been repressed into the unconscious

mind. Acknowledging their disappointment and painfulness of the loss of the desired object formed part of the process of coming to awareness of the compulsion to repeat the same behaviours that had contributed to the trauma. For four of the participants, this awareness happened whilst still in the system. For the others the process of remembering and working through the loss was still in its early stages at the time of the interview. The participants all faced losses when leaving the organisation. They experienced loss of connections with people, the loss of the ego ideal that had held them captive for some time, and the loss of their identities to the organisation. Working through these losses may have formed part of the working through of the trauma of the desired object that was lost.

Participants also lost an infantile and childlike part of themselves in leaving the organisation. Leaving can be understood to form part of a process of individuation. The aim of individuation, equated with the extension of consciousness and the development of personality, is to divest the self of its false wrappings of the persona, the mask the personality uses to confront the world (Schlamm, 2014). In this sense as participants were growing up in their leaving, they were also going through a process of individuation as they dropped their defences. For some who had resigned nearly a year prior to the time of the interview, their experiences of having matured were more prominent than for those who had resigned more recently. They more frequently reported feelings of self-confidence indicating ego strength in the building up of a new ego identity. The growth they were seeking transpired outside of the organisational boundary and not through the developmental process that had been anticipated.

6.4.4.3 Working hypothesis

Coming to awareness in leaving after a rejection trauma requires dropping dependency and hope as defences and retrieving bad projections that were placed onto authority. This marks the transition to a depressive position in which reality can be assimilated to inform a decision to leave. In making the decision to leave, people undergoing voluntary turnover are faced with having to work with the loss of connections and the loss of their identity to the organisation. Working with these losses stimulates the process of remembering and working through the rejection traumas. In integrating the traumas into the conscious mind, people become aware of the repeating patterns of anxiety and subsequent behaviour that had perpetuated the traumas. In losing their identity to the organisation, where they endured a process of dependency, people seek to individuate out of the organisation. They have the experience to grow and mature as a developmental process through leaving and seeking out the good enough self in an object outside of the organisational boundary. Voluntary turnover is therefore

experienced as a process of coming to awareness, of individuation, and of seeking the good object outside of the organisational boundary.

6.5 MICRO-LEVEL WORKING HYPOTHESIS

In this study I had the aim to explore lived voluntary turnover experiences to understand the psychodynamics of the process. I therefore explored the lived voluntary turnover experiences of people and described these using systems psychodynamics as my theoretical lens. Classical Freudian psychoanalytic concepts and processes and Kleinian object relations theory informed my analysis at the individual level of functioning. I synthesised the meaning in all the micro-level working hypotheses to develop a micro-level working hypothesis about the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover. The micro-level working hypothesis is presented below:

People experience pain and pleasure in their desire for a promotion. Pain forms from the expectations that were created and produced anxiety. Pleasure is experienced as excitement and is fuelled by primary narcissism in pursuit of the good object. The anxiety is defended against through regression to an infantile state and dependency on authority to provide the good object. The excitement is contained using hope as a defence against the prospect of a narcissistic injury. When authority denies the person the good object of the promotion, this results in a narcissistic injury and persecutory anxiety that is defended against using fight. People enter the paranoid-schizoid position at this stage in the process. The trauma creates annihilation anxiety which causes overwhelm and fragmentation of the ego. The self is split into good enough and not good enough, and authority is split into good parent and bad parent. The not good enough self is introjected which fragments the ego further, and the good enough self is projected onto others. Badness is projected onto authority and the good parent is introjected to console the wounded ego. People either flight from the organisation out of anger towards authority or feel apathetic and purposeless as a response the lost good object. Those who stay on repress the trauma which forms a repetition compulsion dynamic. When dependency and hope are dropped, when the bad projections that were placed onto authority are retrieved, and when the trauma is worked through, then rational thinking and adult agency is restored. This marks the depressive position. People in accepting that the good object is no longer available within the organisation, and with a desire for growth, leave the organisation in the process of individuation and in a good enough and value object seeking dynamic.

6.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The macro and micro-level findings were presented in this chapter. Macro-level themes were identified from the stories using a qualitative analysis. They were interpreted and discussed as socially constructed defences that constituted distinguishing cultural features that contributed towards voluntary turnover. Themes at the macro-level included a culture of devalued people inside, a culture of cruelty shrouded in niceness, a messiah culture, a culture of stagnated growth, a detached culture, and a paranoid-schizoid culture. An integrated working hypothesis about the macro-level systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover was presented. Micro-level themes were also identified from the voluntary turnover stories and analysed at the individual level emotional experiences and defences. Micro-level themes were ordered according to the process of individuals' experiences of voluntary turnover. Themes included desire and trauma, emotional responses of the trauma, defences against anxiety, and coming to awareness in leaving. An integrated working hypothesis about the micro-level systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover was presented.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMICS MODELS OF VOLUNTARY TURNOVER

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This study aimed to explore and describe the lived voluntary turnover experiences in depth from a systems psychodynamics perspective and to develop a systems psychodynamics model of voluntary turnover for coaching and consulting psychology to support optimal adjustment during the process. While the findings were presented thematically and by means of working hypotheses in Chapters 5 and 6, the purpose of this chapter is to further synthesise the findings in a manner that is theoretically and practically useful. To do so, in this chapter, the findings from Chapters 5 and 6 are summarised and the findings from the third level of hermeneutic analysis are introduced and reflected upon. Consideration of third level hermeneutic findings in the context of the summarized meso, macro and micro themes, culminate into two systems psychodynamics models of voluntary with recommendations for the application thereof.

The chapter thus commences with a summary of the meso, macro and micro themes that were presented in Chapters 5 and 6. A discussion follows about the application of triple hermeneutics and specifically how I applied triple hermeneutics to the study. Findings and themes from the application of triple hermeneutics are thereafter discussed with reference to the macro, meso and micro-level themes and working hypotheses that were presented in Chapter 5 and 6. I then synthesise findings in the form of a conceptual model reflecting the

meso and macro-level systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover. Recommendations are made for organisations and consulting psychologists to apply the findings. A second model is proposed that depicts the micro-level systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover. Recommendations are made for coaching psychologists with reference to the second model illustrating the micro-level systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover as a flexible, phased process. Finally, I make recommendations for organisations based on the presented findings and conclude the chapter with recommendations for future research.

7.2 SUMMARY OF MESO, MACRO AND MICRO THEMES

The purpose of this section of the chapter is to recall and provide the reader with a summary of the meso, macro and micro findings that were discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. The findings were derived from the second level of hermeneutic analysis where I applied systems psychodynamics to interpret and understand more deeply the lived voluntary turnover experiences as shared in the participants' stories. The meso level themes are summarized first because they mirror and reflect the macro-level themes and the micro-level personal experiences of voluntary turnover. The macro-level themes are then summarized and discussed followed by the micro-level themes.

Meso level themes that were presented in Chapter 5 included: Conflict – Shame on you!; Identify – Not my father!; Boundary – Vulnerable and exposed!; Power – Dogs and bones!; Authority – You listen here!; Role – The sins of the father and of the mother!; Task – Where's the captain?; A narcissistic naked emperor of leadership; A detached leadership; and a bullying leadership. The first theme about conflict had to do with leaders excluding and deauthorising followers which created conflict. It was hypothesised that leaders used the conflicts to project shame onto and into followers. The theme about identity had to do with leaders behaving in ways that made it difficult for research participants to identify with them. It was also about the leader behaving in ways that contradicted the identity of the group. Group, as mother in the mind, was experienced to be abused by leader as father in the mind which created an oedipal dynamic in which followers projected their envy and anger onto the leader. Boundary, as the third theme, had to do with insufficient boundaries of role, time and task, and violated psychological boundaries. The lack of boundaries made people feel exposed, unsafe, and impotent, and to regress to a state of dependency on the leader. The theme about power was about the experiences that followers had of being disempowered by their leaders which created feelings of shame and anger in them, and further contributed towards follower's regression to a state of dependency. Authority was about followers having been repeatedly deauthorised by their leader which was experienced as shameful. The theme

about role had to do with follower's experiences of the leader failing to manage their own role boundary which in turn forced the research participants out of role in relation to the leader. This created high levels of survival anxiety in followers. Task as a theme was about leaders colluding in me-ness as an anti-task behaviour, severed boundaries between authority and task, and subsequent high levels of anxiety for the research participants. A narcissistic naked emperor of leadership had to do with leaders creating in-groups of idealising followers, while those who didn't idealise the leader formed part of the out-group. The theme about a detached leadership was about a lack of maternal or paternal containment by leaders which made the processing of alpha elements impossible for the participants who underwent voluntary turnover. The final meso level theme, a bullying leadership, had to do with leaders projecting their persecutory anxiety and bad feelings of shame onto and into the research participants who were used as scapegoats. It was hypothesised that voluntary turnover was not voluntary, but rather that it was the result of scapegoating dynamics. Voluntary turnover also represented the forceful explosion of unprocessed alpha elements, carried by the research participants, across the boundary and out of the organisation. I hypothesised that voluntary turnover represented a phantasy object of emancipation from the shame and bad feelings in the group.

Macro-level themes that were presented and discussed in Chapter 6 included: A culture of devalued people inside; A culture of cruelty shrouded in niceness; A messiah culture; A culture of stagnated growth; A detached culture; and a paranoid-schizoid culture. The first theme about a culture of devalued people inside was about people inside the organisational boundary feeling devalued. It was hypothesised that the head of the body projected value onto people on the outside of the organisational boundary with the phantasy to introject them into the organisation as objects of value while those on the inside introjected the de-value. This formed a shared unconscious assumption that to be on the inside meant to be of lesser value than people on the outside. A culture of cruelty shrouded in niceness had to do with the assumption that to be a powerful leader it was necessary to be perceived as nice. Leaders competed for nice-ness to shore up their self-image at the expense of having difficult but necessary conversations and making unpopular decisions. A messiah culture was about an overly controlling culture where the organisation required its members to perceive it be omnipotent. The shared assumption was that it was necessary to give up one's power to the organisation as omnipotent saviour which manifested in a culture that controlled people. A culture of stagnated growth had to do with experiences that the organisation had stagnated. It was hypothesised that the lack of containment by the head of the body and subsequent untransformed alpha elements of the body contributed toward this. A detached culture was about the head of the body of the organisation having been experienced to be detached from the body both emotionally and in structure of role and task. The head of the body was

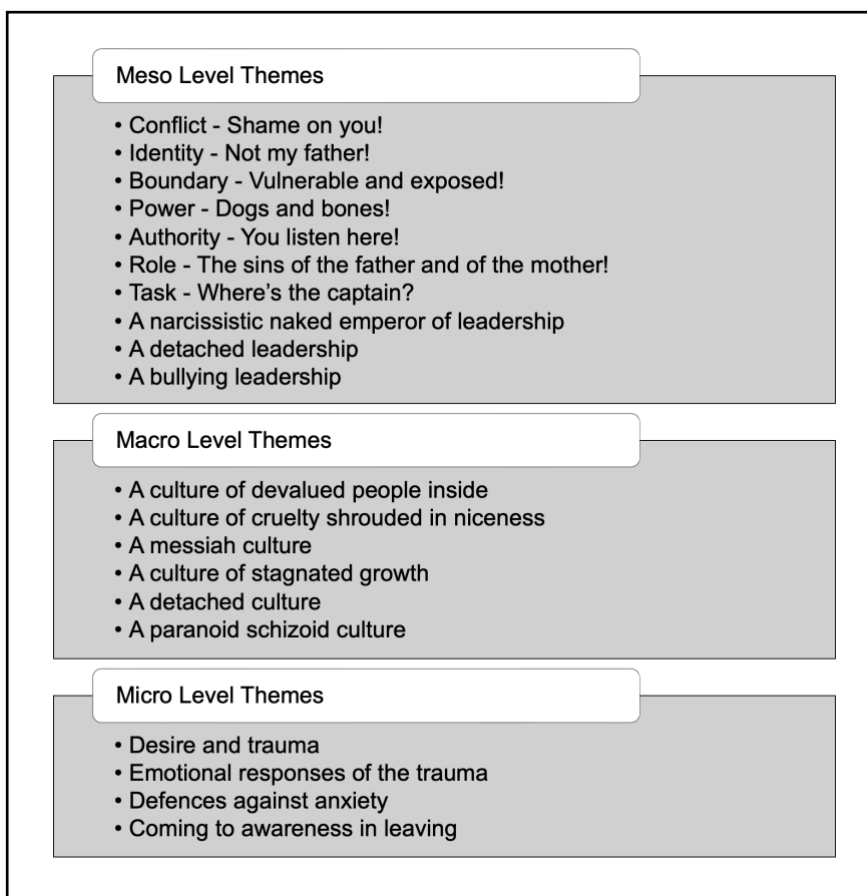
experienced to be narcissistic and existing in an ivory tower that was removed from the body of the organisation. The final macro theme, a paranoid-schizoid culture, had to do with an organisation that was at war with itself for omnipotence. It was hypothesised that those who resigned formed collateral damage of an organisation at war with itself for power.

The micro-level themes that were presented and discussed in Chapter 6 included: Desire and trauma; Emotional responses of the trauma; Defences against anxiety; and coming to awareness in leaving. The first theme, desire and trauma, was about the pain, anxiety, pleasure, and excitement that people experienced in their desire for a promotion. The promotion role represented the desired object that would inform a good enough self while the current role represented a transitional object and the not good enough yet self. It was hypothesised that research participants regressed to a state of dependency on the leader in the hope that the leader would provide the promotion. When participants were denied the promotion role, they experienced a narcissistic injury to their phantasised about good enough self, and a painful loss. It was hypothesised that the rejection was experienced as a trauma that caused participants to enter a paranoid-schizoid position. The second theme about emotional responses of the trauma was about the emotional experiences that people had because of the rejection trauma and associated narcissistic injury and experience of loss. The participants experienced annihilation and persecutory anxiety, shame, helplessness and overwhelm in response to the narcissistic injury. They also experienced a painful loss and had the emotional experiences of anger, apathy, and purposelessness.

The third theme was about the defences against anxiety. It was hypothesised that participants regressed to a state of dependency and hope that they might be awarded the promotion role. After having been rejected and denied the good object of a promotion, they responded in the paranoid-schizoid position by splitting authority and themselves and by fighting against authority as a defence. They projected their bad feelings onto the leader as the bad parent who denied them the good object. They split themselves and introjected the not good enoughness which fragmented the ego. It was hypothesised that some of the participants repressed the difficult psychic material of the loss with the subsequent result of a repetition compulsion of the prior dependency and hope dynamics that preceded the rejection trauma experience. The final theme about coming to awareness in leaving was about the experience of participants coming to a place of acceptance that the desired role was not going to materialise, and that the leader wasn't going to provide it. It was hypothesised that in coming to awareness, the participants had to retrieve the bad projections that were placed onto authority, give the not good enoughness that had been introjected back to the system, drop their dependency on authority, drop hope as a defence and work through the loss that they

had experienced. They needed to enter the depressive position. It was hypothesised that the act of leaving represented a process of individuation and a value object seeking dynamic for those who had worked through the rejection trauma. For those who left immediately after the rejection trauma without working it through, voluntary turnover represented a flight response. A summary of the meso, macro and micro-level themes is presented below.

Figure 7.1: A Summary of Meso, Macro and Micro-level Themes



7.3 APPLYING TRIPLE HERMENEUTICS

In this section of the chapter, I first revisit how I practised reflexivity throughout the course of the study and explain how my reflexive practice shaped the findings of the study in applying

triple hermeneutics. Then I continue to present some additional yet congruent findings as informed by my reflexive practice.

7.4 MY REFLEXIVE PRACTICE

When the researcher and the researched are of the same order, that is, both living, experiencing human beings, it is necessary for us as researchers to reflect on how that might impact the research scenario when gathering data and analysing it afterwards (Watt, 2015). To practice reflexivity, I made field notes about my experiences of having interacted with the research participants after the interviews. I also made psychoanalytic memos about our interactions while I was working through the data from the interviews as well as after debriefing and processing conversations with my psychoanalytic psychologist and my research supervisor. To provide evidence in the thesis of how self-reflection informed my self-reflexive practice, I reflected on my personal experiences of voluntary turnover and my espoused beliefs about the phenomenon in Chapter 1 (see section 1.2). In Chapter 2, I reflected on my role of self as instrument in the research (see section 2.3.3.2) and how my associations to the stories that were shared informed the cocreation thereof (see for example section 2.3.3.4). To synthesise the abundant self-reflective notes and memo's I generated throughout the study, I furthermore decided to write about my transpersonal experiences of interacting with the research participants (see Appendix A). Here, I reflected on my personal interactions with each of the research participants, exploring and writing about the transferences, counter-transferences and identifications that were present in our interactions (see Appendix A). In addition, I reflected on my personal experience of the research journey and my personal experiences of voluntary turnover and summarised these (see Appendix B). Thus, throughout the study I have frequently and consistently created sources of self-reflective evidence and during data analysis I made use of these sources as data sets to inform my practice of reflexivity. It was from these data sets that I applied triple hermeneutics to the study.

I applied triple hermeneutics, reflecting on my transferences, counter-transferences and identifications, and how I as the researcher together with the research participants co-informed the other (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009). According to Gemignani (2017), the analysis of mutual relations between participants and investigators is central to reflexive practice. I used the software program ATLAS.ti to analyse the data in Appendixes A and B. I read and re-read my reflections of interacting with the participants and of my experience of my research journey (see Appendixes A and B). I then coded the data from Appendixes A and B using systems psychodynamics constructs and dynamics. I worked through the codes and collapsed them into emerging themes whilst holding the systems psychodynamics paradigm and the

phenomenon of voluntary turnover in my mind. I then applied systems psychodynamics to the emerging themes to analyse and interpret them and this informed my final set of themes at the third level of analysis. I wrote about the third level findings and themes (see section 7.3.2) and critically (in the spirit of the hermeneutic circle) reflected on how they might have shaped my initial and evolving understanding of voluntary turnover in the study. This brought forth an integration of the findings presented in Chapters 5 and 6 from the collected data with self-reflexive data, which ultimately cumulated into two models depicting the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover at the levels of the meso and macro (see sections 7.5) and micro-levels (see section 7.6) respectively. I discuss how the third level of hermeneutic analysis informed the findings in section that follows.

7.4.1 Findings informed by reflexive practice

In this section of the chapter, I present the triple hermeneutic themes. I first present the findings for each of the triple hermeneutic themes followed by a discussion about them and how they were informed by and informed the findings as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. I also discuss how they contributed to the final findings which are consolidated and depicted in the systems psychodynamics voluntary turnover models.

7.4.1.1 Anxiety

A theme about anxiety emerged from the data through my process of analysing it at the third hermeneutic level. Some of the anxiety was bound up with desire while in other instances it was about performance and survival. The findings from my analysis are presented first followed by a discussion thereof.

i) Findings

I experienced anxiety about whether the first research participant would arrive for the interview. I had a strong desire to complete my research as a desired object and I needed the data from the interviews toward this end. I wrote in my personal reflections that “I then became anxious about whether he would pitch for the interview or not”. I was also anxious about whether the data would be rich enough when I wrote, “I was initially anxious about whether I would gather sufficiently rich data”. I was also anxious when I experienced C2 to idealise me and to transfer dependency on to me, writing, “I experienced both performance and survival anxiety in the countertransference”. I also felt anxious before meeting C3, writing, “I was experiencing some performance anxiety which I attributed to not having met C3 before. I had

also had a difficult experience with the department where he worked prior to leaving the organisation". After having met with C6 I reflected that:

"I responded to her story about the cloud with claustrophobia and anxiety in the countertransference. We were no longer anxious about controlling one another or being controlled by the other, the anxiety was now about being out of control by the organisation as a controlling system".

ii) Discussion

My anxiety about gathering sufficiently rich data to conduct my research was related to the micro-level theme of desire and trauma. I imagine that the anxiety I felt in my desire to complete the research as a good and desired object may have mirrored the anxiety that participants experienced in their desire for the promotional role as a desired object. The performance and survival anxiety that I experienced in relation to being idealised and depended upon was mirrored in the meso level working hypothesis where idealising transference formed in-groups and out-groups. It was also mirrored in the micro-level hypothesis where participants became dependant on authority to provide the good object of a promotion. As a psychologist, I may have come to represent an authority in the minds of the participants who transferred their dependency onto me. My anxiety about being controlled was mirrored in the macro-level theme about a messiah culture. The participant transferred her anxiety onto me, and I responded in the countertransference with anxiety about the organisation being controlling.

7.4.1.2 Shame

I discovered a theme of shame in my transpersonal experiences of the research participants and the research. The shame had to do with feelings of being not good enough. The findings are presented below followed by a brief discussion about how the theme of shame informed the findings of the research and how it is mirrored in the working hypotheses.

i) Findings

C4 spent a fair amount of time making sure to let me know how good he was and how much he had achieved in life and work. He had had a painful rejection experience in the organisation and so had I. On reflecting on our interaction, I came to the realisation that "I had been colluding with him in defence against my own feelings of being not good enough for the organisation". I had identified with him. When interacting with C6 I initially felt that I needed to be on best behaviour, I needed to be good. I reflected in my writing that "I felt that I needed to

be on best behaviour". C6 transferred her own feelings of inadequacy onto me, and I responded in the countertransference by feeling inadequate and small. On reflecting on my personal experience of my research journey I realised that for a long while that I was filled with shame and feelings of being not good enough in relation to my research. I reflected that "I frequently engaged in self-sabotage through procrastination and engaging a script which said, 'you are not an academic, you are a fool, the clown, and the one who was proven to be stupid in junior school'".

ii) Discussion

My identification with C4 served as evidence that I had introjected feelings of shame and of being not good enough that had been projected onto me by the organisation. This relates to the meso level working hypothesis where shame was projected onto and into research participants who were used as scapegoats for the leaders and for the group's shame and bad feelings. I responded to C6 in the countertransference with feelings that I needed to be good enough. This served as evidence of her own feelings of being not good enough in the organisation that she had transferred onto me. The shame and feelings of being not good enough were mirrored in the micro-level theme about emotional responses of the trauma where shame was experienced. I had introjected and held the shame of not being good enough, thinking that I was stupid. This was mirrored in the meso level working hypothesis about shame having been projected onto and into the participants as scapegoats.

7.4.1.3 Loss

A theme of loss emerged out of my third level of hermeneutic analysis. This was evidenced by the sadness in my counter-transferences to the participants. The findings are presented below followed by a discussion.

i) Findings

C1 shared his life story with me, which was fraught with loss at an early age, some of which I identified with. On reflecting after the interview, I wrote, "I also felt a deep sense of sadness about the losses that he shared". C2 shared her story about her lost opportunities for connection with her leader and for the role that she had hoped for. During the interview I responded to her saying, "I feel sad for you". To which she responded, "I feel sad for me too". On reflecting on the interaction between the two of us I wrote that "I was responding to her experiences of loss with sadness in the countertransference and she then accessed the feelings of sadness in her own story". C5 shared his process of leaving as emotionally demanding as he revealed the losses that he had incurred. I reflected after the interview that

“I responded to his story with sadness and overwhelm in the countertransference. I really felt for him and asked if he had been able to process his experiences with someone”. I reflected on my feelings about presenting my research proposal to the panel, writing, “when I presented my research proposal to the panel of professors, I entered a deep state of sadness that I couldn’t shake off or understand”. Embarking on the research meant that I needed to explore my own history of voluntary turnover. I reflected that “I was working through the losses that I’d attempted to forget, and it was painful”.

ii) Discussion

I had identified with some of the losses that participants shared with me. I responded to participants with sadness in the countertransference to the painfulness of the losses that were transferred onto me. At the same time, I felt my own losses. The act of embarking on the research at the stage of presenting my proposal to the panel of professors triggered my own deeply felt loss, and I had to engage a process of working through my own losses that I had incurred through my personal experiences of voluntary turnover. The theme of loss was mirrored in the micro-level working hypothesis, where the experience of losing the desired good object needed to be worked through.

7.4.1.4 Idealisation

I discovered a theme of idealisation in my interactions with some of the participants. In some cases, I mirrored the idealisation that was transferred onto me, and in other cases, I responded with anxiety in the countertransference. The findings are discussed below, followed by a discussion.

i) Findings

C1 had shared his story about overcoming some of the trials in his life. I reflected that “I reacted to his courageous story with idealisation in the countertransference”. I experienced C2 to be somewhat seductive when she remarked how my approach to work was the best and that the role of consultant that I had taken up was very appealing to her. I reflected that “I’d come to represent an idealised object and ego ideal in her mind that she fantasised to integrate into her ego ideal”. I reflected further, writing, “I sensed that I had come to represent authority and power with which she identified as trustworthy and sought to identify with as an idealised

object". She remarked that I had superpowers that enabled me to read people. I wrote in my reflections after the interview that "she transferred the ability to read people onto me which felt like a very powerful projection". On reflecting on my interactions with C4 I wrote that "I felt impressed by the large numbers that he was talking about on the phone and thought to myself that this guy is impressive!". I also reflected that "it was as if the psychodynamics between us in the interview represented a response to the mirroring and idealising transference dynamics that informed in-groups and out-groups in the politics of him leaving".

ii) Discussion

My experiences of idealisation in the transference and countertransference mirrored both the meso and micro-level working hypotheses. The idealisation that I experienced in the countertransference to C4 was mirrored in the meso level findings where mirroring and idealising transferences contributed toward the formation of in-groups and out-groups. I had identified with and idealised C1 and C4 who transferred power in a mirroring and idealising transference dynamic between us. The idealisation that was transferred onto me was mirrored in the micro-level findings where I represented an object of desire in the role of consulting psychologist that I had previously taken up. It was as if my role represented the desired object of a promotion that was discussed in the micro-level working hypothesis.

7.4.1.5 Boundary

A theme of boundary and of boundaries having been pushed emerged from the data when I analysed it at the third hermeneutic level. The findings are presented below, followed by a discussion about how they were reflected in the themes and working hypotheses.

i) Findings

I experienced C5 and C7 to be pushing the time boundary of their interviews. I reflected that "C5 didn't want the interview to end and continued to speak beyond the time boundary until I eventually had to end it". I reflected on my experience of interacting with C7, writing, "I had to work harder to maintain the research boundary in this interview than any of the others". I had previously taken up the role of coaching psychologist to her former leader who C7 and I had both experienced to have played the role of villain. I was having to work hard to stay in my role boundary of researcher as I felt seduced to collude with C7 in a hero, villain, and victim dynamic. While C7 hadn't attended the formal leadership training at the organisation, she was considered by the CFO to have been one of his rising stars. Her immediate leader who had denied her a promotion opportunity didn't seem to endorse her as a high potential future leader though. I struggled with whether I should include C7's story into the study. I reflected that:

“Given this fact (that the CFO viewed her as high potential), and that her story was so rich in deep emotional experiences I decided to keep her as part of the final data set for the research. Again, boundaries had been challenged and I conceded to having them pushed”.

C7 also pushed the time boundary of the interview, and I allowed her to use more than the two hours of time that was allocated. I experienced my research to be dangerous at one point during the process. I reflected about a dream that I had had about a dynamic that had to do with C1, writing, “after coming to this awareness, I realised that I would need to work very hard to maintain the research boundary. This was dangerous work and I felt traumatised at the time”. I also felt vulnerable and exposed when reflecting on the research boundary at the time.

ii) Discussion

The breach of time boundaries was reflected in the micro-level working hypothesis where participants, in their dependency dynamic with the leader, didn't negotiate time boundaries for the promised promotion to take effect. Role boundaries were also challenged which was reflected in the meso level working hypothesis where leaders out of role forced followers out of role in relation to the leader. The boundary of the research was also challenged, and I had to work hard to manage the boundary in terms of which data to include and exclude from the final data set. My experience of feeling traumatised and unsafe in the research was mirrored in the meso level theme about boundaries where people felt vulnerable and exposed due to the lack of effective boundary management. The boundary dynamics in my transpersonal experiences with the research participants and the research informed my understanding of the boundary dynamics in the stories that were shared.

7.4.1.6 Phases of voluntary turnover

In analysing my experiences of interacting with the participants and my research, I came to an understanding that the research participants and I moved through phases of voluntary turnover as a process. I identified four phases and named them: 1) The regressive infantile state; 2) the paranoid-schizoid position; 3) the depressive position; and 4) the individuation maturation state. The findings for each of the phases are presented below, with a discussion about each phase following on from the findings.

Phase 1 - Regressive infantile state

I identified a phase early in the voluntary turnover process, which I named the regressive infantile phase. The phase is characterized by dependency on authority and hope for a good object. The findings are presented below, followed by a brief discussion.

i) Findings

On reflecting on my experience of interacting with C1, I wrote, “C1 became aware of his excitable tone of voice and asked me what kind of psychologist I am”. I reflected that “I responded to his mania with excitement in the countertransference”. It felt as though we were a pair of excited children. I experienced C2 to have transferred dependency onto me during the interview, which made me feel very uncomfortable. I wrote that “I realised afterwards that I had flighted in defence against my anxiety about the seduction to be the powerful one who can read people. I also flighted from the dependency that she transferred onto me. In my reflections about interacting with C5, I wrote that “I of course didn’t promise him anything for his future even though he transferred his reassurance seeking and dependency feelings onto me”. C5 had recently accepted an offer to return to the organisation, and I interpreted him to have had some anxiety about his new role and whether things might be different this time around. I also experienced a strong dependency dynamic in my interactions with C7. I reflected that “C7 wanted me to give her advice and tell her what to do. Her dependency was evident in our interactions, and I had to work hard to keep on giving her agency back to her”. I further reflected that after I became aware of the dependency that “my earlier countertransference of childlike enthusiasm had changed to polite indifference as I sought to remove myself from her as the messiah object”.

When I reflected on my personal experience of my research journey, I realised how naïve I had been to the research process at the beginning. I wrote:

“I was however naïve to the painfulness of the process and in utter denial of my own very difficult voluntary turnover experiences having influenced my choice (of research). I danced into the idea of becoming a doctor of consulting psychology blissfully unaware of what I was getting myself into”.

ii) Discussion

In the case of C1, I responded with childlike excitement in the countertransference. It felt as though we identified as a pair of excitable children. Participants transferred their dependency onto me as if I was an authority who had the power to grant them their desired good object. I responded to the dependency with politeness and indifference because it made me anxious. The regressive infantile state was characterised by regression, dependency and hope as

defences. The dynamics were mirrored in the micro-level working hypothesis about desire and trauma, and how participants depended on authority in the hope that the good object of the promotion would be provided. These insights helped me to develop the micro-level systems psychodynamics model of voluntary turnover.

Phase 2 – The paranoid-schizoid position

Through analysing the data at the third hermeneutic level I came to understand that the paranoid position had something to do with voluntary turnover as a process. The findings are presented below followed by a discussion about them.

i) Findings

I felt incredibly paranoid after my interview with C1 and at other times during the research process. I reflected on my interacting with C1 and wrote that “I wondered through my reflecting if I was carrying some of the paranoia that C1 had projected onto and into me during the interview and which I was containing and needing to process”. In interacting with C2 I experienced myself as an object to have become split from her former leader. I reflected that “the former CEO and I represented good objects that could be trusted while her former leader represented a bad and betraying object”. I was relieved to understand that I might have represented a good object as opposed to her former leader as bad object.

Different camps of in-groups and out-groups were evident in my interacting with C4. I reflected that:

“I was in his camp and the organisation was in the other camp. I used this experience to understand more deeply the paranoid-schizoid culture as a theme at the macro-level. The insight also helped me to understand more deeply and write up the meso level power theme about dogs and bones”.

On reflecting on my experience of my research journey I wrote that at one point in time “my research came to represent an object that could annihilate me. I became paranoid and split into being not good enough and good enough. I felt persecuted by my research”. I had become split in myself. My research had come to represent an authority that threatened my good enough self, and which traumatised me. I felt persecuted by the authority that my research represented and projected my death instinct onto the research as a persecutory authority object. I further reflected that “my ego was weakening, and I felt increasingly fragmented”.

ii) Discussion

The paranoid-schizoid position is distinguished by paranoid anxiety, and the defences of splitting and projecting. My experience of feeling paranoia toward the organisation after some of the interviews served as evidence that I'd introjected paranoid anxiety from the participants. I had also experienced myself to have been split off from bad objects in the organisations. The transferences and counter-transferences of idealisation that informed different camps in my interactions also served as evidence of splitting of good and bad camps in the organisation. The findings link to meso level working hypothesis about in-groups and out-groups, and to the macro-level theme and working hypothesis about a paranoid-schizoid culture. My own experience of my research having come to represent a bad object that could persecute and annihilate me made me realise that the paranoid-schizoid position formed part of the micro-level process of voluntary turnover. This insight relates to the micro-level working hypothesis where the self and authority were split, and where projection of the bad and introjection of the not good enoughness as shame formed part of the dynamic. My experience of my ego becoming fragmented was also mirrored in the micro-level working hypothesis.

Phase 3 – The depressive position

A phase about the depressive position became evident to me when I worked through my reflexive data and analysed it using triple hermeneutics. The phase is characterised by guilt and coming to an understanding and acceptance of both the good and the bad within the same object. The findings are presented below before I discuss them.

i) Findings

I felt guilty after having interacted with C2. I reflected that “I felt guilty after the interaction and wondered why I had placed so much trust in C2 to hold my difficult experiences”. I'd confided in her after the interview about betrayal that I'd experienced in consulting to the organisation. I was concerned that my sharing my experience of the organisation as bad might have damaged the organisation as a good object that I needed and relied upon to complete my research.

In my interacting with C4 I initially experienced him as an all good and powerful object. As the conversation evolved through the interview, I started to see some of the badness too. I reflected that:

“I was starting to see his badness as well as his greatness. I had entered the depressive position which helped me to reflect on the movement from the paranoid-schizoid position to the depressive position in the process of leaving an organisation”.

I had moved from idealising C4 to understanding that he was both good and bad and just another person rather than an omnipotent success.

In my personal experience of my research journey, I had reached a point where my ego was fragmented. I had experienced my research to be traumatising and a threat to my sense of self. I was depressed at the time having worked with so much loss and decided to try ketamine therapy to help with my anxiety and depression. I had a vision of a Sadhu during the first ketamine infusion and reflected that “it was as if he was everything and nothing at the same time”. I reflected that “my research had come to represent the Sadhu, an object of everything and nothing simultaneously, something sacred that I couldn’t quite understand yet. I felt a sense of relief and no longer experienced it to be overwhelmingly annihilating”. I understood that my research wasn’t going to save or kill me, yet it represented both everything and nothing. I wrote that:

“At this point in time the research came to represent something that I could engage with again, but on my terms. I would decide how often and how much time I would spend with it. I would decide when to put it down and take it up again. I would use my rational thinking mind to determine that it was just another research project”.

ii) Discussion

My guilt was about having projected my own felt badness onto the organisation as a good and needed object for the survival of my research. This served as evidence of the depressive position as having something to do with voluntary turnover. I had initially experienced C4 as all powerful and good and gradually understood that he was just another person with both good and bad in him. The interaction provided insight into the depressive position. My experience with the Sadhu and seeing everything and nothing simultaneously in his bright eyes, marked the point at which I moved to a depressive position in my research. It marked the point at which I was able to think rationally again and take back the bad projections that I’d placed onto my research as an authority in my mind. The guilt was part of a dynamic of taking back the bad projections that I had placed onto the organisation. The dynamics of entering the depressive position were reflected in the micro-level theme of coming to awareness and in the working hypothesis. It is reflected in the micro-level working hypothesis about needing to take back the bad projections that were placed onto authority and giving back the introjected not good enoughness to come to an awareness and reclaim personal agency.

Phase 4 – Individuation maturation state

Finally, I came to an understanding through my practice of reflexivity that the act of leaving an organisation had something to do with growing up. I named this phase the individuation maturation state. The findings and discussion thereof follow.

i) Findings

In my interactions with C5 I noted that “he reassured me that he had since grown up and matured in a way that would prevent further disappointments”. He had accepted an offer to return to the organisation and described how he would have done things differently before having had the growth experience that he had had in leaving. I felt that he transferred authority onto me to affirm his grown-upness in leaving. He may have assumed that I, as a psychologist, was qualified to affirm him having grown up. After having interacted with C6 I reflected in my writing that “she was one of the last of her peers remaining at the organisation before she had left and felt that she was being left behind”. It was as if all the other siblings had left the nest except for her. I had initially been very anxious in my interacting with C6 and responded to her in the countertransference as good little boy would respond to a teacher at school. She transferred her infant onto me, and I responded as a child in the countertransference. I reflected on the possibility that:

“C6 had only been at her new organisation for a few months, and I sensed that her new sense of control over life was still in a vulnerable stage, like an infant needing to be nurtured. It was as if her move represented a step into adulthood and with the birth of an inner child that represented her agency”.

The paradox of individuating is that to become an adult in the outer world, the inner child needs to be acknowledged and held. To become grown up in identity means to hold the child within.

C7 requested a coaching session with me a few weeks after our interview to which I agreed. I reflected on my interacting with her, noting that “during the coaching session she told her sister that she was taking responsibility for her life and that she had consulted an industrial psychologist to work with her”. She transferred her containment onto me as she sought to grow up and take responsibility for her life. I responded by offering containment but with a deep awareness of the dependency that she also transferred onto me. This made me realise the importance of the role that psychologists take up in supporting the process of individuation and the awareness needed to give back the dependency so that the person can become their own authority.

On reflecting on my personal experiences of my research journey I wrote that “it was if I had died, had a rebirth experience and was able to hold and nurture myself through the research

to grow and to become stronger". Reflecting on my first real voluntary turnover experience in having left the elite school at age fifteen, I also realised that my tertiary institution "had come to represent my school in the unconscious mind, that my series of academic achievements represented the grades that I would have worked through, and that my PhD research process represented completing unfinished business for me". As I drew nearer to the end stages of my research process, I had the experience to individuate through it. I wrote that "the research had come to represent an object of meaning, of deep processing and of personal transformation". It was as if through the research process I was able to work through my own unprocessed stuff of voluntary turnover to make meaning of it. In this sense it provided me with the containment that I needed to individuate as I grew in capacity to provide containment for myself.

ii) Discussion

Participants transferred authority onto me to affirm that they had indeed matured through and after the process of leaving their jobs. Paradoxically, dependency was, at times, also transferred onto me, which I had to give back while still providing containment. The theme of individuation is reflected in and informed by the micro-level hypothesis that voluntary turnover represents growing up in leaving the organisation.

7.5 FINDINGS SYNTHESISED IN A MESO AND MACRO, AND MICRO-LEVEL SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMICS MODEL OF VOLUNTARY TURNOVER

Consulting psychologists work at multiple levels: directly with individuals, as with executive coaching, with dysfunctional or functional groups, or with the organisation system as a whole (Lowman, 2002). They play an important role in working towards functional organisations through the application of a multitude of consulting approaches. This research supports consulting psychologists to consult to voluntary turnover from a systems psychodynamics approach. To this end I developed two systems psychodynamics models to aid consulting psychologists to better understand and consult to voluntary turnover in client systems. In this section, the meso and macro-level model is first discussed followed by recommendations for consulting psychologists to apply it. Thereafter the micro-level model is discussed integrated with recommendations for coaching psychology.

7.5.1 A meso- and macro-level systems psychodynamics model of voluntary turnover

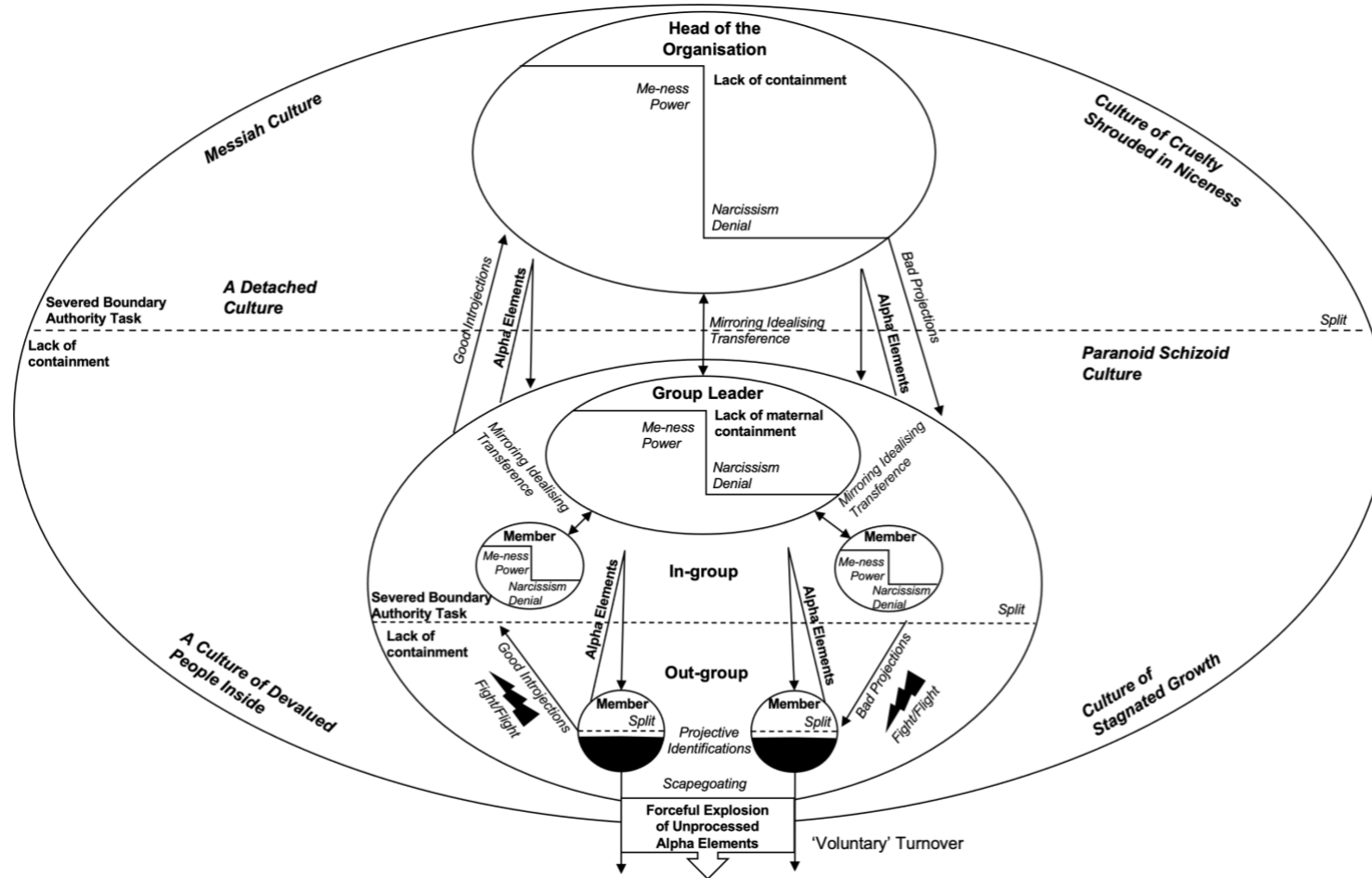
Figure 7.2 illustrates the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover at the meso and macro systems levels. The outer circle represents the organisational boundary, the circle in the top half represents the senior leadership team as the head of the organisation, and the larger circle in the bottom half represents the boundary around the group below the head and inside of the organisation. The larger circle in the upper half of the group boundary represents the leader of the group and the smaller circles represent group members at the individual level. The dynamic at the meso level is mirrored in and by the macro-level dynamics which are experienced at the micro-level. The dotted line in Figure 7.2 represents the split between in-groups and out-groups in the organisation, group, and individual levels. The splits do not allow for the processing of beta elements into alpha elements which must be contained by members of the outgroup. It also represents a severed boundary between authority and task which is mirrored throughout the systemic levels. The diagram illustrates how people undergoing voluntary turnover may be carrying the splits and the severed boundary between authority and task on behalf of the system. This presents as fragmentation and weakening of the ego strength at the micro-level. It also mirrors the dynamic of deauthorisation at the meso and macro system levels through the organisational hierarchy.

The culture of the organisation is depicted through four descriptors of culture which are presented in bold text around the organisational boundary, and two cultural descriptors that have to do with the detachment and splitting of the organisation. The culture was described as a messiah culture, a culture of cruelty shrouded in niceness, a culture of devalued people on the inside, a culture of stagnated growth, a detached head from the body, and a paranoid-schizoid culture. All the culture themes and assumptions revolved around narcissism and power dynamics in the organisation. The head characterised by high levels of narcissism and greed at the time of the study was shown to be detached both paternally and maternally, which yielded the containing function unavailable. The alpha elements were deflected off the head of the organisation, like rays of light off a glass mirror, back to the organisation as a body. The deflection of the unprocessed alpha elements was mirrored in the group and contained by members undergoing voluntary turnover. The individual had the task to carry the unprocessed difficult psychic materials on behalf of the organisation, while the leader of the group was unavailable to process the contained and provide containment.

Parallel to this process was the projection of shame and impotence by the head downward into the body of the organisation, which served the high levels of narcissism in the head. The narcissism of the head was mirrored by the leader of the group which manifested in idealising

and mirroring transference dynamics between members and the leader. Those who engaged in the mirroring and idealising transference dynamics formed the in-group while those who didn't engage the narcissistic transference dynamics formed the out-group. The group dealt with its felt badness by using members of the out-group to carry it in the form of various scapegoated phenomenal roles. The shaded pieces at the level of the individual in the outgroup represents the bad projections that had been placed onto and into them to carry on behalf of the system. The badness was played out through a process of projective identification in service of the in-group's need to feel omnipotent and safe. Organisational psychologists might consider consulting to the group-as-a-whole to enable the system to become aware of where it places its badness and the implications thereof. Figure 7.2 depicting the meso and macro-level systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover is presented on the page that follows.

Figure 7.2: Meso and Macro-level Model of Systems Psychodynamics of Voluntary Turnover



Note. Own Work.

At the levels of the meso and macro voluntary turnover is the collective phantasy of it being an object of emancipation, and with it the projection of members of the out-group out of the organisation. It also represents a forceful explosion of alpha elements across the organisational boundary and to the outside. Consulting psychologists may use Figure 7.2 to explore the influences of excessive narcissism and associated power uses and abuses in the client organisation, and how these are defended against as a collective. By understanding the unconscious assumptions about how power is attained and maintained, consulting psychologists may be able to better understand the unconscious processes through which people are projected out of the organisation. By exploring and understanding the levels of narcissism in the organisation consulting psychologists might be better equipped to identify basic assumptions behaviours that contribute towards anti-task behaviours, for example meanness, fight, and flight. Consulting psychologists might also use the model to explore the paternal and maternal containing functions at the differing systemic levels and how these contribute towards the processing of alpha elements or towards unbearable levels of frustration for some members. Recommendations for coaching psychologists are made next and the micro-level model of the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover is presented.

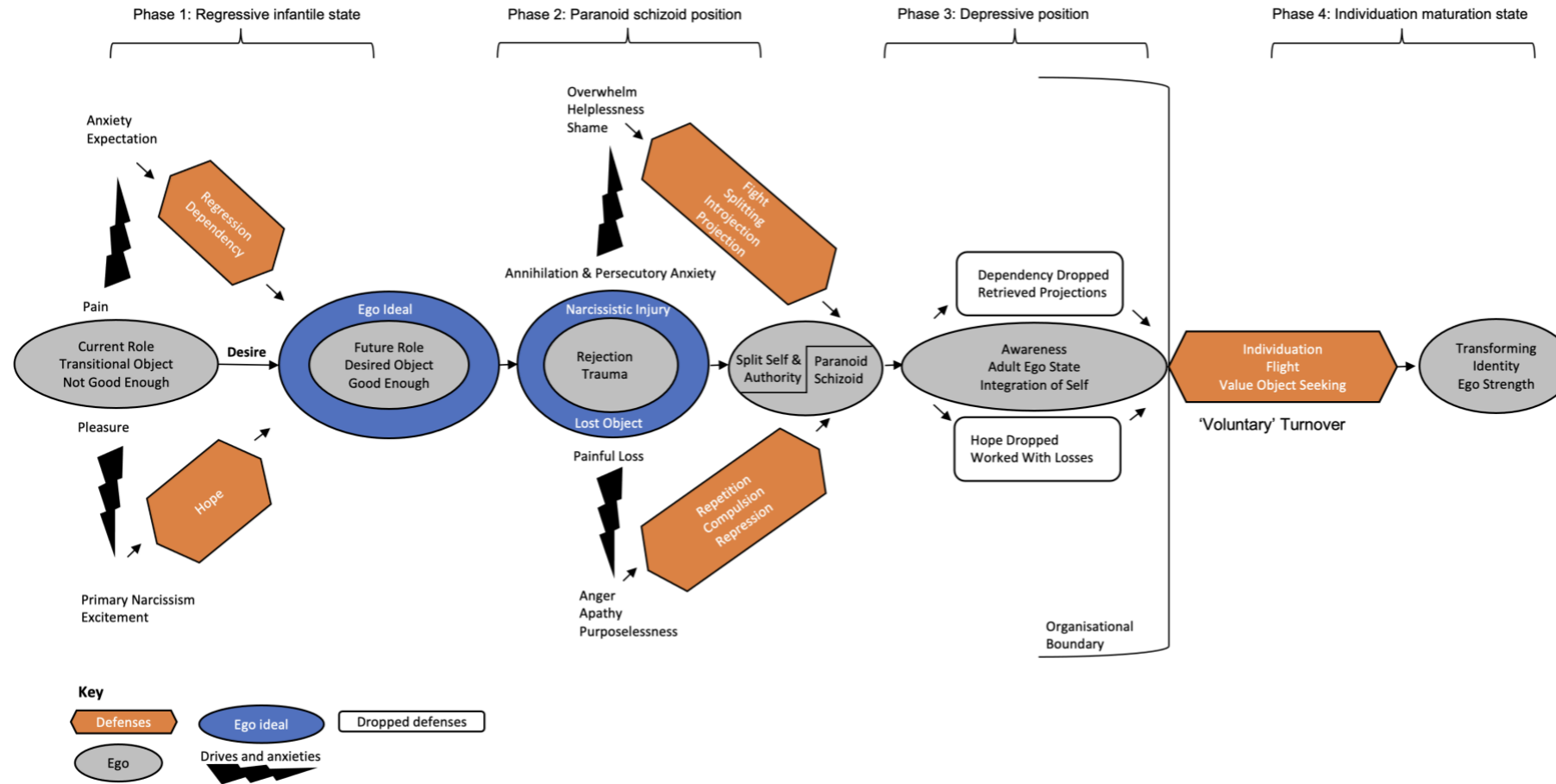
7.5.2 A micro-level systems psychodynamics model of voluntary turnover

Coaching psychology is defined by the Australian Psychological Society as the systematic application of behavioural science to the enhancement of life experience, work performance and well-being for individuals, groups and organisations who do not have clinically significant mental health issues or abnormal levels of stress (Green & Grant, 2006). Coaching psychologists bring a host of psychological theories and models that underpin, and bring depth to, the coaching relationship (Palmer & Cavanagh, 2006). It is an evolving discipline within the field of psychology with new research needed to contribute to the body of knowledge. With the idea of an evolving and developing knowledge base, supplied by appropriate research, there comes the potential of enhancing coaching performance of coaches (Passmore & Theeboom, 2016). This section of the chapter contributes to the evolving body of knowledge about coaching psychology. It synthesises the micro-level hermeneutic findings of this study to provide recommendations to enhance the work of coaching psychologists working with clients in the voluntary turnover process and from a systems psychodynamics stance.

Figure 7.3 depicts a synthesis of the micro individual level psychodynamics in the voluntary turnover process. The process is organised according to four developmental phases that indicate evolving psychological states. The phases are derived from the micro-level findings and the application of triple hermeneutics as discussed in section 7.3.2. The phases include

the regressive infantile state, the paranoid-schizoid position, the depressive position and finally the individuation maturation state, which marks the point of crossing over to the outside of the organisational boundary. It must be noted that it is not the intent of the model to describe a linear process, but rather people undergoing voluntary turnover may move between phase one and two at different points in time or in different organisations. This is especially the case for those who don't process the rejection trauma and loss of their good object and engage repetitively through the phases. Similarly, they might move through phases one to three in different organisations. Consulting psychologists might use the emotional experiences and prevalent defences employed by their clients in coaching to identify which phase the client appears to be working through and adopt an appropriate strategy to consult to the dynamics of the phase. The micro-level model of voluntary turnover experiences is presented on the page that follows.

Figure 7.3: Micro-level Model of Voluntary Turnover Experiences



Note. Own Work.

7.5.2.1 Phase 1 – The regressive infantile phase

The regressive infantile phase comprises of the client in a current role (or another object of identification) which represents a transitional object towards being good enough. The current role is a representation of not being good enough yet. The desired future object, constellated with the super-ego, represents the object of desire and of being good enough. The desire and expectation for the future desired object creates anxiety and pain which is defended against through regression to an infantile state and the adoption of dependency on authority to provide the good enough object. The libidinal drive of primary narcissism creates excitement and pleasure about the desired future object to be taken into the psyche. This is worked with by using hope as a defence against the unbearable thought that the desired good object might not materialise. Hope serves as a container for the excitement and pleasure.

A suitable coaching strategy at this phase might be to work with clients to put boundaries of time, role, and task around the current object versus the future desired object. This may assist in loosening the dependency on authority. Coaching psychologists need to be aware of clients transferring their dependency onto them. It may also help to promote agency and rational thinking capacity to negotiate as an adult. Hope might be consulted to in this phase to support the client to test out reality, communicate expectations to authority or realign expectations. Exploring more deeply the meaning and representation of the desired future object with the client could result in greater awareness of the object seeking behaviours and impulse drives which in turn may aid in constructive psychological adjustment.

7.5.2.2 Phase 2 – The paranoid-schizoid position

Phase two represents the paranoid-schizoid position and is entered into through a traumatic experience of being rejected or denied the object of desire. Individuals acquire a narcissistic injury and experience the loss of the desired good object. Annihilation anxiety, persecutory anxiety, and loss from the dynamo of dynamics at this phase. People may feel ashamed, helpless, overwhelmed, angry, apathetic, and purposeless in this phase. To defend against their anxiety both the self and authority is split into good and bad. Badness, as anger turned inwards, is introjected together with the annihilated good object which results in the fragmentation and weakening of the ego. Badness is also projected onto authority which is experienced to have been persecutory while the good parent is introjected to help console the wounded self. The rejection trauma and loss of the desired object creates a painful loss experience. The loss is defended against through repression of aspects of the rejection

trauma, but which results in a repetition compulsion dynamic and a transition back to phase one until it is worked through.

It is important for coaching psychologists to be aware of the painfulness of this phase. Containment and holding as consulting strategies are critical to support the client. There is a risk for the person to flight out of the organisation at this phase and repeat the trauma in an alternate system. Containment is needed to process the alpha elements and make meaning from the difficult emotions that are experienced. The coach, in providing a holding space, needs to be aware of the interpretations made because the person is likely to easily feel under threat of attack at this phase. Interpretations ought to contribute towards holding and containment initially before working with the bad projections and introjections. Once there is a feeling of safety in the coaching relationship then the coach can proceed to consult to the split self and split authority.

It might be helpful to explore with the person how their felt badness might belong to the system. Exploring what is carried on behalf of the system is necessary to give it back to and locate it in the system. The taking back of bad projections that were placed onto authority is necessary for transformation to a more objective and rational adult state of mind. It is also necessary to work through the rejection trauma by asking the person to take you through what happened step-by-step in as much detail as possible. It will be important to ask them to clarify the events that led up to it and to support them to remember what they were thinking and feeling along the way. In remembering the trauma they'll have an opportunity to integrate the repressed parts of it back into the conscious mind to prevent or transform a repetition compulsion dynamic of repeating the trauma.

7.5.2.3 Phase 3 – The depressive position

Phase three represents the depressive position and is only entered into once the individual has been able to drop dependency on authority and hope for the materialisation of the desired future object. To enter this position the individual needs to have taken back the bad projections that were placed onto authority and retrieve the good enough self that had been split off. This phase is characterised by an integration of self, movement into an adult ego state and awareness of rational thinking and agency to make decisions for oneself.

The coaching psychologist might reflect openly with the client about their hopes and desires and what good enoughness represents for the client. Exploring the subjectivity of success and reframing it with the client could prove a useful strategy. Reaffirming the client's agency to make decisions as a working adult might further support integration and the building up of ego

strength. It is at this stage that the client may reconsider leaving the organisation should sufficient awareness be created. Identifying and locating the desired future object and bringing this to awareness is critical in the coaching relationship at this phase in the process. Raising awareness and promoting agency form the strategies to be adopted in phase three.

Consulting to the transferences and countertransference in the coaching relationship might also prove useful to support the prevention of a regression back to a state of dependency. This is especially the case where dependency might have been transferred by the client into the coaching relationship. It may also be helpful to adopt a TA approach to coaching at this phase with the aim of increasing the Adult, reducing the Critical Parent and Adapted Child, and increasing the Nurturing Parent and the Free child.

7.5.2.4 Phase 4 – The individuation maturation phase

Phase four represents the individuation maturation phase of the process and marks the point at which the individual crosses over the organisational boundary to the outside. The individual, no longer in the binds of dependency and hope seeks to mature as an adult self and see things for what they are. The individual flights across the organisational boundary in a value and growth object seeking dynamic which comes to represent voluntary turnover. At this phase individuals may find themselves asking the question ‘who am I now that I am no longer a member of the organisation with which I had identified?’ Identity and identification work forms the consulting strategy at this phase of the process.

Working with losses incurred because of leaving is also critical to prevent the setting up of a repetition compulsion dynamic. This is especially true if phase three was bypassed by a client who fled from the organisation without sufficient time to process the events. The person may still be carrying the rejection trauma which can become associated with leaving. Identifying with the good enough object of success that was reframed in phase three becomes part of the work in this phase. This forms part of a process of strengthening the ego to meet the demands of future challenges. It might be said that this phase represents a rebirth and move from the experience of Thanatos to the embodiment of Eros.

7.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANISATIONS

Organisations need to be aware of the role of toxic leadership as it relates to the phenomenon of voluntary turnover. They need to raise awareness about the capacity for leadership to work with shame and envy in the system and actively reflect on how these difficult feelings are worked with. Leaders who cannot work through these painful feelings project them into

members of the group and the organisation and which projective dynamics become mirrored throughout the levels of the system. Where voluntary turnover of high achievers becomes a pattern, organisations need to assess the levels of narcissism in the leadership structure of the organisation. Excess narcissism inhibits the capacity for containment in a dynamic of splitting, denial, projection of the shame downwards by leaders onto and into followers, paralleled by the introjection of power by leaders from followers. The lack of capacity for containment by leaders also translates to unprocessed alpha elements of consciousness. Followers carry the unprocessed psychic materials on behalf of the system which causes frustration, a lack of psychological growth and a void of meaning for them.

Voluntary turnover at the levels of the group and the organisation represents scapegoating dynamics and the forceful explosion of alpha elements out of the organisation. Organisations would therefore do well to address issues of containment should they desire to realise transformation of and through voluntary turnover as a process. This might be done through the introduction of regular consultation to the senior leader team by a systems psychodynamics informed consulting psychologist. Containment is best developed through a process of experiential development rather than a traditional classroom style of lecture. The applications of the CIBART model to team development (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005) might be applied to deepen senior leaders' understanding of conflict, identity, boundary, authority, role and task dynamics at the group level. Depth work at the level of the group is likely to increase the group's capacity for containment as their understanding is deepened. Organisations may also do well to employ the services of systems psychodynamics informed executive coaches to work with leaders to create capacity for containment at the individual level.

In instances where reactive narcissistic leaders scapegoat their followers, it is improbable that the narcissism can be transformed. Kets de Vries (2006) recommends the following strategies to mitigate the harmful effects of narcissism in leadership: 1) distributing decision-making and erecting barriers against runaway leadership; 2) improving the selection, education, and evaluation of board members; and 3) offering coaching and counselling to executives showing signs of excessive narcissism. Organisations would do well to consider identifying leaders presenting with reactive narcissism and take steps to manage it. It is imperative to use the services of a competent consulting psychologist in this process to ensure that leaders are not misdiagnosed which would perpetuate the scapegoating dynamics. Narcissism is an affliction that some people suffer, and extra care needs to be taken to not use it as a label to project badness. Leaders who suffer excess narcissism might be managed humanely by placing role and task boundaries around them that limit the extent to which they might exercise their power and authority over others. In cases where the leaders show strong technical expertise it would

be wise to find a role for them in the organisation that allows them to make use of their technical strengths. This is necessary to both contain the issue and prevent systemic mirroring of the narcissistic dynamics that contribute toward voluntary turnover.

Further to this, organisations presenting with a voluntary turnover problem need to look at the role and task boundaries in place and how these connect to authority structures in the business. Severed boundaries of authority and task take people out of role and off-task resulting in high levels of survival anxiety. Organisations should engage regular reflection to raise ongoing awareness of anti-task behaviours that leaders and followers engage. This is necessary to curb survival anxiety and integrate performance realities on an ongoing basis. When the head and the body of the organisation becomes detached then the containing function that is needed for growth becomes inhibited. Organisations seeking to grow through the acquisition of value objects from outside of the organisation need to critically reflect on how this strategy becomes displaced onto the talent strategy which unconsciously devalues people within the organisation and paradoxically inhibits growth. Care should be taken to acknowledge loyalty of service, sustained performance, and the desire of employees within the organisation to grow. A grow from within people strategy that recognises people within as value adding is recommended to curb voluntary turnover.

Many organisations that I've consulted to regard their espoused values as sacred ground and as a representation of the cultural status quo of the organisation. Organisations would do well to explore the possibility that the espoused values, although desired, may not represent the actual culture that is prevalent in the system. Such an acknowledgement would present as a blow to the narcissism of the organisation, and it is therefore likely that denial of this fact would operate as a primary defence. Board members and senior leadership teams would do well to engage in psychosocial education to learn about organisational culture through the lens of systems psychodynamics. Such development might enable them to reach beneath the surface of the rational, controlling, and conscious mind to explore the prevalent unconscious assumptions that are shared by members of the organisation. When espoused values become a defence against making conscious the unconscious shared assumptions, the repressed unfaceable truths within the system are likely to present as symptoms in the form of dysfunctional and anti-task behaviours. It is recommended that organisations frequently employ the services of a systems psychodynamics informed consulting psychologist to create reflective spaces and make use of psychoanalytic modes of inquiry, such as listening posts and photo matrixes (Long, 2013), to attend to the process task of making shared unconscious cultural assumptions conscious.

7.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research on the systems psychodynamics of lived voluntary turnover experiences is important to validate both the hypotheses and models that were developed in the study. A further recommendation is that studies about the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover are done in other large retail organisations in South Africa to expand understanding of the subject to the level of system domain defences. It is also recommended that the study be repeated in organisations other than the value retail industry. Further exploration is needed to determine whether similar themes, hypotheses and processes emerge in other organisations and industries. It is also recommended that future studies look to explore differences between demographics and other diversity factors, and to compare those findings to the findings of this study.

A limitation of the study was the possibility for my transferences and biases to influence the findings. The empirical approach of the study might also be tested by another researcher who doesn't experience themselves to have a proclivity for voluntary turnover. It might also be important for the researcher to not have any connection to the context of the organisation that formed the context of the study. A further recommendation is that research in the future adopts a longitudinal design to allow for validation of the individual voluntary turnover process as depicted in Figure 7.3. This would enable a validation of the phases and process and create a more intricate level of understanding into the systems psychodynamics in each of the phases.

Future research could also include the incorporation of other means of gathering data about the group and organisation wide dynamics. Group coaching sessions, listening posts, social dreaming matrixes and photo matrixes could aid future researchers to understand the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover more deeply. The research intended to create deep understanding to support improved psychological adjustment and development of groups, organisations, and individuals. Further to validating the hypotheses and models, future research might focus on validating the effectiveness of applying the models to organisational development and coaching outcomes.

7.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter commenced with a summary of the meso, macro and micro-level themes that were presented in Chapters 5 and 6. I then discussed my application of triple hermeneutics to the study. I discussed how I engaged in reflexive practice and how my reflexive practice informed my third level of analysis and interpretation. I presented my triple hermeneutics

themes together with findings and a discussion about how they were mirrored in the themes and working hypotheses in Chapters 5 and 6, and how they informed my integrated findings and recommendations. The meso and macro-level, and the micro-level systems psychodynamics models of voluntary turnover were then presented with recommendations for consulting and coaching psychologists to apply them. Recommendations were made for organisations where voluntary turnover of high potential employees is problematic. Finally, recommendations for further research were made.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to critically reflect on whether the study met its objectives, and to reflect on the limitations of the study. The study sought to create an in depth understanding of the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover with the view to support constructive psychological development through the process. The approach adopted was hermeneutic phenomenology, in a qualitative multiple case study design, and with systems psychodynamics as the meta-theoretical lens to study the phenomenon of voluntary turnover. Systems psychodynamics as the paradigm informed the research boundary which both held and directed the study. This chapter presents the conclusions from the study according to the aims that were set out in Chapter 1. Conclusions about the literature aims are discussed first before a discussion about the conclusions about the empirical aims. I then make some conclusions about the trustworthiness of the research through a critical review of how I implemented the quality criteria for the study. Finally, I discuss the limitations of the study before concluding the thesis.

8.1 LITERATURE AND EMPIRICAL CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions drawn are discussed with reference to the aims of the study from Chapter 1. The overarching aim of the study was to explore the lived voluntary turnover experiences of people to develop an in-depth understanding of the systems psychodynamics of the phenomenon. In accordance with this aim the research utilised the stories of participants who had undergone voluntary turnover to explore and gain a deep understanding of their lived experiences of the process. It also used the transpersonal experiences of the researcher and the researched. An understanding of the systems psychodynamics was created at the levels of the meso group, the macro-organisational, and micro individual level experiences.

The literature aims were as follows:

1. To conceptualise the systems psychodynamics perspective.
2. To conceptualise voluntary employee turnover; the specific characteristics of voluntary turnover; and the processes of voluntary turnover.

The empirical research aims were as follows:

1. To explore the lived voluntary turnover experiences of people from a systems psychodynamics perspective and to describe these in depth.
2. To develop a systems psychodynamics model of voluntary turnover for coaching and consulting psychology.

Conclusions for each of the aims are discussed below which culminate in inferences about the general aim of the study.

8.1.1 Literature aim 1: Conclusions

The first aim of the literature review was to conceptualise the systems psychodynamics perspective. This aim was met in Chapter 3 which presented the distinguishing features of the perspective from the literature. The systems psychodynamics perspective is specifically intended to convey the notion that the observable and structural features of an organisation – even quite rational and functional ones – continually interact with its members at all levels in a manner that stimulates particular patterns of individual and group dynamic processes (Gould et al., 2006). It was concluded that systems psychodynamics integrates psychoanalysis, group relations, and open systems theory (Fraher, 2004). The following precis is offered to reflect the essence of how each school of thought inform the system psychodynamic perspective and I reflect on how these theories impacted on decisions made by me in this study:

- Psychoanalysis is an epistemology within systems psychodynamics that considers the role of unconscious processes within organisations (Mayer et al., 2018). According to Freud (1910) psychoanalysis has its origin in the idea of an unconscious mind into which the ego represses unacceptable and unwanted psychic material. The ego defends against drives and impulses deemed inappropriate by the superego through the various psychological defences against anxiety. Freud (1921) applied his ego psychoanalysis to the psychology of groups and argued that individuals, in finding security in belonging to the group, lose their individual consciousness to the group. Klein (1948b) contributed further to psychoanalysis in her theories on anxiety, envy, guilt, gratitude and the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. She studied infants and introduced a developmental theory involving the splitting of the good and the bad breast as the earliest forms of object relations. A hallmark of her work is the idea of annihilation anxiety which suggests anxiety to not only result from impulses and drives, according to Freud's theories, but also to stem from early object relations. Winnicott and Bion are two more influential psychoanalysts who contributed to psychoanalysis. Winnicott contributed the idea of the good enough mother and of holding in which continuity of being is sustained over time to allow for development (Ogden, 2004). Bion's idea of the container-contained addresses the dynamic interaction of unconscious thoughts (the contained) and the capacity for dreaming and thinking those thoughts (the container) (Ogden, 2004).

- In group relations theory the group is seen as having a collective will and power (Rosenbaum, 2004). Bion (1961) was instrumental to the development of group relations theory through his work on group basic assumptions behaviours. The basic assumptions behaviours form group defences against survival anxiety. Survival anxiety is stirred up by the group's need to deliver on the primary task and defended against using basic assumptions behaviours. In this sense Bion (1961) postulates the existence of two groups operating simultaneously, the basic assumptions group, with survival as the task, and the work group with its focus on delivering on its primary task. Bion (1961) discovered the basic assumptions of fight/flight, dependency and pairing. The basic assumptions behaviour of me-ness was added later (Turquet, 1974). The CIBART model is also important to understanding and working with group relations (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005; Green & Molenkamp, 2005; Hirschhorn, 2018). Conflict, identity, boundary, authority, role, and task form group relations constructs used in diagnosing and consulting to teams. Menzies (1960) introduced the idea of social systems as defences informed by shared basic assumptions by the system as a whole. Her work extended the analysis of the group to allow for an understanding of the cultural dynamics of organisational systems.
- Open systems theory assumes systems to be operating at the levels of the micro-individual, meso-group, and macro-organisation. It stems from Von Bertalanffy's (1950) theory of open systems in physics and biology and at its core acknowledges the interconnectedness and interdependencies of systems through the exchange of inputs and outputs. Rice (1969) and his colleagues applied the theory to psychoanalysis to formulate an understanding of individual and group behaviour. Rice (1969) located the ego function at the system boundary as the control region, checking inputs, controlling conversation activities and expressing outputs. Open systems theory sees individuals, groups, and organisations as systems interacting with one another by exchanging psychic materials across their respective boundaries. It acknowledges the importance of understanding psychological processes in the input, conversation and output of psychic materials as exchanged through interdependent systems to survive. It was concluded that the psychodynamics at the meso-group level of voluntary turnover were mirrored in and by the macro-organisation wide level systems psychodynamics and experienced at the micro-level of systemic functioning. This understanding was made possible through open systems theory and guided my decision to present meaning constructed from the data in this systemic logic, first in terms of meso-level findings (Chapter 5), followed by the macro-level findings (Chapter 6), and finally the micro-level findings (Chapter 6).

The application of the basic assumptions' behaviours at the meso level allowed me to create an understanding of anti-task behaviours which contributed towards the voluntary turnover process. I also applied the CIBART constructs at the level of the group which enabled me to understand how conflict, identity, boundaries, authority (and power), role and task manifested in the voluntary turnover stories. The theoretical perspective of systems as social defences enabled me to create an understanding of and to describe the macro-level psychodynamics of voluntary turnover. It was concluded that social defence systems represent shared unconscious cultural assumptions and communally endorsed defences against anxiety. Classical Freudian and Kleinian object relations, psychoanalytic processes and concepts allowed for an analysis and understanding, and the description of anxieties and defence mechanisms in the voluntary turnover process at the micro-level. Bion's ideas of the container-contained enabled an understanding of how thinking and growth were inhibited through the lack of a sufficient containing function. From a TA perspective it was possible to explore how the patterns of transactions from different ego states contributed to a breakdown in communication and trust between followers and leaders in the voluntary turnover process.

I concluded that systems psychodynamics is a triple hermeneutics because as a meta-theoretical lens it requires of the researcher to turn the lens back on oneself in relation to the researched. It served as a critical lens to interpret the unconscious processes, power relations and systemic dynamics in my interactions with the participants and with the research. Systems psychodynamics was therefore applied not only at the second level of analysis but at the third level too (Chapter 7), requiring of me to interpret my own transpersonal experiences of interacting with the research participants and with the research. I used myself as instrument (see section 2.3.3.1) in the research, and through a practice of reflexive analysis, critically reflected on the interpretations that I made in the findings. I drafted narratives of my experiences of having interacted with the research participants from my field notes and psychoanalytic memos (Appendix A). I also wrote about my personal experiences of voluntary turnover and my experience of having interacted with the research (see Appendix B). I explored my own personal experiences of voluntary turnover and preconceptions as rooted in my personal, unconscious experience of voluntary turnover (see section 1.2) which informed my experience of the research (Appendix B) and the research findings (Chapter 7). I applied systems psychodynamics at the third level of hermeneutic analysis to Appendixes A and B and used these insights to inform my final findings. The hermeneutic circle (see Chapter 2) therefore guided my analysis and interpretation as I moved between parts of the text, the whole text, and the text that was informed by my reflexive analysis, using systems psychodynamics as the lens. I concluded that systems psychodynamics was appropriate for the study to explore and describe the lived voluntary turnover stories and my transpersonal

experiences of the researched and the research. It allowed for the development of an in-depth understanding of the complexity of human behaviour in the voluntary turnover process.

8.1.2 Literature aim 2: Conclusions

The second literature aim of the study was to conceptualise voluntary employee turnover, which included the specific characteristics of voluntary turnover and the processes of voluntary turnover. I achieved this aim in Chapter 4 where voluntary turnover was defined and discussed. Mobley et al., (1979) defined employee turnover as a process within which the employee decides to leave the organisation. It was concluded that voluntary turnover can be defined as a social phenomenon informed by conscious and unconscious systemic (micro, meso and macro) psychodynamic process; and implies personal agency at the micro-level in deciding to cross from within boundaries of formal role, group, and organisation to the outside. This is a new way of conceptualising voluntary turnover by including the above rational and below irrational as well as the systemic dynamics thereof. It therefore provides a theoretical contribution the field of voluntary turnover research.

Specific characteristics of turnover were described as part of an expanded taxonomy that distinguished voluntary from involuntary turnover, avoidable from unavoidable turnover, and functional from dysfunctional turnover. Specific characteristics also included antecedent predictors of voluntary turnover that formed part of the content models discussed. Attachment theory allowed for a systems psychodynamics understanding of job-embeddedness as a voluntary turnover antecedent from the literature. It was concluded that other causes of voluntary turnover may include toxic leadership, organisational culture, stress and burnout, and perceptions of injustice and unfairness. Voluntary turnover was thus conceptualised from the literature with reference to its specific characteristics and with a focus on relating it conceptually to a systems psychodynamics understanding. This unique insight further contributes to the study of voluntary turnover and broadens the perspective of understanding voluntary turnover not as something to be avoided, but a process to be understood in order to manage adjusting through it.

Since this research sought to create a deeper understanding of the systems psychodynamics processes of voluntary turnover, special attention was furthermore paid to understanding process models of the phenomenon from the literature. It was concluded from Mobley's (1977) intermediate linkages model and Mobley et al., (1979) expanded model that there were unconscious irrational voluntary turnover processes that remained unexplained by rational decision-making models. Mobley et al., (1979) expanded model helped to create a more systemic view of the micro, meso and macro-level factors to consider in the process. Sheradin

and Abelson's (1983) cusp-catastrophe model was discussed and from which I concluded that voluntary turnover ought to be considered a dynamic rather than a linear process. It also assisted me to reach a conclusion that an alternative conceptualisation of voluntary turnover as a social phenomenon warranted exploration. Lee and Mitchell's (1994) unfolding model was discussed last with reference to Beach's (1990) image theory. It was concluded that the value alignment function of the unfolding model could be understood to represent the function of the super-ego, images which are informed by past experiences could represent transferences, and that the trajectory image might represent the ego ideal. The insights gained into the process of voluntary turnover from the literature review enabled me to frame psychodynamic concepts in the context of voluntary turnover in line with the general aim of the study.

8.1.3 Empirical aim 1: Conclusions

The first empirical aim of the study was to explore the lived experiences of voluntary turnover from a systems psychodynamics perspective to describe and understand the systems psychodynamics of it. This aim was met in Chapters 5 and 6 of the study, and in Chapter 7 where the systems psychodynamics of my transpersonal experiences of the research participants and the research were discussed. Chapter 2 presented a discussion of the qualitative research design and its application to achieve the stated empirical aim. The design allowed for the extraction of rich and meaningful data about the voluntary turnover stories of the research participants. The phenomenological and hermeneutic approach made it possible to uncover unconscious systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover in line with the general aim of the study.

As noted above the findings were presented in Chapters 5 and 6 and in the order of meso level findings in Chapter 5 followed by macro and micro-level findings in Chapter 6. The triple hermeneutic findings were discussed in Chapter 7. Individual cases were analysed followed by cross-case integration in discovering and naming the themes. Findings were presented for each theme followed by a discussion and working hypothesis. The hypotheses culminated into three working hypotheses, one for the meso group level, another for the macro-level, and one for the micro individual level of experiences. The triple hermeneutic findings were mirrored in the working hypotheses in Chapters 5 and 6 and informed the integration of findings into two models depicting the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover. The summative discussion of the findings below indicates that the study met the first empirical aim to explore the lived experiences of people and to describe and understand the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover.

8.1.3.1 Meso-level empirical conclusions

Dysfunctional CIBART dynamics creates shame in systems. It was concluded at the meso-group level that voluntary turnover represents as a symptom of unconscious psychodynamics in the system and where the leadership dynamic determines the group dynamic when leaders step out of role and engage anti-task behaviours. Toxic leadership contributed to mirroring and idealising narcissistic transference dynamics which informed an in-group and an out-group. Toxic leaders were experienced by members of the out-group to be attacking the group-as-mother in the mind when their behaviour ran contradictory to the group identity. This provoked projections of hatred and envy onto the leader in an oedipal dynamic as if the leader represented the father. Members of the out-group who underwent voluntary turnover couldn't identify with the leader or the in-group. Conflict ensued between members of the out-group and the leader and in-group.

It was concluded that the task and authority boundary are necessary in providing paternal containment, yet where these become severed, then leadership and followership engage in anti-task behaviours. It was concluded the severed boundaries of task and authority, and unclear boundaries of role and time led to heightened levels of survival anxiety and anti-task behaviours. Me-ness, fight and flight formed the dominant anti-task behaviours of leaders and followers in the voluntary turnover process. It was also concluded that high levels of narcissism in leadership inhibit the container-contained function that leadership ought to provide. Unprocessed alpha elements built up in members of the out-group causing frustration in the experience of a lack of growth and in experiencing a void of meaning. It was concluded that voluntary turnover represents a forceful explosion of alpha elements out of the organisation.

It was concluded that the power imbalances and abuses between the leader and in-group versus the out-group, the severed authority and task boundaries, unclear role, task and time boundaries, and the valences of participants made it possible for the group to use the voluntary turnover participants as containers for the group's shame. Shame was projected onto and into members of the out-group in a scapegoating and projective identification process. Members of the out-group became increasingly fragmented as they introjected the badness of not being good enough. The group-as-mother in the mind was split into bits which contributed further to fragmentation of ego strength for members of the out-group. I concluded that participants who had formed members of the out-group were scapegoated from the group as containers of shame. It was concluded that voluntary turnover represents a phantasy object of psychological liberation from shame for the group, but which perpetuates the scapegoating dynamics and the existence of the phenomenon.

8.1.3.2 Macro-level empirical conclusions

It was concluded that the social defence systems revolved around competition for power in the organisation. The macro-level findings concluded that cultures characterised by the paranoid-schizoid position of splitting, envy and aggression are driven by leaders and organisational members in pursuit of power. It was concluded that value as a power object was projected onto people outside of the organisation while those inside colluded to introject being devalued. Leaders abdicated their leadership responsibilities in service of shoring up their self-image to look nice in service of their need for omnipotence. The organisation presented with a messiah culture which controlled people and caused members to remain in denial of the shortcomings of the organisation. The organisation had stagnated in growth. This was attributed to the denial of anti-task behaviours and to un-processable alpha elements which stagnated psychological growth. Containment of the body by the head wasn't possible because the head had become detached. The head was engaged in me-ness and in a greedy self-enriching feeding frenzy at the expense of the body. It was concluded that the head was introjecting goodness from the body and projecting its felt badness downwards into the body.

The paranoid-schizoid nature of the organisational culture was underpinned by the assumption that it was necessary and acceptable to divide and rule to gain more power. As the organisation became increasingly fragmented, the badness of shame and powerlessness was projected downwards. The bad projections were contained by members who could see beyond the cultural assumptions and acknowledge the realities of the unspeakable impotencies of the organisation. They became dismembered as containers for the fragmentation of the organisation and were projected out of the organisation under the guise of voluntary turnover. It was concluded that at the macro-level that people who are voluntarily turned over and out of the organisation represent collateral damage of an organisation at war with itself for power.

8.1.3.3 Micro-level empirical conclusions

It was concluded at the micro individual level that the libidinal drive of primary narcissism creates desire for a good object that becomes constellated with the super-ego. In this study the good object represented a desired and expected future role. The unfulfilled desire creates pain and pleasure experienced as anxiety and excitement. The experiences are driven by expectation and primary narcissism. I concluded that anxiety is defended against through regression and dependency on authority to provide the good object. The excitement is defended against using hope as both a container for the desired object and as a defence against the painful possibility that it might not materialise.

It was concluded that when the good object is denied in a painful way that this creates a traumatic rejection experience which in turn forms a narcissistic injury and the experience of loss. It was concluded that participants experienced painful emotions because of the rejection trauma. They experienced annihilation and persecutory anxiety, which was accompanied by feelings of shame, helplessness and overwhelm. They also experienced a painful loss of the good object which was accompanied by feelings of anger, apathy, and purposelessness.

It was concluded that anxiety was defended against through splitting the self and authority and that the loss was defended against through repression of the rejection trauma. The splitting contributed towards a fragmented ego and experience of the paranoid-schizoid position. The repressed trauma formed a repetition compulsion dynamic. Participants who remained in the organisation after the first rejection trauma engaged in further rejection traumas repeatedly. It was concluded that only by dropping dependency and hope, remembering the pain of the trauma, and by taking back the bad projections could voluntary turnover participants enter a state of awareness. It was concluded that this state of awareness represented the depressive position.

It was concluded that through the restoration of thinking, and with dependency and hope dropped, that participants became motivated through a process of individuation to mature in deciding to leave the organisation. They engaged in a growth, value and power object seeking mission to flight across the organisational boundary which formed the point of voluntary turnover. It was concluded that growth represented the forceful explosion of alpha elements out of the organisation as contained in the voluntary turnover participants. It was concluded that post leaving, the psychological development needs became about discovering one's identity outside of the organisation and rebuilding the strength of the ego.

8.1.4 Empirical aim 2 conclusions

The second empirical aim was to develop a systems psychodynamics model of voluntary turnover for consulting and coaching psychology. Triple hermeneutics contributed toward achieving this aim. I engaged in reflexive analysis and applied systems psychodynamics at the third level to interpret my transpersonal experiences of relating with the research participants and the research. The triple hermeneutics findings discussed in Chapter 7 both mirrored the findings in Chapters 5 and 6 and informed the development of the systems psychodynamics models of voluntary turnover. The findings culminated into two integrated systems psychodynamics models of voluntary turnover which were presented and discussed with recommendations in Chapter 7. The models illustrate and describe the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover at the meso and macro-levels, and micro-level

respectively. The models provide a conceptual map for consulting and coaching psychologists to better understand the possible dynamics at play and consult to their clients' systems. It was concluded that the study met its second empirical aim.

8.1.5 General aim conclusions and value add of the study

The general aim of the study was to explore the lived voluntary turnover experiences of people to develop an in-depth understanding of the systems psychodynamics involved in the process. It is concluded that the study was successful in meeting this aim through the data rich and in-depth systems psychodynamics discussions of the voluntary turnover experiences. The research was able to reveal the beneath-the-surface unconscious dynamic patterns of behaviour in the lived voluntary turnover experiences that participants shared. Further to this the research provided an understanding about how to support psychological adjustment and development of individuals undergoing voluntary turnover, and of groups and organisations where voluntary turnover presents as a problem. The study makes an academic contribution of new knowledge to the field of consulting and coaching psychology and new understanding about the phenomenon of voluntary turnover.

Most existing research focuses primarily on the individual rational decision-making processes and measurable antecedents as content of voluntary turnover. It was found lacking in understanding and knowledge about what happens in the unconscious and irrational mind through the dynamic voluntary turnover process. This research formed an advance in closing this gap in knowledge and understanding. This new knowledge and understanding were conveyed through the presentation of themes grounded in the data, interpretive discussions from a systems psychodynamics perspective and consequently formulating working hypotheses at the levels of the meso-group in Chapter 5, and the same for macro-organisational and micro individual level themes in Chapter 6. The new knowledge was also informed by triple hermeneutics, specifically where I identified developmental phases in the process at the micro-level. The findings from the research culminated into two systems psychodynamics models of voluntary turnover that were presented and discussed in Chapter 7. In addition to the new knowledge contribution on a theoretical level, the models enabled various practical recommendations (also presented in Chapter 7), demonstrating the practical value of the study in the Coaching and Consulting Psychology discipline. It is therefore concluded that the study met its general aim.

8.2 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT TRUSTWORTHINESS

It wasn't the aim to generalise from the research. However, the trustworthiness strategies employed should enable others to appropriately transfer the findings to other systems. The trustworthiness of the research is discussed in terms of how I addressed the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity in this section (Krefting, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004).

8.2.1 Credibility

A critical discussion about the strategies that I adopted to enhance the credibility of the study is presented below:

- I adopted well established research methods in qualitative investigation and in general for the study (Shenton, 2004). I used a well-established interview technique, FANI, and probing questions to elicit the voluntary turnover stories as my data collection method. A hermeneutic phenomenological approach (Rennie, 2012) integrating the well-established thematic analysis phases of Braun and Clarke (2006) was employed as the data analysis method. These well-established research methods in qualitative research contributed towards the credibility in the design of the research.
- I familiarized myself with the culture of the organisation in my role as consulting psychologist before the first data collection interview took place (Shenton, 2004). I had previously consulted to the organisation on various projects over a period of five years prior to collecting the data. Leadership interviews, coaching sessions, and group development interventions that I had consulted to had given me access to deep insight into the organisational culture. I had also previously interacted with one of the participants in my role of consulting psychologist who had shared insight into the organisational culture in her professional capacity as my client. I was intimately familiar with the cultural context of the organisation which enabled me to associate deeply to elements of the stories that participants shared.
- I employed tactics to help ensure the honesty in informants' stories when contributing data (Shenton, 2004). Participants were given the opportunity to refuse to participate in the project which ensured that data were only collected from people who were genuinely willing to take part and prepared to offer data freely. All the participants who comprised the sample had painful stories to tell about how they came to leave the organisation. Most of them thanked me for the space that the interview had offered them to talk about their experiences which they offered freely. On several occasions participants commented that they experienced the interview to be cathartic, reflective and helpful in their processing the events that had unfolded. These shared experiences

reassured me of the participants willingness and openness to share their stories truthfully as they had experienced voluntary turnover.

- I engaged in frequent debriefing sessions with my academic supervisor and with my psychoanalytic psychologist. Through discussion with my academic supervisor my vision was widened, alternative approaches were explored, and possible flaws to my proposed courses of action were pointed out (Shenton, 2004). Processing sessions with my psychoanalytically oriented psychologist helped me to become more aware of my own voluntary turnover experiences, my experiences of relating with the research participants, and to recognise my own biases and preferences (Shenton, 2004). The use of peers to reflect with also enhanced the credibility of the study.
- I made notes about my initial impressions of each data collection session (Shenton, 2004). The notes captured my initial thoughts about the meaning that had been conveyed in the story, a clarification of my understanding of the events in the stories, and my experiences in relation to the participants (see Appendix A and Chapter 7). These enabled me to work reflexively and to progressively monitor my own subjectivity throughout the research process which enhanced the credibility of the findings.
- Credibility of the research was also dependent on my credibility as the researcher in terms of my background, qualifications and experience (Shenton, 2004). The interpretative approach to the research meant that I used myself as the main instrument in both collecting and analysing the stories about the lived experiences of participants (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, et al., 2006). My credibility as the primary instrument and researcher was informed by my professional experience and knowledge of the research stance, acquired research and consulting skills, and qualifications as an industrial and organisational psychologist. As a well experienced and seasoned consulting psychologist and researcher I had more than adequate skills, experience, and qualifications to use myself as instrument towards a credible study.
- Explanation-building as a form of pattern-matching between the data and theory (Babbie & Mouton, 2001) further enhanced credibility of the study. This was demonstrated in Chapters 5 and 6 where the findings for each theme were discussed with reference to systems psychodynamics theory.
- Thick descriptions of the phenomenon under scrutiny were provided (Shenton, 2004). These helped to convey the voluntary turnover situations that were investigated and to an extent the context surrounding these. This made it possible for the reader of the final account to determine the extent to which the findings “ring true” (Shenton, 2004).

8.2.2 Transferability

The transferability strategies that I employed are discussed below:

- To enable transferability, sufficient detail of the context of the fieldwork (see section 2.3.3.1) was provided to allow the reader to determine the similarity between the context and another situation familiar to the reader and if the findings might be applicable to the other setting (Shenton, 2004).
- A thick description of the phenomenon under investigation was provided (see Chapters 5 and 6) using verbatim words of the participants to allow the reader to have a proper understanding, thereby enabling a comparison of the instances of the phenomenon described in the research report with those that they have seen to emerge in their situations (Shenton, 2004). Transferability of the findings is highly probable because I described the research context in detail to allow the reader to determine the extent to which the findings might be applicable to other contexts (Shenton, 2004).
- In Chapter 1, the research question and aims were also clearly defined for the reader and the research methods were described in this chapter (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). This allowed for other researchers to apply the same research process in other contexts as a means of promoting transferability. I stated the research questions and aims clearly for the reader in Chapter 1 and described the research methodology in detail in Chapter 2. This will allow other researchers to apply the same methodology to the research aims and questions to other contexts in transferring the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).
- Information about the demographics of participants who made up the sample was provided in section 2.3.3.3. This provided the reader with information about gender, level of functioning in the organisation and age to determine whether the findings might be transferable to other similar samples, for example professionals and managers.

8.2.3 Dependability

The strategies that I adopted to enhance dependability of the research are discussed below:

- The process through which the findings were derived was made explicit in this chapter in section 2.3.3 and is repeatable (Morrow, 2005). I addressed the criterion of dependability by describing in detail the research methods that I adopted in collecting and analysing the data.

- A study cannot be dependable if it isn't credible, and the strategies and techniques outlined to ensure the credibility of the study in section 2.5.1.1 of this chapter also show the quality of dependability (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).
- To further enhance dependability, I tracked the emerging research design through an audit trail of research activities and processes; influences on the data collection and analysis; emerging themes; and analytic memos (Morrow, 2005). I tracked the emerging research design through a series of word documents that demonstrated the evolution of my thinking about the research design. The research activities and processes that I proposed were recorded in a series of proposals with notes that were exchanged between my academic supervisor and me. My own influences on the data collection and analysis were noted through reflecting on my own personal history and biases about voluntary turnover (see section 1.2) and my experiences of interacting with the participants (see Appendix A). I recorded notes about the emerging themes and made analytic memos in the ATLAS.ti software that I used to analyse the data.

8.2.4 Confirmability

Strategies that I adopted to enhance the confirmability of the study are discussed below:

- Theoretical triangulation of different theories was used to analyse and interpret the data. With this type of triangulation, different theories or hypotheses can assist the researcher in supporting or refuting the findings (Carter et al., 2014). I used a multitude of theories, that form part of the systems psychodynamics paradigm (see Chapter 3), to support my findings which are demonstrated in Chapters 5 and 6.
- Reflexive analysis was also useful to ensure that I was aware of my own influence on the data (see section 1.2, Appendix A, and Appendix B) (Krefting, 1991). I explored and shared my own history of personal proclivity for and personal biases toward voluntary turnover (see section 1.2). I also shared my experiences of interacting with the participants to make visible the transferences, counter-transferences and identifications in the interactions that might have influenced the findings (see Appendix A and Chapter 7). Finally, my own personal experiences of undertaking the research project were also shared in a transparent and honest way (see Appendix B). I analysed these reflections by applying systems psychodynamics as a lens to the data and discovered triple hermeneutic themes that I presented in Chapter 7. I discussed the triple hermeneutic findings and how these were mirrored in the meso, macro and micro-level hypotheses (Chapters 5 and 6) and how they contributed toward my final understanding of the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover as discussed in

Chapter 7. My own possible influences on the data were explored and shared in depth to enable the readers to determine the confirmability of the study for them themselves. My reflexive practice and triple hermeneutics, therefore, contributed toward the rigor of the study. Input from my academic supervisor provided an additional interpretive lens in double checking interpretations made and, in some cases, deepening my interpretations.

8.2.5 Authenticity

Strategies that I adopted to enhance the authenticity of the study are critically discussed below:

- The use of the FANI technique allowed for the elicitation of stories that were filled with multiple realities. The unstructured and associative linking style of the interviews meant that the concerns, issues, and values in the context of participants' voluntary turnover stories could be spoken and heard. I concluded each interview with a narrated summary of the story that I had heard to ensure that I understood and considered the range of concerns, issues and underlying values that had been conveyed in the story. This ensured fairness.
- I applied a relativist ontology and a subjective and relational epistemology in adopting hermeneutic phenomenology as my approach to the research (Amin et al., 2020). This contributed towards an expansion of early constructions and ensured the ontological authenticity of the study.

The hermeneutic phenomenological approach that was adopted for the study necessitated the consideration of Van Manen's (1997, 2014) concerns pertaining to quality which include orientation, strength, richness and depth in addition to the quality criteria of Lincoln and Guba (1985) described above. Van Manen's (1997) quality concerns, specific to hermeneutic phenomenology, are discussed below with a description about how they were addressed in the study:

- Orientation infers the extent of involvement that the researcher has in the context of the research participants and the stories that they share (van Manen, 2014). Lincoln and Guba (1985) support the idea of prolonged exposure of the researcher to the research context to enhance credibility. In this sense they also promote orientation as a quality concern. The nature of my work as a consulting psychologist in my consulting role to the organisation prior to the research brought me into close contact with the

world of the participants. This enabled me to relate intimately to the stories with ease and through associative linking.

- Strength is about the capacity of the text to convince and to relay understanding of inherent meanings expressed in the stories of the research participants (van Manen, 2014). The actual words of participants are essential to persuade the reader that the interpretations of the researcher are in fact grounded in the lived experiences of the participants (Morrow, 2005). The words of the participants were quoted to support each interpretation. This enhanced the shared understanding of the meaning that was expressed in the stories that were shared.
- Richness refers to the quality of aesthetics of the text as it narrates and weaves together the meanings (van Manen, 2014). Shenton (2004) asserts the importance of providing sufficient thick descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation. It is important that the narrative provides a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account of the story the data tell – within and across themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I provided rich thick descriptions about the phenomenon and weaved systems psychodynamics theory into the interpretations of the themes in Chapters 5 and 6. This enabled me to narrate the meaning in the themes in a coherent, logical, and concise way that ensured richness of the text.
- Depth is about the writing having capacity to penetrate deeply in expressing the best intentions of the participants (van Manen, 2014). This is similar to the quality criteria of authenticity (Tobin & Begley, 2004). The authenticity principle gives considerable weight to the ability of the research process to incorporate the values and constructions of participants as well as empowering them to improve their situations (Johnson & Rasulova, 2016). The FANI interview technique adopted ensured that the interview reached a level of depth into the values and constructions of the participants. The use of open-ended questions and free association allowed participants to gain deep access to parts of themselves. This in turn enabled participants' best intentions to find expression in the text as their multiple realities were acknowledged. Depth is therefore congruent with hermeneutic phenomenology and its relative ontology (Kafle, 2011).

In making use of the FANI interview method multiple realities were heard and values acknowledged (Tobin & Begley, 2004). The depiction of multiple realities, as shared by the research participants, ensured the authenticity of the study. Different voices were heard including those of the participants and my own voice too (Creswell, 2013). My voice and the voices of the participants formed the constructions of understanding and meaning through a relativist ontology and relational epistemology. Early constructions were expanded in my application of triple hermeneutics in analysing the stories that were shared (Chapter 7). My

choice of hermeneutic phenomenology, as the research approach, reflects my own ontological and epistemological perspectives as a qualitative researcher. This enhanced the authenticity of the study. The discussion of the limitations of the research follows.

8.3 LIMITATIONS

This section of the chapter focusses on the limitations of the study. The discussion commences with the limitations of the literature review before a discussion about the limitations of the empirical research.

8.3.1 Limitations of the literature review

Voluntary turnover as a phenomenon has been researched extensively since the 1950's when March and Simon (1958) inaugurated the first formal theory of turnover. The cost of turnover to organisations has spurred vast volumes of research into the area. This posed a challenge as to what I determined as necessary and valuable to include and what to exclude from the literature review. To deal with this challenge I conducted a high-level overview of the history of turnover research and identified pieces that altered the understanding of and trajectory of research in the field. I then followed a detailed review of the research that had been deemed to significantly change the understanding of the phenomenon and trajectory of research. In keeping with the general aim of the study I also determined to focus more on process models of turnover that accounted for the dynamic rather than content. This clearly reflects my predisposed subjectivity as it informed my choice of models that were included and discussed, possibly at the expense of and omitting others. However, this also ensured relevance and alignment of what was included in the literature review on voluntary turnover to the general aim of the study.

Researching from a systems psychodynamics perspective had the potential for exclusion of other behavioural paradigms on the topic. Given that voluntary turnover is a phenomenon that is well-researched, I deemed this limitation to be limited in impact and acknowledged the specific perspectival slant of the study from the start. As expected, it also presents the study with its contribution and niche perspective to understanding voluntary turnover.

8.3.2 Limitations of the empirical research

Qualitative research can pave the way to a new theory or hypothesis (that may later be tested with quantitative methods) or can help to further elaborate an existing theory (Hammarberg et al., 2016). In other words, working hypotheses generated from qualitative research need to be

verified. Working hypotheses were used as a meaning making tool in the research and represented some limitations to the empirical research. The working hypotheses generated from the study should not be considered as absolute truths, but rather ground on which future research might be done. As with all interpretivist research, there is the possibility for different hypotheses to emerge from the same research question in other studies.

The main disadvantage of qualitative approaches is that their findings cannot be extended to wider populations with the same degree of certainty that quantitative analysis can (Hammarberg et al., 2016). The research strategy applied to the study comprised a sample of seven participants limited to one large organisation in the value retail industry. This had an influence on the conclusions that I drew, and which need to be explored in other organisations and industries to ascertain if similar themes and hypotheses might emerge. The context of the organisation was specific in that it had recently restructured their senior leadership team and that evidence suggested high levels of narcissism in the leadership structure. Conclusions were drawn in the context of an industry with challenges of load shedding, conservative consumers, increased digitalisation of the marketplace and stagnating industry growth. Consulting psychologists need to take cognisance of these contextual factors before applying the models to other settings.

My use of self as instrument in the research may have contributed a further limitation to the study. My own experiences of transference, countertransference, and bias had the potential to influence the analysis and interpretation of the findings. I countered this limitation through ongoing self-reflection throughout the research process by means of psychoanalytic psychotherapy, individual and group coaching supervision, journaling, and regular debriefing with my academic supervisor. I worked with my own inner conflicts and raised awareness of my interactions with the research participants and my relationship with the research as the process evolved. I wrote reflexively which shaped and influenced the research as it developed. While my theoretical and methodological predispositions and previous personal experiences can be regarded as a limitation to the objectivity of the findings, reflexivity formed a strategy to enhance the quality of the research by creating transparency and authenticity. As there are no hard and fast conventions on how reflexivity is demonstrated in the write up of any study, the manner in which I have done it may also be regarded as a limitation in the sense of it reflecting my subjective approach. Again, on the other hand, this I also regard as a strength of the study to demonstrate various possible ways of practicing and demonstrating reflexivity in research.

Lastly, the sample comprised a mix of races, genders, age groups, levels of management, and professions, and a further limitation of the study was that it didn't differentiate between

their experiences based on these differences. Further research into the systems psychodynamics experiences of voluntary turnover of different demographic groups may be warranted.

8.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter concludes my thesis on the systems psychodynamics of voluntary turnover. Literature and empirical conclusions were made with the contributions of the study having been shared. I also made conclusions about the trustworthiness of the study. Finally, I shared the limitations of the research.

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APPENDIX A

My transpersonal experiences of interacting with the research participants

This appendix describes my experiences of interacting with the research participants as part of my reflexive practice. This reflexivity informed my findings at the third hermeneutic level

which were presented in Chapter 7. I describe my interactions with the participants and provide some insights into dynamics that I became aware of in them. These included anxieties, transferences, counter-transferences, identifications, and projective identifications that I became aware of. It was important for me to make these unconscious dynamics conscious so that I could critically analyse the extent to which they may have influenced the research process and findings. What follows is a series of discussions about my interactions with each of the participants.

Case 1

This was my first interview for my research, and I was initially anxious about whether I would gather sufficiently rich data to enable a meaningful analysis and interpretation. I wondered whether my research topic might yield anything interesting at all. I found myself re-reading the interview questions that I had prepared as I sat waiting for C1 to arrive. I then became anxious about whether he would pitch for the interview or not. I needed the data to progress to the next stage of my research. I was experiencing both performance and survival anxiety in anticipation of meeting with C1. My performance anxiety was about my preparedness to conduct a good enough interview to gather sufficient data. My survival anxiety was about whether I would gather the data that I needed for the research to grow into something worthwhile. I'd met C1 in passing whilst delivering some consulting work at the organisation before but didn't get to know him. I knew that we were of a similar age and shared some demographics that made us similar in some respects. I also experienced some excitement to finally get to meet C1 and to learn more about him in person.

He arrived for the interview a few minutes late, as the first object of my much-needed data, and my survival anxiety eased. I studied his face as I greeted him and noted his big sincere eyes. My anxiety eased a bit more as I felt a kindness and sincerity about him. I responded to him immediately in the countertransference with kindness. I felt a sense of loss in his leaving the organisation because we had not had a chance to work together yet. I would have liked to have had an opportunity to work with him. We seemed to have a lot in common and I later became aware of my fantasy to pair with him. I had recently had to renegotiate my position in the organisation because a new OD Manager had been hired who wanted to implement some changes. I found myself having to re-apply for the work that I had been doing and was feeling disempowered in the organisation at the time. I wonder if my fantasy to pair with C1 had something to do with 1) gaining my power back which I had experienced to have lost; 2) punishing the organisation for betraying me; or 3) a desire to have a new adventure too as he was moving to another country. It may have been about all three.

The interview started and I felt my anxiety easing further. C1 was vibrant, easy to talk to, talkative and very generous in his sharing. He began his story by giving me some insight into his childhood. His story was fraught with painful loss with the need to forgo much of his childhood to assume adulthood too early in life. I found myself having had a similar experience and could to some extent identify with his having to grow up before his childhood should have been over. He had lost a father at age six and I had nearly lost my mother to cancer at age five. I reacted to his courageous story with admiration and idealisation in the countertransference. I admired him for how he had coped and what he had achieved in his life despite what he had been through. I also felt a deep sense of sadness about the losses that he shared. At times I had the fantasy to hold him and give him a hug. After the interview I reflected on my own courage to have come as far as I have in my own life despite some of the childhood trauma that I too had endured. I had in some way identified with his story.

C1 then spoke about his experience of the leadership development program that he had attended at the organisation. He seemed to have identified very strongly with how a psychometric assessment called the Enneagram had portrayed him. I initially cringed at his over-identification with the labels that he described and wondered how much he might have unnecessarily introjected as a result. In reflecting on his childhood story more deeply post the interview, I came to see how the Enneagram personality types that he had identified with may have reflected the loss, over identification and repetition compulsion behaviours towards injustice that he seemed to embody. C1 identified as a perfectionist, idealist, someone who ensures fairness and justice, and as someone who upholds integrity in the way people are treated. He had found it difficult to tolerate any form of unfairness. These descriptors made me wonder if he had developed an overly critical and harsh superego. I reflected on how at age six he had lost his father to suicide after divorcing his mother. I wondered what object his father might have come to represent that had through a process of identification become part of his very strict superego.

I experienced C1 to become increasingly excited and excitable as the interview progressed to discussing how he came to leave the organisation. After the interview I reflected on how he had almost become manic in describing his frustrations about his leader at the organisation. I responded to his mania with excitement in the countertransference. I later reflected on how I had also experienced his leader as 'manic making' and frustrating, and how I experienced the leader to be detached and emotionally disengaged. I wondered if C1 was carrying the mania on behalf of the both of us during the interview and in relation to the leader who had made me feel manic. I felt a sense of relief that I was not alone in my mania. C1 then became aware of his excitable tone of voice and asked me what kind of psychologist I am and if it was

appropriate for him to offload as he was. He transferred the role of caring and listening therapist onto me, and I responded to him in the countertransference with caring for what he was sharing. I provided containment as he had opened himself up and shared his deep emotional experiences that he'd had in leaving the organisation.

After the interview I reflected on what he had shared for a long while. I felt sick at the pay discrepancies that existed in the organisation and at how the senior leadership team could be so self-centred and greedy. I carried the projections of corporate greed and dishonesty that he had shared. I felt repulsed by the organisation and what it had come to represent in my mind after the interview which was an abusive relationship between the head and the body of the organisation. I carried disgust towards the organisation on behalf of C1 and reflected on how I might prefer to avoid working with them again in the future. I judged the organisation as an unfair, abusive, and greedy place. I didn't want to be associated with the organisation which in my mind had come to represent a disgusting object of shame. I made some more notes two weeks after the interview and realised how I had become paranoid about some work that I had delivered for the organisation four years prior. I wondered if the new OD Manager would judge it to be not good enough and if I might come under attack for delivering sub-standard work. The organisation was once a good object for me but had come to represent a bad object in my mind.

C1 having only just left the organisation the same day of the interview and having not yet begun to process his loss, may have still been in the paranoid-schizoid position at the time of the interview. He would display anger to the point of rage at times as he distanced himself from some of the practices that he had witnessed at the organisation. Senior authority in the organisation clearly represented bad and persecutory objects and were thus split from the group as the body of the organisation which was idealised as good. I wondered through my reflecting if I was carrying some of the paranoia that C1 had projected onto and into me during the interview and which I was containing and needing to process. I also had a nightmare that I was eating the chargrilled remains of a dead older man. It was a horrifying experience which I took to my psychoanalytic therapist to help process. I came to an understanding that while the dead older man may have represented some part of myself, it may have also represented C1's experience of having lost, grieved and through a process of identification, taken his father into his superego at the young age of six. I was carrying the research, C1 and his story, and the organisation as objects within my own mind that had been projected onto and into me during the interview.

Case 2

I had engaged with C2 many times previously in consulting to her in my role of consulting psychologist to the organisation. We had a good rapport and she had valued my professional expertise which made me feel less anxious before and during the interview. She authorised me in my professional roles of industrial psychologist and consulting psychologist, and I sensed her to have transferred this authorisation into our interview and roles of researcher and participant. I responded to her transference of authorisation with authority in the countertransference. This was my second interview and I had judged the first one to have gone very well which had further eased my anxiety. I transferred the confidence from the first interview into this second one with C2. Both of us spoke with authorisation and confidence.

C2 began by sharing some information about her husband and children before moving on to tell me about her childhood. She shared how she was raised by a strict religious granny and a single mom who had held down several jobs to put her through school. She described her father as an abusive alcoholic, and she described her childhood as broken. Despite growing up in a poor coloured community and without the support of a father, she had achieved mostly distinctions for her matric subjects and won several scholarships to go to university. I was feeling a bit guilty about my privilege having grown up in a middle-class white household and with a loving father. She had chosen to study law. She described her disdain for the patriarchy that she experienced in legal fraternity before moving to HR. It demanded overt humility from her as a young, coloured woman which left her feeling disgusted at having to bow and scrape in front of old white men. She then quickly added and old black men. I felt a bit uncomfortable again because of my privilege and specifically because of my whiteness. She then spoke about her first bosses both of whom were white men. One man was strict and used a red pen in marking her work, and other was a kinder and more generous person to work for. The white men had been split into good and bad objects in her mind and I felt a bit of relief that I might represent the good object.

She was vibrant and very talkative throughout the interview. I experience her to be engaged in the stories that she was telling and very intent on me hearing what her experiences were about. At one point I experienced her to be seductive towards me and wondered what the seduction could have been about. She said that the role of consultant was very appealing to her and that she really liked my approach to assessments and to talent management. I sensed that she had the fantasy to take up a similar consulting role to the one that I had taken up in relation to her as client. She said how she had always gravitated towards working with me. I felt incredibly uncomfortable. Firstly, I didn't have any extra work at the time, and secondly, I didn't want the interview to go off task. I experienced both performance and survival anxiety

in the countertransference to her transference of idealisation toward me. While I needed to hear her story, I was also aware not to say anything that might create an expectation for the two of us to work together. I hypothesised that I'd come to represent an idealised object and ego ideal in her mind that she fantasied to integrate into her ego identity.

She began discussing how her former leader had behaved in specific ways that made her question his integrity. She also talked about two senior leaders who had recently been caught engaging in fraudulent activity that they had benefited from financially. She then had to get up and excuse herself so that she could go to the toilet. She made a quick exit as though she was fleeing as a response to the damning events that she had relayed. When she returned, she talked about what a phenomenal business the organisation was and how amazing the CEO was. It was as if she had held the organisation as denigrated object in the mind prior to going to the toilet, had passed the badness out of her in the act of urinating, and returned to the interview with the organisation as idealised object in the mind. On returning from the bathroom, she said what an incredible organisation it was and how amazing the CEO was. She had split her former leader, a white man, from her former CEO (another white man) into bad and good respectively. She seemed to have a pattern of splitting powerful men into good and bad and I wondered if this might have stemmed from childhood but also reflected on what kind of good object, I might have come to represent for her.

She remarked on several occasions how she trusted me implicitly. C2 said that ["you've got that face; I'm sure people tell you all their secrets"](#). I sensed that she was asking me to be a trustworthy confidant for her. She proceeded to relay in depth how difficult her relationship was with her former leader in the organisation. She shared her painful experiences of mistrust toward her former leader and relayed occasions on when he had betrayed her and others. I was a younger white gay man and represented anything but the traditional patriarchy. I might have been like a metrosexual in her mind, like the CEO who she described as loving his designer work suits. Her former leader at the organisation was a heterosexual white man with a religious background who seemed to represent the patriarchy in her mind. She projected trust onto and into me which aided the interview process as she was comfortable to share her deeply emotional voluntary turnover experiences. She had also projected trust onto the CEO who she had confided in about her difficult relationship with her former leader.

She seemed to have split me from her former leader in the mind, and the former CEO from her former leader in the mind. The former CEO and I represented good objects that could be trusted while her former leader represented a bad and betraying object. I wonder if we were unconsciously colluding on the badness of her former leader. I sensed that I had come to represent an authority and power with which she identified as trustworthy and sought to

identify with as an idealised object. I had come to represent the good male object that challenges the patriarchy. I didn't represent the abusive male authority figures in her life that caused her to regress into a disempowered coloured girlchild who had to be subservient to an abusive father. I wondered how and from whom she had introjected a good male authority figure from which she used to identify with good male objects in her world.

It had been several months since she had left the organisation, and it was clear that she had begun to process her losses in leaving. She referred to her new job as just another job and said that the thrill of work was lost for her. She talked about what she had been through and said how sad it all was. She said that many people who had left the organisation, including herself, had had the experience of having been in an abusive relationship. She had been paid substantially less by the leader than her white colleagues, she was betrayed, and she had experienced her leader as emotionally unavailable to her. Just as her abusive father had emotionally abandoned her, so too had the former leader. She went on to say how sad it was that her former leader had made such a mess of things and that so many people had been negatively affected. I responded to her saying in the interview that "I feel sad for you". C2 then replied saying, "I feel sad for me too". I was responding to her experiences of loss with sadness in the countertransference and she then accessed the feelings of sadness in her own story.

She talked about her former boss as a trapeze artist who was tangled up in his own rope rather than doing beautiful things. I associated to her metaphor with an image of a red-faced man who was strangling while everyone was watching. C2 replied "exactly! Don't you see it when you see him? You can read people well"! She transferred the ability to read people onto me which felt like a very powerful projection. As if I could represent an all seeing and all-knowing entity who could help her to validate her truths. I felt uncomfortable in this instant, looked at my watch and asked if there was anything else to add or if she had said everything that she would have liked to. I realised afterwards that I had flighted in defence against my anxiety about the seduction to be the powerful one who can read people. I also flighted from the dependency that she transferred onto me.

I had recently had my own experience of rejection in the organisation which had caused me to carry shame. After the interview had ended, I brought up the rejection that I'd experienced and asked her if she had any insight into the dynamics. I had felt betrayed by the organisation and felt persecuted by her former leader and my former client. I had identified with many of her experiences of her former leader. I felt guilty after the interaction and wondered why I had placed such trust in C2 to hold my difficult experience too. My consolation was that the conversation had happened after the research interview had ended, yet I was intrigued at how I was seduced into feeling that she could somehow help me with my own frustrations. We

used one another in the role of confidant, and I later discovered, through an in-depth analysis of the transcripts, that C2 had a valence to carry confidential information on behalf of the group. I also have a valence to carry confidential information on behalf of systems. We exchanged trust and trustworthiness through the process of projection and projective identification in playing out the roles of both confidant and friend. We both projected and identified with the projections of confidant, and we both projected and identified with the projections of friend in our relatedness.

Case 3

C3 was the third participant that I interviewed as part of the process of collecting data. By this stage in the process, I was feeling confident having had already interviewed two participants who had shared openly, courageously and generously about their voluntary turnover experiences. I'd never met C3 before the interview and wasn't sure what to expect. I was early for the interview and took extra special care to ensure that I was set up and well prepared to receive C3. While I was feeling reasonably confident about the interview process, I was experiencing some performance anxiety which I attributed to not having met C3 before. I had also had a difficult experience with the department where he'd worked prior to leaving the organisation. The experience had created performance anxiety which I transferred into the interview in my mind in anticipation of meeting him. As if he represented the department in my mind. When I met C3 I immediately experienced him to be respectful toward me and toward my research, and sincere in his style of communicating. I responded to his respectfulness and sincerity with respect and sincerity in the countertransference and there was very little, small talk before he opened up to tell me his story. He was a genuine guy, and he was willing to help me.

He started off by talking about his siblings and family background and gave me an overview of major aspects of his life such as where he went to high school, what he studied at university and so forth. He talked about his brothers and what each did in their professional work lives, and he talked about his parents' occupations too. The waiter then entered the meeting room with our breakfast. We agreed to pause the audio recorder to eat out breakfast first before continuing with the interview. I felt incredibly anxious that the recorder was on pause. I was hesitant to speak or ask any questions in case the recorder might miss something of importance. This served as further evidence of my performance anxiety that I was experiencing. I also wanted to honor his story in its fullness and ensure that I was listening to everything that he relayed in his stories. It was as if my super ego was in overdrive and that I was telling myself to not mess this up! I felt that he could sense my anxiety and offered me a

serviette to put under my beetroot juice as I clumsily looked about for something to wipe the bottom of the glass with. I didn't want to stain the clean tablecloth with my dribbly glass of bright red juice. I responded to his sincerity with performance anxiety in the countertransference, and he responded to my performance anxiety with care. I felt guilty.

Relieved to have quickly finished breakfast, I turned the audio recorder back on to pick up on where we had left off. I asked him about his experience of the leadership program that he'd participated in through the organisation. He used rationalisation as a defence in his response by focusing on the structure of the modules in the program. I then asked him about his experience of having been identified as a high-potential future leader at the organisation. He avoided the question and responded immediately by relaying the conflicted relationship that he had experienced with his former leader at the organisation. He described the leader as insincere, inauthentic and as a bully. The question about his experience of having been recognised was responded to with the story about him of having been silenced and stifled. He felt silenced and betrayed. He spoke with sincerity and trusted me to listen to his very painful story. I responded to his sincerity and trust with sincerity and an attitude of deep and respectful listening in the countertransference. There was a sacredness in the realness of his experiences that he conveyed, and I had a sense that although I was formally in the role of doctoral researcher, I was informally taking up the role of witness to this man's experience.

He relayed all the problems that the organisation was facing including problems with incompetent leadership, problems about exclusive and exclusion dynamics, problems about stagnated growth, and problems about the unsolvable complexity within the systems of the organisation. I found myself intrigued at his insight into the organisation and feeling that this man knows what he is talking about. I responded to him with authorisation in the countertransference and with sincere respect for the many stands of integrity that he had made. I used association to probe more deeply into his emotional experiences which he defended against. He had recently been on an international flight with his family to hold a memorial service for his mother. He picked up the flu while on the airplane. He had also described the organisation as an airplane headed to a crash site with no captain on board. When I made a link and associated his getting sick on the airplane to an experience of getting sick at the organisation, he responded by saying that he was at gym the morning of the flight and his immune system was probably a bit low. He used rationalisation as a defence against exploring what the system had done to him.

I also noticed how instead of referring to himself as I in the interview, he referred to himself as you which implied another. He switched to using the word you to refer to himself every time he needed to share a painful experience that he had had. It was as if he was dissociating as

a defence against working with the painfulness. I phoned C3 a few weeks later to clarify some information from the interview and gather some information that I was curious about. I was struck again by his sincerity and willingness to assist me with my research. He said how he admired my commitment to my research. I felt that I was in the company of a trusted mentor for a few seconds. I experienced him to be a man of integrity and generosity and responded with trust to him in the countertransference. I wanted to know about his relationship with his first leader at the organisation. I wondered if the nature of the relationship between his first leader bore any resemblance to the second one that he had described in depth. He described his relationship with the first leader as a good relationship that was based on integrity and mutual respect which was in stark contrast to his experience of the second leader.

My sense in relating with C3 was that I had been used in the role of a priest to bear witness to the travesties that had occurred at the organisation. Every time I attempted to get closer to what the experiences had done to him, I was met with rationalisation as a defence. He also mentioned on several occasions that he came from a powerful and wealthy family and that he didn't really need to work. While I experienced him as open, honest and sincere, I also experienced him as defensive against his own vulnerabilities in his voluntary turnover stories. He took up the role of and task of the one who was there to help me with my research and the one who was there to relay what had happened at the organisation. This was an empowered role and task which he used in defence against his own vulnerabilities in his voluntary turnover story.

Case 4

C4 arrived for his interview and seemed to be very relaxed and sure of himself. I felt relaxed and confident in his company too. We began with the interview, and I asked him to tell me a bit about his life story. He got right into it and rattled off the chapters of his life in a confident manner using a staccato style of communication. He framed each chapter succinctly and ended each sentence off with a raised tone on the last word. He described the places he had previously worked and made sure to let me know that when the organisation had initially approached him with a job offer that he'd initially declined. He said about the organisation that it had a poor reputation as a place to work. He said that they approached him three times before he accepted a role at the organisation, making sure to let me know how in demand he in fact was. I was intrigued at the almost immediate denigration of the organisation and the fact that he had initially declined them twice before accepting on the third offer. He was assuring me of his value and how desirable he really was for the organisation as a value object.

I could sense that he wanted to use the interview to assert his own sense of self-worth in relation to the organisation. I felt C4 transfer a high authority onto me with the power to pass judgment on the organisation and on the behaviour of the people who worked there. I responded with feelings of impressiveness toward him in the countertransference. On reflecting, it seemed that there was a kind of idealising transference between us throughout the interview, as if I had come to collude with him on his denigration of the organisation and affirmation towards him in his feelings of self-worthiness. At one point we discussed our shared love of dogs. I said to him “yeah, we’ve got five dogs so, we are firmly in the dog camp”. C4 responded by saying that he was also in the dog camp. This served of evidence of our colluding, although I was unaware of it until halfway through the interview. It was as if there were different camps, and I was in his camp and the organisation was in the other camp. I used this experience to understand more deeply the paranoid-schizoid culture as a theme at the macro-level. The insight also helped me to understand more deeply and write up the meso level power theme about dogs and bones.

He made sure to show me that he was a published photography artist and that articles had been written about him. He clearly identified as an adventure man and as an adventure man myself I found it very easy to identify with him. He spent a fair amount of time discussing his achievements, his professional growth over the years, and the improvement in organisational performance that he had achieved for the organisation. I interpreted his focus on his achievements as a rationalisation defence against feelings of being not good enough. He became animated and very proud when he talked about how he was selected for the leadership programs that the organisation offered. C4 mentioned that nobody wants to be excluded and said about his selection in the programs “cool, I’m in! I am one of their star people”. I sensed that he really wanted to tell me that he was with the in-group. I responded to him with joy and laughter in the countertransference. It was as if I had joined in the celebration of C4’s greatness and rationalisation of being part of the in-group. This insight further helped me to understand the paranoid-schizoid dynamics at the macro-level which reflected how the meso level was also split into in-groups and out-groups.

He answered the telephone on several occasions throughout the interview and was sure to let me know afterwards what the call was about. He spoke with authority to his employees over the phone and told me how successful he had become after having left the organisation. I felt impressed by the large numbers that he was talking about on the phone and thought to myself that this guy is impressive! I realised though that I had been colluding with him in defence against my own feelings of being not good enough for the organisation. This was the fourth interview and many of the stories that were shared had framed the organisation as a bad

object. I had had my own personal experience of rejection from the organisation in my role of consulting psychologist which fell outside of my role as a doctoral student. Given the injustices that were shared in the stories and my own shameful experience of reject, it was a seductive collusion to pass judgment on the organisation as a bad object. I couldn't help it though; I had come to a place of feeling intense anger about the injustices committed in the organisation and the damage that had been done to people. I responded to C4's transference of a higher authority with judgement toward the organisation in the countertransference.

C4 described how grateful he was when a problem personality decided to leave the team that he was managing. He said that the guy who left had plenty of mental problems and that as soon as he left and was replaced with someone else then everything was better. I felt suspicious at this point in the interview knowing what I know about group psychology. He then discussed his MD and how they had strategically exited several people out of the organisation together. He didn't agree with one or two of the 'exits' but did agree with some. He then idealised the MD saying what a fantastic leader he was, yet this was the same leader that abdicated responsibility for his leadership role in denying C4 his promotion. I then started to piece the self-adoration, need for recognition, feelings of greatness and what appeared to be a lack of empathy together. I wondered to myself to what extent the group had used the mental person to carry the madness on behalf of the system. I wondered how many other people were deemed to be mental and therefore exited from the organisation. I was taken aback by the complete lack of care for the people who were shown the door. It was as if the MD killed people off and therefore the senior leaders had to follow suit. I became skeptical and aware of my idealisation towards C4, and my judgment shifted from the organisation onto C4. I was starting to see his badness as well as his greatness. I had entered the depressive position which helped me to reflect on the transition between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions in the process of leaving an organisation.

I felt that C4 used the interview process to further denigrate the organisation and to have an authority figure on human behaviour acknowledge how great he was in relation to the organisation. I was seduced by the power that he exuded and for the first half of the interview responded with adoration in the countertransference. Interestingly, some key themes that framed his voluntary turnover story included the experience of being denigrated and disrespected, of being excluded, and being left to struggle with feelings about being not good enough. It was as if the psychodynamics between us in the interview represented a response to the mirroring and idealising transference dynamics that informed in-groups and out-groups in the politics of him leaving. I was idealising him and forming part of his in-group until I learnt about his behaviour in relation to people who were 'exited' under his watch. Although I felt

disturbed at the way people had been treated, I maintained an attitude of respectful curiosity throughout the interview. He had paired with the MD and together became a detached leadership which helped to inform the macro-level theme of a detached leadership.

After the interview I was left with thoughts of what goes around comes around. My sense of adoration towards C4 had all but disappeared and I wondered how he had come to experience similar dynamics to what he and the MD had perpetuated for others. The mirroring dynamics of killing people off eventually caught up with C4 who in turn was killed off while the MD was sitting safely in his role. I responded to C4's lack of empathy with a sentiment of you got what you deserved in the countertransference. I moved from a sense of idealisation of him during the interview to feelings of denigration toward him as leader after the interview. Just as he had moved from being idealised by the organisation to being denigrated by the group in his journey of leaving his job.

Case 5

I got caught behind a large timber truck on route to the interview and then realised that I needed to put some fuel in my car. I was going to be five minutes late for the interview and felt anxious because I didn't want to disrespect any of the participants who had made time to meet with me. I phoned C5 to let him know that I might be late, and he responded to say that he was running ten minutes late. I was relieved to arrive at the interview venue five minutes before he did so that I could set up and welcome him on his arrival. He arrived and we each made ourselves a cup of coffee. He remarked that he thought I might find his story to be very interesting and I responded to let him know that I was looking forward to hearing it. I noted after the interview how I had experienced him to be a kind and genuine person. He double checked about the confidentiality of his data and said that this was very important since he had just accepted an offer to return to the organisation after having worked elsewhere. I reassured him that I would honor our confidentiality agreement.

We got into the interview process and C5 began by telling me about his family background and some of the major life and death events that he had endured during his process of leaving. He relayed how his mother had died not long before he married his fiancé. C5 seemed to have been holding his family together all while trying to prove himself for a role that he desired. I responded to his story with sadness and a sense of overwhelm in the countertransference. I really felt for him and asked him if he had been able to process his experiences with someone. In hindsight I can see that I was someone with whom he chose to process. I think that C5 viewed me as a psychologist and therefore someone that he could offload onto. He was very long winded in the stories that he told and spoke in a rambling style as he described his woes.

Well, I initially felt a deep sadness for what this man had endured, after some time I started to feel anxious because it was difficult for me to get a word in. I felt frozen as though he just needed me to listen to him. I felt an uncomfortable dependency on me. C5 repeated himself often which I interpreted as a defence against the anxiety of not being heard and as evidence of a repletion compulsion dynamic. After the interview it became clear that he used me as a therapist, and I offered a therapeutic space in return.

I was aware that while he spoke very deeply into his painful experiences, that he didn't denigrate the organisation or the people who he worked with there. I got the sense that he didn't want to burn the bridge that he intended to use to return the organisation. Instead, he reassured me that many of the disappointments were due to his own fault and that he should have been more explicit in negotiating the time, role and task boundaries for the promotion that he was hoping for. He was very cautious to not lay any blame on the organisation or his MD and reassured me that he had since grown up and matured in a way that would prevent further disappointments for him. During that time in the interview, it felt as though I represented both a judge and a therapist at the same time. C5 provided evidence that he had grown up and wanted me to hold and reassure him that everything would be ok. I of course didn't promise him anything for his future even though he transferred his reassurance seeking and dependency feelings onto me. I wanted to tell him that he was making sense and that everything would be ok, but I didn't, instead I used the FANI technique to echo his own words back to him.

I felt a bit annoyed at times that he wouldn't give me any 'juicy details' about the organisation or the people he worked with. C5 assumed the role of a nice guy and was overly nice about everything. I interpreted his niceness as a defence against unearthing the painful dynamics around guilt, envy and competition which he seemed to be in denial about. The niceness and superficiality of it helped me to understand the macro-level theme of a culture of cruelty shrouded in niceness. His niceness made sense since he was about to return to the organisation to work for the same MD who had strung him along in the process of him leaving. He needed to adopt the shared basic assumption that nice leaders were powerful leaders. C5 needed to deny the badness in the MD in order to idealise him and the organisation as the adult world that he as an adult could now partake in. My irritation was a response to both his dependency on me to affirm his future, his long winded and repetitive style of communicating, and his refusal to get into the details of what the system and the MD had done to him. C5 didn't want the interview to end and continued to speak beyond the time boundary until I eventually had to end it. It was as if I was being held captive by him. I was being used in our relatedness as an object on which he could depend on to be heard. I listened.

Case 6

I knew of C6 through work that I had previously delivered to the organisation. She was a member of a focus group that I'd consulted to in the design and development of a series of assessments for the organisation. Although I didn't know her personally and we hadn't had any one-on-one interactions before, I did remember her distinctly. I remembered her as a more senior member of the group that I'd consulted to and someone who asked pertinent questions to the process that we were engaged in. I was more anxious in this interview than any of the others and my breath felt shallow as we greeted each other and as I introduced the research to her. I thanked her profusely for giving of her time to help me with my research and she seemed very happy to contribute. She was very nice, yet I still felt highly uncomfortable in our interactions. C6's mannerisms reminded me of another client in the organisation who despite having been very good to me, still made me feel on edge. I felt that I was talking to a pre-primary schoolteacher whose task was to control a group of adolescents in a nice way. She was very pleasant, and I could hear some vulnerability in her voice as C6 introduced herself. I responded to her niceness and control in the interaction with politeness and curtesy in the countertransference. I felt I needed to be on best behaviour.

I was intrigued that she still lived in her family home that she had grown up in. Her parents had built a small cottage on the adjacent piece of land and C6 lived in the main house. She described how she had gradually progressed through the bedrooms to finally occupy the main bedroom of the house. I couldn't imagine what it may have been like to live in the same house for a lifetime. I had moved around a lot as a child and couldn't identify. I was also intrigued because she had spent most of her career at the organisation where she worked in two different business divisions as if the business divisions each represented a different bedroom in the house. As she was speaking, I was jumping to hypotheses in my mind which I later interpreted as the use of intellectualisation as a defence against my anxiety in relation to a pre-primary schoolteacher in my unconscious mind. She mentioned how she was the last one of her peers remaining at the organisation before she left and that she felt she was being left behind. I wondered if it was as if all the other children had moved to big school. She expressed existential anxiety about the prospect to have spent an additional ten years of her life at the organisation.

Aware of her and my anxiety in the interview, I used containment as a strategy and made use of the FANI technique to echo her words that I was hearing her say. This helped me to stop intellectualising and I think it may have helped her to relax and feel that she was being seen and heard. Both of our anxiety eased after about ten minutes into the interview and C6 then opened up about her emotional experiences in making the decision to leave her job. She

talked about a cloud that she felt was hanging over her head at the organisation. Whenever she tried to move up, she was denied the opportunity despite being the most senior person for the role. We explored the cloud metaphor as something that made her invisible in the organisation and as something that inhibited her ability to see a clear path forward. She expressed how she had left the cloud behind in her leaving and how much happier she was in her new organisation. I responded to her story about the cloud with claustrophobia and anxiety in the countertransference. We were no longer anxious about controlling one another or being controlled by the other, the anxiety was now about being out of control by the organisation as a controlling system. Two years later I had a near death experience when I was sucked into a cloud while flying my paraglider in the Himalayas. I wondered how I might have introjected the cloud that nearly killed her which in turn nearly killed me too.

C6 described how she was rejected from internal job applications repeatedly which knocked her confidence levels. I noticed that when she discussed her experiences of having been rejected that she referred to herself as you instead of I. It was as if she defended against the shame by dissociating from the experiences that she had had. I reflected on her painful experiences and could feel the vulnerability, the shame and deject in them. I responded to her with a sense of despair and sadness in the countertransference and felt relieved that she was no longer working in that system. She described how she would often feel anxious that the senior leaders might call her to entice her back to the organisation with an offer that might be difficult to refuse. She said that she was happy in her new role and that she didn't want to go back. I could feel her sense of dread, as though the organisation had a grip on her and control over her. I could make better sense of her initial need for control at the start of the interview process. In her mind I may have represented an object that was associated to the organisation through both the work that I'd delivered there and through my role of researcher. I may have therefore posed the same threat to her as the controlling organisation had. I had felt her anxiety about control and regressed to an infantile state in my own mind, having responded to her with politeness in the countertransference, as a small child must be polite to a teacher. I used this data to inform my thinking about the micro-level theme of desire and trauma. As she felt seen and heard by me, I no longer represented the organisation as a controlling object on which she had to depend.

She said that she couldn't wait on the organisation to move up in the world and that her move to the new organisation represented her taking control over her life. It was as if she had lost her agency to the organisation and the only way to claim it back was to leave. C6 had only been at her new organisation for a few months, and I sensed that her new sense of control over life was still in a vulnerable stage, like an infant needing to be nurtured. It was as if her

move represented a step into adulthood and with the birth of a child that represented her agency which she needed to defend and nurture. I responded to her story of repeated rejection experiences at the organisation by sharing the image of Oliver Twist with her. Oliver Twist represented a child at the mercy of an orphanage and who was repeatedly denied the food that he needed in order to grow. I later reflected that there was no maternal containment at the orphanage. C6 responded that every time a job was advertised, she felt compelled to apply because it was expected of her, yet the process made her incredibly anxious because of her repeated experiences of rejection and the shame that she felt each time. It was as if she was caught in the grip of the system, a malnourished orphan, and denied what she needed in order to grow into the adult that she knew she needed to become. I responded to her stories of repeated reject with pity in the countertransference, yet I celebrated that she had taken control of her life in leaving.

Case 7

I hadn't met C7 before the interview, but I had engaged in a series of coaching sessions with her leader at the organisation. It's very seldom as a coach that you get to speak with the clients' subordinates, and I was curious about how C7 had experienced working for my coaching client. I was aware of the complexity in the multiple roles that each of us had to take up in relation to each other as doctoral researcher and research participant, and in relation to her leader who was my client and her boss. I had to hold the research boundary and make a conscious effort to remain in my role of doctoral researcher. The transference with C7 was easy from the minute we met and neither of us seemed to experience much anxiety. I thought to myself what a bright and groovy young professional. C7 was very charming and easy going, I responded to her with a chilled and enthusiastic feeling in the countertransference. She dove right into her life story and spoke in an animated and passionate manner. She wasn't trying to conceal anything and spoke very quickly as if she needed to have her story heard. It was a comfortable and fun entry into the interview.

I had experienced her leader to be autocratic, lacking in empathy and overly controlling during our coaching sessions. I felt immensely uncomfortable during the coaching sessions, as if my primary task in the coaching interactions was to fluff the leader's ego for her. While I worked very hard to stay in my coaching role, I would often find myself seduced into telling her what I thought she wanted to hear. On one occasion when I provided more challenging feedback and, on another occasion, where she caught my attention drifting off, the leader gave me a look of disapproval to let me know to come back into line. I responded to her leader in the coaching sessions with fear in the countertransference. I needed to be aware not to collude

with C7 in her experiences of her leader which mostly affirmed my own experiences as a coach and suspicions about how the leader might have treated her staff.

When I experienced C7 to be open, bubbly and enthusiastic I had the feeling that she had fallen victim to her leader who represented a villain in my mind. I realised after the interview that I may have been seduced by C7 into the role of hero. I had to work harder to maintain the research boundary in this interview than any of the others. Interestingly, boundaries and traversal of role and task boundaries that led to conflict formed a large part of her voluntary turnover story. A few weeks after the interview C7 contacted me and asked if I could support her with a private consult to which I agreed. I felt very proud that she chose me to be the one to coach her. During the coaching session she said how she told her sister that she was taking responsibility for her life and that she had consulted an industrial psychologist to work with her. The seduction to play the role of hero was very strong and I had to work hard to not be the one who can tell her what to do. C7 wanted me to give her advice and tell her what to do. Her dependency on me was very evident in our interactions and I had to work hard keep on giving her agency back to her.

I could see many patterns of transferences in her story as she spoke during the interview. She grew up with a father who was a preacher and spent much of her childhood on the church pews watching him preach. The CFO at the organisation wasn't a preacher, but he would preach to her and quote biblical verses. It seemed very clear that the CFO represented her father at work. It was also as if her leader represented her mother, and she was the child. She said how her leader would often say to her that her father, referring to the CEO, was looking for her. I learnt during the interview that C7 had not been on the official leadership development program at the organisation, but that her leader, my coaching client, had insisted after she resigned that she come and speak to me. It felt as if mother was instructing daughter to report to the school principal who would pass judgment on her behaviour as the ultimate authority. I wasn't going to include her in the final sample because she had not attended the formal leadership development program, however, I had learnt from the CFO that C7 was part of his group of young stars who he saw as high potential talent to grow into senior leadership roles in the organisation. Given this fact, and that her story was so rich in deep emotional experiences I decided to keep her interview as part of the final data set for the research. Again, boundaries had been challenged and I conceded to having them pushed.

I struggled to get a word in edgeways during the interview as C7 poured her heart out about how she had been mistreated by her leader while her CFO had stood by. I felt that she was searching for another savior but understanding something about victim, villain and messiah dynamics, I resisted her transference of dependency. My earlier countertransference of

childlike enthusiasm had changed to polite indifference as I sought to remove myself from her as the messiah object. She used the full two hours that were allocated for the interview, and I allowed her to go over the time boundary by eleven minutes. Again, I had allowed the boundaries to be pushed and reflected further on how the breaking of boundaries had caused conflict for her in her voluntary turnover process. I hypothesised that beneath the bubbly, charming and youthful persona was a young woman in search of the perfect father to save her. I had to resist taking up a fatherly role in relation to her.

APPENDIX B

Personal reflections of my research journey

The concept of reflexivity assumes that researchers are unavoidably present and influential in the inquiry (Gemignani, 2017). Because reflexivity is a major strategy for quality control in qualitative research, understanding how it may have been impacted by the characteristics and experiences of the researcher is of paramount importance (Berger, 2015). Using myself as instrument meant that I needed to explore my own personal history of and beliefs about voluntary turnover (see section 1.2) and my relationship with each of the research participants (see Appendix A). As part of my reflexive practice, it was also important for me to explore my personal experiences of my research journey and how I related to my research topic and my research as an object throughout the process. The purpose of this section is to share my personal experiences of the research journey to provide the reader with some insights into how I embodied my research and how it embodied me in turn. It may be viewed as a kind of autoethnographic account through which I the researcher explore and locate myself in the research project (Noble & McIlveen, 2012). What follows is a personal narrative of my research journey.

The choice of the topic of my research was an unconscious one. At the time of choosing my topic I had in mind that voluntary turnover was something commonly experienced, costly to organisations and therefore 'useful' to understand in a different light. The potential utility of such an understanding drew me in. The research represented a useful object that might further my career at the onset. I was however naïve to the painfulness of the process and in utter denial of my own very difficult voluntary turnover experiences having influenced my choice. I danced into the idea of becoming a doctor of consulting psychology blissfully unaware of what I was getting myself into. Later that first year of my research in August, as I presented my research proposal to the panel of professors, I entered a deep state of sadness that I couldn't shake off or understand. It enveloped my being and tugged my heart downwards towards my tummy. That same month I voluntarily quit a social group that I'd belonged to, yet I still didn't make the connection with my topic and my own personal history of voluntary turnover experiences. It was only when my supervisor urged me to explore my own voluntary turnover that I began to realise that it was a theme in my own life.

My first voluntary turnover experience that I can remember occurred at age fifteen when I decided to quit school. I'd moved schools in junior school, but that decision was made for me by my parents. I reflected on how I attempted to join three other schools after leaving my school at age fifteen. I quit all of them one after the next! My parents were beside themselves

with angst. I then realised how painful the decision to quit school the first time was and began to understand how I had repeated the same trauma throughout my teenage years. The sense of loss that I felt from quitting the first school was very deep and I'd attempted for years to bury the pain. My loss was masked with anger, self-loathing, and a profound sense of having failed myself and my family. The school that I was at was a prestigious one that carried a powerful and elite identity. I lost my identity to the school and felt utterly ashamed and bewildered, wondering from one painful trauma to the next for many years. I then realised that I'd repeated the early trauma of leaving the elite school in leaving two organisations as a working professional adult (see section 1.2). It was at this point that my depression became more intense. I was working through the losses that I'd attempted to forget, and it was painful. Voluntary turnover had come to represent a painful object for me.

My psychoanalytic psychotherapist supported me throughout the process as I struggled with my depression and the different experiences that I was having in relation to my research. In the early stages of analysing the data I had a nightmare that I was eating the chargrilled remains of an older man who had died. I was disturbed by the dream which preoccupied my waking mind. I wondered if my superego was dying, I wondered if I was becoming over identified with older men in my life, but then it struck me that I was dreaming on behalf of one of the research participants. He had shared how his father had died when he was six years old and how he had to take on a fatherly responsibility at this early age. It became evident as I analysed his story that he had undergone a process of identification with his father at a young age, and I was able to interpret my dream in this context. I was the research participant in the dream and the body represented his dead father. After coming to this awareness, I realised that I would need to work very hard to maintain the research boundary. This was dangerous work and I felt traumatised at the time. My research came to represent an object that could annihilate me. The annihilation anxiety grew as I reflected on what it might mean should the research be unsuccessful. Would I perpetuate my own theme of voluntary turnover in my life if I quit the PhD too?

How would this impact on my identity and how others view me in the world? I became paranoid and split into being not good enough and good enough. I felt persecuted by my research. I frequently engaged in self-sabotage through procrastination and engaging an inner script which said, 'you are not an academic, you are the fool, the clown, and the one who was proven to be stupid in junior school'. It was torture and the research became an object of torture. My ego was weakening, and I felt increasingly fragmented. This manifested in my physical body in a broken ankle, astigmatism in my left eye, and in the need for and subsequent hip replacement. I felt that I was dying. I gave up on psychotherapy for a while and drowned away

my fear with possibly a bit too much alcohol for some time. I put the research down and let it be. At this time, I bought a small flock of sheep and tried to create a different future vision for myself as something other than a psychologist, a butcher. My group supervision coach pointed out the similarity of the role of a butcher and that of a psychoanalyst, both work with body, the butcher a physical body and the psychoanalyst the psychic body. I couldn't do it, I couldn't walk away, my research and profession kept calling me back.

I eventually decided to try ketamine infusion therapy to get out the depression that had me in its grip from August of 2018. In reflecting I came to realise that it was exactly three years later in August of 2021 that I tried the ketamine therapy. My first infusion was intense. I found my body reduced to dust and my consciousness was looking up from the red soil of the earth into the heavens. A Sadhu appeared to me, his face covered in white ash and orange stripes down his forehead. He wore a crown of dreadlocks, and his long grey beard was the only part of his being that moved gently in the cosmic winds of the experience. I looked deeply into his dark eyes, waiting for an emotion, an expression, a clue about what he might be experiencing, but I could sense nothing. It was as if he was everything and nothing at the same time. It wasn't possible for me to name anything about his state of consciousness. My awareness was then raised from the soil of the red earth and hoisted up into the heavens. The stars shone brightly around the awareness that I had come to identify with. I could see the blue ocean shimmering below and the green of the continents glowing like emeralds. The stars began to swirl around me and together we plummeted into the ocean. I felt embodied once more, alive again. My research had come to represent the Sadhu, an object of everything and nothing simultaneously, something sacred that I couldn't quite understand yet. I felt a sense of relief and no longer experienced it to be overwhelmingly annihilating.

At this point the research came to represent something that I could engage with again, but on my terms. I would decide how often and how much time I would spend with it. I would decide when to put it down and take it up again. I would use my rational thinking mind to determine that this was just another research project. I realised that there have been countless PhD research projects conducted before mine and this was just another research project. It wasn't going to save me, and it wasn't going to kill me. It might have been everything, but it was also nothing. I picked up my work again and slowly moved with it after having put it down for a few months. I started with one hour a day, and then two, and then three. In a short space of time, I was working for between five and seven hours a day. It was growing and I was having the experience to grow with it. It was as if I had died, had a rebirth experience and was able to hold and nurture myself through the research to grow and to become stronger. As I received more and more positive feedback from my supervisor my confidence in my work and in the

research increased. I'd held the pain, the splitting, the feelings of being not good enough, the paranoia, the shame, the guilt, the confusion, the helplessness, the overwhelm, the purposelessness, and the dependency and the hope of voluntary turnover. I had sat with and contained the experiences and had finally come to a point where I was processing these into meaning and understanding. My research process had come to represent the container-contained. My research had become the object through which I was individuating.

I realised at this point that a PhD represents the pinnacle of academic achievement. I had completed my B. Com degree, my honors degree, my M. Com degree and now was working on my PhD. I had completed all my degrees through UNISA. I thought back to my first real experience of voluntary turnover in dropping out of school at age fifteen. I came to realise that UNISA had come to represent my school in the unconscious mind, that my series of academic achievements represented the grades that I would have worked through, and that my PhD research process represented completing unfinished business for me. I had drawn on the loss and the regret and used my research process to transform what voluntary turnover had come to represent for me in my mind. I was transforming my shame. It represented my transforming identity as I was individuating through it. I've had countless dreams over the years of returning to the elite school that I'd left with the goal to finish what I'd started there. Although I was a grown man and already in possession of a master's degree, I would dream that I was back. To be back there and having a second chance provided me with a deep peace. Completing my PhD represented a process of working through the painful loss of dropping out of school at age fifteen. The research had come to represent a transformational object of integration and of wholeness, and something through which I was individuating.

Having the experience of birthing something new and being birthed through it made me feel excited. The research project was coming into existence as something real and meaningful. The research had come to represent an object of meaning, of deep processing and of personal transformation. I truly embodied my research, and, in turn, it embodied me.