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CHAPTER 1: SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1   INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study was on a systems psychodynamic exploration towards the development of a model of language use as manifestation of leadership anxiety dynamics.

This chapter provides clarity to the reader on what this study sought to explore, its significance and how the rest of the thesis is structured and presented. Firstly, the background to and motivation for the study, followed by the research problem and aims of the research, are presented. Secondly, the different research paradigms and the research design are discussed. This is followed by the research method (the only yardstick by which one's findings can be verified and replicated), and the justification for the research method in the context of this study. Finally, a chapter division is presented, and the chapter concludes with a summary.

1.2   BACKGROUND TO AND MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

In this section, the background to and motivation for the research are discussed, with specific reference to the realities of the business environment within which leaders have to navigate themselves.

1.2.1 The leadership landscape

In today's world and workplace, leaders are faced with increasing uncertainty, a constantly evolving landscape and torrential turbulence (Covey, 2011; Czander, 2012; Daskal, 2017; Diamond, 2016; Veldsman & Johnson, 2016). Leaders often experience data,

emotional, sensory and responsibility overload. Today, environmental, economic and socio-political changes are more complicated and more unpredictable than ever before (Coy, 2004; Edelstein, 2012; Long, 2008; McGregor & Hamm, 2008; Mero, 2008). Wheatley (2007) speaks eloquently about the world we live in when she observes that leaders live in an era of stirring storms where they feel buffeted by uncontrollable forces.

Leaders are thus under unprecedented strain (Bennett & Bush, 2009; Souba, 2009; Weick, 1995; Zaffron & Logan, 2009). The current economic environment demands increasing levels of productivity, leaders exert tightening control over their organisations, and the demand on employees is to do more work in less time (Collins, 2001; Robbins, 2003; Spangenberg & Theron, 2002). There has been a dramatic increase in pressure on leadership, leaving them with little time and flexibility. This has resulted in leaders feeling caged, alone and emotionally exhausted (Cameron, 2008; Kleiner, 2007; Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2003).

1.2.2 Anxiety in leaders

Leaders consequently find it increasingly difficult to relate to the above-mentioned uncertainty. They are expected to manage the present and a future that they cannot anticipate accurately and for which they cannot plan comprehensively. The assumption is that leaders should have all the answers. Wheatley (2007) suggests that, when an executive leader, for instance, does not have all the answers – because no one person does – he or she is fired, and a more dictatorial leader is appointed. These powerful dynamics reinforce one another, creating alarming levels of anxiety, and subsequently the notion that anxiety is bad and should therefore be feared and eliminated is created (Cummings & Worley, 2015; Lazar, 2011).

Anxiety as the unconscious emotional and physiological reaction to threats in the leader's environment (Jarrett & Kellner, 1996) often becomes unsettling for leadership and extremely destructive in the working environment. A recent study purports that when people's anxiety levels escalate in the face of certain challenges, they often lose the critical capability needed most (McFarland, 2009), which is the capability to think clearly, to prioritise, and to take creative action. Rosen (2008) and Koestenbaum (1991) suggest that the ability to harness anxiety is the single most important leadership quality. Rosen (2008) further postulates that it is this energy that drives leaders forward and which stretches and challenges them to be better tomorrow than they are today. When leaders are afraid that they cannot understand or manage anxiety, they attempt to avoid, deny, resist or medicate it.

By virtue of their role, leaders find themselves on various boundaries within the working context. Boundaries by nature create anxiety (Bennis & Shepard, 1956; Hirschhorn, 1993; Lawrence, 1999; Menzies Lyth, 1993; Obholzer & Roberts, 1994). As leaders operate on the boundary, they experience anxiety and the 'full impact' of what leaves their workspace or crosses into it. When anxiety is consciously accepted, it is transformed into strength applicable to a variety of life situations. Anxiety is therefore not an illness, but strength in action "of growing, of building character, of achieving pride" (Koestenbaum, 1991, p. 157). In other words, leaders proactively manage their personal growth by the way in which they relate to and own their anxiety.

The literature alludes to the assumption that there is a connection between anxiety and language use (Le Doux, 1998; Levine, 2003; Turnbull & Arnett, 2002). The concept of language does not only refer to written and spoken communication, but includes body language, tone of voice, facial expression and other actions that carry symbolic intent (Zaffron & Logan, 2009).

1.2.3 Leadership anxiety and language use

The literature alludes to the assumption that there is a connection between anxiety and language use (Le Doux, 1998; Levine, 2003; Turnbull & Arnett, 2002). The concept of language does not only refer to written and spoken communication, but includes body language, tone of voice, facial expression and other actions that carry symbolic intent (Zaffron & Logan, 2009). Language is not only a symbolic vehicle, but it is also constitutive by nature. In other words, language defines the nature of that which is referred to. It gives meaning to human interactions and actively gives shape to the world (Dewey, 1958; Holtgraves & Kashima, 2008; Souba, 2009). Leaders seem to use language in a particularly unique way – language use. I have noted how the language used by leaders changes, particularly when being confronted with uncomfortable situations or new challenges or when the answers to novel situations are not always evident. When the questions become uncomfortable, anxiety levels tend to rise and the language that leaders use subsequently also changes. This highlights the significance of language use in organisational settings. Koestenbaum (1991) subsequently contends that in the new world of work, leadership consists in finding the kinds of conversations (language use) that will be perceived as constructive, as bringing bottom-line results. It all boils down to how leadership conversations that are judged as bringing results are designed. It therefore appears as if leadership development conversations should be conversations about anxiety. I therefore assert that the construct of leadership anxiety has to be explored within the context of and in relation to language use. I further posit that leaders who have a sound understanding of anxiety are aware of their own sources of anxiety, and use language that reflects this awareness are often able to embrace anxiety in a positive fashion. If this is true, then the harnessing of leadership anxiety is

essentially linguistic in nature. Leaders, therefore, need to become aware of how they use language as they take on their leadership role within an organisational setting.

1.2.4 Personal experiences of language use

Through the various leadership and followership roles within which I have had to manage myself, ranging from the private sector to public enterprises to not-for-profit organisations, I quickly came to realise that, as leader, I could be adored one moment and utterly resented in the next. In the midst of this emotional complexity, I was always aware of my moral responsibility to contribute my own style, strengths, talents and personal voice. Here, personal voice includes my unique language use as leader. Perhaps my most challenging perceived leadership function was to create deliberate space for contradictory and dissenting voices to be heard. The management of these dissenting voices created even more anxiety for me because I was always intrigued by how my fellow leaders would present themselves through their unique language use. There was something unique to how the different leaders I had to report to 'sounded'. A certain impression was created – competent, knowledgeable, progressive – based on the value that was attached to how they sounded. As leader, things such as collaboration, decision-making, inclusivity, change, learning and so on always created anxiety for me. Somehow, my anxiety could always be eased and contained when I had the time to reflect on the language I was going to use. When I was incongruent in terms of what I did (my actions) and what I said (my language use), idealisation by my followers would quickly give way to disillusionment, projection and alienation. What stands out for me is how confident I would become in my leadership role on those rare occasions when I was able to listen for the doubt, uncertainty, incongruence, fear, delays, guarantees and arrogance in my

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language use. An inappropriate word could undermine people's trust. The effective use of words and symbols often enabled me not only to manage, but also to influence people's emotions because I was able to resonate with what was important to them. Leadership thus involves an almost toxic mix of intense idealisation and deep envy between leaders and followers. My experience has hinted at the importance of language use on this often conscious and deeply unconscious leadership terrain.

1.3   THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Leaders today experience more anxiety in the world of work than ever before, because perpetual change creates the perception of leaders being under attack (Cummings & Worley, 2015; Czander, 2012; Daskal, 2017; Veldsman & Johnson, 2016). The greater, the change the greater the uncertainty and anxiety are (Stacey, 2003). Anxiety distorts the leader's capacity to think clearly (Gilbert, 1992), language tends to influence one's thinking, and these thinking patterns in turn tend to be (Friedman, 2007, p. 36):

- polarised and totalistic;
- reactive, rather than principle-based;
- reductionistic;
- externally, rather than internally focused; and
- oriented toward crisis rather than opportunity.

Leaders, especially top executives, are perceived as being immune to anxiety; however, they are indeed susceptible to anxiety in a variety of forms. One of their primary responsibilities is to make critical decisions under ambivalent conditions. These decisions have individual, group and sometimes national implications. Survival anxiety could make leaders focus on organisational threats exclusively, instead of exploring

opportunities. In a recent study by the Harvard Business Review, it was found that leaders who are more anxious took fewer strategic risks to avoid potential losses, compared to their less anxious peers. Anxious leaders tend to surround themselves with trusted subordinates, which could lead to groupthink. These leaders are susceptible to paranoia and this unbearable anxiety often discourages them from asking tough, difficult questions (Mannor, Wowak, Bartkus, & Gomez-Mejia, 2016).

When exploring the literature in general, it is evident that enormous progress has been made in theory regarding persuasive/framing models, and motivating language theory (MLT) (Kuo, 2009; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2004; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2012; Searle, 1969; Sullivan, 1988). The literature adequately reflects isolated, predominantly conscious investigations into –

- *leadership* theories and leadership models (Bass, 1981; Bennis, 2007; Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005; Erskine, 2010; Hersey, Blanchard, & Dewey, 2008; Ngambi, 2011; Vroom & Jago, 2007);
- *language and language use* models (Austen, 1962; Denning, 2008; Downey & Brief, 1986; Gioia & Poole, 1984; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2012; Palermo, 1983; Pike, 1967; Sullivan, 1988); and
- *anxiety* as well as anxiety-related models (Brunning, 2006; De Beer, 2007; De Board, 2014; Freud, 1947; Hergenhahn, 1994; Hjelle & Ziegler, 1992; Janov, 1991; Kets de Vries, 2001; McMartin, 1995; Menzies Lyth, 1993; Van Niekerk, 2011).

No model exists that integrates leadership, anxiety and language use into a meaningful, coherent and integrated whole.

Numerous scholars have also advanced the notion that the leadership relationship is fundamentally rooted in language and

communication (Conger, 1991; Insch, Moore, & Murphy, 1997). Closely related research explores and presents how elements of President Bush's speeches (language use) changed in response to the post-911 crisis (Bligh, Kohles, & Meindl, 2004). The closest research to the topic under investigation is a psychoanalytic contribution by Zeddies (2004), who argues that language and its connection to the unconscious lie at the centre of the therapeutic relationship, and about the way this relational capacity of the unconscious can be accessed through language use (Ogden, 1997; Zeddies, 2000). I could therefore not trace any direct research on language use as explicit manifestation of leadership anxiety dynamics. In addition, no related South African research could be found. It therefore seems that the connection and relationship between language use and unconscious dynamic anxiety triggers may not yet have been investigated adequately. Furthermore, my literature searches seemed to indicate that it has never been explored from a systems psychodynamic perspective with hermeneutics (specifically systems psychodynamic discourse analysis) and critical discourse analysis combined as data analytical tools.

I have observed that when leaders find themselves in the midst of chaos and anxiety, the initial we or the collective conversations become I or personal reactions. What is external becomes internalised. An interpretation can be that the leader's authority is undermined (threatened) and personal competence questioned. It is therefore critical to detect the presence of anxiety (in the language use) of the leader in order to raise awareness and minimise the harm that could be created by uncontained leadership anxieties. It could be useful for leaders to become increasingly aware of the language they use, particularly when they find themselves in the midst of chaos, instability and anxiety.

With reference to the contextualisation above, the **research**

problem was formulated as follows:

Leaders are often hampered by their inability to work consciously and constructively with their anxieties, resulting in poor, ineffective decision-making and the ineffective taking up of their leadership role when they lead from this anxious space.

It is essential for psychology, and in particular industrial and organisational psychology, to contribute to the enhanced functioning of leaders in an environment that is becoming increasingly complex, demanding, turbulent and anxiety-provoking.

The **research question** could be formulated as follows:

What would a systems psychodynamic model with utility value that describes language use as manifestation of leadership anxiety dynamics contain?

1.4   AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

This study was structured around a general aim as well as specific aims.

1.4.1 General aim of the research

The general aim of the research was to explore by developing and describing a systems psychodynamic model of language use as manifestation of leadership anxiety dynamics, to refine this theoretical model and to explore the utility value of the theoretical model.

1.4.2 Specific aims of the research

The specific aims of the research can be formulated according to

the literature review and empirical study. The specific literature review aims were to:

- explore the operational research construct of **anxiety** in leaders from a systems psychodynamic perspective;
- explore the contextual research construct of **leadership** from a systems psychodynamic perspective;
- explore the operational research construct of **language use** from a systems psychodynamic perspective; and
- develop and describe a **theoretical model** relating to language use as manifestation of leadership anxiety dynamics from a systems psychodynamic perspective.

The specific empirical aims were to:

- **explore language use and anxiety phenomenologically** from the perspective of participants to this study;
- **refine the theoretical model** by reporting on the influence of the empirical data on this theoretical model;
- **explore the utility value** of the theoretical model in terms of its potential application by systems psychodynamic practitioners, from a systems psychodynamic perspective;
- **formulate conclusions** in terms of the general and specific research aims of the study; **propose limitations** in terms of the literature study, theoretical model and empirical study; and **suggest recommendations** for industrial and organisational psychology and for future studies.

1.5   THE PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE

Demarcation is an important aspect of any research study; hence, critical consideration should be given to the paradigm perspective. By stating the paradigm perspective upfront, I therefore indicate the boundary around the research. The philosophical, theoretical and methodological dimensions of the study (Creswell, 2013) are discussed in the next section.

1.5.1 Disciplinary relationship

This study was situated within the domain of industrial and organisational psychology, which is one of the applied disciplines within psychology (Bergh & Geldenhuys, 2015). The focus of industrial and organisational psychology is on human behaviour within a business or organisational setting (Muchinsky, 1993). Industrial and organisational psychology has been described as a science with the intention of creating knowledge about human behaviour in a variety of settings, particularly that of organisations (Robbins, Odendaal, & Roodt, 2003). The discipline also studies the extent to which the behaviour of individuals, groups and other organisational units influence the organisation and its environment (Martins & Geldenhuys, 2016). It is therefore concerned with the prediction of human behaviour in an organisational or other work setting (Lowenberg & Conrad, 1998).

This study also strived to be applicable to the sub-disciplines of industrial and organisational psychology, specifically organisational psychology, and the sub-specialities of organisational development, consulting psychology, coaching psychology and individual or organisational wellness.

1.5.2 My worldview and scientific orientation to the study

In conducting research, certain defining questions need to be answered:
– What will make my research scientific?
– What are the metaphysical (ontological, epistemological, axiological) and methodological choices I have to make?

What could not be escaped is that my subjectivity is something that cannot be eliminated (Niewenhuis, 2010). At this point of the study,

I reminded myself of the axiom, "We do not see things as they are, but as we are" (Nin, 1961, p. 124). I therefore deem it imperative to communicate upfront, my approach to the study and 'my way of viewing the world' (Heilig, 2008; Maree, 2010), so that the reader will be able to understand my scientific orientation to the study by expounding on my paradigmatic choices and the assumptions (ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological) to which I adhered. The reader will thus have a clear understanding of the reasons behind my design, the methodological choices and how as primary instrument of the research, I could have influenced the research process (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006), as well as the findings and conclusions of the study.

My worldview and philosophy have been shaped by my thoughts, behaviours, experiences and interactions with others. My personal worldview is therefore my mental framework with which and through which I interpret the nature of reality (Blaikie, 2000; Clarke, 2002). This philosophy will provide the reader with insight into how my research could have been influenced by my stance, and I will elaborate on the measures that have been taken in order to navigate the potential negative influence of my philosophical stance. There are two dominant, opposing forces in the social sciences, namely positivism (closely associated with quantitative research) and relativism (closely associated with qualitative research) (Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2014; Grix, 2010). According to the positivistic approach to research, the nature of the world exists, irrespective of people's perceptions, and experiences can be described in terms of value-free, objective facts and hypotheses can be tested against these facts (Grix, 2010; Robson, 2003; Silverman, 2000). Positivism is thus based on a realist, foundationalist epistemology (Grix, 2010). In this study, I supported the relativist approach which advocates the view that there are no absolute truths (Maree, 2016). The world is perceived and encountered in different ways:

- it is socially constructed – there is no external reality independent of our beliefs and perceptions; and

- true understanding is accessed when the complexity of experience and behaviour is studied (Blaikie, 2000; Denscombe, 2002; May, 2000; Williams & May, 2000).

I also believe that my interaction with the research process and the analysis could not be completely objective or value-free and I further acknowledge the role that language plays in constructing my research identity and how I perceive reality (Bryman, 2008; Williams & May, 2000). My research was therefore heavily influenced by the interpretivist approach but also by the constructivist perspective. From a practical standpoint, the way the data was interrogated and analysed in this study is a reflection of my philosophical viewpoint in the sense that the study honed in on the unique perceptions, beliefs, experiences, feelings and understanding of my participants. Thus, in the process of generating relational knowledge, interpretivists and relativists acknowledge the imprinting of the researcher's values on the entire research process (Parker, 2001). However, despite my philosophical stance, it needs to be added that this study was underpinned by the necessary scientific rigour and integrity as discussed in Chapter 6 of this thesis. It is therefore evident that I could have selected from a wide variety of research paradigms. This is an important step in the research process, as each paradigm is governed by a unique set of assumptions about the nature of the world and how it functions (Henning, Van Rensburg, & Smit, 2004; Machamer, 1998; Whitley, 2002). These paradigms influence the way in which any research study is conducted. I, therefore, gained insight into the personal meaning-making (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004; Niewenhuis, 2010) and subjective

understanding of my participants (interpretive approach) and constructed and reconstructed their narratives from my personal, cultural and historical experiences (Cunliffe, 2003; Kvale, 1996; Laverty, 2003).

In the next section, my philosophy of science related to the underlying presuppositions of my research enterprise is discussed. Greenbank (2003) highlights the metaphysical grounding of researchers when arguing that, when researchers reflect upon the most suitable research methods to adopt, they are directly influenced by their underlying ontological and epistemological stance. This position is also influenced by the values they embrace.

My *ontological perspective* was influenced by the interpretive and to some extent the constructionist paradigm, which advocates multiple realities that are constantly constructed, reconstructed and changed by the knower (Kafle, 2011; Laverty, 2003; Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). In this study, I therefore adopted a perspectival reality where the focus was on the ideas, perceptions, experiences, meaning-making and emotions of my three groups of participants (see section 1.6.3.3). The study also focused on the personal meanings and deeply personal experiences of my participants (Whitley, 2002). Hence, each participant's ontology was limited to what he or she had experienced on a personal level and within a specific context (Van Manen, 1997). Hermeneutic phenomenology (see Van Manen, 2014) highlights the meaning a phenomenon has for a specific individual, that is by giving 'voice' to the experiences of participants, which was therefore congruent with my ontology.

My *epistemological perspective* was informed by my belief that I can lay claim to knowledge through my subjective experiences and insights. Epistemology is concerned with "how we know what we

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know" (Kafle, 2011, p. 117). It guides the identification and formulation of the research question (Maree, 2016; Moerdyk, 2015; Nel, 2007) by describing the nature of the relationship between the knower and the known (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My epistemological stance informed my opinions about valid theories, relevant research questions, the most effective way to conduct my research as well as the proper interpretation of the data (Cunliffe, 2003; Machamer, 1998; Whitley, 2002). In other words, it helped to confirm what was considered knowledge of social things (Nel, 2007). In the interpretive tradition, research becomes a human activity where the researcher takes centre stage. In the present study, as the researcher, I became a passionate participant, as opposed to being a disinterested scientist (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In order to obtain the information regarding the unique experiences of my participants, I had to take up an interactional role with my participants. Since hermeneutic phenomenology creates space for the interpretation, construction and reconstruction of participants' experiences, this paradigm became congruent with my epistemological assumptions.

My *methodological perspective* is detailed in section 1.6 as well as in Chapter 6 of this thesis. In these sections, I discuss how I went about practically when studying the research phenomenon – what can be known (Laverty, 2003; Nel, 2007). My research method was underpinned by good judgement, responsible ethical principles, reflexivity, sensitivity to language, and being open to new and novel experiences (Osborne, 1994; Van Manen, 1997). It should be noted that my methodological approach also evolved as I interacted with my participants (Greenbank, 2003; Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2010). Throughout the study, some of my *axiological perspectives* are revealed as I report on my opinions, concerns, biases and hermeneutic reflections. 'Axiology' refers to the values and ethics that we embrace (Mingers, 2003). My values and opinions were always present as I engaged in knowledge

generation in the present study. In section 6.2.3.2 I also discuss my roles (laden with values) and how I was positioned, which could have had an influence on the research process and outcomes of the study.

Furthermore, in this study, *systems psychodynamics* is being used as my theoretical as well as my research lens or paradigm. Systems psychodynamics falls under the umbrella term of 'hermeneutic phenomenology', because systems psychodynamics reflects and contains both a hermeneutic and a phenomenological dimension (Boydell, 2009; Hinshelwood & Skogstad, 2000). Hermeneutics pertains to interpretation, a form of data analysis aimed at analysing texts from the perspective of the author within a given socio-historical context (Blaikie, 2000; Grix, 2010; May, 2001). In particular, I have found *hermeneutic phenomenology* to be congruent with my ontological and epistemological assumptions. The hermeneutic phenomenology to which I refer is soundly underpinned by the philosophical contributions of scholars such as Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur. Hermeneutic phenomenology relates to the phenomena of being human within a given context (Gadamer, 1975; Heidegger, 1962). It has been advocated as a creative, dialectical and intuitive approach, which questions rigid, predetermined research methods and procedures (Crowther, Smythe, & Spence, 2016; Morse, 2015) by attempting to reveal aspects of phenomena we do not often describe, notice or account for (Crowther et al., 2016). By doing this, hermeneutic researchers work with data in an emerging fashion, encourage further thinking and exploration (Zambas, 2016) and are fascinated by how thinking evolves over time (Van Manen, 2014).

According to some scholars, systems psychodynamics and hermeneutics are examples of psycho-social research methods (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013; Hunt, 1989; Long, 2001) and they share a set of fundamental assumptions. For

example, both assume the existence of an 'internal', covert world. A good proportion of this world is accessible, and during the research encounter, aspects of this hidden world are revealed (psychodynamically) through transference and countertransference processes (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009). Hence, psychoanalytic methods, such as systems psychodynamics, have been viewed as "depth hermeneutics" (Habermas, 1972, p. 18) through which the unconscious is made conscious and concealed knowledge and power sources (for example, as reflected in discourses) have an influence on us. Giddens (1976, p.71) introduced the notion of "double hermeneutics", which has been conceptualised as "the need for the interpretation of the frames of reference of observer and observed, for mediation of their respective understanding" (Sayer, 1992, p. 49). Thus, an interpretive kind of representational knowledge which is at the core of the hermeneutic tradition, goes against the grain of the positivist tradition where the researcher is seen as an objective, disengaged observer (Clarke & Hogget, 2009; Parker, 2001; Young, 1994). Clarke and Hoggett (2009, p. 42) further suggest that psycho-social methodology is inspired and informed by the hermeneutics of psychoanalysis. Another shared assumption of the two paradigms is that at the centre of the hermeneutic tradition lies the notion that the epistemological project is to *make interpretations* of the unique and subjective world of participants (Greenwood & Levin, 1998, p. 68).

Thus, according to Alvesson and Sköldberg (2005, p. 144) –

- *simple hermeneutics* refers to individual meaning and individuals' interpretations about themselves, that is, their own subjective realities;
- *double hermeneutics* is the attempt to understand the aforementioned subjective realities and the subsequent generation of knowledge about these phenomena; and
- *triple hermeneutics* of critical theory pertains to the critical

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interpretation of unconscious processes by interpreting the world of interpretive beings, the interpretive activity, research encounter and research context as a whole.

It is therefore clear that a number of scholars subscribe to the notion that the psychodynamic approach is consistent with hermeneutics (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009; Frosh & Emerson, 2005; Hollway, 2001). In the final analysis, both analytic methods use interpretive repertoires resulting in the emergence of a partnership-in-the-mind (Boydell, 2009).

1.5.3   Research and theoretical paradigm

The relevant research paradigm for this study was the systems psychodynamic paradigm, which some authors (see, for instance, Boydell, 2009; Clarke & Hoggett, 2009; Long, 2001) regard as deep hermeneutics, as mentioned earlier (see section 1.5.2). Hermeneutic interpretive methods recognise conscious and unconscious cultural meanings (Joffe, 1996). Clarke and Hoggett (2009) argue in favour of the synthesis of methodologies by suggesting that structural explanations often explain the 'how', but not the 'why' of social realities. Psychodynamics acknowledges the role of the unconscious in the construction of social reality. Clarke and Hoggett (2009) further argue that unconscious forces shape the research environment, and unconscious motivation and defences are expressed on a conscious level.

1.5.3.1   *Hermeneutic phenomenology*

The general aim of this study was to explore language use as manifestation of leadership anxiety dynamics, but I also wanted to explore participants' lived experiences of language use and anxiety. This objective was achieved by adopting the hermeneutic

phenomenological approach within the qualitative tradition.

'Hermeneutic phenomenology', as the overarching umbrella term, has the capacity to penetrate deep into the human experience, by focusing on the essence of a phenomenon and explicating it as it is encountered by the individual (Kafle, 2011). Interpretation, which is at the core of the process of understanding, is central to the hermeneutic paradigm. Description is an interpretive process. In systems psychodynamics, interpretations (the one pillar of hermeneutic phenomenology) are made by generating working and research hypotheses (Boydell, 2009; Dartington, 2001; Hinshelwood & Skogstad, 2000). Authors, such as Heidegger (1962), claim that to be human is to interpret and every encounter involves interpretation. Hermeneutics and the systems psychodynamic paradigm as interpretive processes therefore seek to bring understanding and disclosure of phenomena through interpretation (Annells, 1996; Clarke & Hoggett, 2009; Laverty, 2003; Long, 2013; Polkinghorne, 2005).

Phenomenology, as the second pillar, seeks to study the nature and meaning of phenomena as they appear to us through experience (Finlay, 2009), the hidden meaning and essence of experiences (Grbich, 2007), and it has the potential to access unique human experiences (Crowther et al., 2016; Langdridge, 2007). The postulates of this approach include the following (Finlay, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994):

- the approach seeks to discover, uncover and recover propositions through observation and the surfacing of meaning from the data;
- the researcher and participants are inter-connected and inter-dependent;
- the researcher's values and those of the participants have an

influence on how phenomena are experienced and understood;

- phenomena are context-sensitive; and
- phenomena are mutually shaped, because relationships are multidirectional.

As the practice and story of interpretation (Van Manen, 1990), hermeneutic phenomenology therefore focuses on the subjective experiences of an individual and/or groups by unveiling their world through their personal life stories (Grbich, 2007). Since there are no uninterpreted phenomena (Caputo, 1984), the approach lends itself to the capturing of lived phenomena through language and the process of interpretation (Cunliffe, 2003; Kidd, 2002; Van Manen, 1990). As research methodology, hermeneutic phenomenology is therefore concerned with the production of rich textual descriptions of individual experiences that are connected to collective experiences (Smith, 1997). This is achieved by using deep reflections on the basis of rich descriptive language.

Hermeneutic phenomenology thus invites the researcher into the world of the text, to play with the text and it challenges the researcher to reflect deeply and meaningfully on what the text has to say (Sharkey, 2001). The methodical structure of this approach allows the researcher to do this. Van Manen (1990, p. 30–33) provides some guidelines on how the basic activities of this approach could be used. These dynamic activities are the –

- centrality of the phenomenon;
- lived experiences of the researcher and participants;
- emerging themes reflecting the essence of the phenomenon;
- penetration of the phenomenon through writing and rewriting;
- firm orientation in relation to the phenomenon; and
- groundedness in the research context by holding the parts and the whole together.

Systems psychodynamics, specifically, allowed me to explicate lived leadership anxiety experiences and to reveal meaning through the process of understanding and interpretation. The explorative nature of this method provided me with a vehicle for deepening my understanding as participants shared their experiences of anxieties and language use.

Next, I briefly refer to systems psychodynamics as research lens to analyse and interpret the experiences of myself as the researcher and the participants in this study. Systems psychodynamics as theoretical lens is further discussed in Chapter 2 of this study.

1.5.3.2   Systems psychodynamics

A number of theoretical influences have resulted in the culmination of what is currently known as the systems psychodynamic paradigm. This practical combination consists of psychoanalysis, object relations theory, group relations (Bion, 1961; Colman & Geller, 1985) and systems theory (De Board, 2014; Miller, 1989a; Obholzer & Roberts, 1994; Stapley, 1996).

However, systems psychodynamics is a paradigm used to explain the collective psychological behaviour within groups and organisations (Fraher, 2004; Hirschhorn, 1993; Stapley, 2006a). According to Miller and Rice (1967), the paradigm seeks to understand the conscious and unconscious dynamic behaviours in organisations. Armstrong (2005) further suggests that the paradigm does not hone in on individual behaviour per se, but essentially on group behaviour. In other words, the phantasies[1] and projections of individual group members result in the group having a life of its own. This paradigm therefore, appreciates the proverbial whole as 'more than the sum of its parts' (Khaleelee &

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1 In this study, **fantasy** refers to conscious imaginings (Likierman, 2001). When spelled with ph (**phantasy**), it denotes instinct stemming from the unconscious (Klein, 1986).

White, 2014). It also endeavours to explain people's emotions and psychological behaviour within an organisational context.

The systems psychodynamic paradigm was thus selected because it sees individuals, groups and organisations as interconnected wholes and facilitates the exploration of unconscious and conscious behaviours in organisations (Bexton, 1975; Dimitrov, 2008). Individuals and organisations are bound to flourish if they reflect on the meaning of realities such as identity, authorisation, boundaries, roles and the unconscious. In this study, I was curious about how unconscious behaviour in the form of anxieties manifest through the language use of the leader in our postmodern world of work. When individuals, groups and organisations have a deep understanding of themselves and the kind of support needed, they tend to thrive in an ever-changing, connected and systemic universe.

1.6   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design endeavours to provide a planned structure to research, in such a way that it will result in the maximisation of the eventual validity of the research findings (Brunner, Nutkevitch, & Sher, 2006; Diamond & Allcorn, 2009; Maree, 2016; Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). This section comprises an explanation of the type of research, the research strategy, the method and interventions employed to enhance the trustworthiness of the study.

The next section serves as a 'preamble', as a detailed, in-depth discussion of the research design is presented in Chapter 6.

1.6.1   Research approach

This study was grounded in a qualitative, explorative (as opposed

to exploratory) and descriptive research design (Breverton & Millward, 2004; Camic, Rhodes, & Yardley, 2003; De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, & Delport, 2002). In this study, descriptive research also had an explorative dimension. Descriptive research is defined as research that explores and explains an individual, group or situation by describing characteristics, functions and relationships (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2010; Clarke, 2005; Creswell, 2014). The justification for this approach is that a qualitative approach would ensure that rich diverse experiences are accessed for exploration and description (Silverman, 2001). This enables the researcher to build a complex and holistic picture through the analysis of language use, of words and the reporting of specific experiences of participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Silverman, 2001; Wolcott, 2001).

Systems psychodynamics was used as the research paradigm (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2005; Clarke & Hoggett, 2009; Long, 2013; Patterson & Williams, 2002; Terre Blanche et al., 2006; Zeddies, 2004), and it was also applied to the exploration of accessing the anxiety triggers of business leaders, through an analysis of language use. Double hermeneutics (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009) was applied when interpreting the texts from the systems psychodynamic stance (Campbell, 2007; Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005; Klein, 2005; Smit & Cilliers, 2006), aimed at knowledge and theory generation. The systems psychodynamic stance has the capacity for a deeper understanding and interpretation of the significance and meaning of complex human behaviour (Diamond, 2011).

1.6.2 Research strategy

In this study, a modelling (building a model) type of research design (Briggs, 2003; Vohra, 2014) linked to a collective or multiple case design (Creswell, 2014) formed part of the strategy of the study because this combination provided an in-depth

understanding and thorough description of not only the phenomenon, but also the context within which it occurs (Yin, 2013). Multiple 'cases' in the form of three Listening Posts (Stapley, 2006a) were used. This aspect of my strategy was also the most appropriate, as it enabled comprehensive scrutiny and resulted in rich descriptive accounts (Chamberlayne, Bornat, & Apitzsch, 2004; Creswell, 2013; Maree, 2016). In the next section, I briefly discuss various aspects of the strategy as it related to the research method, the research setting, sampling, data collection methods, analyses of the data, and strategies to ensure trustworthiness of the study.

1.6.3 Research method

In this section, the research setting, a discussion of the role of the researcher, the most appropriate sampling technique, data collection methods and the analysis of the data are presented.

1.6.3.1 Research setting

Research participants were drawn from their respective work settings (system psychodynamic practitioners, business leaders and postmodern discourse analysts) to the actual research setting, which was the main campus at the University of South Africa (Unisa).

1.6.3.2 Entry and researcher roles

Since the theoretical model was conceptualised from a systems psychodynamic rationale, it was useful that the participants for sample set one were familiar with this stance. For sample set two (business leaders), and sample set three (postmodern discourse analysts), participants had to be experienced business leaders, or competent discourse analysts with a keen interest in language use

and discourse analysis. Prospective participants were invited and briefed by way of an e-mail. As researcher, I am a registered integral coach and psychologist, in the category industrial, with training and experience in the applicable methodology (Brunner et al., 2006; Diamond & Allcorn, 2009). The obvious subjective reality of the study was managed through self-reflection to enhance researcher credibility, continuous discussions with experts, journaling experiences and building up an audit trail of converging and diverging data and decisions taken throughout the study.

1.6.3.3   Sampling

In this study, I also used my personal assessment to select the participants. A purposive, convenient sample (Bachman & Schutt, 2003; Breverton & Millward, 2004; Creswell, 2007; Henning et al., 2004) and opportunistic sampling (Maree, 2016; Terre Blanche et al., 2006) were therefore used, with the possibility of further snowball sampling (Chamberlayne et al., 2004) to make provision for an eventuality where the data was not of sufficient richness for interpretation and analysis. Three sample sets were selected for this study:

Sample set 1:   Systems psychodynamic practitioners (10)

Sample set 2:   Business leaders (10)

Sample set 3:   Postmodern discourse analysts (10)

For sample set one, the ten participants had substantial knowledge of systems psychodynamics, and they were familiar with the basic assumptions and terminology of this approach. For sample sets two and three, the following qualities were reflected in the business leaders and discourse analysts:

- presented a range of experiences to explore a variety of possible unconscious dynamic anxiety triggers and unique language use (the most information-rich data possible); and

- willing and knowledgeable about the phenomenon being investigated in order to share different perspectives – also known as criterion-based sampling (Morrow, 2005).

1.6.3.4   *Data collection methods and recording of data*

Listening posts were conducted, audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. The listening post is congruent with the systems psychodynamic stance. My descriptive field notes became another source of data collection. The sessions were audio-taped and transcribed into text (Brunning, 2006).

1.6.3.5   *Data analysis*

Data was analysed firstly by means of –
- hermeneutics to understand the discursive data (Finlay, 2009; Grbich, 2007; Langdridge, 2007; Sharkey, 2001);
- double hermeneutics, systems psychodynamically informed discourse analysis (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009; Klein, 2005; Smit & Cilliers, 2006); and
- critical discourse analysis (Wodak & Meyer, 2008).

For each theme, a specific working hypothesis was generated. According to Henning (2004), discourse analysis is an appropriate method for a critical research perspective. The utilisation of the systems psychodynamic lens offered a process for understanding deep, covert and complex behaviour (Cilliers, 2007; Smit & Cilliers, 2006).

In line with one of my specific literature aims, namely to develop and describe a **theoretical model** (developed deductively by using existing literature) relating to language use as manifestation of

leadership anxiety dynamics from a systems psychodynamic perspective, I also had to report on what had emerged from the systems psychodynamic literature. This theoretical model is presented in Chapter 5. Furthermore, this theoretical model was later modified after the empirical data had been collected and analysed. The theoretical model-building process, which was followed, is discussed in Chapter 6 (section 6.2.3.7) of this study.

1.6.3.6   Rigour of the research study

Lincoln and Guba (1985) postulate that traditional constructs such as internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity are inappropriate for qualitative inquiry. In the context of a qualitative study, this kind of validity is characterised by rigour, the overall umbrella term, or specifically as 'trustworthiness' (Golafshani, 2003; Shenton, 2004; Silverman, 2001). Trustworthiness within a qualitative study encompasses credibility, dependability, confirmability, and/or transferability of the inferences made (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

a   Credibility

Credibility is synonymous with internal validity. It is a reflection of truth in reality (Dyson & Brown, 2006). In this study, credibility was enhanced by ensuring that all claims, voices and perspectives of participants are reflected in the text, by looking at the data from multiple perspectives to expose underlying meanings, and by applying the researcher's methodological skill and experience in systems psychodynamic research.

b   Dependability

Dependability is regarded as the consistency of the findings over time (Evans, 2007). Dependability was enhanced by ensuring that

reasons for mutations in the phenomenon being studied were theoretically grounded. Credible audit trails were maintained with accurate recordings of verbatim accounts and careful recording of physical evidence of decisions made throughout the project.

c   Transferability

Transferability is equivalent to external validity or the degree to which the research can be generalised to similar settings (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). In this study, transferability was enhanced by the clarification and rigorous management of theoretical delineations.

d   Confirmability

Confirmability is regarded as objectivity or neutrality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Devers, 1999). Confirmability is enhanced by independent corroboration that there is indeed synchronicity between the literature review and the empirical study findings. Additional mechanisms include experience in the systems psychodynamic perspective, the duration of the data collection process, audit trails and building a chain of evidence.

1.6.3.7   Ethical considerations

International ethical principles, as reflected in the Belmont Report (Amdur, 2003) and the Declaration of Helsinki (Singh & Wassenaar, 2016) governed this study, for example:

- respect for persons;
- beneficence, including reporting and the credibility of the researcher; and
- justice.

Participants were respected at all times. I ensured that they were clear about their rights and particularly the right to withdraw from the study at any time (Babbie & Mouton, 2006; Polkinghorne, 2005; Trochim, 2006). Ethical clearance was obtained from Unisa. Benefits (beneficence) to the participants and others as well as potential risks (maleficence) to participants were clearly communicated.

1.6.3.8   *Reporting*

Within the qualitative approach, writing is a continuation of the practice of social inquiry (Langdridge, 2007). My voice as researcher, author and writer has to be tentative and reflexive. I have also strived to report in such a way that there was improved understanding of the social reality, that interpretive responses were invited, and that the text is a credible account of diverse lived leadership anxiety experiences. Research findings are reported according to manifesting themes, working and research hypotheses. I also deemed it important to share some of my personal reflections of this study with the reader. These reflections are presented in Chapter 8 of the study.

1.7   FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the empirical study in terms of the research aims are presented in Chapter 7, followed by a discussion.

1.8   CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In Chapter 8, the findings of the study are integrated and conclusions are drawn. I also outline how the study had met the set aims, answered the research question, and solved the formulated problem. The limitations of the study are explained, and

recommendations are made for future research, leadership, Industrial and Organisational Psychology, and systems psychodynamic practitioners in terms of dynamic anxiety triggers and language use.

1.9   CHAPTER DIVISION

The chapters are presented as follows:

Chapter 2, 3 and 4 cover the literature reviews of this study. Chapter 2 presents a systems psychodynamic exploration of anxiety as one of the operational research constructs of the study. In Chapter 3, the construct of leadership as the contextual research construct of the study is discussed. In Chapter 4, the second operational research construct of the study, namely language use is explored from a systems psychodynamic perspective. In Chapter 5, a theoretical model of the relationship between language use and anxiety as is described. Chapter 6 outlines the research design, the sample and participants, data collection and data analysis procedures and interpretation. The findings are discussed in Chapter 7. The study concludes with Chapter 8 where the conclusions, limitations and recommendations for future research and practice are suggested and discussed.

1.10   CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided a scientific introduction, background to the research and motivation for the study. The research problem and aims were subsequently stated, followed by the paradigm perspectives, and the research design. Finally, the research method and chapter division were presented.

In Chapter 2, anxiety is discussed from a systems psychodynamic

perspective.

CHAPTER 2: ANXIETY: A SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMIC PERSPECTIVE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the first literature aim is discussed, namely to explore anxiety from a systems psychodynamic approach. In the first part of the chapter, the systems psychodynamic paradigm, with reference to its systems and psychodynamic dimensions is discussed (2.2.1.1), followed by a definition of systems psychodynamics (2.2.1.2). Then the origins of systems psychodynamics are presented (2.2.2), followed by a discussion of its fundamental theoretical assumptions (2.2.3). The second part of the chapter deals with the operational research construct of anxiety (2.3). This construct, as well as the notion of defences were explored from a systems psychodynamic perspective, and the discussion is followed by a discussion on related systems psychodynamic concepts. The chapter concludes with a summary.

2.2 SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMIC APPROACH

In this sub-section, systems psychodynamics is conceptualised by considering the systems and psychodynamic components of the approach. This culminates with an attempt to define the systems psychodynamic approach.

2.2.1 Conceptualising systems psychodynamics

Next, the systemic and psychodynamic axes of the systems psychodynamic approach are discussed.

2.2.1.1 Systemic and psychodynamic axes

It has become increasingly apparent that it is not simply the

rational and observable, but more importantly, the hidden, covert and unconscious personal and institutional forces that stall personal and organisational advancement (Kets de Vries, 2006; Kilburg, 2007; Manley, 2014; Roberts & Jarrett, 2006). The systems psychodynamic approach with its two-pronged framework, which pushes the boundaries of awareness to uncover the covert meaning of organisational behaviour (Smit & Cilliers, 2006), makes a valuable contribution in this regard. Obholzer (2006) suggests that systems psychodynamics has two critical axes or components. The *systemic dimension* highlights the stage, props and backdrop of human interaction in a personal or work-related setting. The notion of a system refers to the open systems concept, and provides the framework for understanding structural dimensions of the organisational system, for example, its design, division of labour, authority levels, reporting relationships, primary task and so on (Brunning, 2006; Miller & Rice, 1975). Continuing to use Obholzer's (2006, p. xxiii) analogy, the *psychodynamic element* on the other hand, emphasises the stage and how the self responds negatively and positively through a reciprocal process to the presence and triggers of the other players on this stage. When the necessary level of awareness is in place, the individual will be able to distinguish between what is mine and not mine, the relevance of one's response and most importantly, the most effective course of action. Moreover, the psychodynamic dimension refers to individual personal experiences and mental processes (object relations, fantasy, transference, resistance, etc.) as well as experiences of unconscious group and social processes, which are a source and consequence of unresolved and unrecognised organisational difficulties (Gould, Stapley, & Stein, 2001; Hirschhorn & Barnett, 1993). It is often these hidden, underlying phenomena, which sabotage both personal and organisational growth and development (Armstrong, 2004; Boxer, 2014; Obholzer, 2006).

2.2.1.2   Definition of systems psychodynamics

When taking the above intertwined aspects of this approach into account, systems psychodynamics has been defined as a way to chart overt and covert issues on the journey of life by mitigating issues, nurturing awareness and creating a sensitive monitoring system that alerts leaders to sabotaging elements prior to their arrival (Gould, 2009; Gould et al., 2001). The two essential components of this approach place, for example, a problem in a systemic context, for instance, shifting it from a small family system to a whole business or national climate (Brunning & Perini, 2010). The psychodynamic axis highlights the personal and organisational 'emotional' content of any system that is either not thought about, unspoken or denied (Gould et al., 2001). This approach therefore accentuates the soft, emotional human relations dimension that is often missing from other forms of analysis (Brunning, 2006). This perspective also implies the simultaneous working from "the inside out" and "the outside in" (Armstrong, 1995, p. 97). Phrased differently, it assists individuals to arrive at an in-depth understanding of their inner and outer worlds while emphasising the connections between these realities (Dimitrov, 2008).

Systems psychodynamics is thus an interdisciplinary field that amalgamates a number of disciplinary influences (Fraher, 2004). It refers to collective psychological behaviour not just within but also between groups and organisations (Neumann, 1999). Systems psychodynamics has been presented as a particular way of thinking about motivating forces that emanate from the interconnected nature of units and sub-units of all social systems (Fraher, 2004; Neumann, 1999). Furthermore, systems psychodynamics also refers to an evolving body of knowledge, which explores work and life in organisations, and to a form of inquiry that results in a deep understanding of a system to take effective action (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbeart, 2008). Significant

emphasis is further placed on the influence of the system as well as the context on people's behaviour (Amado, 2007). Finally, according to Vansina and Vansina-Cobbaert (2008), in psychodynamics the primary task is to effect lasting, genuine behavioural change by bringing about change that is a result of being different in a changed situation or context.

2.2.2 The origins of systems psychodynamics

In the light of the discussion and argument above, the next section further considers the systems psychodynamics approach, by reviewing the theories that have formed the bedrock of this approach, such as psychoanalysis, object relations (later group relations) and open systems theory.

2.2.2.1   Psychoanalytic origins

The first influence on the eventual emergence of systems psychodynamics as a distinct discipline came from the practice of psychoanalysis, with significant contributions by Sigmund Freud and later Melanie Klein's work on object relations (Fraher, 2004; Townley, 2008).

Freud emerged with a strong, yet unique emphasis on the conscious and the unconscious mind (Freud, 1947). This approach confronts the often unspoken, emotional issues that have been relegated to an 'unconscious status' in organisations. These repressed materials are ignored, discounted or rigidly controlled within groups and ultimately within organisations (Dowds, 2007). Freudian psychoanalytic theory is based on several assumptions (Freud, 1923; Gomez, 1998):

- mental life can be explained;

- the mind follows the laws of instinct and has a specific structure;
- mental life is developmental and evolutionary, and the adult mind can be understood in terms of the formative experience of the child; and
- the mind holds unconscious power and forces, which have a considerable influence over human beings.

It has further been suggested that systems psychodynamics originated from psychoanalysis, because psychoanalysts, such as Jaques (1953), embarked on a different disciplinary trajectory to psychoanalytic therapy and initiated a study of social systems (Colman & Geller, 1985; Hayden & Molenkamp, 2004; Miller, 1998). Because of the principle of the existence of unconscious and irrational processes (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2003; Kilburg, 2007), the dynamics of unresolved previous relationships are transferred to and into current work relationships (Huffington, Armstrong, Halton, Hoyle, & Pooley, 2004; Maccoby, 2004). These unconscious forces thus have an effect on work behaviour, relationships, the external environment and performance (Long, 2006; Obholzer & Roberts, 1994). The real and perceived risks and the subsequent anxieties that are generated result in collusive fantasies and dysfunctional behaviour (Kilburg, 2007). In light of these disciplinary developments, Freud's thinking is seen as the initial, theoretical foundations of the system psychodynamic paradigm.

2.2.2.2 *Object relations theory*

Melanie Klein (1975) developed object relations theory. Klein's (1986) theory on object relations initially and predominantly had a strong focus on children, but her theories, notably on splitting, projective identification, and the paranoid-schizoid and depressive

positions were later applied to adults (Czander, 1993; Fraher, 2004). Klein (1986) extended some of Freud's thinking and especially the Freudian idea of instinct by proposing that internal objects are representations of instincts, changed by the experiences of the real object (Townley, 2008). The central tenet of Klein's theory is that people inherently learn to cope with unpleasant experiences and emotions from an early age (Neumann, 1999). The psychoanalytic view is that an individual is born related to an object (Harris, 1996). In the work context, the act of working results in increased control and mastery, with the possibility of projecting internal conflicts onto objects thereby reducing levels of anxiety (Klein, 1986). A dynamic system is created between individual, fantasy object and external world. From an early age, the individual develops the capacity to relate to external (real) and internal (fantasy) objects. Czander (1994) postulates that the concept of 'objects' is used since the object of the relationship is not always a single human being, but could also refer to, for example, parts of the body, an idea, a group or even an organisation. In relationships, other individuals are often 'objectified', because they trigger or represent something different to the perceiver.

Klein (1975) further theorised that in an attempt to cope with ambiguity, pain and frustration, the child deploys two defences, namely splitting and projection. 'Splitting' refers to the compartmentalisation of elements, for example, seeing the giving, nurturing mother as good (good breast), and the withholding, frustrating mother as bad (bad breast). This so-called paranoid-schizoid position (Klein, 1985) and splitting defence (Klein, 1985) allowed a child to embrace the good emotions while learning to distance him or her from the destructive emotions, thereby disowning the uncomfortable feelings and projecting them onto someone else (Boxer, 2014; Dowds, 2002). Beyond the paranoid-schizoid stage is a distinct, but overlapping phase known as the

depressive position (Klein, 1975). This happens when the child matures, and starts to reconcile the good and the bad objects and subsequently acknowledges them as whole beings with good and bad aspects (Klein, 1975). These Kleinian ideas resulted in object relations taking a firm presence in the interpersonal world, eventually leading to the emergence and formation of the object relations school in England (Czander, 1997).

Some of the primary differences between classical psychoanalysis and object relations (Klein, 1975; Miller, 2004) are that classical psychoanalysis is intra-personally focused, adopts a pleasure-seeking orientation, believes that pleasure is provided by instinctual gratification, and work is conceptualised as a battle. Object relations on the other hand is inter-personally focused, adopts an object-seeking orientation, is of the view that relationships give pleasure, and work is conceptualised as play.

Table 2.1 below provides a reflection of the principal differences between classical psychoanalysis and object relations theory.

Table 2.1

Comparison between classical psychoanalysis and object relations theory (Klein, 1975)

CLASSICAL PSYCHOANALYSIS	OBJECT RELATIONS THEORY
Pleasure-seeking orientation	Object-seeking orientation
Instinctual gratification gives pleasure	Relationships give pleasure
Adaptation: Captured within the conflict between the Id, the Ego and the Superego	Adaptation: Learned through engagement with the external environment
Oedipal	Pre-oedipal
Intra-personal	Inter-personal
Work is a battle: defensive activity designed to satisfy sexual and aggressive impulses	Work is play: facilitative activity designed to master internal conflicts and their resulting anxieties through creativity

Source: Adapted from Henning, 2009
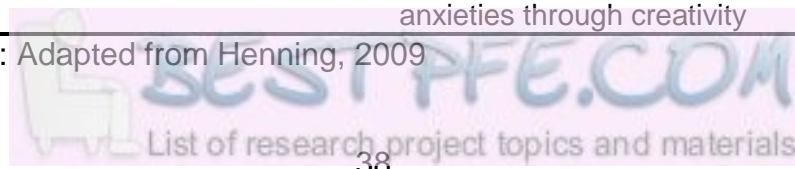
2.2.2.3   Group relations theory

Group relations theory also had an influence on the evolution of the systems psychodynamic paradigm. The theory is based on the classic work of theorists such as, Freud, Lewin, Bion and Klein. The discipline of group relations developed as a result of mental health issues among soldiers during the First World War (Banet & Hayden, 1977; Colman & Geller, 1985; Gould, 1997; Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004; Wells, 1985). There was a shift away from the individual to groups, as it was less expensive to work within a group context. Theoretically, the understanding of groups, would subsequently lead to a better understanding of the individual as well (Colman & Bexton, 1975). The idea of working with the 'group as a whole' was proposed by Le Bon and McDougall, and led to the exploration of group behaviour where the group is perceived as a social system, and individuals are related to this group (system) (Wells, 1985).

Group relations embrace and apply psychodynamic principles to the study of groups perceived as social systems. It is conceptualised by Hayden and Molenkamp (2003) as the study of group dynamics where the group is explored as a holistic system. Fraher (2004) maintains that three theoretical contributions had proved significant in the formation of group relations:

- Le Bon and McDougall's notion that the group should be studied as a whole when attempting to make sense of group behaviour known as the *group-as-a-whole perspective*;
- Bion (1975) and others adapted the clinical practice of observing phenomena from the outside to observing phenomena from within, the so-called 'outsider within' perspective.
- Lewin's (1946) hypothesis that adults tend to learn more effectively when they engage in experiential learning. This

led to the design of the current group relations conferences with its experiential learning perspective.

Like-minded theorists such as Follett (1949) and Mayo (1933) also perceived organisations as 'complex interactive systems' (Awbrey, 2003). The seminal contributions of Bion (date) cannot be over-emphasised. Bion (1961) initiated a therapeutic community by using the Northfield Hospital (Birmingham, England) as an interactive social system, with predominant emphasis on group processes (Banet & Hayden, 1977). Bion's (1975) methods and principles included using himself as an instrument to facilitate understanding of group unconscious dynamics (projection), basic defence mechanisms, distinguishing between the work group and the basic assumption group (and its primary assumption modes: basic assumption of *dependence* (baD), basic assumption of *pairing* (baP), and basic assumption of *fight–flight* (baF) (Bion, 1961). Fraher (2004) concludes by observing that none of these theorists could be seen as systems psychodynamic experts per se, but that they had made invaluable individual contributions to the discipline of systems psychodynamics as it is known today.

2.2.2.4   Open systems theory

Central to open systems theory, is task and boundary awareness (Campbell, 2007; Czander, 1993; Duffy, 2008). This is another influence on the emergence of systems psychodynamics as a distinct discipline (Fraher, 2004). Practitioners at the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations had taken particular interest in the study of whole systems, specifically after World War II (Banet & Hayden, 1977; Colman & Geller, 1985; Gould, 1997; Miller, 2004).

A system is conceptualised as an organised, unitary whole, composed of two or more interdependent subsystems with boundaries, which distinguish it from elements in its external

environment (Colman & Bexton, 1975; Duffy, 2008; Skyttner, 2001; Stapley, 2006b). The emphasis on open systems draws attention to the distinguishing feature of exchanging matter with the environment, resulting in the proposition that all living systems are adaptive and have the innate capacity of self-renewal (Skyttner, 2001). Skyttner (2001) further postulates that the hallmarks of general systems theory are interrelatedness, holism, goal-seeking, transformation, negentrophy (the import of energy from the environment, regulation, hierarchy, differentiation), equifinality (different ways of achieving the same objective), and multifinality (achieving different objectives through similar means). Significant influences on the systems approach came from theoretical developments in psychosocial systems, the understanding of social systems as defences against anxiety, socio-technical approaches, field theory methods, and open systems thinking (Fraher, 2004; Khaleelee & Miller, 1985; Miller & Rice, 1975).

At organisational level, open systems concepts also provide the framing for understanding the more structural aspects of the organisation as a system. Structural aspects refer to the design of the organisation, levels of authority, division of labour, primary and work tasks, processes, activities, boundaries and transactions across boundaries (Klein, 2005). Systems thinking further provides a framing perspective for understanding the relatedness and connectedness of organisational phenomena (Campbell, 2007). To understand organisations more fully, one also needs to explore the influences of what Fraher (2004) calls *socio-factors* (factors such as structures, policies, culture, procedures, etc.) and *psycho-factors* (factors such as values, hopes, fears, anxieties, etc.) that influence realities within the organisation. Fraher (2004) further points out that those relationships between the part and the whole, the whole and the environment, the individual and the group, and the individual and the organisation can be looked at simultaneously to understand organisational defence mechanisms.

The individual and the group (that is, the organisation) can be viewed as a complex manifestation of an open system, and its survival depends on processes of exchange across environmental boundaries (Khaleelee & Miller, 1985). Miller and Rice (1975) thus postulate that the individual, small and large group could be described as:

- consisting of an internal world and external environment;

- engaging in systems of activity characterised by import–conversion–export processes and activities to ensure its survival; and

- transactions between the internal world and the external environment are controlled by its boundary function.

2.2.3 Fundamental theoretical assumptions

Like any other theoretical paradigm, systems psychodynamics is also underpinned by a number of theoretical assumptions. This sub-section deals with some of the basic assumptions. These and other assumptions will be discussed in detail in subsequent literature chapters in relation to the operational research constructs of this study.

As suggested earlier, systems psychodynamic theory is based on a set of basic assumptions. Some of these assumptions are:

- *Unconscious mental life*: Central to psychodynamic thinking is the assumption that part of the mental life of individuals is hidden, and affects them in ways of which they are not always aware – the unconscious life (Colman & Bexton, 1975; De Board, 2014; French & Vince, 1999; Palmer & Whybrow, 2007). It is contended that this serves as a defence mechanism to protect against anxiety and pain (Gould, Stapley, & Stein, 2006; Obholzer, 1999).

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- *Unconscious anxieties and defences*: 'Anxiety' refers to an unconscious, disturbing emotional state (Menzies Lyth, 1993). This state is preceded by the anticipation of a future threatening event in the internal or external environment. The evaluation of environmental stimuli influences an individual's motivational schema. A motivational schema aims to protect our basic needs (Dahlitz, 2015), which have been divided into an *approach-orientation* (movement towards something), or an *avoidance-orientation* (movement away from something) (Elliot, 2006; Erskine, 2010). Human beings subsequently mobilise defence mechanisms to protect against this 'imminent' danger (Blackman, 2004; Colman, 1975; Obholzer & Roberts, 1994). Some examples of these defences are denial, projection, idealisation, denigration and intellectualisation (Blackman, 2004; Palmer & Whybrow, 2007). These mechanisms serve as a shield against the possibility of being tormented by uncontrollable and unbearable unconscious anxieties (Blackman, 2004). Some of these defences (such as denial, splitting and projection) are dysfunctional, while others (such as sublimation and appropriate humour) are more helpful.

- *Containment*: The concept of containment originates from Kleinian psychoanalysts (Klein, Gabelnick, & Herr, 1998; Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). The hypothesis is that infants and younger children start at an early age to manage their anxieties. These infants project their feelings onto their caregivers, who in turn accept ('absorb') these feelings. The emotional state then becomes less threatening (Grotstein, 2008). These roles can also become reversed, as the container attempts to understand the contained (Stapley, 2006a).

- *Transference, counter-transference* and *unconscious communication*: It is hypothesised that individuals attempt to

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bring ('transfer') past experiences into the present, which results in the distortion of perceptions about others (Colman & Geller, 1985; Hayden & Molenkamp, 2004). 'Counter-transference' refers to the feelings and emotions evoked in the second party (Hirschhorn & Barnett, 1993; Segal, 2006). This reaction was later understood as the second party's response to unconscious communication processes from the first, and therefore serves as a critical source of dynamic information at an unconscious level (Gillette & McCollum, 1995; Palmer & Whybrow, 2007).

- *Management of and on the boundary*: Boundaries could be physical or psychological, and delineate what is inside and outside the system (Hayden & Molenkamp, 2004). Regulation is a critical management function. It allows the manager to be in contact with the environment, and in touch with the emotional state of staff, as he or she provides containment of anxieties (Czander, 1993).

- *Authority and leadership*: Authority denotes the legitimate application of power in the course of executing the primary task of the organisation (Stapley, 2006b). Authority is both given and taken in the context of the organisation as well as one's psychological make-up (Krantz & Maltz, 1997). According to Hayden and Molenkamp (2004), leadership authority is the application of this power by influencing the organisation to execute its primary task.

Bion's (1961) central assumption about basic assumption activity is also located at the core of systems psychodynamic theory (Colman, 1975; Lawrence, Bain, & Gould, 2000; Menzies Lyth, 1981). Bion (1961) posits that groups have both *overt* (work group) and *latent* (basic assumption group) aspects. At work group level, groups consciously pursue an agreed-upon task. However, groups do not always function rationally and productively (Hayden & Molenkamp, 2003). The basic

assumption group comprises unconscious fears, wishes, fantasies, desires, defences and projections (Bion, 1961). Thus, there is always an uncomfortable tension between the basic assumption group and the work group. Moreover, Bion (1961) identified three further assumptions at individual (micro-system), group (the meso-system) and organisational level (the macro-system) as the cornerstones of psychodynamic or group relations theory. These assumptions are known as dependency, fight–flight, and pairing.

- *Basic assumption dependency* (baD): Group members with strong feelings of protection and security often work from the assumption that some members in the group would provide parental guidance, acceptance or caring (Bion, 1989; Cilliers & Koortzen, 2000; Colman & Bexton, 1975). When these needs are not met, members feel frustrated or powerless.

- *Basic assumption fight or flight* (baF): The fight reaction (jealousy, competition, etc.) is exhibited when individuals fight within themselves or with fellow group members in order to manage the discomfort. The flight reaction (rationalise, focus on past experiences, intellectualise, etc.) is displayed as a mechanism to avoid what is uncomfortable in the here and now (Huffington, 2004; Lawrence, 1999; Stapley, 2006a).

- *Basic assumption pairing* (baP): The group uses pairing to cope with the anxiety of alienation, discomfort and loneliness (Czander, 1993). Splitting is also a form of pairing, when the group splits according to gender, ethnicity or similar experiences (Lawrence, 2000; Stapley, 2006b).

Two additional assumptions were added, namely *one-ness,* also referred to as *we-ness*, when the team desires to join a more powerful force (Turquet, 1974) and *me-ness*, which unfolds when the individual retreats into an inner comfortable world (individualism), as opposed to the external, disturbing and threatening environment (Dowds, 2007; Turquet, 1974). A summary of these basic assumptions compiled from contributions by (Bion, 1961; Lawrence et al., 2000; Turquet, 1974) are reflected in Table 2.2 below.

Table 2.2

The basic assumption life of groups

Basic assumption	Dominant behaviour	Dominant emotional climate
Dependency	Members behave as if the group exists purely for someone to take care of members. This leader is expected to be the source of all knowledge, health and power. The chosen leader is seduced into taking up this role (Huffington et al., 2004; Neumann Kellner, & Dawson-Shepherd, 1997).	Helplessness, powerlessness, and utter dependence.
Fight–flight	Members behave as if the group merely exists to fight an imminent danger or enemy (object or idea) or to flee from it. The leader is expected to identify the enemy and lead the group in fight or flight (Hoggett, 2010; Krantz, 2010).	Over-activity and urgency without reflection. Anti-intellectual and anti-introspection.
Pairing	Members behave as if the group has assembled awaiting a miracle, or the arrival of a 'messiah' or 'saviour' to make things better (Huffington et al., 2004).	Hope and euphoria with the focus on a better future.
One-ness/We-ness	Members seek to become part of a powerful force; the self is surrendered to take up a more passive role (Turquet, 1974). The individual self is absorbed into the group.	Sense of belonging and unity.
Me-ness	Members behave as if there is no group reality, because the only consideration is for the self. Engaging with the group is threatening, and there is a retreat into 'self-reliance' (Horowitz, 2005).	Selfishness, self-protection, self-preservation. Anxiety evoked by the perception of the self being erased by the group.

The general trend of a basic assumption mode is the loss of touch with reality. Group members tend to generalise, and feelings and actions take precedence over reflection and exploration (Hoggett, 2010; Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). According to Argyris (2004, p. 207) defensive and protective strategies generally emphasise the following key values, which are underpinned by feelings of uncertainty, vulnerability, incompetence and the loss of self-esteem:

- be in unilateral control;

- maximise winning and minimise losing;

- avoid expressing negative feelings; and

- act rationally by using defensive reasoning.

Furthermore, employees not only create but also *sustain their own psychic reality of organisational life*. This psychic reality influences behaviours, processes and procedures in the workplace. According to Adams and Diamond (1999), people attribute their own emotional and unconscious meanings to the experiences they encounter and the relationships that they have in the organisation, which has been referred to as the organisation-in-the-mind (Armstrong, 2005; Hutton, Balzagette, & Reed, 1997; Neumann & Hirschhorn, 1999). Thus, between organisational reality on the one hand, and subjective human experience on the other, lies the important phenomenon of the attribution of meaning.

Leaders generally prefer a controllable and predictable environment, and therefore dislike feelings of discomfort, ambivalence and anxiety. However, particularly anxiety and defences against anxiety is part of organisational reality. One of the assumptions of the system psychodynamic stance is that organisations provide containing mechanisms to protect employees and leaders from excessive uncertainty, ambivalence and anxiety. Hence, Adams and Diamond (1999) suggest that employees use organisations as potential psychological space for play or to defend against anxiety in order to protect their self-esteem. Excessive anxiety leads to the triggering of

defence mechanisms (Neumann & Hirshhorn, 1999) through the development of social systems as defence against persecutory and depressive anxieties (Krantz, 1998; Young, 1995). Anxiety is linked to positions (roles) in the organisation, the tasks to be performed and the relationships to be created and sustained (Jaques, 1990; Menzies Lyth, 1960; Obholzer, 1999). Organisational structures are thus used for defence-related instead of primary task-related activities (Jaques, 1990; Nutkevitch, 1998; Obholzer, 1999; Shapiro, 1985). Often, a vicious cycle is created, because as new situations arise and new anxieties are created, new defences have to be deployed (Brown 2003; Long, 2004; Stein, 2000). These social defence mechanisms have an important function in that they replace the need for individual defences (Hirschhorn, 1999).

Postmodern organisations are often referred to as 'anxiety machines' (Amado & Amato, 2001), eliciting primitive anxieties. I want to suggest that, as traditional containing structures are corroding, language should be explored more creatively as a container of anxiety. Perhaps now more than ever before, there is a need to acknowledge, to own and to integrate the 'good' and the 'bad' as it is encountered in situations, people, objects and organisations. I believe that language could play a significant creative and containing role in this regard.

Perhaps leaders could benefit from harnessing a more conscious application of the basic assumption mentality. Bion (1961, 1975) asserts that the work and basic assumption groups not only exist simultaneously, but more importantly, both are necessary to ensure the group's activity. However, when there is inadequate consciousness about basic assumption activity, workgroup activity is diverted and compromised (Fraher, 2004; Gould, 2001). Basic assumption activity carries particular implications for leaders. When a specific basic assumption is triggered because leaders experience too much conflict or anxiety, effective reflection, decision-making, learning and functioning could be impeded. In an organisational context, the culture could be influenced by aberrant

forms of basic assumptions (Stokes, 1994a). Leaders should therefore be conscious of the potential formation of group cultures for basic assumption activities (Stokes, 1994a).

An ambivalent primary task could trigger a valence for basic assumption behaviour. Different and even conflicting notions regarding the primary task or its execution could trigger anxieties. The turbulent and perpetually changing leadership landscape, often results in perversion (Long, 2008) or flexible primary tasks as a result of limited resources, organisational challenges and other external environmental demands (Manley, 2014). Leaders can also benefit from the complexity perspective about basic assumption activity, which posits that when groups function at the edge of the basic assumption group, more transformative processes, creativity and positive energy are unleashed (Stacey, 2001; Wells, 1985). This implies that uncertainty and ambivalence are not only identified and acknowledged, but also proactively embraced.

2.3   ANXIETY

In this second part of the chapter, the operational research construct of anxiety is discussed. Particular emphasis is placed on the conceptualisation of anxiety from a systems psychodynamic perspective, anxiety and its defences as well as related systems psychodynamic concepts.

2.3.1 Systems psychodynamic perspectives on anxiety

Explications of anxiety vary greatly (Barlow, 2002; Cooper, 2003; Kelvens, 1997; Squire, 2009). Because of the associated discomfort that leaders experience in the form of uncomfortable bodily sensations, such as increased heart rate, sweating, shortness of breath, muscle tension, racing thoughts and tunnel vision, etc. (Squire, 2009), anxiety is often viewed as an unpleasant experience to be avoided at all cost. Different conceptualisations of anxiety exist, and some of these share a number of

basic assumptions with the systems psychodynamic definition of anxiety. Anxiety has been conceptualised as an emotional and/or physiological response to known and/or predominantly unknown or unconscious causes that may range from a normal anxious reaction to extreme dysfunction, which affects decision-making and impair functioning and/or affect quality of life (Bush & Griffin-Sobel, 2002; Noyes, Holt, & Massie, 1998; Vitek, Rosenzweig, & Stollings, 2006). Other scholars explicate anxiety as a future-oriented mood state with an anticipated preparation for possible future negative events (Craske et al., 2009). Jacobs and Jacobs (2004) emphasise one of the major characteristics of anxiety, which is an overwhelming sense of apprehension – the expectation that something bad is happening or will happen. The symptoms of anxiety include worry (verbal-subjective), avoidance (overt motor acts), and muscle tension (somato-visceral activity) (Watson, 2005; Zinbarg, 1998). It is common for leaders to experience this anxiety in the face of certain personal and/or organisational challenges (McFarland, 2009; Nel, 2014; Obholzer & Roberts, 1994; Segal, 2006). This unpleasant emotional state accompanied by feelings of apprehension, dread, distress and uneasiness amongst leaders in the course of their duties, has been referred to as 'leadership anxiety' (Koestenbaum, 1991; Spinelli, 2005). There also appears to be a significant difference between fear and anxiety. Craske et al. (2009) provide evidence for differentiating fear from anxiety. Evidence (studies involving undergraduates, air force academy cadets, and psychiatric outpatients seems to support a distinction between self-reported somato-visceral symptoms experienced as a result of fear and self-reported subjective symptoms that are a result of anxiety (Craske et al., 2009). In other words, with *anxiety* there is no imminent, apparent danger or threat to react to, whereas *fear* refers to an emotional feeling of apprehensiveness in response to an imminent threat.

The brief discussion above was offered to contextualise the systems psychodynamic stance, which has a rather unique understanding of the nature, origin and influence of anxiety. Anxiety is viewed as being intertwined with the human condition. Anxiety goes back to the early

stages of infancy (Gould et al., 2006), with numerous sources, ranging from activities of the death instinct (Segal, 2006) to the fear of decimation by a dominant force or object. This could result in –

- anxiety as an internal persecutor;

- internal prosecution as a result of the introjection of the fear of annihilation by an overpowering object;

- frustration associated with expectations not being met (Klein, 1997); and

- primal anxieties triggered by the separation from the mother or authority figure (Klein, 1997).

Freud (1935) identifies the trauma of birth as another source as a result of the conflict between the forbidden drives of the id and the moral codes of the superego, as well as the frustration associated with expectations not being met. Freud (1948) later introduced the concept of 'neurotic anxiety' (free-floating and always filled with the preoccupation of attaching itself to available thoughts). Other psychodynamic authors describe anxiety as having a primitive component, ever present, and pervasive in all human beings (Fraher, 2004; Obholzer, 1999; Segal, 2006). Hjelle and Ziegler (1992) on the other hand define reality anxiety as an emotional response to real or perceived external danger. This type of anxiety is very intense, but often relatively easy to alleviate, because the cause of the threat only needs to be addressed in order to minimise the level of anxiety (Meyer, Moore, & Viljoen, 1995).

Freud (1947) further distinguished between three types of anxiety, namely reality anxiety, neurotic anxiety and moral anxiety.

- *Reality anxiety* could cause intra-psychic and interpersonal conflict (Moller, 1995). This kind of anxiety is also known as objective anxiety, which is an intelligible response in the face of an external threat.

- *Neurotic anxiety* refers to an emotional response to a perceived threat that unacceptable id impulses could enter consciousness,

and the ego would not be able to control these sexual and/or aggressive urges (Hjelle & Ziegler, 1992). This type of anxiety is of a conscious nature and gradually becomes unconscious. Freud (1947) further distinguishes between three types of neurotic anxiety, namely –

- *free-floating anxiety* (temporarily attaches itself to any possibility of an imminent dread);
- *phobias* (the exaggeration of an external danger); and
- *hysteria* (including other similar symptoms without any visible evidence of external danger).

- *Moral anxiety* is the fear of not acting in accordance with the superego and the subsequent experience of guilt (Hergenhahn, 1994). This kind of anxiety is the emotional response of the ego in the presence of a stern warning from the superego of unacceptable behaviour and the threat of imminent punishment (Hjelle & Ziegler, 1992). Moral anxiety could also emanate from behaviours, which society deems to be dangerous, for example, teenage pregnancies, sexual trafficking, social media, children's use of the Internet, and genetic engineering (Hoggett, 2013).

Anxiety as the central psychological problem of humankind (Lazar, 2011). It also has an organisational influence and has become the central hallmark of any organisational landscape (Jaques, 1955a). Jaques (1955a, p. 479) further highlights the unconscious role of anxiety in organisations as follows:

[A] number of problems, which are often laid at the door of human ignorance, stupidity, wrong attitudes, selfishness, or power-seeking, may become more understandable if seen as containing unconsciously motivated attempts by human beings to defend themselves in the best way available at the moment against the experience of anxieties whose sources could not be consciously controlled.

From a systems psychodynamic perspective, anxiety is thus perceived as fear of the future, serving as the impetus or driving force (dynamo) of the

relations and relatedness between leaders and their followers (Cilliers & Terblanche, 2010). Jarrett and Kellner (1996) in turn describe it as an emotional reaction of the unconscious to internal and external threats resulting in psychological disturbance. Anxiety is therefore at the core of psychodynamic theory (De Board, 2014). Koortzen and Cilliers (2002) conceptualise anxiety as the emotional state of apprehension, which is characterised by unpleasant feelings of tension or, according to Vansina and Vansina-Cobbaert (2008, p. 68), as a an emotion, which is triggered by a primary functioning mental system, when a situation is experienced as unsafe. Moving from the personal to the work environment, anxiety is seen as the very foundation of organisational behaviour (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2000). Much behaviour in organisations can therefore be attributed to anxiety (Krantz, 2001).

The systems psychodynamic view acknowledges the prevalence of primitive anxieties of a persecutory and depressive nature (Krantz, 2001). A central feature of this approach is the mobilisation of social defences to contain this anxiety (Gould, Stapley, & Stein, 2004). Obholzer (1994) distinguishes between three types of anxiety, of which leaders should be aware and which they should address, namely primitive anxieties, anxieties arising from work, and personal anxieties.

According to Obholzer (1996), *primitive anxieties* are all-pervasive and ever-present. These anxieties are contained when organisations provide members with a safe haven and a sense of belonging (Obholzer, 1999). However, these primitive anxieties are evoked when members experience that they are being separated from the organisation (Gutmann & Ravot-Loucheux, 2009). Czander (1993) suggests that there are two types of primitive anxieties, namely *persecutory anxiety* (associated with the fear of annihilation, and characterised by the paranoia and splitting of the paranoid-schizoid position) and *depressive anxiety* (associated with the fear that destructive impulses would destroy the loved and dependent object. This kind of anxiety is never fully worked through). The *paranoid-schizoid position* focuses on the survival of the self, which is perceived to be threatened by a variety of persecutors. It endeavours to rescue itself

by splitting them off onto an external objective, for example, projective identification (Lazar, 2011). Anxieties of the *depressive position* focus on the survival or well-being of the 'other' (object) who is perceived to be threatened by one's own hostility (Hoggett, 2013). The anxiety labelled by Bion (1985) as *nameless dread*, is almost impossible to tolerate and the subject tries to make it bearable by giving it a name, an object, even a focus to make it more tolerable (Hollway, 2013).

Obholzer (2000) is of the opinion that the purpose of work is really to protect members from anxiety, and is not simply organised in order to attain the primary task of the organisation. Leaders experience personal anxieties when an encounter triggers previous experiences. At a conscious as well as an unconscious level, *work-generated anxieties* tend to resonate with personal and primitive anxieties (Obholzer, 1996). Where there is anxiety, one is likely to find defensive mechanisms and behaviour. Anxieties and defences tend to hang out together. *Free-floating anxiety* – describing the objectless nature of this anxiety – is a common form of anxiety. It is somatic (feeling something in one's gut, tightening body, nauseous) and largely non-discursive (the tension endures; not the thought); thus, it is an affect seeking an object to which it can attach itself (Hoggett, 2013). It is pervasive and unrealistic, which exerts pressure on the individual or the system as a whole. This anxiety triggers actions or responses, and individuals are compelled to defend themselves against this nervousness in order to retain control (Sievers, 2009). *Survival anxiety* is triggered by the unpleasant realisation that one has to change in order to survive. An associative anxiety is called 'learning anxiety', which implies that one is confronted by the risk of one's own incompetence or dysfunctional behaviour (Schein, 2009) in the context of a change situation. *Performance anxiety* is triggered when one is haunted by the perception of being incompetent, inadequate or unable to perform at a specific level (Baumeister & Tice, 1990; Hoggett, 2013). In light of the above exploration, Koortzen and Cilliers (2002) strongly contend that understanding anxieties is crucial to uncovering the conscious and unconscious motivations of self-defeating behaviour at

different levels throughout the organisation.

On reflection, a number of common strands can be drawn from the discussion leading up to this point. For example, anxiety is perceived as a predominantly unconscious process and driving force (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002). This energy, psychic pain or impetus, which is prevalent in all systems, manifests in different ways. It is triggered by threats in the environment and affects individual and organisational functioning. The depressive position is to be assumed for anxiety to be acknowledged and owned, and the impairment caused by splitting has to be reconnected (Klein, 1975). Drawing from these strands, for the purpose of congruence and the empirical component of this study, anxiety was conceptualised as an emotional state and/or the emotional and psychological reaction of the dynamic unconscious to perceived threats in the external or internal world, which serve as impetus of organisational behaviour, thereby either developing or impairing leadership functioning (Cilliers & Terblanche, 2010; Jarrett & Kellner, 1996; Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008).

2.3.2 Anxiety dynamics: Anxiety and its defences

In this section, I define anxiety dynamics quite widely as processes, experiences, events or behaviours that trigger, contain or are the outcome of the presence of anxieties (Cytrynbaum, 1993; Kets de Vries, 2004; Mollon, 2002). In the following section, the theoretical relationship between anxiety and defences is discussed by exploring the three categories of defence mechanisms. These categories are personal or individual defences, social defences, and system domain defences.

2.3.2.1   Defence mechanisms

Anxiety has been viewed as the origin of both distorted and creative work relationships (Hirschhorn, 1993). In an attempt to manage and contain their anxieties, leaders employ a diverse range of defence mechanisms to protect themselves (Czander, 1993; Halton, 1994; Hirschhorn, 1993;

Obholzer, 1996. The inherent problem with defences in general is that they limit experience and subsequently leadership understanding, particularly at a time when experience should be expanded and understanding improved (Hirschhorn, 1993). Jaques (1955a) eloquently describes how employees (including leaders in the context of this study) use organisations as defence against the recurrence of early paranoid and depressive anxieties (as suggested by Klein (1975), and to reinforce individual defence mechanisms against anxiety. Jaques (1955b) hypothesised that this defence against anxiety is what keeps employees or leaders together (De Board, 2014; Kernberg, 1998). Thus, within an organisational context, behaviours such as envy, suspicion and hostility correlate with behaviour when projection is at play (Hirschhorn & Barnett, 1993; Miller, 1997; Obholzer & Roberts, 1994). It has been suggested that by externalising internal objects into the social life of institutions, the emergence of psychotic anxieties is reduced (Colman & Bexton, 1975; De Board, 2014).

Defence mechanisms are used unconsciously (Lipgar & Pines, 2003; Miller, 1993; Shapiro & Carr, 1999) in order to remain in control and to experience a sense of safety, security and acceptance (Gabelnick & Carr, 1989; Hoggett, 2010; Krantz, 2010; Neumann et al., 1997). The implication is that if adequate defences are in place, the leader will be able to function reasonably well in the midst of anxiety (Kramer, 2010; Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2001). Arguing from a different perspective, Kerr and Bowen (1988) concur that anxiety undermines feelings of emotional well-being, and emotional interdependence in relationships leads to more anxiety. Defences operate on a continuum, ranging from primitive, debilitating impairments to more sophisticated competence-enhancing adaptations (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). Defences are impairing because, instead of restricting one's experiences of anxiety, one's understanding should actually be expanded by exploring anxiety, thereby resulting in increased understanding and more innovative ways of negotiating life's diverse encounters.

2.3.2.2   Individual defences

Throughout life, individuals are subjected to painful encounters, stress, conflicting thoughts and intense pressure, which often result in anxiety (Maccoby, 2004; Stapley, 2006a). Individual defence mechanisms are thus employed in response to this emotional conflict and turmoil (Gould et al., 2006; Kilburg, 2000). As suggested earlier, these defence mechanisms have a protective function and are neither good nor bad (Czander, 1993). Individuals develop these coping strategies from an early age to deal with reality and to maintain a functional sense of self (Blackman, 2004). The problem with defence mechanisms is that they only assist on a temporary basis, and the issue that is being suppressed will inevitable resurface at a later stage if not addressed satisfactorily (Blackman, 2004; Dimitrov, 2008; Hyde & Thomas, 2002; Kets de Vries, 1991).

In this study, the defence mechanism hierarchy as suggested by Sadock and Sadock (2003) and Vaillant (1997) was explored, because these authors present defence mechanisms according to the maturity level of each as well as the degree of optimal functioning – i.e. from least favourable adaptation (paranoid-schizoid position) to movement into the depressive position. Individual defences in the form and sequence of narcissistic defences, immature defences, neurotic defences and mature defences will be discussed.

a   Narcissistic defences

This category of defences is not only the least favourable, but also the most immature of all the defence mechanisms (Sadock & Sadock, 2003; Vaillant, 1997). These consist of the following:

- *Denial* is one of the most common forms of defence. Stapley (2006b) asserts that it involves some form of disowning of aspects of a conflict dynamic so that it appears or becomes non-existent in the process. Certain events, for example, could become so painful

and traumatic that these experiences are temporarily 'deleted' through this unconscious process.

- The primitive defence mechanism called *splitting* (which is also a form of denial) refers to the defensive process where good features of an object are separated from bad ones (Gomez, 1998). The individual deals with ambivalent anxiety by creating the illusion that some people, institutions, values, etc. are all good and others are all bad (Blackman, 2004). According to Klein (1946), splitting allows a baby to engage in trusting relationships by separating everything good from everything that is bad thereby being able to take in (introjection) total goodness. It thus appears as if splitting forms the underlying capacity for idealisation, introjection and projection.

- *Projection* involves ejecting parts of oneself onto others and distancing from it, whilst *projective identification* is the interactive process of unconsciously identifying with projected feelings or material (Czander, 1993; Halton, 2003). When perpetual projections are internalised by the projectee, the sense of identity of that person becomes affected (Knapp, 1989). Projective identification results in 'feeling at one' with the object of projection in an effort to control the reaction and behaviours of such person or object (Ogden, 1982). Projective identification (Czander, 1994) thus serves as defence to distance, for example, the leader unconsciously from unwanted parts, and simultaneously keeping those parts alive in others as mode of communication thereby making the projectee feeling the same as the projector. It further serves as a type of relatedness (the projectee is viewed and becomes a container of the affects of the projector). A related process is transference, which involves the displacement of past wishes and feelings onto people in the present (Maccoby, 2004). During counter-transference, other people's feelings and emotions are experienced as one's own (Halton, 1994). The connection with counter-transference is that the projective identification leads to the

individual (recipient) acting out the counter-transference emanating from the projected feelings. Sub-systems then absorb, for example, the guilt of the entire system (Bolton & Roberts, 1994; Halton, 1994; Kets de Vries, 1991).

b   Immature defences

Immature defences are also primitive defences and prevent the effective resolution of issues (Blackman, 2004; Sadock & Sadock, 2003; Vaillant, 1997). These defences involve the following:

- *Introjection* is a process of internalisation of bad/good parts from others to alleviate anxiety by creating congruency (Czander, 1993; De Board, 2014; Obholzer & Roberts, 1994). Focus reverts to external realities, and anxiety-provoking affects, such as distrust, jealousy and greed, which are often located onto others through the above-mentioned process of projection (Halton, 1994). Introjection is thus another way of enforcing the illusion of good and bad, thereby creating a 'safer' environment (Gomez, 1998). This could lead to stuckness in the sense that when a challenging situation arises, the 'introject' of the past is unconsciously recalled, and the same behaviour is repeated (Stapley, 2006b).
- *Regression* occurs when an individual attempts to avoid an anxiety-provoking situation by looking for comfort in an earlier (regression) more gratifying but less mature level of behaviour, whether partially or totally (Blackman, 2004). An example is 'throwing a temper tantrum'. This individual reverts to a behaviour that he or she knows has been successful under previous conditions (Moller, 1995).
- *Passive aggression,* on the other hand, is the process of bearing hostility and acting in such a way that it would inconvenience a feared person (Moller, 1995; Padavic & Ely, 2013). Aggression is expressed indirectly (passively) towards this feared individual. According to Sadock and Sadock (2003), examples include acting

ill or simply procrastinating.

c   Neurotic defences

Through neurotic defences, threatening memories, thoughts or emotions are kept out of conscious awareness (Blackman, 2004; Hjelle & Ziegler, 1992; Moller, 1995). Examples include:

- *Repression*, which is the defence that transfers unacceptable memories and wishes into the unconscious (Moller, 1995). These drives often cause leaders pain in the form of guilt and anxiety. This form of defence is often used in conjunction with other defence mechanisms in order to ensure that the repressed material remains in the unconscious (Hergenhahn, 1994; Kilburg, 2004).

- *Rationalisation* refers to an attempt to explain one behaviour by providing what appears to be rational, acceptable behaviours for those actions (Blackman, 2004). Rationalisation is therefore a type of justification or intellectualisation, which attributes the reason for the behaviour to what is in fact not the real reason for the behaviour (Kets de Vries, 2006).

- Finally, *controlling* occurs when an individual, such as a leader, attempts to regulate, influence or manage an object or event to reduce inner conflict or anxiety (Sadock & Sadock, 2003; Stapley, 2006a).

d   Mature defences

Mature defences seem to be more effective in managing anxieties and other forms of inner conflict (Moller, 1995). Optimal functionality is promoted, as the individual attempts to raise issues into conscious awareness (Vaillant, 1997). Examples of mature defences include:

- *Suppression,* which occurs when the mind automatically blocks out the thought content of an affect, also expressed as 'unconscious

forgetting' (Blackman, 2004). The individual purposefully and consciously (or semi-consciously) sets an issue aside in order to reduce the level of discomfort (Blackman, 2004; Peltier, 2001; Vansina, 2000).

- *Sublimation* has been proposed as one of the more constructive and mature forms of defences as socially unacceptable impulses or fantasies are converted into socially more acceptable behaviours that are representative of the objectionable feelings or fantasies (Padavic & Ely, 2013; Sadock & Sadock, 2003).

- Finally, in order to escape related often painful feelings, an individual might focus on the funny elements of a painful and/or threatening situation (Blackman, 2004). This form of defence is known as *humour*, because according to Freud (1905), socially unacceptable thoughts and feelings are shared in an informal, less serious and light-hearted fashion. Furthermore, dreams and what has become known as slips of the tongue are often reflective of repressed unconscious desires.

2.3.2.3   Socially constructed defences

The turbulence in organisations elicits anxieties regarding how anxieties of the paranoid and depressive type will be contained in organisations (Jaques, 1990). Anxieties are contained by employing social defences (Jaques, 1953; Menzies Lyth, 1993), which results in the depersonalisation of relationships and impairment of the primary task performance in organisations (Bain, 1998). These social defences are viewed as being part of group dynamics, notably the group-as-a-whole principle (Colman & Bexton, 1975; Miller & Rice, 1975; Rice, 1965). A social defence has been defined as "a set of organizational arrangements, including structure, work routines, and narratives, that function to protect members from having to confront disturbing emotions stemming from internal psychological conflicts produced by the nature of the work" (Padavic & Ely, 2013, p. 1). These social defence systems are

characterised by the evasion of guilt, shame, anxiety and ambivalence (Bain, 1998), they reinforce individual psychological defences (Jaques, 1953), are deeply embedded in any organisational system, and adversely affect effective learning and performance in organisations (Dimitrov, 2008; Menzies Lyth, 1993; Stapley, 2006b).

From a practical perspective, a management system, instead of dealing constructively with its troubling dynamics, could project undesired parts onto other groups, or even punishing them for acting out what actually belongs to the management system (Mouly & Sankaram, 2002). An abusive environment is thus created because the management system has abused its power and rejected a valuable part of itself that should have been acknowledged and embraced (Amado, 1995; Miller, 2004).

2.3.2.4   System domain defences

Bain (1998, p. 128) introduced the term "system domain defences" in referring to a collection of institutions sharing a similar task. This concept was used to explain theoretically why it is difficult to sustain change in certain types of organisations. Institutions that comprise such a domain also share a similar set of social defences against anxiety (Dimitrov, 2008; Huffington et al., 2004; Hyde & Thomas, 2002). These defences stifle development, learning and change. Bain (1998, p. 130) further introduced the term "system domain fabric" to refer to that which the system domain (institution) holds in common. Effective change management resides in the transformation of the system domain fabric in the form of culture, authority systems, roles and so forth. Staff sustains and transfers the knowledge, experience and behaviour of the system through Bains' (1998, p. 138) notion of the "system-in-the-mind", which entails the internalised representation of the system domain. In this study, (business) leadership could be viewed as a system domain. The exploration of language use as manifestation of leadership anxiety dynamics could provide insights into potential sources of anxiety (individually, socially and emanating from the systemic domain) and the

preferred defences of leaders. This could provide an opportunity for systems psychodynamic practitioners to assist leaders to take up their leadership role more effectively in the current increasingly turbulent and threatening times.

2.3.2.5   Developmental processes

Apart from the above-mentioned defence mechanisms, Vansina and Vansina-Cobbaert (2008) allude to what they have coined 'developmental processes' employed for defensive purposes.

- *Symbolisation* is the act of using language as a means of deflecting attention from critical uncomfortable matters, a way of shutting people up, and the disruption of thought processes.

- *Fantasy* (imagination) is employed to disguise a scary, painful reality, which is essentially within one's sphere of influence. The phrase 'flight into fantasy' is often used to explain this phenomenon (Kilburg, 2004).

- When *identification* is triggered by anxiety, the characteristics of someone else are adopted. This is obviously very dangerous in an abusive situation. Vansina and Vansina-Cobbaert (2008) further postulate that the defensive use of developmental processes is not always triggered by anxiety, and is not always an unconscious process. It could be conscious, emanating from the need for influence, power and control.

Defensive behaviours thus seem to be a normal part of human life (Klein, 2005). However, as suggested earlier (see section 2.3.2.2), these behaviours often become a stumbling block in the path of the primary task and the development of authentic engaging relationships (Vansina, 2000). In working with and through defences, Vansina and Vansina-Cobbaert (2008) make the following recommendations:

- It is critical to be able to find the *reasons* behind the sometimes observable, inappropriate behaviours and ways of working and

finding creative ways to handle these reasons more satisfactorily.

- Defensive behaviour often triggers defensive reactions, leading to ineffective reactions, rather than exploring the reasons behind these noted defences. It is thus important to *self-reflect* on what is triggered off.

- Defensive processes are handled insofar as they create an *ineffective working environment*, or to the extent that people's integrity and development are compromised.

- Labelling is not sufficient; attention should be drawn to the *illogical quality* of the behaviour in order for people to reflect and to make some progress by moving forward. Typical linguistic interventions could be: "We speak as if these two issues are not related to each other", or "Are we trying to have our cake and eat it?" This will force people to reflect on the logic behind their actions/behaviours.

- One never touches directly on unconscious anxieties. One should explore any possible relationship between defences and underlying anxieties and decide on an appropriate intervention (if any) in the context of the situation.

2.3.3 Anxiety and related systems psychodynamic concepts

I have decided to allow myself to be guided by the systems psychodynamic literature in order to identify systems psychodynamic constructs that are relevant to anxiety dynamics, and my research question in particular, as the following section shows. Here, these systems psychodynamic constructs are mentioned insofar as they have the capacity either to trigger anxieties, or to contain or activate terrains of tension, thereby resulting in the activation of defence mechanisms. These constructs are attachment, relationships and relatedness, transitional phenomena, envy, jealousy and greed, and transference and counter-transference. These constructs are discussed below.

2.3.3.1   Attachment

John Bowlby pioneered the literature on attachment theory in the 1950s and 1960s to explain phenomena in personality development (Bowlby, 1988). He suggested that attachments are experience-based mental representations of early childhood relationships that serve the purpose of ordering one's world and determining our responses to the world (Dykas & Cassidy, 2011; Rautenbach, Sutherland, & Scheepers, 2015). Attachment theory is based on the observation that separation from or loss of the mother figure could lead to severe anger, distress and anxiety among children (Colin, 1996). Thus, attachment refers to the bond between a person and an attachment figure based on the need for safety, security and protection (Sonkin, 2005). Attachment behaviour is triggered when the individual's safety is threatened (Prior & Glaser, 2006) or when there is a perception of separation from the attachment figure (Mikuliner & Shaver, 2004).

These mental functions could either be adaptive or maladaptive (processing knowledge in a negative, biased schematic way) information processing systems (Braun, 2001). It has been found that the increased complexity and insecurities of the modern workplace lead to enhanced attachment behaviour because individuals become increasingly dependent on the sense of security provided by familiar internal models (Grady & Grady, 2013). Separation anxiety could then be described as separation from an attachment figure. Leaders become stuck when they hold on to their dysfunctional attachments, despite the fact that a different approach would be more effective (Higgs & Rowland, 2004).

According to Rholes and Simpson (2004), some attachment histories could be uncomplicated (few attachment figures) or highly complex (diverse care-giving patterns, traumatic separations). The norm for adult attachment is interdependency (Colin, 1996). Attachment is facilitated by protective and supportive interactions by peers and significant others, security and a stable model of self (Mikuliner & Shaver, 2004).

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) propose the following categories of attachment, illustrated in Table 2.3 below.

Table 2.3

Adult attachment model (modified by Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991)

Secure attachment	Anxious attachment
Secure attachment, high self-esteem, high sociability, comfortable with intimacy as well as autonomy, trusting, accepting	Preoccupied with relationships, anxious, strives for self-acceptance, looks for others' acceptance, low self-esteem, high sociability
(positive thoughts about self)	*(negative thoughts about self)*
Dismissive attachment	**Disorganised attachment**
Dismissing of intimacy, counter-dependent, high self-esteem, low sociability, independent-vulnerable	Fearful attachment, socially avoidant, low self-esteem, low sociability, feels unlovable, does not trust others
(negative thoughts about others)	*(negative thoughts about others)*

Leaders, like all other individuals, also have attachment histories and attachment preferences. These need to be understood as far as possible, as such histories and preference could trigger anxieties in certain situations and would have an influence on how the leadership role is taken up and how followers experience leaders in the work place.

2.3.3.2   Relationships and relatedness

'Relationships' refer to any interactions, as these occur in the here and now (i.e. the present). The organisation provides the context for behaviours, and one of the driving forces for existing relationships within this context, is team and individual perceptions of managers themselves and others (Bion, 1970; Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002; Miller, 1989a, 1995). Kersten (2001) notes that individuals are an extension of these relationship networks.

'Relatedness', on the other hand, refers to the ever-present relationships in the mind (Cilliers, 2005), which is an inescapable reality of mutual

influence between individuals, the individual and the team, and/or teams, the team and the organisation and between the organisation and society at large (Klein, 1987; Stapley, 2006b). Unconscious processes also have a direct influence on processes at individual, team and organisational level. Relatedness is an inescapable process, because human beings are socially oriented (Klein, 1975; Stapley, 2006a). This relatedness was expressed by Rosenfeld (1971) as 'the-gang-in-the-mind' and Armstrong later referred to it as 'the-organisation-in-the-mind' (Young, 1995). An example would be a leader at any South African university who shares narratives around life at university during the #FeesMustFall campaign. A vivid picture of the university (within) is evoked at that moment.

2.3.3.3 *Transitional phenomena*

The concept of *transitional phenomena* was introduced by Winnicott (1953, p. 145). Transitional phenomena have been described as any rituals or objects, for example, a toy, a tune or any other reality object (Klein, 1975, 1985; Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008; Winnicott, 1953, 1975) that bridge the individual psyche and external reality and make contact possible between the two. Even Winnicott admitted that this concept was rather elusive to capture, since it attempts to express the relationship between what is perceived (objectively) and conceived (subjectively) (Winnicott, 1975). In popular culture, the security blanket and teddy bear have become examples of *transitional objects* (Hamilton, 1982; Winnicott, 1953). The transitional object as the first non-me experience/possession of the baby is used as defence against anxiety (Gerson, 2005). Winnicott (1971, p. 98) explains that transitional objects have specific properties:

The infant creates it himself, he can be both affectionate and aggressive towards it; it must not change, unless changed by the infant; it must survive loving, hating, and aggression; it must seem to have vitality or reality of its own; it is neither a hallucination nor comes from within the baby; it is gradually decathected [i.e. to withdraw one's feelings of attachment from something (e.g. a
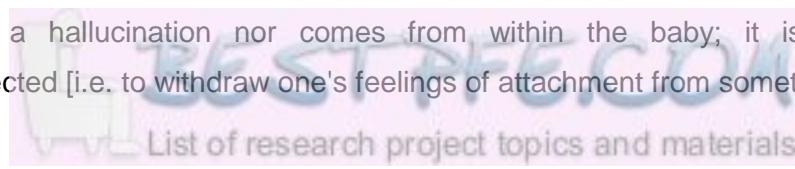
person, idea or object) as in anticipation of a future loss], but not lost and forms the basis of play, culture and dreaming.

The related notion of *transitional space* simultaneously separates and connects internal and external reality (Abram, 1996; Winnicott, 1971), thereby providing space for the process of becoming able to accept similarities and differences. Winnicott (1971) refers to this space as 'the third area', 'the intermediate area', 'the potential space' and 'a resting place'. These processes and structures enable and support meaningful shifts in a specific direction, and essentially demand individual participation. It is from this space that creativity, culture and play originate (Abram, 1996). These phenomena enable a person to move from a current 'way of being', to another more 'appropriate way of being'. Thus, it reconciles or facilitates our inner reality with our external reality, and vice versa (Hamilton, 1982). This harmonisation (also a form of defence) is obviously of critical significance during times of change, transition, uncertainty and turbulence within an organisational setting (James & Ladkin, 2008). Furthermore, in organisations, employees need to find space and time to actively explore their inner world and how this inner reality relates to their external experiences. Moreover, this harmonisation, together with sufficient holding and containment, may create the foundation for creative, innovative and collaborative engagements in new organisational contexts (Amado & Amato, 2001; Mnguni, 2015; Winnicott, 1965).

2.3.3.4   Envy, jealousy and greed

Envy is an irate feeling, often manifesting as rivalry, competition, devaluing, ruthlessness and mockery (Solomon, 1995) emanating from the perception that someone else not only possesses but also enjoys something a second party desperately desires to possess. This triggers a deeply envious impulse to spoil, annihilate or disown the possessor (Gutmann, Ternier-David, & Verrier, 1999; Klein, 1975). It could also manifest, according to Cilliers and May (2002), as a desire to fuse with

the object in a kind of parasitical fashion, in order to become part of the object. Thus, there is a part of the relationship that strives to be as good as the object. Sometimes these efforts fail, and the next best thing seems to be to destroy this characteristic of the object in an attempt to erase the origin of the experienced envious feelings (Likierman, 2001; Segal, 2006).

Jealousy is based on envy, but it also involves two sometimes three people (Klein, 1975). Jealousy seems to crave what others have (Solomon, 1995). It also has a competitive element, as it tends to be triggered whenever the fear of losing this loved object to a rival is aroused (Segal, 2006). Klein (1975) further postulates that jealousy fears to lose what it has, believing that what belongs to the individual has been taken away, or could be taken away.

Greed is a craving that extends beyond one's reasonable needs (Klein, 1975). The result could be the spoiling or destroying of the object. Segal (2006) claims that envy could also fuse with greed in order to strip the object of all its goodness, so that it is devoid of anything of significant value. Greed is generally attacking in nature (Czander & Eisold, 2003). According to Klein (1946), greed could also take the form of a sadistic attack. Within this context, Czander (2012) explored the psychology of greed and destructiveness from a psychodynamic perspective, and suggests that blatant greed has gotten out of control, fuels current leadership and organisational behaviour, and that this form of self-enrichment lies at the core of the modern organisation.

2.3.3.5 *Transference and counter-transference*

Transference implies that there is no such thing as a new relationship (Freud, 1946; Janov, 1991). All relationships are somehow coloured by past relationships. Responses of the past are replayed in the present (Kets de Vries, 2000). Transference is defined as the recreation of projections stemming from childhood relationships in current relationships (Hirschhorn & Barnett, 1993; Shapiro & Carr, 1991). According to Freud

(1949), transference is an attempt to resolve past conflicted and traumatic relationships. Klein (1997) later conceptualised transference as the psychological encounters of past internalised figures, which are unconsciously expressed in the present. Psychological boundaries thus become blurred resulting in transference as a form of confusion in terms of place, person and time (Diamond, 2007). Relationships also tend to become ambivalent because false associations and connections are made between past and present (Harris, 1996; Kets de Vries & Miller, 1984).

Transference is also applicable to dyads such as subject and researcher, consultant and client and leader and follower (Corradi, 2006; Sullivan, 2002). Subsequently, it is never simply the experience of the client, but also reflects the involvement of the analyst in the client's repetitions (Knight, 2007). Theorists and practitioners, for example, Kets de Vries and Miller (1984) suggest that there are three major forms of transference, namely –

- idealising transference (when a person attempts to recapture a past sense of bliss by forming a union with an 'omnipotent and perfect' other);
- mirror transference (an individual attempts to recreate an original state of bliss through an 'all-powerful and perfect' self-image; and finally
- persecutory transference (characterised by the defence mechanism of splitting to manage anxiety).

Counter-transference refers to the feelings and emotions experienced by individuals who receive projections (Fauth & Hayes, 2006). This is triggered by unconscious mental material related to unresolved difficulties in, for example, the client (Scharff & Scharff, 2005), or conscious and unconscious reactions of a practitioner towards a client (Knight, 2007; Rosenberger & Hayes, 2002). Counter-transference reactions should be normalised. It could be the source of incredible insights and learning if

these reactions are taken seriously by both parties (Fauth & Hayes, 2006). Rosenberger and Hayes (2002) divided counter-transference into five major dimensions, namely –

- origins (aspects within the therapist that have not been resolved);

- triggers (events that surface from the therapist's unresolved issues);

- manifestations (for example at cognitive, affective or behavioural level);

- the effects which have an influence on the therapeutic journey; and

- management, which refers to the importance of the therapist to manage his or her personal conflicts and other emotional reactions throughout the therapeutic journey.

Within the context of this study, transference and counter-transference reactions had obvious implications for leaders. It is likely that, without the necessary awareness, these reactions could have an adverse effect on the way leaders –

- take up their role in organisations (Kets de Vries, 2000; Shapiro & Carr, 1999);

- influence their way of relating to their followers (Harris, 1996; Hirschhorn & Barnett, 1993); and

- through projections and introjections could feel that they are being devalued and perceived as incompetent leaders in the organisation (Czander, 1997; Stacey, 2006).

When this happens, it is likely that personal anxieties could be triggered and that leaders could display defensive behaviours, thereby derailing them from the primary task.

2.4   CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, two major themes were explored. Firstly, systems psychodynamic theory and, secondly, anxiety (one of the operational

research constructs of this study) were explored from a systems psychodynamic perspective. Under systems psychodynamic theory, the concept of systems psychodynamics was conceptualised and the origins of this paradigm was explored. This first part of the chapter was concluded with a discussion on the basic theoretical assumptions of the paradigm, followed by the application of the fundamental assumption mentality to this study. In the second part of the chapter, anxiety was explored from a systems psychodynamic perspective, and anxiety was discussed in relation to individual, socially constructed and system domain defences. This section concluded with the presentation of relevant systems psychodynamic constructs, namely attachment; relationships and relatedness, transitional phenomena, envy, jealousy and greed, and transference and counter-transference.

In the next chapter, leadership, as the contextual research construct of this study, is discussed from a systems psychodynamic perspective.

CHAPTER 3: LEADERSHIP: A SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMIC PERSPECTIVE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the second literature aim is discussed and focuses on leadership as the contextual research construct of this study, with particular emphasis on leadership from a systems psychodynamic perspective. Firstly, leadership as context is explored, followed by systems psychodynamic insights on leadership. Leadership as function as well as leadership as the taking up of a role is discussed. These definitions are discussed in order to indicate the definition I used during this study. The chapter concludes by presenting related systems psychodynamic constructs, i.e. valence, holding and containment, and finally a chapter summary is provided.

3.2 LEADERSHIP AS CONTEXT

In this sub-section, context is created by presenting the roots of leadership in the form of a brief overview on how understanding of leadership has evolved by discussing the major approaches to leadership over the last century. This is followed by an illustration of which aspects of general leadership literature are applicable to the systems psychodynamic leadership approach. The section then links up with a more formal discussion on systems psychodynamic perspectives on leadership.

Traditional approaches to leadership include, for example, trait theories (see Mann, 1959), psychoanalytic theory (see Klein, 1985), leadership behaviours (see Northouse, 2010), and leader–member exchange theories (see Bass, 1981). Trait theories propose that there are qualities that differentiate leaders from followers, and the purpose of leadership research should be the identification of these qualities (Bateman & Snell, 1999). The theory has been criticised because it does not allow for the

interactive effect of leaders and followers (Khan, 2014; Northouse, 2010). Reflections from a psychoanalytic perspective portray the leader as a figure (father/mother) or as a bad object (such as a tyrant, despot or dictator), representing the superego, or serving as container for follower phantasies (see 1.5.3.2) and frustration (Klein, 1985). Extreme manifestations of a specific neurotic style could lead to dysfunctional leadership behaviour (Lyndon, 1994). Theories of leadership behaviour emphasise the identification of behaviours critical to leadership, which implies that individuals can be trained to become good leaders. Leader–member exchange theory explains leadership and leader–follower relations as an interactive process (Bass, 1981). When in-group and out-group dynamics are at play, in-groups would be afforded more independence, attention and reward, thereby leading to high levels of performance and satisfaction (Northouse, 2010).

The *situational approach* focuses on leadership in a particular context (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969; Hershey et al., 2008). The premise is that each situation is unique, and therefore requires a unique response. Situational approaches, including path–goal theory and other contingency models, for example Fiedler's contingency model (Bass, 1997), assume that employee abilities and motivations vary according to situations. Leaders rather than employees thus need to adapt their strategies ranging from being directive to being supportive (Ashforth, 1994). Despite the criticism levelled against these approaches for their lack of comprehensive research to validate its suppositions and assertions (Vielmetter & Sell, 2014), situational approaches have proved to be a practical approach in a range of diverse settings (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Khan, 2014). Situational approaches received renewed attention when researchers noted that people are often overwhelmed by situational demands on the leadership role (Vroom & Jago, 2007).

The *full range approach* to leadership focuses on the visionary and interpersonal aspects of leadership (Yammarino, 2012). The model encompasses laissez-faire, transactional and transformational leadership

(Bass & Avolio, 1994). This approach reflects leadership as contingent reinforcement by a transactional leader or leading followers beyond their self-interest for the good of the organisation through a transformation leader (Bass, 1997). More traditional styles of leadership, seem to have been replaced by 'servant leadership styles' (Yammarino, 2012), as well as strong influence by spiritual (Mayer, Viviers, Flotman & Schneider-Stengel, 2016) and ethical principles that underpin leadership (Sato, 2004). These leaders seem to convey an organisational vision that is personally motivating to followers, and which develops an organisational culture characterised by caring, appreciation and shared values that ultimately inspire a sense of belonging (Brown, 2003). In more recent times, *collectivist approaches*, involving multi-person interactions, have become imperative (Yammarino, 2012). These approaches include team leadership (Mulvey & Padilla, 2010), network leadership (Balkundi, Kilduff & Harrison, 2011), shared leadership (Shaw, 2002), and complexity leadership (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009; Valerio, 2009).

From a leadership context perspective, the above-mentioned theories seem to suggest that individuals with a grand, bold vision for the organisation or the future are often earmarked for leadership positions. There seems to be very little concern for the personal role to be taken up, or that such an individual needs to demonstrate sincere appreciation and understanding for the organisation as a connected system (Bell & Huffington, 2011; James & Arroba, 2005). The modern networked organisation is perceived as a rapidly evolving hybrid (Daskal, 2017; Diamond, 2016; Veldsman & Johnson, 2016; Western, 2013) and is different in terms of structure, nature, function, politics and culture compared to previous bureaucratic forms (Castelis, 2000; Kets de Vries, 2014; Martins & Geldenhuys, 2016). Interest created by more recent leadership theories regarding these constantly evolving hybrid organisations, has resulted in more attention being given to the anxieties that are created, particularly survival and transition anxiety (Amado & Elsner, 2007). This tends to influence the dynamics (group) in the organisation – hidden aspects that affect conscious processes and

manifesting behaviours (Western, 2013) – which have become a deliberate focus point by later leadership theories, notably systems psychodynamic leadership perspectives, which have built on previous leadership models and ideas. This renewed focus includes issues related to authority, the emotional needs of the organisation, ambivalence surrounding work, collective defences and the structural features of the organisation (Krantz, 2001; Miller & Rice, 1967; Stokes, 1994b). Innovation, the clear articulation of a shared vision and the significance of personal and social intelligence, which are distinguishing features of transformational leadership, are also addressed by the systems psychodynamic approach to leadership (James & Arroba, 2005). Despite all these grand leadership theories, global financial and political crises as well as dissenting and diverging voices echoing across the globe are perhaps reflections of both a failure of leadership and a leadership in crisis (Bones, 2011; Diamond, 2016; Rossert & Marino, 2005; Stein, 2016; Veldsman & Johnson, 2016). The unrelenting pressure on leadership and the doling out of blame have resulted in trust and confidence in leadership being undermined (Bones, 2011; Mulvey & Padilla, 2010; Schilling & Schyn, 2012). Leadership challenges in the form of conscious and unconscious interactions at individual, group and organisational level are now more than ever before open to be explored vigorously by leadership theories (Lukomnik & Pitt-Watson, 2006; Maccoby, 2004; McInnis, 2012). In the South African context, the emergence of radical movements to the left, for example the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), appears to be a reflection of an increase in the pressure on and sharp decline in levels of trust in political and business leadership (Du Toit, 2014). Perhaps what is apparent from the above discussion is that leadership does not exist in a vacuum, but in the midst of a variety of dynamic situational variables creating additional stress and complexity for leaders (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Hersey et al., 2008; Hollway, 2013; Yukl, 2002). A clear example is the current puzzling cultural and ethical contexts within which leaders have to operate (Brunning & Perini, 2010; Daskal, 2017; Mitonga-Monga, Flotman & Cilliers, 2016; Robbins & Decenzo, 2012; Veldsman & Johnson, 2016).

3.3 A SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMIC PERSPECTIVE ON LEADERSHIP

Leadership research has grown exponentially over the last decade (Boxer, 2014; Mayer et al., 2016; Northouse, 2010; Veldsman & Johnson, 2016; Yammarino, 2012), with invaluable contributions from scholars and practitioners throughout the world. Recent years have seen the development of theories explaining the role of leaders within complex systems and dynamic social networks (Balkundi et al., 2011; Diamond, 2016; Western, 2013; Yammarino, 2012). This reflects that there does not seem to be much consensus on the essence of leadership. It is necessary to point out the lack of consensus as well as the complexity when it comes to leadership, and therefore the purpose of this section is to explore systems psychodynamic contributions to leadership and leadership development specifically.

Psychodynamic theorists and practitioners posit that individual behaviour as well as organisational life is a reflection of constantly shifting irrational forces that underlie seemingly 'rational' choices and actions (Czander, 1993; Eisold, 2010; Gould et al., 2001; Hirschhorn, 1988; Kets de Vries, 2014; Krantz, 2010). Most conceptualisations of leadership tend to avoid the emotional, complexities and relationships within organisational life (Kets de Vries, 2006; Neumann & Hirschhorn, 1999; Volkan, 1988) by focusing on rational, conscious, observable phenomena. A rational and irrational approach is required in order to provide more comprehensive and meaningful explanations of leadership life in organisations (Boxer, 2014; Eisold, 2010; Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). In other words, if understanding of leadership is to be enhanced, the complexities, paradoxes and undercurrents of human behaviour and organisational life need to be explored. A psychodynamic approach to leadership acknowledges people as complex beings with innumerable motivational drives and patterns of interaction (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2011).

At this point, I deem it necessary to discuss the unconscious briefly and indicate how it was operationalised in this study. Furthermore, the unconscious plays a critical role in systems psychodynamic thinking and constant reference is made to this phenomenon. Understanding of the unconscious differs widely. Freud laid the foundation in terms of our understanding of the unconscious. Freud (1916) proposed that all that individuals are aware of is stored in the conscious. What is in our subconscious can only be accessed when it is prompted. The vast majority of what we do not know is buried in the unconscious. The unconscious remains a mystery in some sense; hence, it has been defined and approached from contradictory perspectives (Nevid, Rathus, & Greene, 2008). Conceptualisations of the unconscious range from Freud's (1916, p. 97) "primary process thinking" (i.e. energetic charge) to Jung's collective unconscious and Klein's notion of 'phantasy' (Klein, 1975), the emotional, relational and imaginary bases in the context of developmental processes (Hinshelwood, 1989) and Bion's notions of dreams, dream-thoughts, pre-conceptions and conceptions (Bion, 1967). Recently, the societal influence on the unconscious has been re-emphasised (Hollway, 2013). In an attempt to highlight the power of society, Salling-Oleson (2012, p. 28) suggested that the unconscious is socially produced, carries non-verbalised meaning and consists of a combination of cultural and symbolic expressions – including language use – that are the outcome of mental processes and material. In terms of its content (as repository), the unconscious contains experiences not readily available to consciousness or awareness, predominantly of an ominous nature, for example traumatic experiences, emotions, motives and memories that have been consigned to the unconscious mind (Gosling & Case, 2013). With respect to its function, it has been suggested that the unconscious is the principle driving force behind human behaviour (Czander, 1993; Eisold, 2010; Hinshelwood, 1989). A notable departure from Freud's theories regarding the unconscious is object relations theory (see Klein, 1975). This theory emphasises the role of individual relations with actual (in this case, external) and phantasised (in this case, internal) objects; thus, allowing for the analysis of not only

the person, but also the relations with internal (unconscious) and external objects (Czander, 1993; Klein, 1985; Likierman, 2001; Ogden, 1982).

However, in this study the unconscious both as a system and in its dynamic content, represented our original historic, but more importantly, our protective here-and-now way of mental functioning (Manley, 2014; Meltzer, 1984; Vansina-Cobbaert, 2005). The unconscious can be a source of resistance to experiences, emotions and ideas that could threaten our mental functioning, or it could serve as resource for creativity and imagination. The unconscious is a complex combination of contents, structures and processes that were never clearly conscious or disappeared from consciousness because of several influences, for example suppression and repression (Gosling & Case, 2013; Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). The unconscious thus serves as 'dynamo' from which forces flow, thereby making creative energies or capacities available to be harnessed and transformed (Cervone & Pervin, 2008; Czander, 1993). It also has a primary defensive function (see section 2.3.2 on the role of the unconscious and defence mechanisms). Being part of the mental life of individuals, groups and organisations, the unconscious is indirectly accessible, and has motivational power as part of our inner world now and in the future as it influences our way of being in the world (Lawrence, 2010).

What was important to this study was that some scholars (Bollas, 1995; Frosh & Emerson, 2005; Lacan, 1997; Menzies Lyth, 1989; Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008) are of the opinion that the unconscious constantly attempts to reveal itself through the languages of images, dreams, symbolism, actions and relationships, also regarded as concealed meaning. Pertinent to this inquiry, Menzies Lyth (1989) in particular notes that one develops the capacity not only to recognise, but also to understand how the unconscious mind manifests itself consciously through leaders' thoughts, feelings, speech and behaviour.

3.3.1 Leadership as a complex mix of functions

Despite the notion that leadership appears to be a complex mix of functions and roles, theorists seem to place different emphases on leadership either as function or as role.

Obholzer (2001) and Obholzer and Miller (2004), for example, seem to suggest that leadership consists of a number of core functions. These authors propose that one of the core tasks of the leader is to develop a *vision* and to create a clear awareness and understanding of the *primary task* of the organisation. Effective leaders review these elements on a regular basis and when necessary, a change in functioning, staffing and structure should be considered. Organisational activities and priorities should always revolve around the vision and primary task of the organisation (Czander, 1993; French & Vince, 1999; Manley, 2014; Miller & Rice, 1975).

A connected function of leadership is the *management of change*, inside and outside of the organisation (Brunning & Perini, 2010; Gould et al., 2001; Obholzer & Miller, 2004). This leads to an inherent tension between leaders and followers. Leaders push for change, and followers tend to resist change (Burt, 2014; Cytrynbaum & Noumair, 2004; Fraher, 2004; Krantz, 1996; Turquet, 1974). Change implies the disruption of the status quo in terms of emotional peace and, as an authority figure, the leader becomes a legitimate emotional target (Fairholm, 2009; Greyvenstein & Cilliers, 2012; James & Arroba, 2005). Effective change management requires that different parts of the organisational system cooperate with each other to ensure that these sub-systems have the emotional capacity to deal with the change. Leaders need to work with resistance and to understand anxieties if they want to release positive energy and creativity into the system for the effective implementation of the change process (Bell & Huffington, 2011). This function leads to a third related function, which is the *exercise of authority* (Colman & Geller, 1985; Kets de Vries, 2001; Obholzer, 2001; Obholzer & Miller, 2004).

'Authority' refers to the legitimate application of power in the interest of executing the primary task of the organisation (Macaux, 2014; Stapley, 2006a) or the formal and official power that the team experiences to perform allocated tasks (Czander, 1993; Diamond & Allcorn, 2009) or the right to make decisions that are binding to subordinates (Lawrence, 1999). This authority (i.e. leadership authority) is used as a tool to ensure submission and compliance in the workplace (Czander, 1993). Obholzer and Roberts (1994) further explain that this authority can be given 'from above', for example by management, or 'from below' by subordinates, and 'from within' by individuals or by a team to themselves. Hence, Lawrence (1999) distinguishes between organisational authority (i.e. authority delegated to roles), and personal authority – a critical aspect of the individual's enduring sense of self, regardless of the role she or he occupies. Another aspect is that for formal authority to be effective, subordinates have to accept it (Hayden & Molenkamp, 2004; Miller, 1993; Vansina, 2014). 'Authority from within' however is influenced by the internal world of the leader (Kets de Vries, 2006; Maccoby, 2004; Prins, 2002) derived from a solid personal identity and has an embedded sense of confidence that the task and all related anxieties are manageable. This is a critical construct, because significant distance between subordinates and the authority figure leads to projections and transference reactions (Fauth & Hayes, 2006; Hirschhorn & Barnett, 1993; Janov, 1991; Kets de Vries, 2000; Stacey, 2003), obscuring the authentic nature of the object (Czander, 1993). Constant changes in the workplace result in employees bringing more of themselves into the work setting by taking up their personal authority (Stapley, 2006b). However, effective leaders need both power (belonging to the individual in terms of personality or position and resources) and authority (authorised by themselves, the organisation and employees of the organisation). As soon as authority is withheld, the leader needs to explore the underlying reasons for this behaviour. As authority figures (Stapley, 2006a) for others, leaders are the containers of imagined and projected power and authority (Hirschhorn, 1999; Lawrence, 2000). There seems to be a wish for the leader to be the owner of magical invincible power, but simultaneously a hatred for the

power of the leader (Armstrong, 2005; Kets de Vries, 2001; Western, 2013).

Related to the withholding of authority, leaders have to deal with *organisational dynamics in general and anti-task behaviour in particular* (French & Vince, 1999; Obholzer & Roberts, 1994; Sievers & Beumer, 2006). These elements are often connected, as the organisation tends to function as an extension of the defence mechanisms of individuals (Jaques, 1990; Krantz, 1996; Padavic & Ely, 2013).

Because leaders are expected to work across relational and other boundaries, they have to fulfil a critical *boundary management function* (Laughlin & Sher, 2010; Lawrence, 1999). This includes the managing of relationships with other parts of the system and with the whole (Obholzer, 1996). *Boundaries* refer to:

- physical and psychological demarcations of what is inside and outside of a system (Czander, 1993; Hayden & Molenkamp, 2004);
- the space around or between parts of the system, which functions to contain anxiety and to make the workplace more controllable (Hayden & Molenkamp, 2004; Hirschhorn, 1990; Stapley, 2006a); or
- the safety blanket of the group (Skyttner, 2001).

Appropriate boundaries should be permeable and flexible in order to facilitate transactions between the internal and external environment, and sometimes closed to contain what is inside (Boxer, 2014; Czander, 1997; Hayden & Molenkamp, 2004). Firm boundaries could lead to strong individual and group identities, and the consequence is conflict and firm resistance in the face of change (Lawrence, 2000; Palmer & Whybrow, 2007). On the other hand, boundaries indicate entry points into the system (Czander, 1993) and offer valuable opportunities for collaboration and innovation (Diamond, Allcorn, & Stein, 2004).

Effective boundary management is therefore important. It ensures that the integrity of the organisation is protected (Czander, 1993), that the internal life of the system is sustained, and that shared meaning is co-constructed (Diamond et al., 2004). However, boundary crossing can trigger defences, due to the level of anxiety created (Lazar, 2011; Levinson, 2006; McRae & Short, 2010). Boundaries are not only of a physical, but also of a very intense psychological nature (Reciniello, 2014; Scharff & Scharff, 2005; Sher, 2010). Boundaries involve setting time, space and clearly defined tasks (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002). In this vein, Czander (1993) distinguishes between four types of boundary management for assessment:

- regulation of *task system boundary* (the system's input, conversion, and output and their relationships);
- regulation of *sentient group boundary* (this reflects the role and division of labour, as well as the emotional life of the members);
- regulation of the *organisation's boundaries*; and
- regulation of the relationships between *task, sentient and organisational boundaries*.

Because of the anxiety-provoking nature of boundaries and boundary management, it is critical that these boundaries be identified and regulated appropriately, particularly in turbulent times (Brunning & Perini, 2010; Jarrett & Kellner, 1996; Krantz, 1996).

Implicit in the leadership role is that it is a negotiated role pertaining to followers, the organisation and its environment (Kets de Vries, 2014). Leadership therefore also implies followership. According to Obholzer (2000), effective followership implies being active, participative and willing to take responsibility for personal, group and organisational tasks. This complexity creates fertile ground for splitting, projection and projective identification (Czander, 1993; Gomez, 1998; Halton, 1994; Maccoby, 2004; Stapley, 2006a). A potential positive is that followers develop critical managerial skills, and leaders take up the membership role,

thereby raising leaders' consciousness (Manley, 2014) regarding membership dynamics. Thus, according to Zaleznik (1991), leadership binds leaders and followers into a shared moral, intellectual and emotional commitment.

3.3.2 Leadership as taking up a role

Leadership has also been emphasised as the taking up and the taking on of an organisational role. Hence, leadership has been loosely defined as the effective management of boundaries and associated conflicts by exercising one's authority within a specific organisational role (and accompanying tasks) with a clear sense of identity (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005; Erskine, 2010; James & Arroba, 2005; Kets de Vries, 2007; Vince, 2000). This definition reflects the acronym BART, as proposed by Cytrynbaum and Noumair (2004), which reflects the systems psychodynamic constructs of **b**oundary, **a**uthority, **r**ole and **t**ask. Koortzen and Cilliers (2002) later added CI to BART, suggesting that leaders need to be cognisant of the presence of **c**onflict and the role of **i**dentity within any given system. Van Niekerk (2011, p. 287) then added the construct of **a**nxiety, which resulted in the ACIBART model. This ACIBART model served as a useful tool in the context of this study, not only to explain the role of anxiety, conflict and defences in the individual leader and organisational system, but also the dynamics at play whenever individual leaders wrestle with the taking up of their role in organisations. In order to cast more light on these constructs, the CIBART model (the construct of anxiety has already been discussed in Chapter 2, (see section 2.3) is briefly described and discussed below.

3.3.2.1 Conflict

Conflict is a natural and inevitable aspect of the human condition (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2000), and could serve as a catalyst for enhanced team performance, innovation (Carson, Peterson & Higgins, 2003), creativity and coping ability (Cilliers, 2005). Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) point out

that conflict manifests on different levels:

- *intra-personally* – within the individual, between ideas and feelings;
- *interpersonally* – denoting differences between two or more team members;
- *intra-group* – between factions or subgroups; and
- *inter-group* – between teams or departments within a larger systemic context.

In order to manage potential and actual sources of conflict, as well as to reduce conflict, leaders could be 'seduced' to act in a particular fashion. Leaders must be aware that there is thus a potential relationship between conflict and valence.

3.3.2.2   Identity

Identity is conceptualised by Diamond (2007) and Dimitrov (2008) as a feeling an individual has that there is a constant of 'selfhood' (i.e. the sense of having an individual identity), which remains constant and consistent when confronted with change. A clear sense of identity is constituted by values, traditions, history, dreams, experiences, competencies and culture that inform self-reference (Kets de Vries, 2014; Wheatley, 1999). This sense of self-identity is influenced by significant others and by one's rank in social groupings (Vince, 2000; Wheatley, 1999). Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) define *identity* as the characteristics that make the group, its members, the task, culture and climate unique – the fingerprint of the individual leader. A leader with an unclear identity, conflicting identity, unclear identity boundaries or discrepancies would experience anxiety. Feelings of ambivalence instead of belonging and hopelessness could ensue. It is therefore critical for leaders to reflect on their identity and to embrace the kind of leader they want to be. Relatedness and the system-in-the-mind also pertain to identity (Kets de Vries, 2014). 'Relationships', for example, refer to any interactions, as these occur in the here and now (present). The organisation provides the

context for behaviours, and one of the driving forces for existing relationships within this context are team and individual perceptions of themselves and others (Bion, 1967; Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002; Miller, 1989b, 1995). Kersten (2001) notes that individuals are an extension of these relationship networks. 'Relatedness', on the other hand, refers to the ever-present relationships in the mind (Cilliers, 2005), which is an inescapable reality of mutual influence between individuals, the individual and the team or teams, the team and the organisation, and between the organisation and society at large (Klein, 1987; Stapley, 2006b). Unconscious processes also have a direct influence on processes at individual, team and organisational level. Relatedness is an inescapable process, because human beings are socially oriented (Klein, 1975; Stapley, 2006a).

3.3.2.3 *Boundary*

All individual, group and organisational systems possess boundaries (Czander, 1993; Dimitrov, 2008; Lawrence, 2000). A boundary is the space around and between individual parts of a system that essentially keeps the system intact and protected (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005). As suggested in an earlier section (3.3.1), boundaries serve as container of the system, distinguishes between what is inside and what is outside a specific system, and the contained anxieties (Czander, 1993; Long, 2006; Miller, 1998). Effective boundary management contributes to effective task performance. Individuals often experience the desire to move away from boundaries as anxieties are provoked when boundaries are crossed thereby resulting in unconscious defensive behaviours (Hirschhorn, 1990; Long & Chapman, 2009). This anxiety is fuelled by inner phantasies of not being good enough, of rejection, and finally annihilation (Diamond & Allcorn, 2009). Leaders need to realise that boundaries also create opportunities for collaboration and effective individual and organisational performance. This realisation has dawned because of the notion of viewing boundaries as transitional space with the inherent potential for creativity, collaboration and engagement (Hayden & Molenkamp, 2003;

Long & Chapman, 2009). The potentiality is endless, because a distinction can be made between –

- *time boundaries* (for example working hours);

- *task boundaries* (for example work content and performance criteria);

- *territory boundaries* (for example the space within which work is done); and

- *psychological boundaries* (for example the emotional space of acknowledgement, respect and unconditional acceptance (Cilliers, 2005; Czander, 1993, 2012; Hirschhorn, 1990; Stapley, 2006a).

3.3.2.4   Authority

'Authority' is generally defined as the right to execute tasks and associated roles that emanate from a variety of sources (Armstrong, 2006; Stapley, 2006a), or an interpersonal relationship through which one's behaviour is influenced by endorsing a decision made by another superior (Czander, 1993). Authority can be formal (granted by a board of directors) or informal, for example being appreciated by colleagues (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005; Huffington et al., 2004). Thus, according to Stapley (2006a), authority can be sanctioned from above (leader or manager), from below (by subordinates) and from within (emanating from the individual's personal authority). Personal authority is the way a person takes up his or her formal authority (Eden, 2006; McGrath & Tschan, 2004; Vansina-Cobbaert, 2006). The taking up of personal authority is influenced by authority figures-in-the-mind, social and cultural background, identity and so forth (Obholzer & Roberts, 1994). Authority figures-in-the-mind are powerful phenomena, as these experiences could create self-doubt thereby undermining self-authorisation (Huffington et al., 2004; Lawrence, 2006; Triest, 1999). It is likely that a healthy sense of self-authority will be experienced by those individuals who have an appreciation for the factors that influence authority (Obholzer & Roberts, 1994). From a leadership perspective, the role of authority often triggers

transference reactions on the part of followers in the form of fantasies and other emotional needs, for example love, protection and admiration (Diamond & Allcorn, 2009; Maccoby, 2004; Rice, 1965). Likewise, those in authority also evoke projections of admiration, competence and heroism (Czander, 1993). Leaders should therefore be realistic by reminding themselves that good enough authority is comprised of authorisation granted from above, below and within (Stapley, 2006a; Triest, 1999). Leaders can be deauthorised when their expertise is questioned, disrespected and undermined (Brunning, 2006; Gould et al., 2006; Maccoby, 2004; Miller, 1993).

3.3.2.5   Role

'Role' denotes the description of what needs to be done (Kets de Vries, 1991), or a way of adaptation, for example to authority, structure and responsibilities (Czander, 1993). Clearly defined roles form the boundary around work (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2005). Taking up a role implies to be authorised to do so, renouncing behaviours that are incongruent with the role (Czander, 1993), uncertainty and risk (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002), and incongruence between the person and the role often leads to role stress. Role thus defines actual, potential or implied behaviour, and delineates which person is responsible for which task (Cytrynbaum, 1993). Members also take up what is known as 'informal roles'. These roles stem from what individuals bring to the role, and what other members implicitly expect from the role (Huffington et al., 2004).

3.3.2.6   Task

The purpose of any organisation is to execute a specific task or tasks (Czander, 1993). A task is therefore, the end to which work is directed (Cytrynbaum, 1993). Clear boundary management facilitates *on-task* behaviour and regulation, *off-task* behaviour refers to those behaviours that are no longer in the interest of the primary task, whilst *anti-task* performance is created by boundary confusion (James & Huffington,

2004). The focus of systems psychodynamic consulting often relates to what facilitates on-task behaviour, or what inhibits on-task performance (Czander, 1993). Leaders therefore need to be clear about their role and tasks in order to manage their own as well as their followers' on-task and off-task behaviours. Valence in the presence of conflict could seduce leaders to engage in off-task behaviours.

3.3.3 Leadership defined in this study

Congruent with the theoretical views and constructs discussed above (see section 3.3.2), some systems psychodynamic theorists and/or practitioners define leadership as –

- the leveraging of complex dynamics and forces in organisations (Kets de Vries, 2014);
- exercising authority in the management and direction of oneself and others in pursuit of the primary task (Miller, 1976), or
- according to Western (2013), simply as a psycho-social dynamic that influence organisational functioning.

By reflecting on the leadership contributions above, one can conclude that leadership involves a complex set of dynamic forces, the exercise of personal authority, has both individual and social influence and exhibits an appreciation for the context or system within which the leadership role has to be taken up. In this study, by pulling different above-mentioned theoretical strands together, leadership is defined as a negotiated, boundary management role (managing within from that which is without) that leaders take up consciously and unconsciously, by exercising their authority relations (relationships and relatedness) within a unique, connected and emotional organisational system in service of the primary task (James & Denyer, 2011; James & Huffington, 2004; Kets de Vries, 2007; Miller, 1976).

3.3.4 The vicissitudes of leadership

From the discussion above, it can be deduced that leadership is indeed a complex role. Kirsten (2009) suggests that this complexity emanates on three systemic levels, the micro-, meso- and macro-systemic levels. On micro-level, the leader is confronted with multiple dynamic and system leadership roles. For instance, leadership will reflect concerns for healthy relationships, the well-being of others (Cilliers & Flotman, 2016; Grossman & Valiga, 2009; Van der Colff & Rothmann, 2009), and unbearable anxieties that result in leaders feeling lost, hesitant and not-good-enough (Greyvenstein & Cilliers, 2012). Challenges arising from the presence of conflict, diversity, risk and limited resources are endemic of the leadership role on meso-level (Kets de Vries, 2001; Meyer & Boninelli, 2007) and on macro-level, leadership is confronted by challenges in the form of transformation, competition, globalisation and legislation (Nohria & Khurana, 2010; Watts, 2009). In summary, the systems psychodynamic approach to leadership therefore shifts the leadership emphasis away from an individual deficit approach to raising awareness of the system as a connected whole (James & Denyer, 2011), but also highlights the difference between activities focusing on rational task performance and those focusing on emotional needs and anxieties (Trehan, 2007). Human relationships are understood according to the notion of connectedness and relatedness. The leadership role must be explored by examining power, the nature and exercise of authority, and the relationship of the organisation to its social, economic and political context (Vince, 2000). Leadership thus has a strong relational component, which colours organisational life. Another critical component of this relational approach is the connectedness between the leadership role, emotions (including the emotional organisation, where emotions influence events and events influence emotions) and organisational dynamics. The nature and role of anxiety assume a central place. A clear understanding of anxiety and how it manifests in the form of structures and systems (defences against anxiety) would result in more effective leadership. In this study, it was suggested that it is through emotions that leaders learn, but also how

learning is prevented and sabotaged. Finally, the systems psychodynamic leadership perspective affirms that leadership consists of multiple constructs. It would be self-defeating to reduce leadership to an organisational formula or recipe to be followed. To put the enormity of the leadership task in its proper perspective, James and Arroba (2005, p. 305) describe the leader's major capabilities as:

- creating an effective holding environment;

- displaying the emotional capacity to manage uncertainty, without becoming too overwhelmed themselves;

- managing distractions (e.g. scapegoating and projections) that prevent people from focusing on the primary task; and

- creating space for all voices to be heard.

The view being created is that leadership is about the entire personal and organisational system. If this is the case, leadership becomes less about selling grand visions, but more about learning effectively about leadership in a role. Indeed a mammoth task; therefore, the complex and challenging organisational settings of today require a deeper understanding of the individual leader, the dynamics of the system (Neumann & Hirschhorn, 1999) and an awareness of what could be carried at an unconscious level (Armstrong, 2004). Leadership behaviour is influenced by and emerges from the complex interaction of individual personal characteristics and organisational dynamics where the individual takes up a leadership role. As Armstrong (2004, p. 286) affirms, that emotion in and of the system must be used as intelligence to understand the functioning of the organisation. Armstrong thus eloquently summarises the intrinsic value of the systems psychodynamic perspective to this study.

3.4   RELATED SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMIC CONSTRUCTS

A number of systems psychodynamic constructs are also important within the context of leadership, as these constructs play a role in how the leader takes up and takes on her or his leadership role. The systems

psychodynamic literature seems to suggest that two concepts in particular, namely valence and 'not good-enough' holding and containment could render the leadership role ineffective. Thus, when a leader has the tendency to collude with and internalise projections, or is unable to provide the stability and security of an effective container, the leadership role cannot be negotiated successfully. Next, these constructs are discussed in relation to leadership.

3.4.1 Valence

In physics, 'valence' refers to the tendency of an atom to combine with others (Obholzer & Miller, 2004). From a systems psychodynamic perspective, it refers to a person's propensity to collude with others in engaging in basic assumption behaviour (Stapley, 2006a). In this regard, valence changes over time and is influenced by one's immediate context (Hayden & Molenkamp, 2004; Khan, 2014). Stapley (2006a) further explains that a person will be used by the group to resist change and innovation, if his or her valence is triggered by group anxiety over change. This is also important for leaders, as the valence of leaders would make them prone to behave in a specific manner under particular circumstances. Valence and other psychological processes such as the capacity for containment, attachment, preferred defences and so on, are perceived as components of one's psychological risk profile (Prins, 2002; Sher, 2010).

3.4.2 Holding and containment

Closely related to projective identification, are the concepts of 'holding' and 'containment'. When an object is projected into a container, the object of the projection subsequently becomes contained (Bion, 1961, 1985). Bion (1993) links the concepts of 'container' and 'contained' to the role of the mother, who through her ability to understand the emotional states of her infant, makes these states tolerable and acceptable. 'Holding' reflects the physical act of holding the baby and providing care

and safety, therefore denoting a sensuous, external motherly experience (Winnicot, 1965). Effective holding always instils a sense of wholeness and stability (Miller & Rice, 1967; Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008).

Kleinian psychoanalysts developed the concept 'containment'. The mother as the original container will later be replaced by social groupings (Cytrynbaum, 1993). Processes in the container–contained relationship work in a two-way manner (Bion, 1970), wherein both parties co-construct this experience. Thus, the contained is not always a passive recipient. In a work setting, guilt may be projected onto a member of the group. This allows the group to work with whatever is the cause of this guilt. This 'container' could therefore, play a useful role, allowing development to take place (Armstrong, 2005; Bion, 1961). The constructs of 'holding' and 'containing' are almost always intertwined (De Board, 2014; Lawrence, 2000; Rioch, 1975). Grotstein (2008) points out that some elements of the returning material to the contained could be aspects of the container, so the contained should be in a position to discern what authentically belongs to the contained.

In the context of systems psychodynamic consulting, the consultant is often expected to take up the role of container, in order to allow members to work with whatever it is they need to work with (Lawrence, 2000). The consultant (or leader) is therefore holding, bounding, confining and fencing in the affect of the system (Cytrynbaum, 1993), or as Cilliers (2005) articulates it, as placing a boundary around an experience or emotion – for it to be managed or denied, kept in or passed on, experienced or avoided, in order for the effects to be amplified or mitigated. The emotional content is contained as long as the boundary holds, or the contained state remains unchanged (Cytrynbaum & Noumair, 2004). In this context, the container could serve as filter or sponge (managing difficult emotions), or it could act as a rigid frame that either blocks or restricts (French & Vince, 1999), thus transforming the contained into a threat or saviour (Cilliers, 2005). Effective containment creates critical mental space for groups to be able to engage in creative

and innovative decision-making (Cilliers, 2005). This is exactly the kind of function that leaders need to fulfil. This is even more so during change situations (accompanied by the disruption of routines – including emotional instability), or when there is a significant level of turmoil in the workplace. Containment is therefore a critical psychic and protective leadership function through which leaders temporarily take on the unpleasant emotions, including the thoughts, ideas and anxieties of their followers (Cytrynbaum, 1993). This will prevent followers from being overly stressed, or from experiencing feelings of being overwhelmed, because of the complexity of a given situation. Effective leaders provide space for an important idea or thought to be voiced, a feeling to be expressed, or a challenging situation to be rephrased. For example at national level in South Africa, the ability of the president to hold the national space so that questions around the previous role of the Minister of Finance, who had lost his job, could be adequately addressed, before and without the economic markets tumbling down. The same could apply at departmental level when considering the leader of the department who creates space for an uncomfortable issue to be addressed so that it can be worked with and integrated and potential off-task behaviours managed in order for the department to continue focusing on its core business.

3.5   Leadership anxiety

Anxiety is real for all people in leadership positions. There are few things that are as anxiety-provoking as the taking up of a new role. Taking up a new role is associated with the dynamic shift of transitioning into a new role – from being a follower to being a leader. When leaders enter the leadership space and take up their leadership role, 'resonance' is created (Amado & Elsner, 2007) that could trigger anxieties. Leaders subsequently look for familiarity in the situation to contain this anxiety to provide a feeling of safety and security. The construct 'leadership anxiety', sometimes loosely referred to as 'leader anxiety' (Jarrett & Kellner, 1996), or 'anxiety in leaders' (Czander, 1993) does not appear to be an established theoretical construct in the systems psychodynamic

literature. In this study, *leadership anxiety* is defined as the anxieties that are inherent in the leadership role and experienced by leaders when they manage themselves in this leadership role, in a given personal and organisational context (Cytrynbaum, 1993; Greyvenstein & Cilliers, 2012; Hader, 2017; Huffington et al., 2004; Mannor et al., 2016). Perhaps this construct does not tell us much, apart from role and context, until the actual source of the anxiety is identified, for example transition anxiety, survival anxiety, performance anxiety, fragmentation anxiety, primitive anxieties (Amado & Elsner, 2007; Hergenhahn, 1994; Hjelle & Ziegler, 1992; Obholzer, 1999) and so on. As new realities arise and leaders explore new avenues, more anxiety is created. Leaders become increasingly vulnerable because their personal sense of identity in the role (or new role) is consistently questioned, scrutinised and challenged.

3.6   CHAPTER SUMMARY

Leadership has proved to be central in every environment, particularly in our complex, turbulent and fast-paced business setting. In this chapter, leadership as context was explored, followed by an exploration of leadership from a systems psychodynamic perspective. I particularly looked at two approaches to leadership, namely leadership as function and leadership as the taking up of an organisational role. Here, I described the ACIBART model (see section 3.3.2.1) as a useful tool to define the leadership role. The chapter concluded by presenting related systems psychodynamic constructs in the form of valence and the provision of a 'good-enough' holding and containment environment. The chapter is concluded with a summary.

In the next chapter, language use is discussed from a systems psychodynamic perspective.

CHAPTER 4:   LANGUAGE USE: A SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMIC PERSPECTIVE

4.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the third specific literature is addressed, and language use as the second operational research construct of this study is discussed. Firstly, language in general, and in particular language use, is defined and discussed. Secondly, language use is contextualised, and then explored from a systems psychodynamic perspective. Language use is further explored by presenting the notion of the languages of the unconscious. The chapter concludes with the potential of language as transitional phenomenon, the notion of potential space and a chapter summary.

4.2   DEFINING LANGUAGE USE

Language use has evoked unprecedented fascination across the social sciences (Anderson, 2007, 2012; Gadamer, 2007; Holtgraves & Kashima, 2008; Zaffron & Logan, 2009). There are considerable research outputs regarding language use with respect to its properties, functions and power (Carruthers, 2004; Kegan & Lahey, 2001; Renzl, 2007; Wind & Crook, 2006). With reference to the power of language use, Souba (2010) maintains that language itself is constitutive of human experiences, thereby resulting in a uniquely human world and human experiences. Language use has the capacity to influence shifts in one's cognitive thinking and emotions (Renzl, 2007), and has symbolic value in that it not simply describes reality, but also creates reality (Wittgenstein, 1961). Many human and leadership problems and challenges, and much of who leaders are, are contained and revealed in conversation or language use (Souba, 2010). This potency of language use is expressed in the following extract:

> In the very earliest time … when both people and animals lived on earth,

a person could become an animal, if he wanted to, and an animal could become a human being. All spoke the same language. That was the time when words were like magic. A word spoken by chance might have strange consequences. It would suddenly come alive. All you had to do was say it. Nobody could explain this. That's the way it was (Nalungiaq, Inuit woman interviewed by ethnologist Knud Rasmussen, cited in Carruthers, 2004, p. 126).

Language has been defined in a variety of ways, for example as a closed structural system with rules and signs with specific meaning (Duranti & Goodwin, 1992; Romaine, 2001), or as the unique human capacity of interaction (Lesser, 1098). In this study, preference was given to the definition of language as a complex system of communication (Agha, 2006; Fitch, 2010) because this definition speaks to the systemic, complex and more comprehensive communicative dimensions of language.

However, this study focused specifically on *language use* and not language. 'Language use' refers to *how* language is used and has been defined as the unique meaning that is attached to words, that is verbal communication and its accompaniments, for example the symbolic world of the individual, inclusive of signs, slips of the tongue, metaphors, habits, similes, repetition of certain words (or phrases), etc. (Kennison, 2013; Tomasello, 2008). In other words, it is what provides unique structure and the unique repertoire of how, for example John communicates, as opposed to how Jane uses language. This definition, therefore refers to spoken and written communication, including body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, and any other actions with symbolic intent (Fetzer, 2004; Givon, 2005; Zaffron & Logan, 2009). This unique language use could be reflective of a person's motives, identity, worldview and so on (Givon, 2005), that is how language is used as a vehicle and medium not only to reflect, but also to constitute human reality (Fitch, 2010). In Austen's (1962, p. 238) classic work on language use, he describes the complexity of language use in terms of *locutionary*

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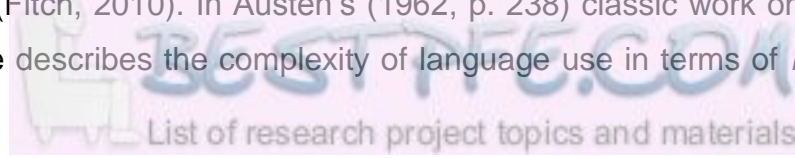
acts (focus on the meaning of the words), *illocutionary acts* (focus on what the speaker is doing while talking), and *perlocutionary acts* (focus on what the speaker is hoping to achieve – perhaps the speaker's unconscious intentions are also included under these acts).

The words that people use can reveal critical aspects of both their inner and outer sociological and psychological world (James, Burke, Austin & Hulme, 2003). Within the context of this study, it was therefore not unreasonable to deduce that leaders use both conscious and unconscious expressions of language simultaneously in their daily interaction with their followers. Language use is employed as carrier to convey both conscious messages (conscious interaction between sender and receiver) and the unconscious 'below the surface' role of language to, for example defend against anxieties when under threat and/or to cover up leadership insecurities.

4.3   LANGUAGE USE IN SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMICS

In this study, the focus was on providing an in-depth psychological description about the way in which leaders use language, thereby reflecting the different forms of anxiety they may experience. Central to the systems psychodynamic approach to language use is honing in on the psychology of language by attending to underlying unconscious meanings, which differs substantially from ordinary listening, which only 'hears' denotative and connotative meanings (Makari & Shapiro, 1992; Miller, 1993; Rice, 1963; Shapiro, 1985). When adopting this approach, clinical practitioners listen to both conscious and unconscious processes as these are presented, including in language use and in particular how language is used (Makari & Shapiro, 1992). Systems psychodynamic theory, as discussed in Chapter 2, builds on certain psychoanalytic assumptions, including that of language use. For example Freud (1916, p. 17) was adamant that the unconscious must be 'in' language. Lorenzer (1972) supports this view by proposing that the unconscious could appear in language use through defensive operations. Freud (1912) further

suggested that the psychoanalyst should 'evenly hover attention' and place equal value on all the patient's words. In other words, I also deduced that practitioners and consultants should attempt to listen (as far as possible) without memory, desire and judgement (Bion, 1962, 1975; Gould et al., 2001; Grotstein, 2008). This kind of listening to language use implies free associative play and phantasy (Lacan, 1968), the full indulgence of one's own unconscious, aimed at grasping almost intuitively the expressions of the other person's unconscious that are concealed in for example the manner of speech and behaviour (Ferenczi, 1919; Freud, 1912; Jacobs, 1991; Lacan, 1968; Menzies Lyth, 1989). One of the emphases seems to be the oscillation between free associative play and focused analysis. In the context of how the unconscious reveals itself in language use, Reik (1948, p. 144) refers to listening with the 'third ear'. Thus, one potentially has to listen to what the unconscious is gently whispering through sentences, between sentences and even without sentences (Amado, 1995; Jemstedt, 2000; Winnicott, 1975). In an attempt to emphasise the significance of words, Major and Miller (1984, p. 127) pose the question, "How much could be psychodynamically and psychoanalytically 'heard', when a person does not verbally communicate, speaks in an unknown foreign language, communicates no feeling?" This is difficult, because the inner world of the 'other' can be accessed by journeying through the wall of words as presented by the other. Language use thus becomes the presenting data as one way through which psychodynamic inferences and interpretations could be made. In privileging language, Lacan (1968) suggests that, in the course of the practitioner's work, whether it be with a patient, a client or even an entire client system, close attention should be paid to the details and nuances of words. Lacan (1968) refers to this process as the play of signifiers through which encoded unconscious messages are reflected. Some theorists (see Boroditsky, 2010; Corradi, 2006; Erskine, 2010; Geerardyn, 2002; Horowitz, 1979; Makari & Shapiro, 1992; Zepf, 2016) allude to how intended narratives (predominantly conscious; the meaning being conveyed by the speaker) are almost seamlessly weaved into shadow narratives (predominantly unconscious; indirect communication).

These shadow narratives would also include psychological processes, for example projections, transference, and counter-transference. Loewenstein (1956) supports this notion of the shadow narrative by suggesting that next to the daily vocabulary of language exists another, which is usually unconscious. Desire and memory, for example, could often be buried or hidden inside a word, phrase, or metaphor. Words, as in language use, are important because it is through words that the world is named and described and sense is made of experiences, and ultimately inner desires and realities are revealed. It is therefore through language use that the psychodynamic consultant also gathers data in order to analyse and interpret a situation to arrive at a validated shadow narrative.

4.3.1 Languages of the unconscious

The notion of the power of the unconscious and its influence on behaviour has always been acknowledged (Armstrong, 2005; Brunning, 2006; Obholzer, 2006; Roberts & Jarrett, 2006; Sievers, 2009). Lacan (1997, 2001) was one of the earliest psychoanalytic theorists who alluded to the connection between the unconscious and language use. Lacan (1964) suggests that the unconscious was formed through speech (the expression of or the ability to articulate sounds in a meaningful manner), particularly words imposed by significant others during childhood, and these mental scripts would then be reflected in language use and behaviour. Vansina-Cobbaert (2005, p. 28) also asserts the resonance and relevance of the unconscious by exhorting practitioners to refrain from underestimating the importance of the 'buried underground treasure' in favour of rational, logical scientific thinking. Vansina and Vansina-Cobbaert (2008) suggest that the unconscious uses several 'languages' to communicate its content, and the meaning emerges only in the total context within which these languages are used. The above-mentioned authors further discuss the languages of images, actions and relations, which they regard as critical in understanding individuals, teams and organisations.

4.3.1.1 The unconscious language of images

The language of images refers to images popping into the mind unexpectedly when one is in a conscious state or words, phrases, metaphors, the proverbial 'slip of the tongue' ('Freudian slip') or through the mediation of a dream (Lawrence, 2010; Long, 2008; Manley, 2014; Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008), i.e. the capacity of the unconscious to identify, understand and reveal cues relating to the external world, but which have escaped conscious awareness. This 'hidden system' therefore has the capability to pick up things that often have not been observed at a conscious level. Lawrence (1998) contends that this communicative capacity of the unconscious is responsible for the phenomenon known as 'social dreaming'. A number of scholars are of the opinion that the unconscious can also pick up information that is only present at an unconscious level in the organisation, or located in certain structures in the organisation (Armstrong, 2005; Klein, 1987; Lacan, 1997; Menzies Lyth, 1960, 1981).

4.3.1.2 The unconscious language of actions

The way in which people execute their tasks and symbolic actions could also reveal the content of the unconscious. With the assistance of an example, the authors Vansina and Vansina-Cobbaert (2008) refer to friction between nursing staff and psychoanalytic group therapists in a psychiatric department. At conscious level, criticism and ridicule were directed at the psychoanalytic approach of the group therapists by the nursing staff, but at unconscious level, there was a firm conviction that psychoanalytic work was deemed extremely valuable in the department. This conviction was so strong that nursing staff would go about executing their tasks in such a way that it 'looked like' psychoanalytic therapy. Exploration revealed that this behaviour was based on the perception that psychoanalytic group therapists were the only ones treated with special respect by staff and other visitors to the institution (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). Thus, the way in which nursing staff executed their task,

revealed something about the tension and anxiety that were lurking behind their actions. Individuals and groups in organisations often project either positive, negative or more accurately, a combination of characteristics, onto each other. It is common for the recipients to idealise or to identify with these projections (Hirschhorn & Barnett, 1993; Long, Dalton, Faris, & Newton, 2010; Miller, 1997; Overlaet & Barrett, 2000). Leaders can manage the anxiety stemming from the projection of 'not being good-enough, not being valued, not being appreciated' by colluding (Diamond & Allcorn, 2009) with these projections. Closer examination would provide a picture of what one's 'organisation-in-the-mind' (Borwick, 2006) looks like.

The image groups have about themselves without them being aware of such image, or that they are using them, could also reveal aspects of the unconscious. When attempting to understand the meaning of actions, leaders are influenced by the emotional quality of the interaction (Adams, 1994; Armstrong, 1995; Boroditsky, 2009). Actions can be used to manage disappointments or to communicate unfulfilled wishes. The contents of the unconscious are indirectly expressed in the totality of an actual setting (Roberts & Jarrett, 2006; Vansina, 1993).

4.3.1.3   *The unconscious language of relations*

A large number of scholars (Armstrong, 2005; Czander, 1993; De Board, 2014; Huffington et al., 2004; Menzies Lyth, 1993) allude to the centrality of emotional relations, which are partly or exclusively revealed in behaviour that can be thought of or talked about through interactive associative exploration. The language of relations is expressed through the psychological processes of transference, counter-transference and projective identification, which were explored in section 2.3.3. Brief mention of these constructs will be made here, specifically within the context of language use.

Gould et al. (2001), Menzies Lyth (1993) and a number of other scholars allude to an extended notion of the concept of transference. Two aspects are highlighted, namely:

What is transferred, are experiences and reactions *associated with certain functions that people either perform or do not perform* (acts of commission or omission), for example as caretaker, protector, teacher, etc.

The understanding that whatever is transferred, whether it is a need, an anxiety, or an experience, is *now present in our inner world*, although there is a connection with past experiences or phantasies.

Without awareness, the *actual inner world* becomes visible and is transferred to the *total actual situation,* and this is expressed through what is said (language) and through people's behaviour, or a combination of the two, i.e. language and action.

Secondly, 'counter-transference' refers to the emotional responses of the consultant to the client or the manager to co-workers (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Boydell, 2009; Vansina-Cobbaert, 2005). In other words, it is those emotional reactions that another person unconsciously induces in an individual, thereby revealing a characteristic of him or her that belongs to the unconscious (Czander, 1993; Menzies Lyth, 1990). The relevance of counter-transference is that the potential presence of emotional psychodynamic material could be explored by using language as a tool for exploration.

Finally, projective identification, classified as a defence mechanism, is a fully unconscious process (Czander, 1993; Gould et al., 2001) through which a part of the self is injected "or ejected" (what one does not like or is afraid of) into someone else, being unaware of that part and the intention to get rid of it (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008, p. 45). What is important is that projective identification is a method of communication,

being one of the important 'languages' of primary process thinking (Armstrong, 2006; Czander & Eisold, 2003). It manifests through the way in which a person behaves or talks about something (i.e. through language use). Emotional intensity also makes it easier for projective identification to occur (Czander, 1993; Sievers, 2009).

Thus, the unconscious reveals itself through the way work is structured (socio-technically), and through relationships. It also reveals itself linguistically in verbal expression, through images carried in the form of language, spontaneous associations, the use of unexpected words, and some hasty remarks not picked up (Diamond, 2007; Roberts & Jarrett, 2006; Stapley, 2002). Some authors, such as Roberts and Jarrett (2006) and Vansina and Vansina-Cobbaert (2008) suggest that it is as if the unconscious not only 'speaks' but also 'understands' its own languages. Consultants and other practitioners therefore need to get in touch with the way in which a work system unconsciously expresses itself, whether it is in the form of images, stories, myths, words or symbols. Defensive behaviours should be recognised as a way in which the unconscious expresses terrains of tension, unfulfilled needs and desires, and unsettling uncertainties and anxieties.

Meaning can therefore never be grasped fully through activity alone (Lazar, 2011). It will reveal itself through stories, images, people's reactions, the way in which people engage in their tasks and the emotional experiences of the consultant (Diamond, 1993; Eisold, 2010; Mollon, 2002). Whatever emerges will have to be explored repeatedly before the real meaning evolves in the here and now (Vansina-Cobbaert, 2005).

In the next sections, the potential inherent in language use as transitional phenomenon and as defence against 'otherness' is discussed.

4.3.2 Language as transitional phenomenon and potential space

Transitional phenomena, transitional objects, transitional space, potential space and intermediate space are all interrelated concepts (Winnicott, 1953). As discussed in section 2.3.3.3, the term 'transitional phenomenon' was introduced by Winnicott (1953), who refers to an array of ways in which transitional objects, such as the use of a soft toy to reassure or comfort a young child, could be used. This object is given up and becomes irrelevant once the change process (transition) has been completed (Bollas, 1987). Vansina and Vansina-Cobbaert (2008) suggest that a transitional object does not need to be an object in the narrow sense of the word, but could include a poem, a saying or even a word. 'Transitional' refers to the view that the object assists an individual to move from one way of being to another (Amado, 2001). Transitional phenomena are also used to describe the experience in the mother–child relationship, which assists in an understanding of the relationship between mother and child (Bollas, 1987). Transitional space, on the other hand, is an intermediate space between the inner and the outer world, which facilitates the movement from a subjective to a more objective state to experience the world (French & Simpson, 1999; Vansina, 2000). This is the space, which simultaneously connects and separates one's internal and external reality. This space has been referred to by different names, for example "the third ear", "the intermediate area", "potential space", and "a resting place" (Abram, 1996; Diamond & Allcorn, 2009; Long, 1992; Winnicott, 1971). The "third space" is described by Winnicott (1971, p. 2) as:

> [T]he third part of the life of a human being, a part that we cannot ignore, is an intermediate area of experiencing, to which inner reality and external life both contribute. It is an area that is not challenged, because no claim is made on its behalf except that it shall exist as a resting-place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated.

Grady and Grady (2013) applied Winnicott's (1965, 1975) ideas not only to adults, but to organisations as well. These authors suggest that, within the context of organisational transition and transformation, leaders could use "transitional space" (Grady & Grady, 2013, p. 243) to play an important role in experimentation and innovation. This is a safe environment in which new roles, new behaviours, new ideas and issues could be explored without judgement or any other negative repercussions.

Working with Winnicott's (1971) contribution that words could be used, as well as contributions by other scholars (Amado, 2007; Amado & Amato, 2001; Jemstedt, 2000; Long, 1992; Mnguni, 2015; Van Buskirk & MxGrath, 1999; Vansina, 1993), it is suggested that words in the collective form of language use could be used as transitional phenomena with all the qualities and functions of transitional phenomena. This then alludes to the possibility that language could be used as 'potential space' (Amado, 2007). Potential space has transformative possibilities, because it is in potential space that individuals encounter or pursue something in the external world and both transforms and is transformed by it (Jemstedt, 2000). Where there is good-enough containment, and safe-enough potential spaces, "purposeful play and playful work" (Mnguni, 2015, p. 15) are possible and release us of our existential anxiety.

When leaders have to negotiate transitions, accompanied by new roles, behaviours, systems and cultures, this period could require 'a new language' to be spoken. Leaders are often in the best possible position not only to create the necessary conditions for such a transitional space, but also to craft this new language in support of organisational change. This transitional space could be a reflective space where individuals experiment (in a safe space) with new roles, relationships and behaviours in the new emerging organisation (Gerson, 2005). By engaging this transitional space, language could contain some of the anxiety associated with change, provide reassurance and communicate emotional meaning to individuals in the organisation. Leaders are also in need of a language

that will help them to engage social and moral issues and ideologies that constrain leadership actions (Trehan, 2007). A new language, which complements this transitional space – temporary, safe environment designed for thinking, imagination, "purposeful play" (Mnguni, 2015, p. 15) and reassurance in preparation for the future – could enable both leaders and followers to deal with the pain of loss and to embrace new beginnings.

4.4 LANGUAGE USE AS INDICATION OF LEADERSHIP ANXIETY

As alluded to earlier, words, and by extension language use, could conceal as well as reveal important facets of one's inner and outer psychological world (James et al., 2003). Language has a conscious and unconscious psychological role. Some scholars propose that language use also carries unconscious processes (Makari & Shapiro, 1992; Rice, 1963). Anxiety is an example of these unconscious processes. Since the unconscious is in language use (Freud, 1916), it is reasonable to suggest that anxiety as an unconscious psychological process is also present in language use. This is essentially what is meant by language use as manifestation of leadership anxiety dynamics. Leaders defend against anxieties by deploying defence mechanisms (see section 2.3.2). Hence, anxieties could lurk in the presence of defensive operations (Lorenzer, 1972). Encoded unconscious messages are reflected through linguistic signifiers (Lacan, 1968). Anxiety manifests in shadow narratives, in the form of psychological processes, for example projections, transference, counter-transference and projective identification (Loewenstein, 1956). It is therefore proposed that anxiety could be detected by, for example, the systems psychodynamic practitioner, by examining the language use of the leader.

I have to state upfront that, due to the nature of the unconscious, the psychology of language use, the complexity of psychological processes and because anxiety is predominantly an unconscious process, it is not easy to access the presence of anxiety in the language use of the leader.
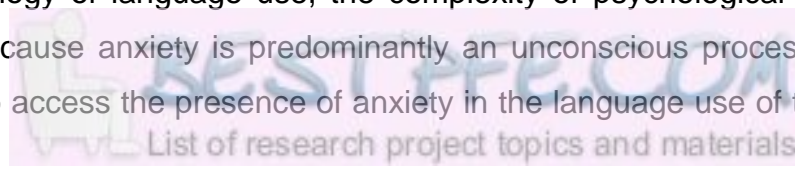
Therapists and other practitioners take years to master their therapeutic skills, of which, "listening to the client" is a critical component. The unconscious remains an intangible and mysterious phenomenon. There is thus a need to guard against the phantasy of looking for a recipe, formula or step-by-step guide to access leadership anxiety dynamics in the language use of the leader.

Taking the above-mentioned challenges into account, the thrust of my argument is not radically different from how therapists listen to their clients, and how industrial and organisational psychologists, for example, listen to leaders and coaches. However, in this study, the focus was predominantly on listening to leadership anxieties. In section 1.3, reference is made to how anxiety is on the rise and the influence of these anxieties on, amongst others, leadership decision-making and how the leadership role is taken up in the organisation.

The following listening guidelines are recommended in particular to systems psychodynamic practitioners when listening to leaders to access their language use as an indication of leadership anxiety:

- to listen in the totality of the here and now;
- to listen not only through the ears, but also through the eyes and the body of the practitioner as well;
- to listen without memory, judgement and desire, or as far as it is humanly possible;
- to listen for dynamics present in language use (narrative) and the body of the client;
- to listen for processes present in language use (narrative) and the body of the client;
- to listen for somatic data, for example transference and counter-transference reactions, emotional reactions both in the client and in the body of the practitioner;
- to listen for linguistic idiosyncrasies, for example unique language usage, repetitions, hesitance, object relations;

- to permit (authorise) the practitioner's unconscious consciously and deliberately to speak to the client's unconscious;
- to listen to the unconscious language of images, for example symbols, signs, images, metaphors, sounds, slips of the tongue, signifiers;
- to listen to the unconscious language of relations, for example the quality of relations in the narrative of the leader, relational patterns, objects, identities, attachments.

These listening guidelines will take the consultant down numerous potential psychological avenues for further exploration and validation, given the skill set of the systems psychodynamic practitioner, in collaboration with the client.

The listening guidelines above are notably different to, for example how therapists listen to their clients. These guidelines are different by:

- presenting a more structured and linguistically grounded approach to explore the language use of the leader;
- making concrete suggestions in terms of how to create a good-enough listening container (see model below in 4.1);
- highlighting the centrality of adopting a conscious listening disposition as consultant (and perhaps even as the client);
- articulating the psychology of language use by extending the notion of the "languages of the unconscious" (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008); and
- attempting to generate renewed appreciation for how both practitioners or consultants and clients (in this study, leaders) could 'listen to their bodies' as potential source of somatic intelligence (data).

These listening guidelines as discussed above, are visually represented in the Figure 4.1 below.
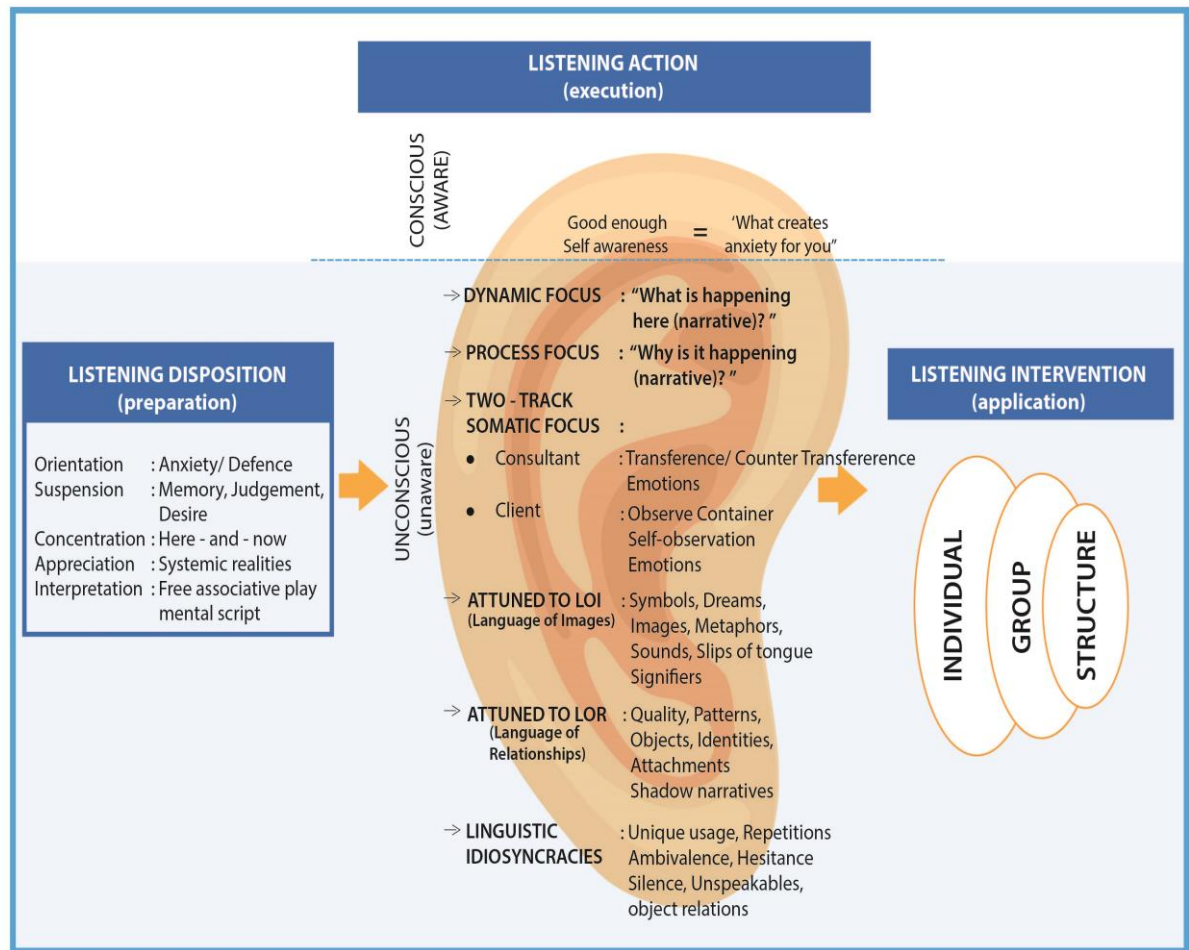
Figure 4.1. Good-enough listening container

4.5   CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, language use as the second operational research construct of this study was discussed. Language, and in particular language use, was defined and language use was contextualised within the boundaries of this study. Language use was then explored from a systems psychodynamic perspective. The languages of the unconscious (in the form of images, actions and relations) and the way in which the unconscious reveals itself, were also explored. The chapter concluded with a discussion of language as transitional phenomenon and language use as indication of leadership anxiety.

In the next chapter, I report on the development and description of a theoretical model (language use as manifestation of leadership anxiety dynamics) based on the literature, which attempts to explain the interconnected nature of the constructs (leadership as contextual construct, and anxiety and language use as the operational research constructs) of this study.

CHAPTER 5: LANGUAGE USE AS MANIFESTATION OF LEADERSHIP ANXIETY DYNAMICS: A SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMIC MODEL

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The fourth specific literature aim was to develop and describe a systems psychodynamic theoretical model relating to language use as manifestation of leadership anxiety dynamics.

This chapter presents an integration of the previous literature chapters, by highlighting salient theoretical contributions from the systems psychodynamic literature. Firstly, a discussion of the nature of the relationship between anxiety in leadership, language use and the unconscious is presented, which culminates in a presentation and description of a theoretical model on leadership anxiety and language use. In a sense, my theoretical model represents the systems psychodynamic literature in a visual format. The chapter concludes with a summary.

5.2 LANGUAGE USE AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

Covert, unconscious mental and emotional forces play a critical role in the systems psychodynamic paradigm, as this paradigm appreciates the full complexity of human behaviour (Bain, 1998; Clare & Zarbafi, 2009; De Board, 2014; Eisold, 2010; Kets de Vries, 2007). There is a plethora of research evidence, supporting how leaders bring unconscious content into relationships (Boydell, 2009; Brown, 2003; Brunning & Perini, 2010; Krantz, 2001; Lawrence, 2003; Long, 2004). Threats to the self tend to create anxiety, and this triggers defences (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009), because anxiety is intertwined with being human (Eisold, 2010). Anxiety as the emotional and psychological reaction of the unconscious, which serves as impetus of individual and organisational behaviour, thereby either enhancing or impairing leadership functioning (Cilliers &

Terblanche, 2010; Jarrett & Kellner, 1996; Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008), is evoked whenever something is experienced as a threat (Bexton, 1975; Fromm, 2009; James & Huffington, 2004; Mersky, 2008). Defensive behaviours (Gould et al., 2004) basic assumption behaviours (Gabriel & Carr, 2002) and defensive developmental processes (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008) are mobilised to contain this anxiety. The unconscious mind therefore manifests itself in thoughts, feelings, speech and behaviour (Menzies Lyth, 1989). The way the unconscious manifests itself through the vehicle and medium of language use is what concerned this study primarily. Many researchers (Bollas, 1995; Hoggett, 2013; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013) refer to this proverbial 'play' of the unconscious mind with conscious experiences. Thus, there are always conscious and unconscious reasons behind the connection to specific rhetorical and discursive positions (Frosh & Emerson, 2005). One can develop the capacity to recognise and understand how the unconscious mind reveals itself in thoughts, feelings, speech and behaviour (Menzies Lyth, 1989). Wood (2011) contends that, at the core of leadership relationships and relatedness, is the reality of the identification, comprehension and management of the motivating power of covert unconscious emotional forces. At the centre of these contributions, however, lies the belief that human beings are an interconnected, conscious and unconscious social unit (Czander & Eisold, 2003). A number of theorists (Diamond, 2007; Menzies Lyth, 1989; Roberts & Jarrett, 2006; Stapley, 2002; Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008) indirectly refer to the connection between anxiety in leadership and the use of language in the form of images, stories, myths, words and symbols.

Language use, like other 'transitional objects' (Dore, Franklin, Miller & Ramer, 1976; Goddard, 2016; Harris, 1992; Tolpin, 2017), for example a blanket, could be perceived as a transitional phenomenon, with the purpose of creating space in order to make the link possible between the psyche and external reality. Transitional objects play an enabling function, by facilitating movement from an existing way of being to a different, more

appropriate way of being (Flaherty, 2005). Language also has the capacity to trigger individual valence (Obholzer & Miller, 2004). The leadership landscape manifests in a unique way for each leader (relatedness), which is reflected to some extent in the language that is used. This communicative capacity of the unconscious is also expressed as 'social dreaming' (Lawrence, 1980, 1998; Manley, 2014). Projective identification, for example, is a defence mechanism, which reflects the communicative ability of the unconscious (Vansina, 1993). It is known that the unconscious can notice phenomena, which are present at a non-conscious level in the organisation (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). Furthermore, language use has the capacity to reflect transference and/or counter-transference, projection, basic assumption behaviours, or a range of other vulnerabilities, for example the need for attachment (Mitchell, 2014).

A possible process to explore potential unconscious forces might resemble the process as reflected in the figure below:

Figure 5.1.   Lens to explore possible unconscious forces
(Author's own compilation)

A review of the systems psychodynamic literature has indicated certain aspects regarding the unconscious.

As suggested earlier (see section 5.2), in this study, the unconscious as a system and in terms of its dynamic content, represents leaders' original historic, but more importantly, their protective here-and-now way of mental functioning (Manley, 2014; Meltzer, 1984; Vansina-Cobbaert, 2005). One's socio-cultural context and environment also have a significant influence on the unconscious (Baglioni & Fubini, 2013). This conceptualisation implies and reflects other scholars' contributions regarding the nature and properties of the unconscious. For example, the unconscious has communicative capacity in that it expresses itself through the different components of an actual situation (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). This expressive capability suggests that the unconscious is always at work and that its contents could be accessed by being alert and perceptive to what it is trying to communicate. I remember how, as consultants to diversity interventions, we would share with each other, almost religiously, every morning, our thoughts and feelings and the dreams we had the previous night. When we explored this material, we were surprised at how connected it was to the group dynamics with which we were working at the time. This communication of the unconscious could take the form of images, symbols, words and phrases that spring to mind, emotional reactions, projections, dreams, or the way in which tasks are executed and symbolic actions taken (Amado, 2001; Baglioni & Fubini, 2013; Klein, 2005; Krantz, 2010). Moreover, the unconscious has the capacity to reveal itself not only in intense emotional situations and relationships, but also in calm, serene situations (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2004). Regarding the communicative capacity of the unconscious, it has also been suggested that the unconscious uses several languages (the languages of images, relations and actions) to convey its contents (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). Pertaining to its properties, the unconscious has the capacity to notice what the conscious mind has failed to observe (Vansina, 2000). Thus, the conscious mind is

not able to attend to all the stimuli and interaction as experienced on a daily basis. It can therefore be the simultaneous source of creativity and innovation on the one hand, but on the other hand, also be destructive and regressive (Krantz, 2001).

The above poses some implications in terms of how the unconscious should be approached. Because of its nature, its contents cannot be worked with directly (for example unconscious anxieties), but one could challenge or work with the unconscious through conscious logical reasoning and linguistic interventions (reframing or creating awareness around how and what is communicated) (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Baglioni & Fubini, 2013; Menzies Lyth, 1989). Leaders, therefore, need to be attentive (or should be assisted by experts) to what is happening at the conscious level, while simultaneously exploring what is revealed at the unconscious level. What is observable is valuable, and often the only clue to the presence of unconscious factors (Lawrence, 1998). Finally, the unconscious should be approached with a deep sense of respectful curiosity (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009).

There is therefore a profound connection between conscious and unconscious forces. In line with Heidegger (1971), Gadamer (1976) and Kockelmans (1972), Flaherty (2004) supports the notion that human beings are connected, and exist in a different way from other phenomena. Leaders enter into a relationship with everything they encounter. The capacity for relating is a constitutive part of being human. Leaders seem to have different forms of this capacity, particularly those who have been damaged emotionally and physically. From an object relations perspective, at the core of human existence is the desire and possibility for creating connections and relationships (Klein, 1985; Rosenberger & Hayes, 2002).

In the next section, a theoretical systems psychodynamic model on leadership anxiety dynamics as reflected through language use, based on pertinent theoretical contributions in the systems psychodynamic literature, is presented and discussed.

5.3 A SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMIC MODEL ON LANGUAGE USE AS MANIFESTATION OF LEADERSHIP ANXIETY DYNAMICS

In line with the systems psychodynamic stance, the case was made that unconscious material in the form of thoughts, emotions, anxieties, dysfunctional patterns of thinking, and experiences (the repressed unconscious), could have a significant effect on leadership behaviour and decision-making. By becoming more aware of their unconscious behaviours by reflecting on leadership practices, particularly through the exploration of language use, leaders might be able to conceptualise different alternatives and courses of action.

The systems psychodynamic approach provided me with a lens to explore leadership anxiety dynamics, as these are reflected in language use (unconscious use of language), 'below the surface' (Brunning & Perini, 2010; Long, 2004; Miller, 1993). What follows is a theoretical model, outlining the nature of the relationship between leadership anxiety dynamics and language use, as well as how these unconscious dynamics could be accessed, and explored through this model. This model will be conceptualised and referred to as the 'systems psychodynamic model on language use as manifestation of leadership anxiety dynamics' (see Figure 5.2). The purpose of this model is to explore the nature of the interaction between anxiety in leadership and language use, and to serve as a guide in raising awareness, identifying and exploring leadership anxiety dynamics as these are manifested through the language use of the leader.

Figure 5.2. Systems psychodynamic model on language use as manifestation of leadership anxiety dynamics

I will describe and discuss this model in the next section, followed by a summary of this chapter.

5.3.1 The contextual component of the model

The realities of organisational life are complex, evolving and dynamic (Long, 2008). The model departs from the premise that all human interaction is related and situated, within a systemic and psychodynamic environment. The workplace is therefore conceptualised as a connected, psychodynamic system (Boxer, 2014; Grotstein, 2008; Krantz, 1996). Leaders have to function within this systemic reality, which is alive, interactive, turbulent and vibrant, and which has an above and below the surface dimension (Kahn, 2014). The context, which is situated at the bottom of the model, not only signifies the importance of being aware of certain fundamental influences, but also the containing capacity (Boydell, 2009; Krantz, 2001) of this reality.

5.3.2 The consciousness component of the model

As leaders interact with their daily realities, a certain level of personal consciousness is at play. Leaders can draw from a *conscious* source of information accessible in the here and now, and from their *pre-conscious* source of information, which reflects a state and content, which can be retrieved into consciousness by exerting a certain level of effort (American Psychological Association [APA], 2015; Freud, 1959). Leaders must be aware of the role that *unconscious* forces could play, particularly the unconscious use of language use, in their behaviour within the context of the messiness, ambivalence and complexities of relationships, anxieties, relatedness and organisational life (Blackman, 2004; Freud, 1959; Stapley, 2006a).

5.3.3 The connected (relatedness) component of the model

The leader's internal world and external reality are always connected (Abram, 1996; Diamond & Allcorn, 2009; Vansina, 1993; Winnicott, 1971). The complex nature of the leader as a person as well as leadership as a role is encapsulated in the concept of a psychological 'leadership black

box' (Stein & Allcorn, 2014). This concept of a leadership black box reflects the leader's complexity and uniqueness in the form of personality, values and beliefs, attachments, projections, transferences, valence, language use, interests and past experiences, unconscious motivations, preferences and seductions that leaders bring to the leadership role (that which the leader carries into the work environment). These realities are always connected to how the leader takes up and takes on the leadership role.

Similarly, at the core of humanity lies the basic psychological need for safety, in the form of attachment, control orientation, avoidance of pain/maximisation of pleasure and self-enhancement (Bowlby, 1969, 1973; Grawe, 2007; Rossouw, 2014; Western, 2012). Intertwined with these needs is the leader's defensive, protective instinct and need for self-preservation (Clarke, Hahn & Hoggett, 2008; Gomez, 1998; Lazar, 2011). As situated beings, leaders therefore find themselves in a larger psychodynamic environment filled with numerous and diverse actual and potential stimuli.

The leader observes, evaluates (as 'high threat' or 'low threat') and interprets environmental stimuli through the phenomenon of relatedness and the organisation-in-the-mind, his or her unique structure of interpretation (Flaherty, 2005), which is a unique mix of both conscious (objectives, behaviours, perceptions and conscious experiences) and unconscious (assumptions, representations, values and defences) psychodynamic material. The way leaders view the world and the meaning that is attached, will influence their behaviours, the actions taken, and the emotions experienced (Reciniello, 2014). Observations, a particular way of thinking, and a series of actions, are always and according to a specific individual, based on his or her structure of interpretation, at a given time. Leaders respond to environmental stimuli as either threat triggers or reward triggers (Gomez, 1998). Threat triggers, perceived as threats to the self, elicit anxiety-related responses. This emotional response from the dynamic unconscious system is activated by

perceived dangers/threats in the subjective inner world of the leader or the objective external environment (Colman & Geller, 1985; Cytrynbaum & Noumair, 2004; Czander, 1997; Diamond, 1993; Gomez, 1998; Obholzer & Roberts, 1994).

The assessment of environmental stimuli affects the motivational schema. The purpose of a motivational schema is to satisfy or protect the leader's basic needs (Dahlitz, 2015), which are classified into two psychological approaches, namely an *approach-orientation* (movement towards – gaining or keeping something perceived as positive) or an *avoidance-orientation* (movement away – getting away or keeping away from something perceived as negative) (Elliot, 2006).

Furthermore, the leader's unique, subjective psychological risk profile (Prins, 2002; Sher, 2010) seems to be directly relevant in the interpretation of threat or reward triggers. This profile consists of, amongst others, the leader's need for and level of attachment, valence, preferred defences, frustration threshold, perception of outcome path, as well as the context (perceived as safe or anxiety-provoking). Whatever is triggered also depends on the leader's 'capacity to contain' (Diamond, 2016; Gould, 2001). An environment, characterised by high stress levels, increased expectations, ambiguous tasks, complex organisational structures, and ever-shifting organisational priorities (Rao, 2013; Vansina, 2014) will inevitably stir up vulnerabilities in leaders. The leader is expected to 'contain' change, anxiety, confusion, uncertainty and loss (Reciniello, 2014). This is tough because the leader's connections with the task to be performed are affected by inner personal and external contextual realities (for example withholding authorisation), that will inevitably have an influence on her or his ability to hold others in the mind and to provide 'good enough containment' (Hoggett, 2013; Stein & Allcorn, 2014). Containment is thus a process whereby a potentially overwhelming feeling is held, understood and put into perspective primarily dialogically (i.e. via language use), between self and the other (Lazar, 2011; Western, 2013). When powerful emotional content cannot

be contained, it has to go somewhere and, according to Britton (1992), it is then projected, enacted or embodied. The capacity to be a good enough container will reduce anxiety and make employees or followers feel understood, they will become more creative and committed and feel they are valued contributors (Amado, 1995; Bion, 1985; Khaleelee & Stapley, 2013). The leader who is able to contain the emotional turbulence of the modern work setting, helps employees to focus on the primary task, and helps to prevent regressing to an infantile dependency, thoughtless consensus, reckless action and the expectation of an imminent miracle (Diamond, 2007; Reciniello, 2014; Stein & Allcorn, 2014).

Perceived threats to the self trigger apprehension (mental mode of increased consciousness) and defences in the form of psychic and social defensive processes, developmental practices, and basic assumption behaviours. The unconscious plays a critical role in the process of selection, perception (Armstrong, 2005; Bion, 1985; Vansina, 2014) and attention paid to stimuli. These defences against anxiety could be 'positive', resulting in functional, sophisticated, competence-enhancing adaptations. Nevertheless, it can also be 'negative', leading to dysfunctional, debilitating, impairments (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). On the leadership landscape, there is always the perception of threat, and the subsequent response of anxiety. Energy is invested in actions to reduce this anxiety (Blackman, 2004). The Greek equivalent of anxiety, namely *merimna* (Pike, 1967), implying to be fragmented, also conjures the image of anxiety as having the following consequences: being dis-figured, dis-membered, and dis-integrated, as opposed to becoming transfigured, re-membered, and re-integrated.

5.3.4 The colliquation component of the model

The concept of 'colliquation' is the process and point where two substances meet, enter each other and mutually influence each other to such an extent that they start to reflect each other's characteristics

(Turillazzi et al., 2005). These collisions and mutual influences occur when the leader's unconscious anxieties are reflected in his or her language use and vice versa. Thus, these anxiety dynamics, which are often manifested in the form of psychic and social defensive processes, may be reflected in the language that leaders use – linguistic manifestations of anxiety. Language is used by the unconscious as vehicle of communication, medium to connect, conduit for psychodynamic material, bridge into and out of the dynamic unconscious, and as mirror for reflection (Tolpin, 2017).

The unconscious uses several 'languages', being the language of *images*, of *actions* and of *relations* (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). These languages have been adapted and extended to reflect leadership anxiety dynamics through the following:

- ***Language as speech and image*** – this language reflects the popping into the mind of images, symbols, individual nuances, phrases and what has become known as the 'slip of the tongue' (also known as Freudian slips) phenomenon.

- ***Language of relations and relatedness*** – the way in which leaders describe and verbalise actual or potential *relationships* including 'languaged' emotional responses, or relatedness expressed through, for example identity, power, authorisation, role, as well as transference, counter-transference and projective identification as methods of communication.

- ***Language in action and omission*** – the way in which leaders, through their actions or omission, actually 'communicate', experiences and expectations, articulate unfulfilled wishes, phantasies or thinking related to tasks to be executed. In this way, possible terrains of tension and anxieties lurking behind verbalised actions are communicated (Vansina-Cobbaert, 2006).

Leaders should recognise the presence of defensive behaviours as a way in which the unconscious expresses unfulfilled needs and desires,

disturbing uncertainties and anxieties. In the final analysis, it could be significant that the model reflects the form of a calabash, and that the conscious and unconscious content of the model is nestled gently within this calabash 'container'. The calabash is widely known for its flexibility, versatility (for example as nutrient, container, pipe, utensil or musical instrument) and some varieties for their toxicity (Decker-Walters, Wilkins-Ellert, Chung & Staub, 2005). Just as the calabash, in this context, language use can be rather versatile – as transitional phenomenon and as holder and container of anxieties. This model therefore emphasises language as potential lens and is located within potential space. Potential space as a way of being in relation to the other, offers a valuable in-between area and a point of departure out of potential relationship stalemates (Amado, 2007; Jemstedt, 2000; Long, 1992; Mnguni, 2015; Winnicott, 1971). Since almost everything about being human is carried, expressed and encapsulated in language, it becomes an important medium of reflection, engagement and transformation as leaders enter that place of encounter between inner and outer reality (Jemstedt, 2000).

5.4   CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented an integration of the previous literature chapters, by suggesting salient contributions from the systems psychodynamic literature. A discussion on the nature of the relationship between anxiety in leadership, language use and the unconscious was presented, followed by a presentation and description of a theoretical model on language use as manifestation of leadership anxiety dynamics. Different components of the model were discussed. The model reflects the dynamic interaction between leaders' experience of anxieties and how these anxieties are reflected in how leaders use language.

In the next chapter, the research methodology pertaining to this study is discussed. I also provide a detailed account of how I ensured the scientific rigour of this study.

CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the methodological elements pertaining to qualitative empirical research. The chapter commences with a presentation of the qualitative research design, which was selected, and the justification for this design. This is followed by a discussion of the data collection method, research sample, procedure and discourse analysis (critical discourse analysis as well as systems psychodynamically informed discourse analysis), as the selected method of data analysis for this study. The chapter concludes with a section on the trustworthiness of the study, ethical considerations and a summary.

As a reminder to the reader, the first three specific empirical aims, which had implications pertaining to the research design, were formulated as follows (also see section 1.4.2):

- to **explore language use and anxiety phenomenologically** from the perspectives of participants to this study;
- to **refine the theoretical model** by reporting on the influence of the empirical data on this theoretical model; and
- to explore the **utility value** of this theoretical model in terms of its potential application by systems psychodynamic practitioners, from a systems psychodynamic perspective.

6.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

In the following section, the researcher presents the research approach, research strategy and research method as it pertained to this study.

6.2.1 Research approach

The study was grounded in a qualitative and descriptive (inclusive of an explorative) research approach (De Vos et al., 2002; Maree, 2016;

Rhodes & Yardley, 2003; Young, Sproeber, Groschwitz, Preiss, & Plener, 2016). Sinkovics and Alfoldi (2012) define qualitative research as a series of interpretive activities aimed at understanding the meaning behind behaviours where the researcher takes up the role of the unique interpreter of the data. However, qualitative research has been perceived as a 'soft science', lacking scientific rigour, compared to quantitative research (Mays & Pope, 1995; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Some of the criticism included that qualitative research is anecdotal, subjective and subject to researcher bias (Bergman, 2011; Koch & Harrington, 1998; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012; Tierney, 2001). Rolfe (2004) summarises this debate as revolving around three positions: scholars who propose that qualitative research should be judged according to quantitative criteria; scholars who argue in favour of a different set of criteria; and, finally, those who question the appropriateness of predetermined criteria and who argue that the very idea of qualitative research should in fact be questioned.

Despite these divergent debates, my justification for selecting a qualitative approach was its distinct value, which is to explore phenomena in their natural settings and to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena with respect to the meanings participants bring to them (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindal, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2004; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). Furthermore, I was hoping to obtain valuable insights from the experiences of individuals and groups (listening posts in the context of this study) resulting in *Verstehen* or understanding (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Green, Thomas & Magilvy, 2011; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Thorogood, 2004). This approach resulted in my research yielding 'thick descriptions', thus remaining faithful to the original context and meaning (Silverman, 2004; Steyn, Smit, Du Toit & Strasheim, 2015). These thick descriptions evoke emotionality, voices, feelings and actions, and the meaning at the centre of interacting individuals is expressed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). I also selected this approach, not necessarily to generalise with regard to other settings and subjects, but to explore the aims of the study in depth, to

expand the knowledge base and to introduce new social and scientific practices (Bergman, 2011; Onwuegbuzie, Frels, Leech & Collins, 2011; Shenton, 2004). It was hoped that, by adopting this approach, a deeper and richer understanding of the phenomena under investigation could be achieved within this specific research context (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011).

Throughout the research process, as qualitative researcher, I celebrated my subjectivity, but not at the cost of sufficient rigour. To this end, I disclosed my involvement, personal and theoretical assumptions, paradigms and how these would be managed (Welsch, Piekkari, Plakoyiannaki & Paavilainen-Mantymaki, 2011). Regarding researcher subjectivity, Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 290) caution qualitative researchers to ensure that "the biases, motivations, interests or perspectives of the inquirer" must be reported and made explicit as the study unfolds. What needs to be guarded against, is researcher bias with respect to the design of the study and during the data collection phase, the credibility of sources and subjects, incomplete background information, and the 'skewness' of the data due to the very presence of the researcher (Domegan & Fleming, 2007; Moerdyk, 2015). Sections 6.2.3.4–6.2.3.6 reflect researcher bias by discussing the data collection instruments, data collection procedure and the way data were analysed. In the context of this study, a qualitative approach with an inductive exploration therefore provided a better account of the complexity of behaviours and phenomena under investigation. The complex nature of the research question also contributed towards the selection of a qualitative as opposed to a conventional quantitative design (Mays & Pope, 1995; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Patton, 2002). Section 6.2.3.8 provides a comprehensive discussion of how the trustworthiness of this study was ensured.

The research question, choice of research strategy, and the nature of the sample, allowed for explorative and descriptive 'what' questions, the investigation of unconscious manifestations (Rose, Spinks & Canhoto, 2015; Zainal, 2007) and a holistic approach to real-life phenomena, which

yielded rich descriptive accounts from multiple data sources (Chamberlayne et al., 2004; Yin, 2012; Zucker, 2001). This design was therefore also used as an explorative tool (Levy, 2008).

6.2.2 Research strategy

In this study, I opted for a modelling (building a model) type of research design (Briggs, 2003; Vohra, 2014) linked to a multiple-case study research design (Maree, 2016; Nahum, 2005; Yin, 2012). Qualitative data can also be modelled to explore the relationship between constructs (Jaccard & Jacoby, 2010). In this study, I used modelling as both a practical and a conceptual tool to enhance understanding of the constructs and the phenomena under scrutiny (Pidd, 1996). Despite the widespread use of multiple-case study designs, little consensus exists about how a case study should be defined (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Levy, 2008; Vohra, 2014; Yin, 2012). A multiple-case study design is generally defined as a comprehensive, systemic examination of phenomena of interest in a specific situation to obtain rich, in-depth knowledge by using multiple cases (Cox, 2004; Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996; Le Roux, 2003; Salkind, 2014; Schurink, Fouché & De Vos; 2011; Zucker, 2001). According to Yin (2012), a multiple-case research design has the unique advantage of revealing multiple factors, which interact to result in the characteristics of the phenomenon under investigation. Yin (2009) further contends that this design is used when the boundaries of phenomena and contexts are not always evident. Furthermore, this strategy was selected because the unconscious cannot be measured directly (Vansina, 2000). From an application perspective, one of the sample sets comprised business leaders to help me reflect on the theoretical model from a leadership perspective. However, other experts were also included in these cases to provide input from their unique expert perspectives (systems psychodynamic practitioners and post-modern discourse analysts) as indicated above. The three respective listening posts could be viewed as separate 'cases' to explore the complex phenomenon of language use as a manifestation of leadership anxiety dynamics from a variety of perspectives. It has been proposed

that the use of 'multiple cases' strengthens research findings and enhances the robustness of the research project (Creswell, 2014; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Vohra, 2014; Yin, 2009). Hence, with reference to the discussion above, my justification for selecting a multiple-case study research design was its capacity to yield rich, in-depth knowledge and experience. Multiple input (cases) was provided from a variety of sources, and I intended to see how multiple factors, for example language use and anxiety interact where the boundaries of the interacting constructs of the study are not always evident. Congruent with this design, my strategy was to sample specific groups of participants, recruited because of their knowledge, skills and/or expertise (see 6.2.3.3 for the specific predefined set of criteria). The sample set comprised systems psychodynamic practitioners, business leaders and post-modern discourse analysts. The respective sample sets (participants) and justification for these are discussed in section 6.2.3.3.

Common features of a multiple-case research design include (Frosh & Emerson, 2005) are:

- in-depth study of a number of cases;
- data are collected and analysed about specific features of each case;
- cases are explored in real-life contexts;
- cases are naturally occurring, i.e. no manipulation as in an experiment; and
- multiple sources of data are used.

The multiple-case research design, which was utilised in this study, had also been applied successfully in related studies from the systems psychodynamic paradigm (Coetzee, 2007; Henning & Cilliers, 2014; Lutgen-Sandrik & Alberts, 2006; Prins, 2002).

Next, a detailed description of the steps that were followed and specific aspects regarding components of the research method are discussed.

6.2.3 Research method

In this section, the research method is discussed as it related to the research setting, my role as researcher, sampling, data collection methods, recording, analyses of the data, strategies to ensure trustworthiness of the study and all ethical considerations.

6.2.3.1 The research setting

Participants were invited to assess the utility value of the theoretical model, which was developed based on relevant sources in the literature. The three groups of participants (systems psychodynamically informed practitioners, business leaders and post-modern discourse analysts) converged on different days to reflect on the model in the form of a listening post. The systems psychodynamic practitioners were predominantly academics and some psychologists who work in private practice. The business leaders were from the financial services industry with some coming from the security industry. The post-modern discourse analysts were academics, with some participants working as psychologists in the corporate world. The three respective listening posts were conducted in a conference-style venue at the main campus of the University of South Africa (Unisa) in Pretoria. Sessions were conducted on different occasions after hours (18:00–20:00), when it was relatively quiet, free from the normal disruptions in a university setting.

It is important to note that there was also a psychodynamic setting in this study: an institute of higher learning. Universities are sites of 'titles', power, projections, competition and rivalry. Universities were also in the spotlight at the time when the data were collected. These dynamics could have had an influence on the participants as well as on the quality and the nature of the data collected.

A comprehensive description of the sample, as well as the procedure that was followed, is presented later in the chapter (see 6.2.3.3).

6.2.3.2 Entreé and establishing researcher roles

Gaining access to research participants could be a challenging exercise, or it could be a straightforward process (Jones, Torres & Arminio, 2006; Kelly, 2007; Sato, 2004). However, in this study, gaining access to potential participants was not very difficult. For sample set 1, which consisted of systems psychodynamic practitioners (the first listening post), I was either familiar with members in this community of practice, or they were invited by accessing the systems psychodynamic interest group list, which is readily available for this community. Coming from a corporate environment, I was also familiar with business leaders within the financial services industry. These individuals comprised sample set 2 (the second listening post): business leaders. I therefore knew these leaders and they had shown interest in my research after I had spoken to them. Sample set 3 (the third listening post), namely post-modern discourse analysts, was accessed by relying on colleagues in the academic environment, through a form of snowball sampling (Chamberlayne et al., 2004; Terre Blanche et al., 2006). I called all the participants to discuss the research and to invite them to participate in the study. This was later followed up with a formal invite via e-mail to participate in the respective listening post sessions. Dynamics related to the participants being familiar with the researcher are discussed later.

In qualitative research, the role of the researcher is considered an instrument of data collection (Arzubiaga, Artiles, King, & Harris-Muri, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Greenbank, 2003). In this study, I took on the role of convenor and sometimes co-convenor of the three listening posts and at other times, that of observer (Davies, 2007). My role included –

- shaping the 'raw' data into data records by organising and reconstructing field notes and audio recordings;
- analysis of the data;
- the development of codes and themes that emerged through an

iterative process; and

- interpreting what the data wanted to say by relating what the interpretations meant to related research and conceptual literature (Barrett, 2007; Salkind, 2014).

It was therefore important for me to be aware of all the subjective realities and to self-reflect consistently throughout the research process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Steyn et al., 2015).

I knew some of the participants, which highlighted the relevance and bearing of the issue of positionality. Positionality is defined by Walt, Schneider, Murray, Brugha, and Gilson (2008) as the perceived institutional base, legitimacy, or how a researcher shows up, is viewed, or situated within a given context. This includes the researcher's gender, race, ethnicity, profession, authority, class and whether the researcher is perceived as an insider or outsider (Goodall, 2009; Hall, 2011; Macfarlane, 2011). Qualitative researchers need to identify themselves with precision, because this "reveals several of the lenses and the degree of sensitivity with which the researcher may collect, view, analyse and report the data" (Arzubiaga et al., 2008, p. 74). Researchers should enhance their reflexivity by paying close attention to issues of power, resistance, positions and resources as they surface during the research process, and influence the agenda during the research process (Bolden, Gosling & O'Brien, 2014; Sato, 2004; Walt et al., 2008). In terms of my positionality, I am a middle-class, so-called 'coloured', according to the race classification system within the South African context. I am a male, Afrikaans-speaking (mother tongue), industrial psychologist in my late forties. The fact that I am also an academic and familiar with the systems psychodynamic stance, made me an insider to some of the participants, and an outsider to other participants (for example for some of the business leaders and post-modern discourse analysts). The meaning and implications of this familiarity are reflected upon in section 8.7 of this thesis.

6.2.3.3   Sampling and participants

The method to select participants for this study was purposive sampling (Creswell, 2007; Evans, 2007; Salkind, 2014). I therefore used my own judgement to select participants (Evans, 2007; Fischer, 2006; Patton, 1999) based on their unique qualities (Babbie & Mouton, 2006; Brink, Van der Walt & Van Rensburg, 2006; Strydom & Delport, 2011). Due to their knowledge of the subject matter of this study (Polkinghorne, 2005), three predefined separate groups of participants were identified for the study, namely, systems psychodynamic practitioners (10 participants), business leaders (10 participants) and post-modern discourse analysts (10 participants).

Participants who suited a specific set of criteria were invited to participate in the study (see detailed explanation and description of the participants below). Participants were invited via e-mail to attend the listening posts. Sample set 1 (systems psychodynamic practitioners) was accessed via the systems psychodynamic interest group list, which, as was explained earlier, is generally available in this community. Sample set 2 (business leaders), consisted of corporate business leaders known to me and who had shown interest in the research when they were informally approached, because they could identify with the relevance of the research problem. They were also invited via e-mail to participate in the listening post sessions. Sample set 3 (post-modern discourse analysts) was identified by relying on colleagues in the academic environment, who had either known about the study or who were themselves interested in the study. By utilising snowball sampling (Chamberlayne et al., 2004; Terre Blanche et al., 2006), I was able to identify additional participants to attend the listening post.

A working definition of a discourse is that it is a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world) (Bakhtin, 1981). Discourse analyst therefore work with what has been said or written by exploring patterns in and across discourses in order to identify

the social consequences of discursive representations of reality (Howarth, 2000).

Participants, who had met the following criteria, were selected:

a   Systems psychodynamic practitioners

Participants had to be knowledgeable about the systems psychodynamic paradigm, and had to have consulted with organisations from this stance. This is important since systems psychodynamics was the paradigm of this study, and participants needed to be familiar with the terminology, approach and assumptions, available to attend the listening posts in Pretoria (South Africa) and had to be proficient in English.

Table 6.1

Listening post 1: Systems psychodynamic practitioners

Participant	Race	Gender	Organisational role
1.1	Black	Male	Industrial psychologist (P1.1/B/M/IOP)
1.2	White	Female	Industrial psychologist (P1.2/W/F/IOP)
1.3	Coloured[2]	Male	Industrial psychologist (P1.3/C/M/IOP)
1.4	White	Male	Industrial psychologist (P1.4/W/M/IOP)
1.5	White	Female	Research psychologist (P1.5/W/F/RP)
1.6	Black	Female	Clinical psychologist (P1.6/B/F/CLP)
1.7	Black	Female	Industrial psychologist (P1.7/B/F/IOP)

[2] The racial classification of being "Coloured" goes back to the early 20th century and became a category for individuals who were classified as mixed race (Adhikari, 2005; Mayer & Barnard, 2015).

b   Business leaders

Participants had to be knowledgeable about, competent in or experienced regarding the phenomenon under scrutiny, willing to share their experiences, representative of a diverse range of points of view, available to attend the listening posts in Pretoria (South Africa) and proficient in English.

Table 6.2

Listening post 2: Business leaders

Participant	Race	Gender	Organisational role
2.1	White	Male	Divisional head: Private bank (P2.1/W/M/DH)
2.2	Black	Female	Credit manager (P2.2/B/F/CM)
2.3	Indian	Male	Divisional head: Retail banking (P2.3/I/M/DH)
2.4	White	Male	Senior staff officer (P2.4/W/M/SSO)
2.5	White	Male	Divisional head: IT (P2.5/W/M/DH)
2.6	Coloured	Male	Industrial psychologist (P2.6/C/M/IOP)
2.7	Black	Male	Senior staff officer (P2.7/B/M/SSO)

c   Post-modern discourse analysts

Participants had to be knowledgeable about, competent in or experienced regarding the discipline under discussion because there was a language use component to the systems psychodynamic model. They had to be willing to share their expertise. A critical additional function of this cohort

was that it would assist further to enhance the rigour of the model, once the practitioners and business leaders had reflected and possibly further contributed to the conceptual enhancement of the model. They also had to be available to attend the listening posts in Pretoria (South Africa) and had to be proficient in English.

Table 6.3

Listening post 3 – Post-modern discourse analysts

Participant	Race	Gender	Organisational role
3.1	White	Male	Clinical psychologist (P3.1/W/M/CLP)
3.2	White	Male	Research professor (P3.2/W/M/RP)
3.3	Coloured	Female	Clinical psychologist (P3.3/C/F/CLP)
3.4	White	Male	Industrial psychologist (P3.4/W/M/IOP)
3.5	Black	Female	Counselling psychologist (P3.5/B/F/COP)
3.6	White	Male	Industrial psychologist (P3.6/W/M/IOP)
3.7	Coloured	Male	Industrial psychologist (P3.7/C/M/IOP)
3.8	White	Male	Industrial psychologist (P3.8/W/M/IOP)
3.9	White	Male	Industrial psychologist (P3.9/W/M/IOP)

Ultimately, in a qualitative-based study, the role played by numbers is not the only critical factor, as is the case in quantitative research (Morrow, 2005; Polkinghorne, 2005). Critical to me was the information richness of the cases and my own analytical skills (Patton, 2002). Typically, data are collected to the point of redundancy (saturation), meaning no new information is forthcoming from any new data (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson,

2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). Depending on the nature of the study, some scholars report that data saturation is generally achieved within 10 individual interviews (Morse & Field, 2002; Nixon & Wild, 2010), or saturation is used as a 'marker for sampling adequacy' (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). I decided to work with the samples presented during the three listening posts. My hypothesis was that these participants as a collective (microcosm) carried the issues of the larger system (Gould et al., 2001; Stapley, 2006b; Wells, 1985) and that my exploration of these groups would result in some understanding of group and inter-group processes (Miller & Rice, 1975), pertaining to the first three empirical research aims of the study (see section 6.1).

6.2.3.4 Data collection method

In this section, the preferred data collection method, namely three listening posts, is discussed.

The systems psychodynamic listening post
The listening post as a form of inquiry and data collection method is discussed here.

a Origin and rationale

The listening post method originates from the systems psychodynamic approach of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in an attempt to explore 'citizenship in the workplace' (Bolden et al., 2014; Lawrence, 1980). Participants are typically requested to reflect upon and share their preoccupations as these are related to their repertoire of societal roles and experiences (Khaleelee & Stapley, 2013), thereby allowing the unconscious expression of the characteristics of society (Bolden et al., 2014; Gould et al., 2001; Newton, Long & Sievers, 2006), which was relevant to this study. The method is based on the psychodynamic notion that by coming together as a collective that represents a part of the whole (the microsystem), the manifesting behavioural dynamics will reflect not
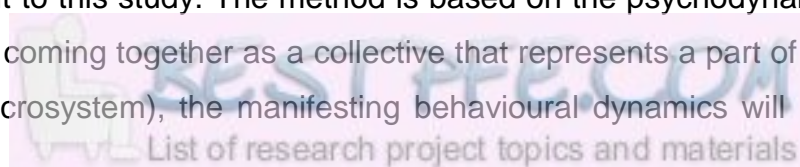
only the nature but also the behaviour of the collective (the macrosystem) (Wells, 1985) when it comes to its unconscious systemic relatedness (Cilliers & May, 2010). The outcome of this reflection is a 'snapshot' of what is happening in society at a specific moment in time. Thus, the group is perceived as a microcosm of society, and allows for the exploration of societal dynamics, by focusing on a clear task boundary (Hall, 2011; Khaleelee & Miller, 1985; Nahum, 2005; OPUS, 2010; Stapley, 2006a). In the present study, the listening post engaged the experiences of reflective citizens in order to arrive at a much deeper understanding of society (Dartington, 2001; Henning & Cilliers, 2014). Stapley (2006a) defines the rationale of the listening post as the exploration of the unconscious processes of group members as they attempt to develop a deeper understanding of the task boundary. This method of inquiry focuses on the group as an open, interconnected system. Through interaction, individuals collaborate and co-create deep understanding through insight (Diamond, 2007). This unstructured design is relevant because it allows for conscious and unconscious forces to emerge and to be explored (Diamond, 2007). The present study corroborated these previous research findings.

b   Trustworthiness

Central to the validity of the listening post, is the convenor's ability to ensure that participants share their experiences in a well-contained space (relating to space, time and task boundaries), which is free from judgement, memory or desire (Cilliers & May, 2010; Miller, 1993; Stapley & Collie, 2005). A number of strategies were employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the listening post. These included:

- The careful and appropriate selection of participants. Participants for the listening posts were experienced, trained and/or competent, i.e. experienced, in systems psychodynamic consultation, and they were either experienced business leaders or competent post-modernists with a keen interest in discourse and discourse analysis.

- Participants were willing to reflect on and to share their personal experiences and understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

- Participants themselves were afforded the opportunity to integrate the themes, thereby ensuring that they were comfortable with whatever was identified and integrated.

- Finally, the session was convoked by a skilled convenor and/or co-convenors.

c   Justification for selection

In this study, the systems psychodynamic model on language use as manifestation of leadership anxiety dynamics was presented to the listening post as a phenomenon to be explored and discussed. The listening post as a method of inquiry was thus employed to assess the utility value of the model. The model deals with both conscious and unconscious behavioural dynamics, which may have been prevalent as the groups reflected on the various conscious and unconscious dynamics (language, anxieties and the unconscious) of the theoretical model. One of the underlying assumptions of the model is reflected in Figure 6.1 below.
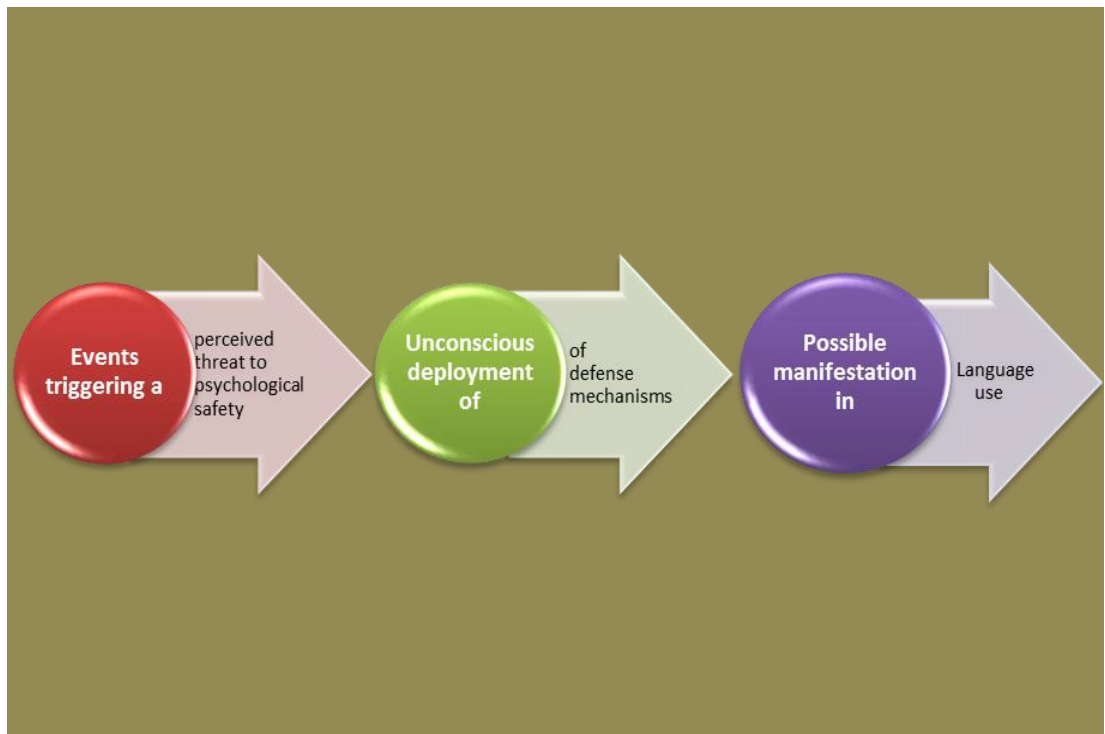
Figure 6.1.   Underlying   hypothesis   of   the   systems   psychodynamic model

Source: Author's own compilation

The listening post method thus has the potential to express the collective and unconscious assumptions, anxieties and desires of members that an interview would be unlikely to reveal (Bolden et al., 2014; Khaleelee & Miller, 1985; Nahum, 2005; Newton et al., 2006; Stapley, 2006a). Since the systems psychodynamic lens was also the research paradigm for this study (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009), the listening post became an appropriate mode of inquiry. The nature of the listening post is that it invites discourse by stimulating thought in an unstructured environment. As themes emerged through open discourse (Bolden et al., 2014; Hall, 2011; Macfarlane, 2011), participants engaged in and provided feedback on the model, and by implication further co-created and enhanced the utility value of the proposed model.

6.2.3.5 *Data collection procedure and recording*

Data were collected through the listening post method at the same time (18:00) but on different occasions. The following data collection procedure was followed:

- Participants were invited via e-mail to attend the listening posts. The primary task of the listening posts was explained as "to collect data which will help to assess the utility value of the leadership anxiety dynamics and language use model". Follow-up telephone calls were made to confirm attendance.

- Participants convened in a venue with a capacity to accommodate 10–14 individuals comfortably, at a time convenient to all.

- On the day, participants were welcomed to the session, the purpose and structure of the listening post were explained, and participants were assured of their anonymity during the study.

- Listening posts were conducted by a convenor/co-convenors whose primary role was to manage the time and task boundaries strictly and to interact as equals with group members as they engaged in free associative dialogue (OPUS, 2010; Stapley, 2006a; Stapley & Rickman, 2010). The event was unstructured and participation was voluntary (Bolden et al., 2014). The session(s) took the format of a two-hour session, with a 30-minute refreshment break between the two one-hour sessions. During the first session, the task boundary was introduced and group members were invited to reflect on their relatedness and preoccupations as these were related to the phenomenon under investigation. This was followed by a 30-minute break. During the second session, participants were encouraged to reflect on the first session. Emerging themes were translated into working hypotheses encapsulating conscious and unconscious dynamics (Long, 2013; Nahum, 2005), which reflected the meaning of diverse aspects of the phenomenon under scrutiny (Dartington, 2001; OPUS, 2010). With the permission of the participants, the

event was audio-recorded to ensure that there was an accurate account of the session (Bolden et al., 2014; Cilliers & May, 2010).

- During the first and third listening posts, participants indicated that there was no need for introductions since they were all familiar with each other. However, the second listening post commenced with introductions as some of the participants did not know each other. In summarised my role as co-convenor, and the role of the convenor as being an active participant during the listening post also responsible for the time and task boundaries.

- The structure of the listening post was presented as follows.

PROCEDURE (120 minutes)

Part 1:   The sharing of preoccupations and experiences (60 minutes)

Primary task: to provide participants with the opportunity to reflect on their personal experiences of anxiety in leaders and language use; and to comment on the utility value of the model.

Focus: the participants' 'social' or 'external' world.

<p align="center">(30-minute break)</p>

Part 2: Identification of major themes (30 minutes)

Primary task: To provide participants with the opportunity to identify collectively the major themes emerging from Part 1.

Focus: the participants' critical analysis of content, process and dynamics.

Part 3: Analysis and hypothesis formulation (30 minutes)

Primary task: to provide participants with the opportunity to identify collectively the predominant and underlying dynamics, both conscious and unconscious, which manifested in Parts 1 and 2 above, and to develop working hypotheses relating to why they might be occurring at that moment.

Focus: the 'internal' world of participants where their collective ideas and ways of thinking both determine how they perceive the external realities and shape their actions towards them.

At the end of the session, the participants were thanked for their participation, and the listening post was adjourned.

All the listening posts were audiotaped with the prior written consent of the participants (see Addendum A). These audiotaped recordings were transcribed to a secure non-networked computer. Recordings were transcribed verbatim and stored on an encrypted computer to ensure anonymity and confidentiality (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). The descriptive field notes of the researcher, which were made prior to, during and after the listening posts became another source of data collection (De Vos et al., 2002; Green & Thorogood, 2004).

6.2.3.6   Data analyses

Data emanating from the three listening posts were analysed through discourse analysis, first, by means of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003a; Finlay, 2009; Foucault, 1984; Janks, 2008; Wodak & Meyer, 2008; Yin, 2012), and then by means of systems psychodynamically informed discourse analysis (Cilliers, 2007; Clarke & Hoggett, 2009; Klein, 2005; Smit & Cilliers, 2006).

Discourse analysis
Teddlie and Tashakkori (2010) describe discourse analysis as a method for selecting representative or unique sections of language use, such as several lines of an interview transcript and then examining the selected lines in detail for rhetorical organisation, inconsistency, accountability and positioning. A common feature of discourse analytical approaches is that text becomes the primary resource of the researcher (Fischer, 2006; Schurink et al., 2011). Discourse analysis has been advocated as an appropriate data analysis method for researchers wanting to explore complexity (depth perspective) and the meaning behind phenomena (Fairclough, 2013; Henning, 2004).

Some scholars have referred to their work as 'critical discourse analysis' (CDA) (Fairclough, 1996; Schneider, 2013; Van Dijk, 1998; Widdowson, 1998; Wodak, 2000a). What follows is a discussion of the origin, rationale, method and justification for the selection of this particular data analysis method.

a   Origin

According to Fischer (2006), the origin of discourse analysis is to be found in Wittgenstein's (1961) philosophy of language, which advocates a close relationship between meaning and context. The ultimate purpose of this approach is to facilitate understanding by creating space for individual subjective interpretation. Critical discourse analysis (CDA), on the other hand, refers to the application of a variety of techniques for the study of textual practice and language use as cultural and social practices (Fairclough, 1992b; Luke, 2010). Van Dijk (1998) conceptualises this as a field that focuses on the studying and analysis of both written and spoken texts to expose the discursive sources of inequality, dominance and power in society. These discursive sources of power are not only maintained, but also reproduced within specific socio-political and economic contexts. Therefore, central to CDA is to reveal the connections and intricate relationships between discourse practices, socio-political practices and social structures that are not often evident to the ordinary citizen (Fairclough, 1993). CDA goes back to critical linguistics, and was developed by linguists and literary theorists (Fowler & Hodge, 1979; Wodak & Ludwig, 1999). This linguistic theme was perpetuated by Halliday (1994) who views language as a social act and alludes to a pervasive connection between linguistic structure and social structure. The variety and divergent perspectives on CDA have resulted in Bell and Garret (1998) suggesting that CDA should not be perceived as a single school, but as shared perspectives encompassing a range of approaches. According to Wodak and Meyer (2008), these CDA scholars have at least the following dimensions in common:

- a keen interest in the properties of naturally occurring language use by real language users;
- a focus on larger discursive units, rather than isolated words and sentences;
- an extension of linguistics beyond sentence grammar, to a focus on action and interaction;
- an extension to include the non-verbal (visual) aspects of communication and interaction;
- a study of the functions of context of language use (cultural, social, cognitive, situational); and
- a focus on the phenomena of text grammar and language use, for example topics, speech acts, argumentation and mental models.

CDA therefore seeks to investigate complex social phenomena, which necessitates a multi-disciplinary and multi-methodical approach. Therefore, it is problem-oriented, interdisciplinary and eclectic.

b   Rationale

The philosophical underpinnings of CDA are that there is no objective truth, only subjective reality (Fischer, 2006; Luke, 2010). Knowledge is socially constructed (Henning, 2004) in the process of deconstructing the world by challenging the rigid positivistic paradigm (Grix, 2010; Henning, 2004). Critical researchers always attempt to explore how discourse is generated and maintained and in the process is influencing and shaping people's lives (Sitz, 2008). Hence, critique relates to making visible the covert interconnectedness of things (Martin & Wodak, 2003). The principles underpinning the rationale of the CDA method can be summarised as follows (Fairclough, 1995a; Kress, 1991; Van Dijk, 1998; Wodak, 1996; Wodak & Meyer, 2008):

- the world is presented through a social practice called 'language use';

- language use as social practice represents, signifies and constitutes other social practices in the form of power, prejudice, bias or resistance;

- text acquires meaning by the relationship between text and social subject which acts according to choice, access and interpretation;

- linguistic features and structures are purposeful, whether consciously or unconsciously;

- power relations are produced, exercised and maintained through discourse;

- discursive practices can be inclusive and exclusive;

- discourse is set within a specific historical context (social, cultural, ideological, time and space);

- the potential value of CDA is that it interprets and explains texts.

c   Justification for selection

CDA and systems psychodynamically informed discourse analysis are complementary, in the sense that both are situated within the hermeneutic tradition (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009; Sitz, 2008; Wodak & Meyer, 2008), which serves as initial justification for selection. CDA also seeks to explain the relationship and integration of previous experiences, present events and future visions of the conscious and unconscious domains of our lives (Lazar, 2005; Wodak, 2000b). This carries significant value, as the present study also had a particular interest in what happens at an unconscious level. On the main research agenda of CDA is the integration of methods (Wodak & Meyer, 2008), which makes systems psychodynamically informed discourse analysis a compatible theoretical lens.

CDA also attempts to convey relevant knowledge that will enable human beings to free themselves from different forms of domination through structured reflection (Fairclough, 1992b). Within the context of this study,

which sought to investigate language use as manifestation of leadership anxiety dynamics, free-floating anxiety could also be viewed as a form of 'domination and oppression'. This theoretical lens also warrants use given its assumption that linguistic features and structures are not arbitrary, but serve a specific conscious or unconscious purpose (Martin & Wodak, 2003; Sheyholislami, 2009), This in turn warrants exploration. In its constructive application, CDA can be used as a tool to raise 'critical language awareness' (Henning, 2004; Luke, 2010), which was also relevant to this study.

d   Quality criteria in CDA

According to Wodak and Meyer (2008), there seems to be little direct discussion on quality criteria in CDA. However, there is what is known as 'completeness' as a quality criterion suited for CDA: a study will be complete if the new data, as well as the analysis of the new linguistic devices reveal no new findings (Fairclough, 1992a; Luke, 2010; Van Dijk, 1998). Another criterion is 'accessibility', in that findings should be accessible to the social groupings under investigation (Van Dijk, 1988; Widdowson, 1998). Furthermore, triangulation procedures are recommended to ensure validity (Silverman, 1993). Another way in which the validity of a discourse analysis can be assessed is by looking at coherence. Analytical claims are supposed to form a coherent discourse in order for readers to accept the analysis (Potter & Wetherell 1987). Furthermore, validity can be determined by evaluating the fruitfulness of the analysis. In evaluating the fruitfulness of the analysis, the focus is on the explanatory potential of the analytical framework, including the ability of the framework to provide new explanations (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

e   Method

CDA, as located within the hermeneutic methodological tradition, differentiates between a content-oriented step of structure analysis, and a linguistically oriented step of fine analysis (Wodak & Meyer, 2008).
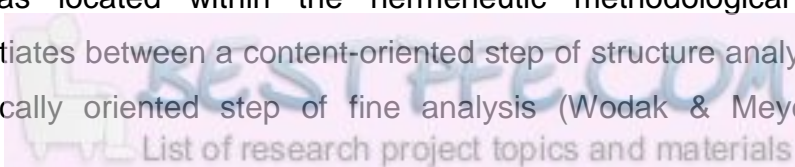
Structure analysis characterises the media and general themes, and the fine analysis focuses upon the quantitative and qualitative aspects of context, text surface and rhetorical means (Chilton, 2004; Widdowson, 1998).

In this study, the CDA data analysis procedure reflected in Figure 6.2 below was used.
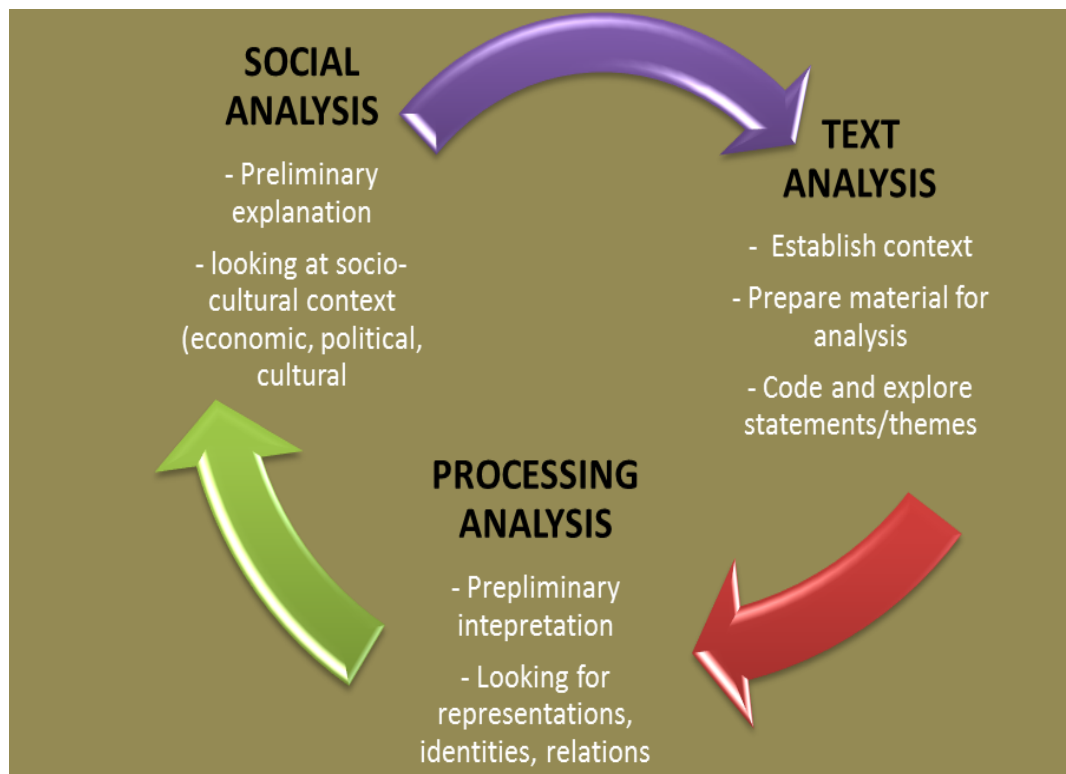
Figure 6.2. CDA data analysis process
Source: Schneider (2013)

Data analysis theoretical lens 1: Critical discourse analysis

Text preparation and analysis
Step 1: I made comprehensive field notes before, during and after the listening posts to ensure that observations, experiences, thoughts and my emotions were recorded. My counter-transferences could also be a source of data in terms of what participants might have experience.

Step 2: The audio-recorded data from the listening posts were transcribed, in order to be analysed by means of CDA.

Step 3: I read and re-read through the text to facilitate understanding and to get a sense of the wholeness of the data. During this process, I made analytical comments in the appropriate boxes on my templates (text, process, social) in the form of preliminary codes to organise and manage the data set, ultimately looking for patterns to be used to establish preliminary working hypotheses about possible 'discourses' at work.

Processing analysis

Step 4: The next step was the systematic examination of lexicalisation, choices of mood, choices of modality/polarity and thematic structure.

Step 5: Then followed an exploration for representations, identities and relations. In other words, what or who was represented by the data, whose identities were present/presented/represented and what was the nature of relationships?

Social analysis

Step 6: Preliminary interpretation: What is happening?

Step 7: Preliminary explanation: Why is it happening?

Data analysis theoretical lens 2: Systems psychodynamically informed discourse analysis

Step 8: The re-reading of the data with the second lens, led to deeper understanding, by noting the possible influences of unconscious processes and making interpretations from the systems psychodynamic stance. According to Smit and Cilliers (2006), the linking of conscious and unconscious behaviours enriches the understanding of the phenomenon under scrutiny. The utilisation of the systems psychodynamic lens offered a process for deep, unconscious, complex behaviours (Cilliers, 2007; Clarke & Hoggett, 2009; Smit & Cilliers, 2006). This process was exploratory and facilitated depth in the understanding of data (Henning, 2004; Smit & Cilliers, 2006).

Step 9:   Interpretations were categorised into themes.

Step 10: Working hypotheses were generated for each theme. According to Schafer (2003), a working hypothesis is a statement, which presents a tentative understanding primarily from a meta-position based on an interpretation of the evidence contained in the data. Scholars have approached and defined the formulation of working hypotheses from diverse perspectives. Lawrence (2000), for example, defines 'hypotheses' as propositions, possible explanations or theories arrived at to understand a phenomenon. Working hypotheses thus, attempt to provide explanations for what is happening at a social, but also at a deeper psychological level (Stapley & Argent, 2015). In this study, congruent with the above, the following structure was utilised: 'Because of A, members of society do B, which results in C' (Stapley, Laimov, & Sama, 2014).

Step 11: The process was concluded with the suggestion of a number of research hypotheses.

It is important to mention that this was not a linear process. The first challenge I experienced was the vast volume of data with which I was confronted. This feeling of being overwhelmed created considerable anxiety for me. This anxiety was clearly reflected in the language that I used during earlier drafts of this study. What helped me to contain some of the anxiety, was to structure the data by separating it according to the three listening posts and to adhere as closely as possible to the data analysis steps. The fact that I used two, although complementary, data analysis methods also contributed to my anxiety levels. With hindsight, what also assisted me with some of the containment, analysis and sense-making were my observation field notes in the form of thoughts, emotions I had experienced, and questions I had recorded prior to, during and after the listening posts. These notes became almost a secondary lens through which I could view, and in a certain sense, interpret the data. What later also created some discomfort for me was the step where I had to examine the lexication systematically, because of my limited expertise in this regard. I, therefore, had to proceed very cautiously. I decided to err on the side of caution by under-interpreting rather than over-interpreting

in terms of the structure of the text.

I particularly enjoyed the step where I had to look for potential representations, identities and relatedness. However, I had to ensure that I did not get carried away by looking for sufficient evidence for my preliminary conclusions.

Figure 6.3 reflects the data collection and analysis methods used for the empirical phase of this study.
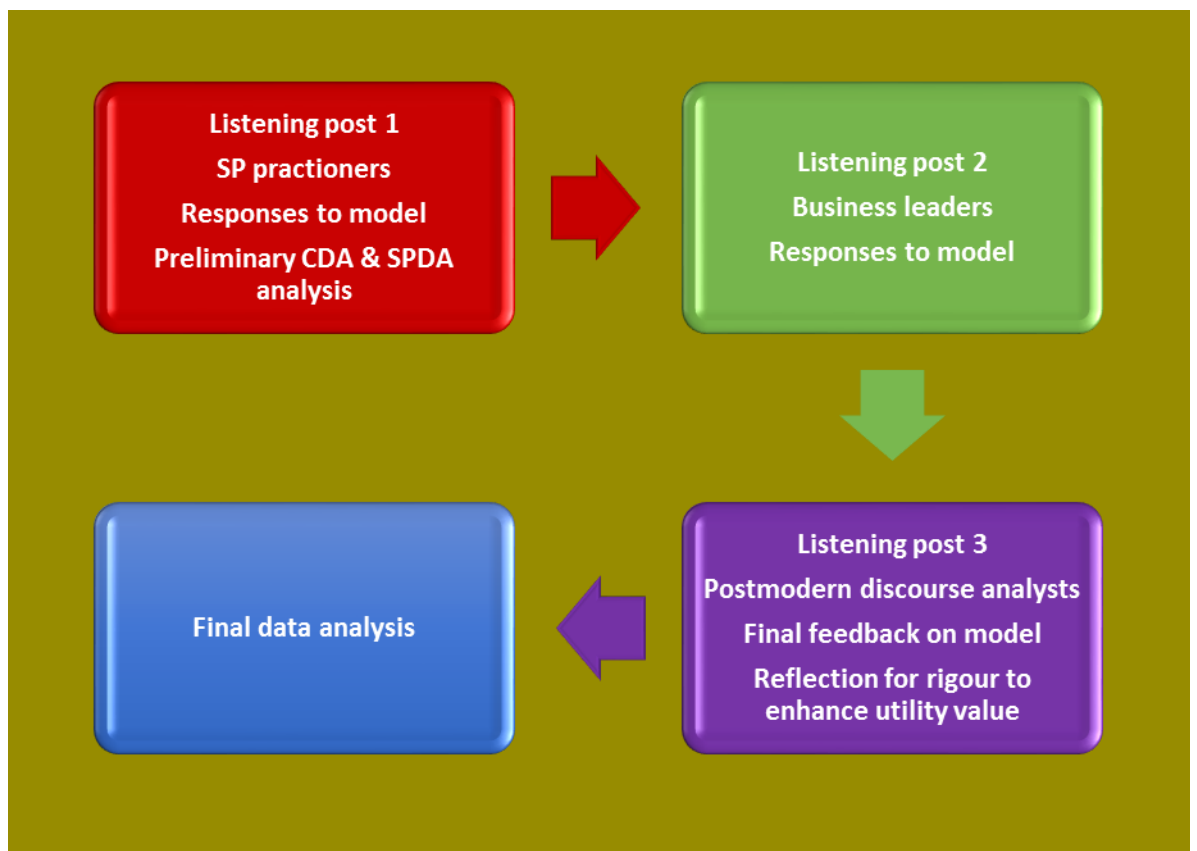
Figure 6.3.   Data collection and analysis flowchart

6.2.3.7   *Modelling as applied in this study*

Modelling implies the construction of a theoretical model, and within the context of specific empirical aim 2 of this study, to refine the theoretical model by reporting on the influence of the empirical data on this theoretical model. Furthermore, modelling is viewed as a common tool in quantitative research. Some qualitative scholars argue that qualitative

data can also be modelled (Briggs, 2007; David, 2001; Eriksson, 2003) to explore the relationship between constructs, to enable prediction and to analyse the phenomenon under scrutiny further (Briggs, 2003; Jaccard & Jacoby, 2010; Schwandt, 1998).

A model was defined in this study as an explicit representation of an aspect of reality as seen from the perspective of individuals who would like to use the model to gain understanding of that part of reality (Pidd, 1996). It therefore appears to be a simplified version of a very complex reality and cannot include everything about the reality being depicted. Qualitative methods are primarily inductive, while the primary purpose of this form of research is to build hypotheses. In this study, I tried to demonstrate how modelling could be used as a practical and conceptual tool to enhance understanding in the field of industrial and organisational psychology. Qualitative analysis is appealing to visual analysis in that empirical data can be visualised through mapping (Bendassolli, 2013). Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 197) advocate the dynamic interplay between "display and analytical text, where display enables the researcher to summarise data, identify themes, patterns and clusters, discover relationships and develop explanations …". The prominence and influence of a particular construct in relation to others, and where it is located within a system, are features that can be revealed through the conceptual analysis of empirical data to be represented as models (Briggs, 2007). This feature of a model was quite useful in this study. Models could also capture underlying processes, therefore providing a tool for the development of working, research and other hypotheses. Adopting an interpretivist stance, this iterative process, as applied in the present study, was used for analysis, to help me understand the complexity of a phenomenon, explanation and even decision-making.

What is important in the context of this thesis is for the reader to know that the further development of my theoretical model was also influenced by the findings of the study (empirical data). This predominantly intuitive and iterative process was guided by the following steps:

- preliminary concepts and impressions reflected in the empirical data;
- initial identification of constructs and relationships;
- further analysis of relationships; and
- presentation (Briggs, 2007).

This process is visually communicated in Chapter 7 of the thesis.

The following steps were used for modelling during this study.

Table: 6.4

Modelling process in qualitative research and this study

Using existing literature to build a model	Using empirical data to build a model
Initial reading of the literature	Preliminary concepts and impressions reflected in the data
General impressions gained	Concept coding of transcripts
Understanding of the literature (concepts)	Identification of relationships between data sets
Deeper analysis by identifying possible relationships	Preliminary formal analysis
Conceptual modelling	Further analysis of relationships
Emerging theory (if applicable)	Presentation through the use of modelling

Source: Adapted from Bassey (1999) and Briggs (2005, 2007)

6.2.3.8   Strategies employed to ensure quality of the study

In the next section, I discuss the scientific rigour of the study by exploring the nature of trustworthiness and the way this was addressed during the study.

Qualitative research endeavours to understand phenomena in context-specific settings (Golafshani, 2003). This approach to research is normally characterised by small and non-random samples (Creswell, 2013). Assessing the credibility of qualitative findings is therefore not always easy.

'Trustworthiness' or 'rigour' is the term used in qualitative research to denote the quality of the research (Guba, 1990; Mason, 2010). It is a reflection of the extent to which the study, inclusive of the data and the process of data collection and analysis, is believable (Fischer, 2006; Patton, 2002). I attempted to provide 'thick descriptions' of the empirical part of the study, as well as during the rest of the research procedure, for example the data collection and analysis phase of the study, to ensure the reader of the trustworthiness of the study. Researchers devote much time to ensure that their work is rigorous and believable. I also wish to ensure the reader that this study was grounded in sound professional, scientific and ethical principles. Traditionally, four elements comprise trustworthiness, namely credibility (truth), dependability (consistency), transferability (applicability), and confirmability (neutrality) (Creswell, 2013; Golafshani, 2003; Guba, 1990; Krefting, 1991). Authenticity (reality) has been added as a fifth element for evaluation (Polit & Beck, 2011). I have selected these qualitative criteria because the literature has shown that the adoption of these criteria and strategies would enhance the rigour and believability of my study (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2010; Blaikie, 2010; Creswell, 2014; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). By employing these strategies, I am convinced that my study is academically sound. Thus, trustworthiness implies being able to demonstrate to the reader that I had gone about my study in a rigorous fashion.

In the next section, trustworthiness or credibility is assessed by applying the above-mentioned strategies.

a   Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research is the extent to which the data and data analysis are trustworthy and believable (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Morrow, 2005). Credibility also implies that the research was carried out in such a way that the findings are considered to be valid as a result of multiple sources of data collection, the use of a sound theoretical framework and refining hypotheses (Devers, 1999). It is analogous to internal validity (Maree, 2016; Singh & Wassenaar, 2016).

In the present study, credibility was enhanced by presenting my trustworthiness as a researcher, providing a detailed description of the research design, i.e. the sample, data collection, data analysis strategies and finally the findings and conclusions of the study. In particular, I tried to –

- ensure that all claims, voices and perspectives of participants are reflected in the text;
- look at the data from multiple perspectives to expose underlying meanings;
- apply my methodological skills and experience in systems psychodynamic research;
- ensure that the research was situated within the paradigm identified for this study;
- collect converging and diverging evidence; and
- search actively for deviant cases.

Additional strategies used were –
- the collection of data over a prolonged period of time;
- from three different groups (three listening posts) with unique expertise; and
- the findings of the study were compared as far as possible to previous, similar studies.

In this way, the reader can be assured of the scientific rigour of this project.

b   Dependability

Dependability is analogous to reliability (Evans, 2007; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Polkinghorne, 2005). The concept of replication is problematic because the qualitative assumption is that the social world is always being constructed and reconstructed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus, the methodology of the researcher's deductions must be transparent and explicit (Golafshani, 2003; Steyn et al., 2015).

Dependability was enhanced by ensuring that reasons for mutations in the phenomenon being studied were theoretically grounded. Credible audit trails were maintained with accurate recordings of verbatim accounts (transcriptions) and careful recording of physical evidence of decisions made throughout the project. Dependability was also ensured by constant referral to the raw data, interpretations based on explicit evidence and working hypotheses based on sound interpretations.

c   Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which findings can be generalised, and is analogous to external validity (Cox, 2004; Le Roux, 2003; Moerdyk, 2015). However, in qualitative research it is up to the reader to decide to what extent findings can be transferred to other contexts (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Mason, 2010). Transferability is a major challenge in qualitative research, since the subjectivity of the researcher is key, and is subsequently a potential threat to valid inferences (Mason, 2010; Shenton, 2004).

In this study, transferability was enhanced by the clarification and rigorous management of theoretical delineations. I confirmed the quality of the data prior to data analysis. Multiple sources of data were used. The

research methods (and the reasons for their selection), contexts (detailed, rich descriptions of the settings) and assumptions underlying the study were also explained. This allows the reader to judge whether it is possible to transfer findings to other settings with which he or she might be familiar.

d   Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the extent to which research findings can be corroborated by others (Bowen, 2008; Silverman, 2004). In other words, it is a reflection of whether the findings can be confirmed by another similar study. Sufficient evidence therefore exists to support the findings. This is analogous to objectivity (Evans, 2007; Mason, 2010).

Confirmability is enhanced by independent corroboration that there is indeed synchronicity between the literature review and empirical study findings (Bowen, 2008). Additional mechanisms included experience in the systems psychodynamic perspective, the duration of the data collection process, audit trails, building a chain of evidence, and the sharing of interpretations with a 'third ear', with the capacity to listen more objectively.

Thus, the general trustworthiness of the empirical study was enhanced by implementing self-verification strategies, and strategies covering the credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability of the data, as discussed above. Some notable strategies included ensuring that all responses were captured in the form of audio recordings, and that they were professionally transcribed verbatim. In this way –

- none of the information was lost;
- there was little chance of pre-emptive responses being made;
- all the voices of participants are reflected in the text;
- the application of my skill and the embedding of the study in the selected research paradigm of this study are reflected;
- interpretations are supported with explicit and sufficient evidence; and

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- the findings of the empirical study are corroborated by the literature.

The research design was kept simple, yet rigorous, and the research was guided strictly by the research problem and question. However, it was also possible for me to project my own preconceived ideas and stereotypes onto the data (Kelly, 2007). I attempted to mitigate (potential projections) by employing the strategies I have discussed throughout the thesis.

A second specific empirical aim of the study was to assess the utility value of the model by eliciting the expert opinion of systems psychodynamic practitioners, business leaders and post-modern discourse analysts. The utility value of the theoretical model was aimed at business leaders in an increasingly turbulent business environment. It was hoped that the model would assist them in taking up and taking on their leadership role more effectively.

The experience and expertise of systems psychodynamic practitioners, business leaders and post-modern discourse analysts were explored. My assessment of the utility value of the model was guided by the following principles:

- the expert opinions of the participants on the theoretical model (Creswell, 2014; Mouton & Marais, 1998; Silverman, 2004);
- the authority of the researcher to conduct the research and to develop the model (Eisner, 2003; Long, 2013);
- the parsimonious use of academic language (unambiguous and theoretically driven) (Babbie & Mouton, 2006; Charmaz, 2002);
- the perspicuous nature of the literature review (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Green & Thorogood, 2004; Yin, 2013);
- the reflexive capacity of the researcher (presence and influence of the researcher) (Greenwood & Levin, 1998; Patton, 2002); and
- the structural coherence of the model (clear theoretical parameter

and well-defined literature control) (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Moerdyk, 2015).

6.2.3.9   *Ethical considerations*

According to Huysamen (1994), ethical considerations apply at three stages of the research process, namely the recruitment of participants, the data collection (or intervention), and the release of the findings. The nature of qualitative research implies that the researcher interacts deeply with participants (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Silverman (2001) maintains that researchers must remember that when doing research, they enter the private lives of participants. Ethical behaviour thus reflects a set of moral principles that govern a researcher's conduct. Ethical issues were addressed in the following ways.

- **Informed consent:** Individuals participating in the study had a reasonable expectation that all relevant information pertaining to the study would be revealed and that they could choose to participate or to withdraw at any time during the study. By obtaining informed consent, I committed myself to not violating the rights of my participants, who were not coerced openly or subtly into participating in the study. I informed participants by means of an information letter (see Addendum A) regarding the purpose, roles, nature, data collection and data analysis methods, prior to the research. I also obtained their written consent (also see Addendum A) to participate in the study.

Research is also a dynamic endeavour. Whenever the project heads into a different direction than was initially anticipated, research participants should be informed and new consent elicited (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Polkinghorne, 2005). They should also not feel 'penalised' when they do decide not to continue participating in the study (Singh & Wassenaar, 2016). Fortunately, this was not the case during the study.

- **Voluntary participation:** Participants were informed that the research was for purely academic purposes, that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw up to the point where they start to provide data (Babbie & Mouton, 2006; Silverman, 2004). To this end, participants had to complete a participant informed consent form prior to the data collection sessions.

- **Harm and risk:** This is the cornerstone of ethical conduct (Fischer, 2006), which also guided my research in terms of the collection, analysis and reporting of the findings. In all research, there is a reasonable expectation by participants that they will not be exposed to situations where they will be harmed. It is critical for the researcher to communicate any possible adverse effects of the study. In the present study, none of the participants were exposed to situations where they could be harmed physically or psychologically. However, I have to mention that due to the nature of the research and because participants also shared their phenomenological experiences, there was always a certain level of anxiety during the three listening posts. I tried to mitigate this by keeping tight control over the task and time boundaries during these sessions.

- **Honesty and trust:** With respect to data security (Morse et al., 2002), I also adhered to the highest levels of honesty and trust. Paper-based records were kept in a secure location with restricted access. Computer-based records were only accessible to me (and to the transcriber who had to sign a confidentiality agreement) and were available on request to my promoters. However, no such request had been made during the study.

- **Confidentiality and anonymity:** Participants in any research study have a reasonable expectation that their privacy and anonymity will be secured (Schneider, 2013). No identifying characteristics of the participants should be revealed. This includes both individual and institutional anonymity. In the present study, confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by removing all

identifying characteristics from research documentation.

I was also guided by the fact that participants who were involved in the study were dignified human beings, and had to be treated as such (Hemmings, 2006). With new technological advances come many responsibilities (Koro-Ljungberg, Gemignani, Brodeur, & Kmiec, 2007). Researchers need to proceed with caution in this technological minefield. Data should be analysed in a manner that is free from misrepresentation, over-interpreting and fraudulent analysis (Cannella & Lincoln, 2007), thereby presenting results that are not supported by scientific evidence. In the findings chapter (Chapter 7), as well as the conclusions chapter (Chapter 8), I reflect from a personal phenomenological perspective on my experiences and mistakes during the research project and how these were addressed.

6.2.3.10   *Reporting of findings*

Themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis are presented per listening post, interpretations are made, direct quotes from the empirical data are used, and working hypotheses are formulated. Where applicable, reference is made to applicable literature sources. Participants are indicated according to a coding formula to protect their identities. Each participant was allocated a number, depending on the listening post that was attended, for example P2.7/B/M/SSO (participant in listening post 2, number 7, black, male, senior staff officer). The findings of the study were then integrated and the working hypotheses integrated into research hypotheses (literature and empirical).

6.3   CHAPTER SUMMARY

The purpose of this chapter was to explain the research methodology, which was followed for this study. First, the research design was discussed with reference to the approach and strategy. The design was further presented by discussing the research method, with specific

emphasis on the research setting, the researcher's roles, sampling, data collection methods and recording and analyses of the data. Strategies employed to secure quality data were discussed, and the chapter concluded with ethical considerations applied and a summary.

In Chapter 7, I report on the findings of this study based on the listening posts in the form of themes, an integrated literature discussion, working hypotheses and a number of research hypotheses for the study. In presenting and applying the findings in the following chapter, I also use the term 'leaders' and not 'business leaders' as I have done in this chapter.

CHAPTER 7:   RESEARCH FINDINGS

7.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the findings of the study are presented. I report on the themes and sub-themes, which have emanated from the data analysis. The findings are interpreted from a systems psychodynamic perspective supported by evidence from participants in the form of 'thick descriptions' and with reference to the relevant systems psychodynamic literature. Themes are followed by working hypotheses. Then follows a discussion of the influence of the empirical data on the theoretical model. I conclude the chapter with a discussion on the utility value of the theoretical model, an integration of the findings and a chapter summary.

7.2   PRESENTATION OF THE MAIN THEMES

In this section, I present the main themes of the study in the form of a table, in order to provide the reader with an overview of the findings of the study. I then proceed to discuss the themes and working hypotheses associated with each of the three listening posts.

Table 7.1

Main themes of the listening posts

Listening post (LP)	Main themes	
LP 1	<u>Theme 1:</u>	Language of titles
	<u>Theme 2:</u>	Language as potential space
	<u>Theme 3:</u>	Language of silence versus non-silence
	<u>Theme 4:</u>	Dynamics of the listening post 1
	<u>Sub-themes:</u> Engagement and attachment to primary task; Identification with language use – anxiety connection	
LP 2	<u>Theme 1:</u>	Anxiety and its triggers
	<u>Theme 2:</u>	Anxiety and leadership response
	<u>Theme 3:</u>	Anxiety and language use
	<u>Theme 4:</u>	Dynamics of listening post 2
	<u>Sub-themes:</u> Researcher, participant and transcriber anxieties)	
LP 3	<u>Theme 1:</u>	Sources of anxiety
	<u>Theme 2:</u>	Language as unconscious defence
	<u>Theme 3:</u>	Language as unconscious offense
	<u>Theme 4:</u>	Towards a language of vulnerability
	<u>Theme 5:</u>	Dynamics of the listening post 3
	<u>Sub-themes:</u> Emergence of splitting and pairing into trios; socio-political accentuation of language; unpronounceable colliquation	

7.3   LISTENING POST 1: THEMES AND WORKING HYPOTHESES

The first listening post comprised systems psychodynamic practitioners. A full description of the sample is provided in 6.2.3.3 of Chapter 6, of this thesis.

The following themes and sub-themes were either identified by participants or emanated from my interpretation of the data:

Theme 1:   Language of titles

Sub-theme 1:   Titles, change and ambivalence

Sub-theme 2:   Titles in relation to race, gender and language use

Sub-theme 3:   Titles as 'splitting' and 'pairing' device

Theme 2:   Language as potential space

Sub-theme 1:   The relational properties of language use

Sub-theme 2:   The regressive properties of language use

Sub-theme 3:   The defensive properties of language use

Theme 3:   Language of silence versus non-silence

Sub-theme 1:   Language of silence as internal dialogue

Sub-theme 2:   Language perceived as 'noise' creating 'voice'

Sub-theme 3:   Language of imagery creating voice

Theme 4:   Dynamics of the listening post

Sub-theme 1:   Engagement and attachment to the primary task

Sub-theme 2:   Identification with language use – anxiety connection and fascination with the 'colliquation' concept

7.3.1 Language of titles

In this section, Theme one, the language of titles is discussed in relation to titles, change and the potential ambivalence it creates, titles pertaining to race, gender and language, and finally, titles as both potential 'splitting' and 'pairing' device. Each section concludes with a working hypothesis. Please note that all quotations from the interviews below are reproduced verbatim and unedited.

7.3.1.1   *Titles, change and ambivalence*

Titles and associated identities could also create a lot of uncertainty for both leaders and their followers. One of the participants alluded to the ambivalence created when a new line manager was appointed. This

encounter was shared as follows:

> We recently had a new line manager and there is a lot of curiosity for me in the way that people are now called. It is as if there is uncertainty in what to be called … So for me there is anxiety in the way that (the new line manager) calls me and the other (P1.2/W/M/IOP).

This wrestling with new titles, the not fully integrated 'new' part to one's identity, the anxiety it creates and the obligation to renegotiate relationships (Brunner et al., 2006; Campbell, 2007), were phrased in a different way by another participant when he said that:

> In the world that I am in, it is not a big issue, the issue of titles … What I am hearing is that there seems to be anxiety on both sides, the title-holder and those without a title. So how do we navigate, how do I as the person who used to hold a particular position now relate to them? And in the same vein, the person finding it difficult, part of which could be, we often hear about … I have nobody that I can have lunch with, because how do I as this title, have lunch with someone with a different title … and what do we talk about? What will people think when they see us together and what are they talking about, because we are not supposed to be mingling with people holding other titles. So beyond the two of us, particularly if we have had a long-term relationship ... How do we transform it, so that I am not seen as now that I have this title, I am no longer in 'your league' (P1.1/B/MIOP).

It is evident that this leadership transition in identity which is described above was anxiety-provoking for both leaders and followers. Authority is granted to the leader by the organisation. This is authorisation from above. There seems to be a part of an identity, a role and relationship (Altman, 2005; Balbus, 2004; Lazar & Lohmar, 2000) element to be negotiated and then renegotiated between leader and followers. The impression is created that the new role creates a certain level of ambivalence, as expressed by followers, which implies that the person receives a new part of the old identity. The leader's identity is changing, or has changed (in transition) and the leader has not yet integrated this new part of the identity into the old one. There could be a split between

the old (known identity) and the new part (not known identity) (Bion, 1961). This split is manifesting in the experience, "I am, but I am also not the person I used to be". This can be rather confusing for both the new titleholder and those who have to report into the new titleholder (followers). This subsequent ambivalence, which "is housed in the inner life" (Kilburg, 2000, p. 123) of the person, is thus reflected in the way in which the person communicates and engages. The same participant reflected on how the leader's language use is changed.

> I was wondering whether it was not my anxiety about her in the new leadership role because I feel now I do not know what I must call her […] maybe it is my anxiety, about her taking up the role … there is an interplay between the two (P1.2/W/FIOP).

It is evident from the above that leadership transitions are anxiety-provoking, not only for the leader, but for followers as well. The corporate working environment then becomes a space filled with anxiety. Followers then experience that they have to fend against this anxiety by, for example, projecting their needs and frustrations onto leaders (Aldefer, 1972; Huffington et al., 2004). Leaders have to be careful not to take on these projections by giving them back to their followers. Similarly, the challenge of a new part to the old identity was verbalised by another participant in relation to the South African Police Services (SAPS).

> It reminds me of the ambivalence and confusion in the identity of the police whether it is a 'police force' or a 'police service' (P1.5/W/F/RP)
>
> [I]t is an identity thing (P1.7/B/F/IOP).

Since this split (ambivalence) creates anxiety, language becomes the carrier of this 'identity in crisis', or it is observed behaviourally in the inability of the role-occupant to be decisive. The uncertainty as to how the new part of the self should be repositioned carries even more anxiety for subordinates (Altman, 2005; Clarke, 2005; James & Huffington, 2004; Prins, 2002). Another participant verbalised this anxiety as follows:

> [P]reviously we were also relating on a first-name basis … and all of a sudden with the appointment of my manager, I was also not sure, and I
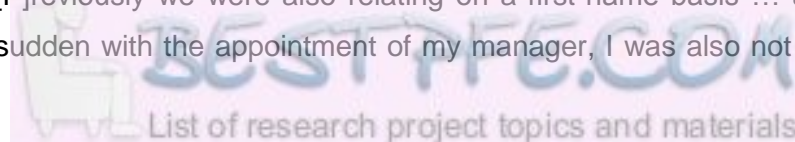
was hoping for some kind of a clue, so I would throw in the name and wait for a response, but it was very stern, so I decided OK, let me rather go to …, and it has actually become so ridiculous because sometimes I would refer to her as 'mam' … and I still do not get a response, a reaction. So, I have tested all these different words and I still do not know which one to use (P1.3/C/M/IOP).

It is as if leaders do not know how to position themselves in a new role. When the leader has not been authorised in the new role, primitive, performance, survival and other anxieties could be triggered (Cytrynbaum & Noumair, 2004; Czander, 1993). This could then be expressed in the language use (different words), or the lack of a consistent response ("I still do not know which one to use") (P1.3/C/M/IOP). When the performance anxiety becomes unbearable, it is then off-loaded onto followers in the form of projections (Hayden & Molenkamp, 2004; Kets de Vries & Miller, 1984; Western, 2013). Hence, when leaders find themselves in an unfamiliar situation, it creates performance and survival anxiety, which could evoke a fight response (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). In the fight mode, 'fight language' could be used, often to 'strip', or deny the opponent of status or rank. This phenomenon was echoed by another participant with an example from the domestic sphere:

> [M]y partner, when we fight, I don't call her 'love', I call her by name, when I am angry or whatever, the sweet names I would typically call her, disappear because I am in a different mode

and

> [S]omething creeps in immediately we are in some pressure, to deal with it there and then and whatever else may disappear, you know, we may go beyond the decorum, … and so on, or even forget that the person is a 'prof', because somehow we have to deal with that which presents itself at that point in time (P1.1/B/M/IOP).

In the anxiety-filled moment, or container, the initial response is to fight. This includes the denial of a legitimate title. The object is then split. Bad characteristics are projected onto others. In this process, leaders are stripped of their positive characteristics by followers. Good leadership

qualities then 'disappear'. In the above-mentioned context, the legitimate titles of 'Professor' and 'Doctor' that create a certain level of status and authority (power) are denied.

7.3.1.2   Titles in relation to race, gender and language

Participants referred to the idea that titles also have a race and gender dynamic. They claimed that in their experience, some men would be quite keen to own a title, even if it is not applicable to them. Women in turn, would almost spontaneously correct or sometimes even disown a title. One participant said that she strongly believes that titles have a:

> [G]ender aspect to it and maybe to some extent even intersects with race in some way or another … I am thinking of a situation whereby, quite often, if people are not sure, they err on the side of caution and rather call a white man a 'professor' or a 'doctor' without ascertaining the title and in my typical experience, the 'white man' would not correct that, but a woman, if you call me a 'professor' and I am not a professor, I will be quick to correct that and/or if I am a professor, I would say, please call me so and so. So there seems to be a gender dynamic there and I suspect it intersects with race at some point (P1.7/B/F/IOP).

This participant provided another example:

> [I]f a black man, especially the ones I know, if you call them 'professor', they would defend themselves by saying that 'I never said you must call me professor', they just take it on, and let you continue, so I think there is a gender dynamic going on there (P1.7/B/F/IOP).

It is common to project positive characteristics onto white (male) people, for example professor, doctor or manager. These projections are then introjected through projective identification. In my experience, women would be uncomfortable and voice their discomfort when they do not legitimately own a specific title. There could be elements of narcissism when certain men benefit from using a title and defend themselves by rationalising this behaviour. The language use is interesting, for example, "I never said you must call me professor", and yet they were not

instructed to keep quiet about it.

Another participant concurred with this perception by saying that:

> [I]n my team of psychologists, two of us have doctorates, so there is a doctor who is my supervisor. And looking at the minutes of a previous meeting ..., I was surprised to see that she was referred to as 'Ms'. And I asked her, why that was the case, and she said 'No, I actually leave them, I never took it up with them, unless if it is …' she actually said 'unless it is formal', or something like that, but a meeting is actually a formal event, I mean it is recorded, in our official minutes. And we almost had a conversation around, how do we manage this now going forward. As if there was a 'bosberaad' or strategising and considering whether we tone it down, or we own it … so that was quite fascinating … linking with the gender issue (P1.6/B/F/CLP).

In terms of this gender dynamic, it would be inaccurate to say that 'men behave like this' and that 'women behave like this'. This kind of thinking would reflect a form of splitting between good on the one side and bad on the other. Perhaps it also reflects common stereotypes, when white males are perceived to be 'in charge', doctors and professors. What is it about claiming a title that does not belong to you? Alternatively, why would you be feeling uncomfortable to claim a title that legitimately belongs to you? How will others perceive me, if I unapologetically claim my title? It sounds as if a title could be a boundary. Thus, when women send a 'reminder' of this boundary, by insisting that it should be used (owning it), it is often interpreted as snobbish behaviour. The situation of the two women mentioned previously was clearly anxiety-provoking for them. The laughter during the listening post when the story was shared, is a reflection of the anxiety around the owning of a title as a woman. The pairing between the women suggests further evidence of the presence of anxiety at the time – "we almost had a conversation around, how do we manage this now going forward" The anxiety is also reflected in the language use, for example, "considering whether we tone it down".

This gender dynamic was extended to reflect the discomfort when women enter the perceived traditional male domain. One of the participants explained that the National Police Commissioner opened her speech at a 'Woman in Leadership Event' with "I do not need testosterone! I can be a leader without testosterone!" In her anxiety to defend herself, the National Police Commissioner probably panicked – I was thinking that she had to defend her femininity in a very strong male-dominated environment (P1.3/C/M/IOP). I went to look for this event and discovered that it was preceded by a newspaper article, "The National Commissioner Needs Testosterone!" (The Daily Maverick, March 1, 2013). It was evident that the female police commissioner has been weighed and found wanting by certain quarters of the population. There could have been a phantasy of a male messiah in the form of another male Police Commissioner (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2000), which did not materialise. In this context, from a language use perspective, the term 'testosterone' was equated with competence (possible projection). The intense performance anxiety that this gender dynamic is creating was further accentuated when another participant reminded us that:

> [I]n the beginning, when females became captains in the SAA [South African Airways] and there is the announcement: 'This is Captain Williams speaking,' then you would hear the entire aircraft sighing, 'Oh no!', because it is a female voice (P1.5/W/F/RP).

These titles, including how a female voice sounds (unconscious language of images) in a specific context, could denote incompetence and role model associations – Captain Williams is supposed to be a man – are deeply embedded in the unconscious. Survival and other primitive anxieties are triggered when we experience events that do not 'fit the unconscious script' (Hollway, 2013; Salling-Oleson, 2012). There seems to be a tendency to authorise the known, familiar and what brings comfort, and to de-authorise the unfamiliar and the unknown. Another dimension is when titles, accents and indigenous languages are used to exclude others. There is an attachment, for example to an identity group to manage one's anxiety (Coetzee, 2007; Huxham & Vangen, 2005),

which logically results in stereotyping, discrimination and exclusion based on identity groups. Attachment could also include the bonding with an object (Braun, 2001; Rholes & Simpson, 2004; Sonkin, 2005), in this case, a title, language, or language use (Captain Mr Williams) that provides safety, security and comfort. A participant mentioned:

> [Y]ou could be in a meeting and I could choose to speak in IsiXhosa knowing very well some people do not understand or you could speak Afrikaans, it happens a lot at ... For me it is almost like the elephant in the room … (P1.7/B/F/IOP)

> [W]hich is what the debate in Stellenbosch [University of Stellenbosch] is all about. It's about a language that not everyone can understand (P1.4/W/F/IOP).

When the people in the narrative above use a language in the presence of other people who do not understand that language, it reflects an almost dismissive kind of attachment (Bartholomew & Horwitz, 1991). These people become so emotionally attached to the language and identify so strongly with it, coupled with a high level of disrespect and low sociability that language is used as a weapon (object) to fight and denigrate the other (Dykas & Cassidy, 2011; Rautenbach et al., 2015). Language then creates a split between those who understand and those who do not understand the language, thereby even creating paranoia in the process. It is intriguing how the metaphor of 'the elephant in the room' (as an example of the unconscious language of images) in this case, not just refers to the unspeakable, but language itself becomes the unspeakable.

7.3.1.3   Titles as 'splitting' and 'pairing' device

Language use also plays the role of a splitting mechanism. Splitting refers to a form of compartmentalisation, for example seeing the nurturing mother as good (good breast), and the withholding mother as bad (bad breast). This behaviour allows a person to embrace the good emotions and to create distance from destructive emotions. In this way,

uncomfortable feelings are disowned and projected onto someone else (Boxer, 2014; Dowds, 2002). It is a form of denial, which is based on idealisation (Armstrong, 2005; Cilliers & May, 2010; Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). Pairing on the other hand, is a bonding phenomenon, which creates intimacy and leads to closeness (Fromm, 2009) to cope with the anxiety of alienation, discomfort and loneliness (Czander, 1993). Titles as language use have the potential to fulfil a similar splitting or even identification function. One of the participants made an example of how Mr Mandela was referred to in different ways. He mentioned that:

> I once said 'Mandela', and a colleague said, 'it is Mr Mandela'. And then some people said he has got a doctorate. Yes, but he did not write a thesis […] but he earned the doctorate. Then the name 'Madiba' also comes into the conversation. Who has the right to call him that? People who are closer to him? Or people who feel themselves closer to him? And at some point I had the idea that it is easier … black people was more allowed to call him 'Madiba', rather than white people. So for white people he was 'Mandela, went to prison and then he came out' and then in the new country, for black people he was 'the freedom fighter', and therefore 'a Madiba to take the cause of the struggle forward'. So it also depends on where you sit … and what titles you can use, you almost use intimacy, a closer relationship … to be more deserving (P1.4/W/M/IOP).

It is clear that the language that is used when referring to someone also contains its own dynamics. The question of who has the right to use certain titles (language use) arises. In the narrative above, it appears as if those who are perceived to be closer to Madiba have more authority to use certain titles. The use of a title, without the necessary credentials, could be anxiety-provoking, because of the pecking-order-in-the-mind. The question then arises, "Am I good enough or close enough to use a specific title?" This splitting dynamic was phrased differently by another participant. She recalled a comment during a meeting with her direct report who is a social worker:

> In the meeting with psychologists … her remark was that she gets so lost in those meetings that sometimes she has to google certain things, and in my experience the conversations are not very technical, they are not

very jargon-related, they are admin-related. But it was fascinating that this social worker was finding it so difficult to understand, and this is a very competent, intelligent, knowledgeable woman, to connect with this group of psychologists. So there is something around the anxieties of being different that interferes with your capacity to understand or to bear to listen or to bear to hear … It sounds like language and titles to … disconnect (P1.6/B/F/CLP).

Titles as language use could thus be used to create a split by signifying who is allowed, authorised (Hirschhorn & Barnett, 1993; Janov, 1991; Stacey, 2003) or more deserving to use specific titles. The performance anxieties around difference could also affect one's comprehension or processing ability that it creates a disconnect with one's audience. As defence, for example, against relational or task anxieties (Long, 2001), we could use language formally or informally, to engage this specific topic, but not that one, to stimulate or avoid intimacy. The splitting mechanism could also have a class dynamic, for example when people speak in 'Oxford or American English', signifying that they belong to this esteemed community. Apparently, in the black community it is referred to as a 'twang'. One of the participants explained this phenomenon as follows:

> Twang, twang, twang, you have these kids who speak like that, not opening their mouth. They speak like whites in an English accent. There's a way of forming your facial muscles so that you are speaking with a twang … And I think for me the biggest, what is the word I am looking for … it is beyond an insult … yeah worse … it's an atrocity, it is an abomination (P1.7/B/F/IOP);
>
> How then they will make fun of our accent … our parent's accents who have taken them to school. There is one joke on Comedy Central right now. It's about a girl, a young girl, twanging, speaking about how you recognise if someone is a black person at McDonalds and then she mimics the waitress asking in an English accent and the black person says 'wanka'. Every time I see that I mute it because I cannot bear to listen to that nonsense … from our children. Such denigration (P1.6B/F/CLP).

Another participant mentioned:

> So, something about sophistication as a silencing mechanism: because then in some spaces if you cannot use the right technical language or the right accent or the posh English or whatever you could come to feel inhibited, and therefore not expressing yourself (P1.7/B/F/IOP).

Language could thus be used to differentiate one class from another. One's inability or unwillingness to 'twang' could result in feelings of being de-authorised. Thus, through the capacity to twang, for example competence, sophistication, class and excellence are projected onto the person who is able to twang. The opposite could also be true. The inability to twang, could represent 'a backward, rural mentality', incompetence, stupidity and so on. Language use then creates a mask as well as a split between good and bad, clever upper class and stupid lower class. In behavioural terms, some individuals, groups or communities will be idealised and others despised or denigrated. This class distinction could also have an almost national dimension, as reflected in the narrative below:

> I have a stereotype in my mind. It comes from students as well. Zimbabwean students talk different English; they also write differently in English. I don't know now but some years ago their schooling was quite good. So, it is how we project some of our background and personal upbringing and how we speak and present ourselves. That differentiates, so language really differentiates. 'True self', 'real self', 'posh self (P1.4/W/M/IOP).

Certain sections of a community could also distinguish themselves from others. A number of examples were used:

> It happens in Afrikaans as well, especially. I grew up in Pretoria. 'Pa' (father) and 'ma' (mother) becomes 'paw' and 'maw' (P1.4/W/M/IOP).
> And 'staatsteater' (State Theatre) becomes 'stawtsteater' (P1.5/W/F/RP).

Similarly, titles or language could also be used to create a pairing effect (Lawrence, Bain, & Gould, 2000). It is almost as if a certain level or reminder of familiarity could serve as defence against anxiety in

leadership and followership. Leaders would often say, "Don't worry. It is just a new position. I am still the old Frank. Nothing has changed." One of the participants shared her experience of a newly appointed Major General who insisted that colleagues should address her as 'Sister Maria' (real name withheld). She recalled the anxiety that was created within this formal traditional police culture, which was all about power and rank. She said:

> She was authorised by the organisation, but she did not take up that role yet … and the reaction was this silence … you could almost feel the shock … 'How can you say that?' 'We are not going to call you Sis Maria!' … You are Major General (P1.5/W/F/RP)

This invitation from the General was probably a request to her colleagues to engage more intimately with her, but the organisational culture did not allow this. Her role and the boundaries around this role demanded that she should be addressed in a particular manner. The language of Major General creates distance, but Sis Maria creates intimacy, closeness and camaraderie. From a performance anxiety perspective, it is better not to live up to expectations when the leader is Sis Maria, as opposed to Major General. In a different context, another participant explained:

I have that sort of experience when a church minister stands at the pulpit and says, 'I know that in the church I am a minister, but you can call me Jan!' I mean that is not Jan standing there, he is the minister, he needs to bring a message, he needs to be authorised by God … you bring a message from God … He is standing for something … similarly you do not call the Pope, 'Francis' (P1.4/W/M/IOP).

Thus, the inability to deal effectively with anxiety-provoking situations could result in an almost paranoid-schizoid dynamic (Czander, 1993; Hinshelwood & Skogstad, 2000) in language use. It is 'me', but also 'not me'. Yes, the leader is indeed a 'leader', but simultaneously also 'still a follower'. In a sense the leader has not taken up the role fully. There is paranoia and mistrust in the followers and this plays out in language. This ambivalence and messiness also result in a perceived split when the

role is still new, and there is a disconnect between the 'real me' and the 'ideal me' (Boydell, 2005; Goddard, 2001), or the 'authorised self' and the 'de-authorised self' (Gould, 1997; Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2011). Perhaps the leader still needs time to make sense of and identify with the new role. Followers find this confusing and anxiety-provoking. Thus, language could be used for the purpose of defending against anxiety created by race, gender, class, the taking up of a new role and identity.

7.3.1.4   Working hypothesis 1

The use of titles could also be a language. When a new title is taken on, anxiety is created. Anxiety increases when the leader does not claim, own and embrace the new title by authorising herself in the new role, or when a new language has not been crafted. The unconscious language of relations and actions could be reflected when a title is disowned, de-authorisation occurs, and the leader strips away a specific aspect of her/his identity.

7.3.2 Language as potential space

Language as potential space is discussed in terms of its relational, regressive and defensive properties. Since all tasks have elements of anxiety associated with them (Long, 2001; Mnguni, 2010), language use seems to have both developmental and regressive potential, which if meaningfully engaged could contain the potential for creative engagement. Within this context, language is used/perceived as a transitional phenomenon, which facilitates contact between inner and outer reality, thereby making meaningful shifts possible between one way of being to another (De Shazer et al., 2007; Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). This phenomenon, in this case language use, takes on a significant role during times of intense anxiety, for example when there is transition, uncertainty and turbulence. In the next section participants' reflections pertaining to language as potential space is discussed.

7.3.2.1   The relational properties of language

A participant alluded to how language is used to reveal different aspects of ourselves. Leaders resist being placed in a box, or to be reduced to something which is less than who they are. The individual leader is always more than what is perceived (Kets de Vries, 2006). This reduction in the true self of the leader could also create anxiety. Leaders would then convey a specific message in an attempt to convey different realities about themselves to create a connection with followers. The above-mentioned participant articulated this experience as follows:

> I hear somewhere half-way through our discussion … being a chameleon and it is so apparent in the stories that people tell 'this is me, but this is also me', so how we play for the audience, how we play for our colleagues. We use different parts of ourselves to present in different contexts, to be acceptable or to feel at ease, or to cope with the anxiety … These are all internal psychological processes and then language is used to pronounce myself (P1.4/W/M/IOP).

Personal Reflection: This narrative reminds me of my time in the military, when I observed the value of language as a relational device amongst street children in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where I was deployed as part of a peace-keeping force. When I arrived in the Congo, I was surprised to hear some of the local children speaking Afrikaans, in a predominantly, French-speaking country. It was fascinating to see, how they would use Afrikaans, as language (tool) to foster relationships and how this enabled them to survive within this harsh economic and political environment. Some would work for the soldiers as translators, as negotiators to negotiate the best possible prices at the local market, to create an emotional connection, or simply to entertain, particularly when swearing extremely poetically in Afrikaans! Those who were able to speak some English and Afrikaans became a 'valuable commodity' – simply because they recognised the value of being able to speak a specific language. Language can therefore be used to disconnect, but also to connect both cognitively and emotionally through authorisation,

inspiration, and inclusion (Kilburg & Diedrich, 2007; Knight, 2007). As reflected in the narrative above, leaders also project certain parts of themselves in order to be accepted by their followers and to contain their anxiety. However, the projection of these different parts of the leader could also be anxiety-provoking to followers, because followers tend to desire consistency and not a 'jack-in-a-box' mentality.

7.3.2.2   *The regressive properties of language*

Language has the potential to be used as a weapon to harm, create self-doubt, undermine or de-authorise others. In the context mentioned above, when the leader chooses to reveal a specific aspect of him or her, there is also the potential for regression depending on the intention. One participant pointed out this inherent potential for regression:

> But there is also the issue of manipulation … It sounds like manipulation, keeping things ambiguous, so that I can choose, choose which person to reveal, so I can keep the audience guessing … And also placing the recipient in an uncertain space … In terms of how to reciprocate (P1.7/B/F/IOP).

There is a difference between healthy social influence and psychological manipulation, which is the exercise of undue influence through mental distortion and even emotional exploitation, resulting in the seizure of control and power (Friedman, 2007; Grotstein, 2008). When individual needs are not met in an ethical manner, manipulative leaders coerce followers to behave in a certain manner (Prins, 2002), which could be a sign of immature, or regressive behaviour (Janov, 1991; Rao, 2013). A slightly different form of manipulation was alluded to in the form of soliciting reciprocity, instead of simply indicating what kind of address would be preferred. The leader would address a follower or subordinate in a specific way, in the hope that the person would reciprocate. The following reflection was offered:

> [S]o I do not know what my new boss wants me to call her. (P1.2/W/F/IOP).

Another participant then responded to this covert solicitation to respond in a specific way by saying:

> You know what this is making me wonder, if you were to call each other by name … her changing gears, and playing with the title, I wonder if it is not an indirect invitation, for you to call her back by title as well … So, it is an indirect way of claiming the title and stature … Establishing my own authority (P1.7/B/F/IOP).

In other words, the leader would address a subordinate in a certain way, in the hope that the subordinate would respond 'in kind', because I am referring to you as Dr Jones, as opposed to John (your first name). There could be something 'manipulative' in using language deliberately in a vague, ambiguous fashion. This implies having to second-guess the person. When do I speak to my manager, and when do I speak to Frank? This could create anxiety for followers. In order to manage this anxiety, followers could almost feel compelled to respond according to how they have been addressed. Instead of demanding that a leader be called 'Doctor', she/he would call a subordinate 'Doctor', thereby seducing or manipulating the other to do the same. Instead of dealing with an unpleasant situation in a more adult or mature fashion, a leader could demonstrate regressive behaviour by behaving in a child-like, immature manner. Thus, in the example above, the title has been claimed, one's authority is intact, the boundary has been created and enforced, and the leader's identity has been communicated.

7.3.2.3   *The defensive properties of language*

In the same vein, language could also be used as a defence against anxiety, emanating from a wide range of sources, particularly in the leadership space (Zeddies, 2004). One participant linked up with the defensive properties of language by mentioning the following:

> [H]ow pedantic we can become about language and language use in order to hide something else. I think you mentioned productivity and performance … or we would rather try to get this right and perfect. As

opposed to focusing on what really matters at the end of the day. So, language becomes a very powerful weapon, you know, almost like a protective device so to speak (P1.6/B/F/CLP).

This line of enquiry was extended by another participant:

[A]lmost as if language is a defence against relational and task anxieties (P1.7/B/F/IOP).

Used elsewhere as a splitting device, language could then also serve a defensive purpose.

We could keep a conversation going here, not to go there. We could get it to go formal or informal, or to avoid intimacy. I can in an argument say to you, "Explain that." It could keep us intellectually busy so that we don't have to deal with the real issues. So, it is a defence against realness but also battle (P1.4/W/M/IOP).

This defence could be so strong that it almost taps into its regressive potential. This was expressed by another participant:

For me there is fixation. It has a fixational quality to it, because the experience is stagnation, we are not moving, but there is such a high output of articulate language going on. I feel an association with this something that has got to do with constipation (P1.7/B/F/IOP).

Language could also be used to project leadership competence (masking my own incompetence) and that the leader is actually busy with the 'primary task' in the organisation. One participant reflected on her observations in a typical work setting:

But also how we project competence … being articulate, hey? When we get stuck there we are actually pretending to be doing the important work of leading and we can sit in a meeting saying all kinds of wonderful big things. It is the work. Meanwhile things are decaying outside (P1.6/B/F/CLP).

It is almost a façade that we use … Sometimes we say 'Wow, this guy is saying all the right things'. It has got status! And if it is in an Oxford accent, even better (P1.3/C/M/IOP).

The above narratives therefore suggest, that leaders could become fixated on what is actually irrelevant, as they defend against performance anxieties triggered by the fear of incompetence, of vulnerability (fear of being exposed/unmasked), and the expectations of relationships. Language then becomes a defence against authenticity.

Language could also reflect the ambivalence and tension created when a leader strives to position him- or herself in a particular way. There is almost the need to find a healthy balance between being close enough to connect, and being sufficiently aloof as well in order to create distance. This behaviour could be a way of disconnecting when it is needed for whatever purpose. In this leadership context, language is used as a defence against intimacy or informality. It could also serve a boundary management function (Brunning & Perini, 2010), for example,

> [U]sing my title when I engage with my students (P1.7/B/F/IOP).

It is clear that language has the inherent potential to be used to defend against the anxiety of failure, unrealistic follower expectations and inadequate performance. One of the participants shared the following experience:

> I am also thinking about something that has been happening at work with a leader who is within an acting role. And feeling so de-authorised and my evidence for that is how careful he is with language, in particular. To the extent that he has to respond to each and every question, each and every remark, however unnecessary, and then the meeting drags ... the meeting really, really drags … And that says something to me about how anxiety-provoking it is for him to be in that role … in proving to everybody that he is not misconstruing anything, and even to himself … that he is really listening. And as a result this becomes a very, very painful experience being in that meeting (P1.6/B/F/CLP).

Being in an acting position (some people refer to it as 'keeping the boat afloat until a formal appointment is made'), is a difficult space to be in,

and especially if one has ambitions to fulfil. It could also be a way of dealing with the pressure of going out there and doing the work (performance anxiety), as opposed to staying in here and pretending to be doing the work. According to a participant, the former chief operating officer of the SABC, Mr Hlaudi Motsoeneng recently stated:

> I am an intellectual strategist. I am a visionary. My value is in here (P1.3/C/M/IOP).

In addition, there is also the struggle for self-preservation (Grotstein, 2008). Another participant shared how intense it had become in the police force. At a recent event in the police force, the language that was used became quite noticeable, for example in words or expressions such as 'battle', 'fight', 'eliminate', 'reduce them to nothingness', 'Kill the enemy' (P1.5/W/F/RP). Another participant responded, "Trap die duiwel op sy kop!" (literally means to crush the devil's head) (P1.2/W/F/IOP).

These examples seem to relate to object representation, a key concept in object relations theory, which entails conscious and unconscious mental schemata. Language seems to be both a potential space and a transitional object. An object can exist in a transitional space (Winnicott, 1953; 1971) which is a psychic transitional zone between internal (world of subjectivity) and external reality (world of objectivity). Objects inhabiting this zone are referred to as transitional objects. Phrased differently, potential space as a 'playground' (Grady & Grady, 2013; Winnicott, 1971) has an exciting (potential for relationships), but also a precarious (potential for regression) dimension. Despite the anxieties being experienced, leaders can work with their anxiety to mine language for its relational value. Since language use has a relational value within potential space, this capacity could be used to establish and embed relationships through authorisation, effective boundary management, and linguistic inclusive practices. Language could also be used as a vehicle for negotiating the tension between the need for intimacy and need for requisite distance. There is always the unconscious need for intimacy, but also 'professionalism' within the leadership space in taking up a new or

existing leadership role (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). Language, by definition, therefore has the potential to fulfil the function of a transitional object. Within the potential space of holding, unfolding and sense-making, language use has inherent relational, but in an organisational setting, also regressive and defensive value. Leaders have to be aware of, as one participant said, "what comes through the vocal cords" (P1.4/W/M/IOP), what the consequences are of this articulation and what it projects psychologically about the self and others. Language, in the interaction between leaders and followers becomes the transitional object (Amado, 2007), the vehicle in terms of communicating and facilitating the primary task. Within potential space it can be optimised, or perverted, used for adaptive or regressive purposes. Thus, for example, in assuming commonality leaders often do not ask, which results in the *rupturing* of relationships, instead of asking and listening, which could lead to the *rapturing* of relationships. Whether it is used for inclusion or exclusion, to create intimacy or distance, language as an object has the potential to be used to communicate, to manipulate, to perform, to impress, to withhold, to overburden. All of this relates to the potentiality of language, it lies within the potential space for good or bad (Amado, 2007; Jemstedt, 2000; Long, 1992; Ogden, 1985). The implications of the above interpretation is that language as object could be used to lead more effectively, by creating a good-enough holding and containing space and by becoming aware of what is projected through language use. When leaders are aware of these dynamics, or when the anxiety becomes unbearable, it is likely that language could be used for regressive purposes.

Thus, in the presence of unconscious anxieties, language use also has regressive potential. Regression is a defence mechanism to cope with anxiety. One reverts to an earlier stage of development, instead of managing a challenging situation in a more mature, adaptive fashion. Leaders would move away from complexity and the discomfort of a painful situation and move towards more immature and primitive ways of dealing with the anxiety in the moment. An example would be to keep themselves cleverly busy with lots of words, fancy accents and the latest

business jargon during meetings, thereby avoiding, or de-authorising the primary task (going off-task) in order to manage their fear and defend themselves from being exposed. Leaders therefore do not simply, or innocently, use language to communicate, but they use language to perform, or not to perform.

7.3.2.4   *Working hypothesis 2*

Language is a potential space and often manifests as a transitional object. Anxiety is created in the presence of change, diversity or even when ambivalent authority has been granted to leaders. When these anxieties become unbearable, leaders become overwhelmed. To contain this anxiety, regressive behaviours could be displayed, which manifest in the form of de-authorising the self or the 'other', the engagement in manipulative practices, or deliberately keeping relationships ambiguous, in order to elicit a specific response. When this happens, the unconscious language of relations and relatedness is used as defence against relational, task or performance anxieties to mask perceptions of incompetence, a lack of self-confidence, or other personal vulnerabilities. Leadership performance is then contained in language, masked by language, or simply language becomes performance.

7.3.3   Language of silence versus non-silence

The language of silence can be perceived as a container of exceptionally rich meanings. This container is often overlooked. In this section a variety of aspects of language of silence versus non-silence are discussed, specifically, silence as internal dialogue, when language is perceived as 'noise' with the intention of creating a 'voice' for those affected, and in my opinion, the powerful concept of the language of silence as a potential space. The juxtaposition of the language of silence versus non-silence is such an important phenomenon that I have deemed it necessary to have it explored under its own heading.

7.3.3.1   Language of silence as internal dialogue

Language appears to have a variety of facets and perhaps one of the most intriguing and under-explored dimensions is the silent language of internal dialogue. The leader's own internal dialogue is potentially an area for rich exploration. The internal dialogue of the leader plays a critical role in shaping their perceptions of reality and subsequently, how they behave. Becoming aware of one's internal dialogue, particularly in an anxiety-provoking situation, is one way of monitoring this dialogue. The nature of this internal dialogue could also be the source of anxiety. One participant posed the following series of questions:

> What language do you use when you speak to yourself … in your own head? What words do you use when you think? Do you use language when you dream? Do you dream in colour, or not in colour? I know I mumble a lot (P1.4/W/M/IOP).

7.3.3.2   Language perceived as 'noise' creating 'voice'

The language of silence creates an exciting discourse when it is juxtaposed with "noise". Participants alluded to the unconscious dynamic of "noise" and the unconscious messages that could possibly be conveyed.

> [T]he issue of noise, the loudness, black people are quite loud, generally speaking, and generally white people are quite soft-spoken and I know on … where we are working, it's becoming an issue … I'm quite cautious of it. I'm one of the loud ones. Also the pitch (P1.7/B/F/IOP).

> And then I'm thinking of Malema and his party, and if you just look at the videos you see the orange being taken away so the orange has been taken away the noise is being taken away as if we can take the party away and what it represents (P1.4/W/M/IOP).

> [T]he language of the admin people. It's not the words but the sound of the voice that's being conveyed into decibels that go up for more attention and down for less attention (P1.5/W/F/RP).

> I was once asked to speak to colleagues around what was perceived as noise … well it was exactly this issue of you know the elephant in the room, because in that context the white boss did not want to speak to the black lady who was too loud so I was called into the office with doors closed and asked … could you please address the lady (P1.2/W/F/IOP).
>
> In my working environment most of the black staff are administrators and most of the white staff are academics and I wonder whether the noise is about asserting their voice, it is almost about upsetting the hierarchy in a sense … something about these administrators are the low ones and can easily be ignored and in many instances you feel they are forgotten … So they speak louder (P1.5/W/F/RP).

A participant highlighted a related dynamic:

> [I]t is then very easy to say black people are loud. But it is difficult to go to … the 'less paid', 'de-authorised', 'marginalised', the 'back office', whose voice is taken away (P1.1/B/M/IOP).

When people (followers) experience that they are being silenced, whether it is in the form of being ignored, or not taken seriously, they make noise in order to assert themselves and to gain attention. When the 'noise' is removed, they have effectively been 'silenced'. Their 'voice' has been removed and they subsequently almost do not exist anymore. Noise then becomes an affirmation that 'I will not allow myself to be silenced'. In the South African context, recent events in Vuwani (Limpopo Province, South Africa), where students and other community members burnt down schools and other municipal properties and widespread incidents of violence in the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality prior to the local government elections, come to mind. The consistent narrative has been that ordinary citizens are not heard until they destroy property, violently disrupt the status quo, and so on.

7.3.3.3   Language of imagery-creating voice

The language of imagery (in the form of non-verbal communication, as a reflection of the compelling paradox of silent image and yet, it 'speaks' so
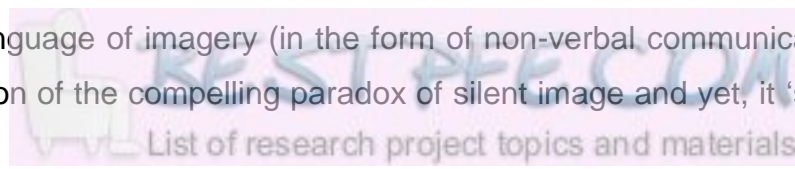
forcefully), creating voice, perhaps also falls within potential space. This language of imagery is possibly one of the most powerful languages that we tend to overlook (Souba, 2010). It reflects and implies embracing the ambiguities presented by the modern emotionally turbulent working environment (Brunning & Perini, 2010). Powerful emotions and thoughts are often provoked in the presence of silence or moving imagery.

> I have often noticed how people become quiet during meetings, workshops or other organisational contexts … and I have been reflecting on what it could mean (P1.1/B/M/IOP).
>
> [S]o sad when a person loses his voice (P1.1/B/M/IOP).

The unconscious language of imagery also manifested as a critical sub-theme. A few interesting examples emerged during the listening post:

- the blue overalls on the mines;
- the red overalls of the Economic Freedom Front (EFF) being removed from the South African Parliament;
- the perception of black Democratic Alliance (DA) members toyi-toying in the streets versus white DA members in the boardroom;
- the mental picture of language use as an elusive tango between the paradoxical, simultaneous needs for intimacy and distance;
- the very important 'k' in Denmark versus Denmar (Psychiatric Institution outside Nigel in Gauteng);
- the exclamation that "Generals don't bark; they bite!"; and
- the captivating interplay between 'relational rupture' versus 'relational rapture'.

Silence has the capacity to carry rich meanings and messages. When engaging in respectful silence, leaders treat the 'other' not as objects, but as 'experiencing subjects' (Stein & Allcorn, 2014). Leaders need to learn how to be silent, but authentically connect to their inner dialogue and tolerate the discomfort of uncertainty, ambiguity and not knowing or not having all the answers all the time, which is negative capability (Burt, 2014; French, Simpson & Harvey, 2001; Kelvens, 1997). Silence can therefore be used for different purposes. It can be a form of withholding, a

sign of protest or simply reflective of authentic engagement (Edelstein, 2012). Internal dialogue reflects and influences leadership behaviour. The leadership challenge therefore is: as a leader can I be a silent good-enough container of my own anxiety, as well as the anxiety of my followers when I take up my leadership role within an organisational work setting?

7.3.3.4   Working hypothesis 3

When leaders and followers experience that they are being silenced, they may use the powerful language of imagery and noise as defence against this anxiety. 'If you don't see me I will speak louder until you concede to my presence, value and existence.' This 'loudness'/resistance is often misconstrued as 'noise' as opposed to 'voice'. Alternatively, silence as non-verbal language, can also be self-initiated. Silence as a 'temporary way of being', a form of self-authorised silence. Critically, silence can also serve to be connected to one's inner dialogue. This kind of silence then becomes purposeful, so that the leader who initiated the silence becomes in tune with the inner dialogue and the 'other' is somehow enabled to engage the primary task.

7.3.4 Dynamics of the listening post

The dynamics of the listening post are explored in terms of engagement and attachment to the primary task, identification with the interrelationship between language use, the unconscious and anxiety, and the fascination with the colliquation concept in the theoretical model. This is followed by a working hypothesis.

7.3.4.1   Engagement and attachment with the primary task

One of the noticeable dynamics of the listening post was the way in which participants engaged and attached themselves to the primary task. Participants consisted of industrial, clinical and research psychologists

who were all systems psychodynamic practitioners. As researcher, I deeply appreciated their energy, commitment and sense of purpose as they engaged the three well-defined primary tasks throughout the listening post. Their light-hearted exuberance, personal narratives, phenomenological encounters, major themes and working hypotheses offered resulted in a rich stream of qualitative data. As they engaged the task, pairs also became a strong sub-theme: two white females, two black females, two black males, two white males who failed to pitch on the night, and two without doctoral degrees. Interestingly, only one white male attended the listening post. When pairing happened, the predominant mood in the group was that of hope with the anticipation of a better tomorrow (Rao, 2013; Rioch, 1975). This behaviour thus generates a new 'saving idea' (Huffington et al., 2004; Shapiro, 2013).

The exuberance, energy and pairing could have been a result of the anxiety in the room, emanating from participants' feelings of vulnerability as they shared their personal narratives around unconscious anxieties and language use as practitioners and leaders in their own right. There could also have been a competition element, as they were sharing their own, personal life stories and not just what was happening to other leaders out there. Perhaps there was also the hope that by being able to access their own leadership anxiety triggers, leaders, or participants in the here-and-now would be able to enhance their personal awareness and 'manage' the potential sources of their anxiety a little bit better.

7.3.4.2   Identification with language use – anxiety connection

Another listening post dynamically related to how participants were able to identify with the interrelationship between language use, the unconscious and their anxieties. One participant responded:

> When I looked at this, I could almost superimpose the mechanical principle of systems theory in terms of input, throughput, output … Where input is I see the input here, the stimuli, conscious and unconscious evaluation thereof. Throughput is the black box and the colliquation,

because that is where the transformation and the blending takes place, and then the output is the anxieties triggered … I see that in here as well (P1.5/W/F/RP).

And the colliquation comes from colliding … worlds colliding (P1.1/B/M/IOP).

Yes, coming together and influencing each other … and the transformation you spoke about, transforming what is in the unconscious and transforming the way in which language is used and vice versa (P1.1/B/M/IOP).

So if you quantify that you could have a colli – coefficient (P1.5/W/F/RP).

You know, when I first looked at this, I loved that colliquation, I did not know what it was, but it spoke to something I was preoccupied with … and I am linking that with language of actions, how I express myself, and how sometimes I am anxious, when sometimes something is not quite right, how I can actually … engage in a worse monotone and render myself inaudible, whereas when I am comfortable, I am relaxed and can be as clear, almost crispy clear, sometimes, ja, that is what came to mind (P1.7/B/F/IOP).

[A]nd [it] takes me one step further, as a leader can I contain my own anxiety to lead and that is inherent then in the model as a behavioural outcome that the leader should be coached on (P1.7/B/F/IOP).

Participants' comments seemed to address to a significant extend, the 'face value', in quantitative language, of the model presented. They seemed to be able to identify with the way in which the model was able to reflect dynamic multiple realities and multiple narratives in the context of the research. In terms of basic assumption group functioning (Bion, 1961; Coetzee, 2007), it was as if the group identified so much with the model that a form of dependency (Bion, 1961; Colman & Bexton, 1975; Miller, 1993) could have developed. The model in a sense also represented the phantasy of:

[O]ur anxiety could disappear if we execute this model effectively (P1.6/B/F/CLP).

Around this phantasy, a sense of 'oneness' (Dowds, 2007) also developed, characterised by a sense of belonging, cohesion and unity. A number of projections could also have occurred in the moment. Perhaps participants were projecting hope onto the theoretical model, but even more significantly, the projection that the researcher, as saviour, would be the bearer of a tool that would actually do the real work.

Based on the dynamics of the listening post, the following working hypothesis is presented.

7.3.4.3   *Working hypothesis 4*

Leadership performance anxiety could trigger basic assumption behaviour, and in particular, 'flight into phantasy', in this context that the model in itself is going to do all the work and make the painful reality that leaders should be doing the work, disappear. When leaders operate in this 'flight mode', which may be reflected in their language use they may not be able to hold, absorb, reflect and respond to their own and their followers' anxieties.

7.3.5 Utility value of the model

In this section, I present an illustration of participants' comments regarding the utility value of the theoretical model.

Reflexive value: Some participants alluded to the potential of the model to raise awareness (reflexive value) around leadership behaviour. A number of examples were made.

> [W]hen I sit with the leader, and they speak about their context and frustrations at work and so on to be able to work with that person based on where they are, their own psychological safety profile and then intervene at the level which they are to be able to assist them to work in a more effective way with the context and the other factors that would be playing a role (P1.1/B/M/IOP).

> [W]e deal with anxiety unconsciously, and so on, but once we are aware, once I am aware of myself, I am able to see the situation for what it is … that is when I am able to behave differently (P1.1/B/M/IOP).

Awareness is likely to create understanding and understanding creates the capacity to make choices. When leaders can make choices, they often feel empowered, safe and in control. In the context of awareness, the model could also be used as consulting tool. Another participant referred to a different kind of awareness that could be raised in that owning a title could also create anxiety for the titleholder, in that it creates distance (potential tension) when what the titleholder could want is intimacy (harmony). The participant said:

> I was surprised to see that she was referred to as a 'Ms'. And I asked her, why that was the case, and she said that "No I actually leave them, I never took it up with them, unless if it is" … she actually said unless if it is formal, or something like that, but a meeting is actually a formal event, I mean it is recorded, in our official minutes (P1.6/B/F/CLP).

The same participant also reflected:

> So there is something around the anxieties of being different that interferes with your capacity to understand, or to bear to listen or to bear to hear … It sounds like language to connect, and language also to disconnect (P1.6/B/F/CLP).

Explanatory value: Besides the creation of awareness, the model could also help to explain leadership experiences (explanatory value). When the leader has not identified, or is unsure how to position the self in a new role it becomes difficult to take up the leadership role and to negotiate new relationships with followers effectively. Anxiety is created for both the leader and the followers. A participant provided this example:

> But that response that you, that I am not getting, gives me the sense that she can still not yet decide, how she wants to position herself, and that for me relates to the anxiety of taking up the role and re-establishing relationships with people…

Or another participant's example:

> [T]o make sense of whatever is happening in their life, unconscious life of the leader (P1.3/C/M/IOP).
>
> She was authorised by the organisation, but she did not take up that role yet … and the reaction was this silence … you could almost feel the shock … "How can you say that? We are not gonna call you sister D, you are Major General" (P1.5/W/F/RP).

Coaching and consulting value: Another participant suggested that the model could be used as a consulting and coaching tool.

> So, if it is a consulting tool and as a leader you come to me with this model … I would imagine if this could then be turned into a coaching tool (P1.4/W/M/IOP).
>
> [A]nd it takes me one step further, as a leader can I contain my own anxiety to lead and that is inherent then in the model as a behavioural outcome that a leader should be coached on (P1.4/W/M/IOP).

Leadership development: Participants also highlighted specific components of the model, for example the significance of defences in the leadership role.

> [T]itles as defence against anxiety. It also talks to the unconscious stimuli in the defences that you have in your model (P1.7/B/F/IOP).
>
> language as a medium to explore terrains of tension
>
> [O]f how language reflects the unconscious conflict between the need for … to express intimacy, intimacy needs versus professionalism in taking up the new role (P1.7/B/F/IOP)

and

> [L]anguage is a defence against relational and task anxieties (P1.7/B/F/IOP),

and

> So, something about sophistication as a silencing mechanism because then in some spaces if you cannot use the right technical language or the right accent or the posh English or whatever, you could come to feel inhibited, and therefore not expressing yourself (P1.7/B/F/IOP).

and the containment component of leadership being accentuated by the model

> [A] leader needs to contain his or her own anxiety in order to lead others and I sense it in this model (P1.5/W/F/RP).

7.4 LISTENING POST 2: THEMES AND WORKING HYPOTHESES

The second listening post comprised senior business leaders. A full description of the sample is provided in Chapter 6 (see 6.2.3.3) of this thesis.

The following themes and sub-themes were identified by participants and resulted from my own interpretation of the data.

Theme 1:   Anxiety and its triggers

Sub-theme 1:   *"Leaderme" triggers*

Sub-theme 2:   *Role triggers*

Sub-theme 3:   *Environmental triggers*

Theme 2:   Anxiety and leadership response

Sub-theme 1:   *Reflexive practices*

Sub-theme 2:   *Somatic practices*

Sub-theme 3:   *Preventative practices*

Theme 3:   Anxiety and language use

Sub-theme 1:   *Colliquation: When anxiety and language use collide*

Theme 4:   Dynamics of listening post 2

Sub-theme 1:   *Researcher anxiety*

Sub-theme 2:   *Participant anxiety*

Sub-theme 3:   *Transcriber anxiety*

7.4.1 Anxiety and its triggers

In this section, the theme of anxiety and how it is evoked within the phenomenological world of participants, as leaders, is discussed. A number of categories of anxiety triggers have been identified. These relate to *'leaderme'* (Furnham, 2010) triggers which reside in the internal world of the leader, triggers related to the leadership role to be taken up and finally triggers located within the external environment of the leader. The section is concluded with a working hypothesis.

7.4.1.1 *"Leaderme" triggers*

Participants testified to the constant uncertainty, disorientating turbulence, and intense pressure which they encounter in the world of work on a daily basis (Grossman & Valiga, 2009; Peltier, 2010; Stein & Allcorn, 2014). This relentless uncertainty and the complexity of the leadership role explain the anxiety experienced by leaders. A participant alluded firstly to the pressures under which leaders put themselves.

> I would immediately doubt the business intelligence, all the known and unknown 'what ifs' and my own competence, by reverting back to what had worked for me in the past … My ego would take over and the meeting would become about me, my opinion, and my things (P2.1/W/M/DH).

This could be reflective of narcissistic personality features where the self becomes an excessive reference point (Campbell, 2007; Kets de Vries, 2007). Immature defensive behaviours in the form of denial, splitting and projection were displayed. This phenomenon often results in what is commonly known as leadership derailment (Inyang, 2013; Pienaar, 2011). Other participants reflected upon how they would be haunted by past seminal leadership experiences.

> Whether I have had a good or bad experience in the past, those first memorable experiences that you have had … that I was exposed to, somehow I would always automatically tend to go back to them

(P2.1/W/M/DH).

Leaders are often mirrored in their followers (succession dynamic) in the same way that parents are mirrored in their children (family dynamic). Leaders would therefore 'see' themselves in their followers. This could be reflective of psychological processes, for example transference and counter-transference. Their colleagues, or followers, would then become objects and reflections of themselves at a given point in time (Czander, 1993; Gomez, 1998; Kets de Vries, 2007). Other participants mentioned how the complexity of the business environment would force them to 'reflect' different aspects of themselves in different contexts. This could possibly be due to projective identification and counter-transference. This would become very confusing for the followers who expect them to be consistent and to behave in a predictable fashion.

> They don't understand that leadership is situational and multi-faceted …
> And it's not that you are being false in any way, by being like that …
> Some people would say, 'No, why are you so different?' … You are not
> different … You choose to be like that because that is your situation
> (P2.3/I/M/DH).

This apparent reaction to multiple realities of the leader would be anxiety-provoking for followers, which would force the leader 'back into the familiar box' that they are comfortable with, or they would collude with their followers through introjection and projective identification. An interesting contribution from participants was the consistent tension between the leader's struggle for personal authenticity and his or her instinct for self-preservation within the organisation.

In our regional meetings I would be challenged by that inner voice to say what I feel and what I mean … and I have these questions that I need answers to, versus eish! I need to be careful, you know. I don't want to rock the boat. I don't want to stand out. There might be consequences. And if the next round of retrenchments comes I may be the first in line (P2.5/W/M/DH).

The survival anxiety could become so unbearable that the leadership voice becomes ambiguous or lost in this internal struggle (Nohria & Khurana, 2010). Further evidence was provided by a participant who mentioned that:

> [S]ometimes the leader's voice will totally disappear, totally disappear, it gets swallowed up and it is also a shame when you know it is a good leader, but when the chips are down and the stakes are high, that value gets lost. I have seen it so many times (P2.5/W/M/DH).

7.4.1.2   Role triggers

Participants often pondered upon their apparent struggle to be effective containers in the workplace. An example is to own decisions that one does not support, but it is part of the job to communicate the decision as if the leader is personally convinced that it is the correct course of action.

> We would discuss retrenchments with top executives. And we would have heated discussions. Now you have to walk out of that room, being upset, not agreeing with certain things and you are expected to give this message that you do not agree with to your staff … now I have to own the decision ... it is nerve-wrecking (P2.5/W/M/DH).

Thus, fully taking on the leadership role is anxiety-provoking. The concept of the role encompasses the demarcation around the position of leadership, which clearly differentiates it from other roles, for example followership (Greyvenstein & Cilliers, 2012; Henning, 2009; Obholzer & Roberts, 1994). Perpetual turbulence caused by the necessity for change in modern day organisations leads to higher levels of leadership anxiety (Higgin & Bridger, 1965; Miller, 1993; Obholzer & Roberts, 1994). When the organisational holding environment becomes inadequate (Hoggett, 2013; Stacey, 2003), the anxiety becomes so much that leaders can no longer take up their roles effectively, resulting in the occurrence of splitting, projection, scapegoating, power struggles, blaming and idealisation (Czander, 1993; Erskine, 2010; Kernberg, 1998; Korotov, Florent-Treacy, Kets de Vries & Bernhardt, 2012; Levinson, 2006). The

leader is also confronted with the possibility of losing the respect and credibility of staff. This heightened level of performance and survival anxiety, could result in leaders feeling lonely, 'not-good-enough', and disorientated (Greyvenstein & Cilliers, 2012). This leadership experience was expressed by a participant who said that:

> I mean, who am I as a leader, if I don't have followers? (P2.7/B/M/SSO).

Hence, in their leadership role, leaders do not always feel understood, accepted and authorised (Colman, 1975; Colman & Geller, 1985; Turquet, 1974). One participant shared it like this:

> It is like a seesaw, then you are up and then you are down (P2.5/W/M/DH).

Kets de Vries (2007) refers to this multifarious nature of the dynamic and systemic leadership role as the capacity to contain, demonstrating symbolic and representative leadership, authorising self, others, and the management of conscious and unconscious psychological boundaries. These challenges and expectations of the role can be a cause of great anxiety for leaders as they are plagued by a sense of being inadequate as their emotional resources become more and more depleted. The result is that their personal defences may be activated.

7.4.1.3   Environmental triggers

Anxiety can be triggered by other factors in the external environment of the leader. For example, the anxiety can be created by the silent voices of followers.

> There is nothing so disturbing, disturbing when voices become silent. People are concerned about what you are saying, but they can't even say it with "with due respect, Mr ..." What can they and what can't they say? (P2.4/W/M/SSO).

Anxiety can be created by the 'other', whether it is the multi-cultural (Motsoaledi, 2009) and multi-lingual working context, or the divergent

perspectives and opinions prevalent in the working environment.

> I think that the one thing that creates so much pressure and aggravates language use in South Africa is the fact that we live in a multi-cultural society. And very often there is not even a shared vocabulary and people think that they understand what you are saying, but they actually don't. I used the word 'missionary creep' the other day and somebody became highly offended, because he only heard the 'creep' ... so there is not just personal anxiety, but group anxiety as well (P2.4/W/M/DH).

Then there is the anxiety that arises as a result of the lack of control over external variables in the modern day dynamic business and global context, including the lack of control over how followers would interpret and respond to what is happening at work.

> [A]s my colleague said, people interpret what you are saying from their perspective … so you have to check more and assume less (P2.3/I/M/DH).

There is also the inevitable rivalry and competition between leaders for superiority and ultimate survival in what has often been described as "a cut-throat" corporate environment where only the fittest and the smartest have the right to rule. One participant said that:

> [T]he leader group would decide that I have to start off the meeting and facilitate the discussion. But they will feel threatened when I take the lead. They feel that they also have to say something, otherwise they will be less of a leader, so they must come up and say something so that they can still be the leader … you can still be seen as the leader (P2.2/B/F/CM).

Anxiety inherent to the leadership role has been defined as the fear of the future (Greyvenstein & Cilliers, 2012) or as an emotion evoked by the unconscious whenever it experiences something as ominous (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). Followers cope with this anxiety by splitting and comparing one leader with another leader or authority figure (Czander, 1993). Goodness is projected onto some leaders and badness projected onto others (Gaitanidis, 2007). This battle between leadership

and followership is described by Obholzer and Roberts (1994) as followers taking up the critical parent role by introjecting competence, but at the same time projecting their own doubts, incompetence and insecurities about the leadership role onto their leaders. Erskine (2010) compares leadership to a teenager experiencing an identity crisis, the teenager attempts to impress authority figures (on the outside), whilst simultaneously trying to make sense of the role confusion, lack of security and inadequate containment (raging on the inside). Under these circumstances, followers cannot authorise leadership to take up its role effectively, which creates increasing anxiety, and feelings of being out of control on the part of leaders (Cilliers, 2005; Diamond, 2016; Dimitov, 2008).

Leaders as multifarious entities in their containing function, must therefore learn to hold the splits and the implied paradox of leadership (Henning, 2009) in the face of personal, role and environmental triggers, by nurturing an attitude which welcomes anxiety and by authorising themselves within constantly changing organisational identities (Nohria & Khurana, 2010).

7.4.1.4   *Working hypothesis 1*

Anxiety, which can be associated with internal static creation, can be triggered by anything in the internal or external world of the leader. These triggers can be compared with *kairos* moments (moments of truth) in the life of the leader. These *kairos* moments can be activated by the constant attack on leadership, thereby impacting their language use, the perpetual tension emanating from the struggle for authenticity on the one hand and the battle for self-preservation on the other.

How this emerging anxiety is contained, has a direct impact on how the leadership voice, in the form of the unconscious languages of images, actions and relations, is articulated. Leaders then have to choose between being true to self, with the possibility of being without a job, or

selecting self-preservation with the possibility of one's identity being compromised.

7.4.2 Anxiety and leadership response

Leaders do respond both consciously and unconsciously to the presence of anxiety. This section has been included, even though it appears not to address language use in a direct manner. It is relevant to the discussion insofar as it alludes to language anxiety dynamics as these are manifested in leadership reflexive, somatic and preventative anxiety management practices.

What follows is a discussion on how participants deal with anxiety as it manifests itself within them in the corporate environment.

7.4.2.1 Reflexive practices

Some of the reflective practices leaders make use of are holding and reflecting on the experience, both individually, or collectively with colleagues and subsequently deciding on the most effective course of action.

> Now, you sit in front of your team you say, "Guys, you know I was at the meeting this is the situation". You have to own it … So, there is one anxiety in the boardroom and another anxiety when you are now addressing your team (P2.5/W/M/DH)
>
> [T]hese are the types of things we have to deal with every day (P2.1/W/M/DH).

Leaders are expected to hold or contain (Bion, 1985; Boxer, 2014; Colman & Geller, 1985; Eisold, 2010; May, 2010) specific experiences on behalf of others in order to make it easier for them to work with the primary task. This is clear from the narrative above. Being aware of the anxiety that is being experienced is already an achievement. This awareness could be extended to other areas where anxiety is manifested,

for example, the language use of the leader. Another participant provided this example.

> I remember this leader who had just heard that he was affected, identified for retrenchment, but he had to hold his pose and go to his people and tell them about the retrenchment process. He was standing there with a straight face and he was giving that message, but he was without a job and I said to myself: "Wow, what a man! what a man!" (P2.6/C/M/IOP).

In the narrative above, the leader was expected to fulfil an important containing function in order for the team to be able to function effectively. An alternate practice was to engage in a deliberate conscious mental pause by creating space between the 'event' and the next action to be taken.

> When I get anxious about anything, it is normally a sign for me to take time out (P2.7/B/M/SSO).

Thus the leader can ensure that there is a good-enough identity and loyalty fit between being true to oneself, being true to followers and being true to the organisation.

> Malema comes to mind … this is who I am, this is what my followers expect from me and therefore I have to fit into an organisational structure that supports this course (P2.1/W/M/DH).

Some leaders also decide to look for psychological safety first, by resorting to past successful encounters. Nevertheless, there is always a willingness to explore other alternatives if the past is no longer relevant. One leader said that he uses the past tense (an excellent example of language use) as potential evidence of the denial of the present.

> I am afraid the trigger for me is always this … we have always done it in this way, and then I ask, is it the only way to do it, is it the best way to do it … tradition becomes baggage, it drags you back, even if it is the best way to do it, you have got to revisit it (P2.3/I/M/DH).

It is noteworthy to see that there is an increase in the awareness of the

importance of the containing/holding leadership function. The language use of the leader in the narrative above is rather intriguing: "*we have always done it in this way*". It is potentially loaded with transference, projections and other forms of object relations. The response is formulated in such a captivating manner, 'tradition becomes baggage, it drags you back'. In the face of these temptations and seductions to go back into the past, good-enough containers are important, as well as a good-enough fit between self, follower and organisation. The Latin equivalent for container, namely *continere* denotes two implicit leadership functions (Austen, 1962). *Com* implies 'bringing together', and *tenere* denotes 'holding together'. As a symbolic container, leaders are tasked with not only 'bringing together', but more importantly, with 'holding together' as long as this is beneficial to the purpose or primary task of the group. One of the participants also alluded to how he would allow (authorise) the parent company to be used almost as a transitional object for the scapegoating and projections of his followers. The parent company in a sense became the 'life-sucking parent', whilst the subsidiary became the 'spoilt rebellious child'. The participant explained how he would allow his followers, and sometimes he would actively participate in, blaming the foreign majority shareholder for organisational inefficiencies, not knowing the local business culture and for undermining the intelligence and expertise of local leaders. In this context, the faceless, foreign shareholder became the enemy (a useful target for negative projections), thereby masking the leader's own poor performance and contribution to the status quo. In the example above, the leader seemed to have been aware (demonstrated some reflexivity) of what was happening, but was using the situation to protect himself.

7.4.2.2   Somatic practices

Participants also explained how they would actually verbalise (another example of language use) their anxiety to acknowledge its presence, but also to heighten their conscious awareness. For example:

> Me hearing you talking about rumours of another round of retrenchments, makes me rather anxious right now (P2.2/B/F/CM).

On the organisational level, leaders are faced with complex technical and dynamic interpersonal systems (Greyvenstein & Cilliers, 2012), hence coping requires consistent conscious awareness in order to deal with change, paradox and vulnerabilities within the ebb and flow of organisational life (Meyer & Boninelli, 2007). Some leaders also spoke about the importance of noticing their own and the body language of their followers:

> Language is what? The spoken word? It is actually more than that. It is the unspoken word really … your body language … What you say and how your body moves could be total opposites … how you express yourself with your body … perhaps the true message could come out more forcefully and louder than the message that you are saying in words (P2.1/W/M/DH).
> The body language shares so much … sometimes more than the real voice … When somebody stands like this … Yeah, whatever (P2.5/W/M/DH).

This narrative is an example of how leaders need to tap into the intelligence of the somatic. Working somatically implies having the ability to observe what is happening in one's body (e.g., energised, tired, heavy, open, tight) and to tap into this somatic wisdom as leaders respond to the present moment (Flaherty, 2005). How the body responds to the presence of anxiety, could be an example of the unconscious language of images in the form of unique nuances, for example, how the leader physically (disposition) presents her- or himself to their followers. It is often said that the somatic cannot be deceived (Connor, 1998; Flaherty, 2004). Sometimes even followers are able to read the body language of the leader:

> By listening to me and observing how I come across … my staff would just know that this instruction comes from above (P2.4/W/M/DH).

This refers to the importance of being aware of one's body language.

7.4.2.3 Preventative practices

Participants also used an interesting word in their conversation when they referred to a 'pre-mortem' (P2.4/W/M/SSO) (as opposed to a post-mortem). Instead of leaders waiting for things to go wrong and then to deal with it, they would do scenario forecasting to pre-empt any potential negative consequences. This approach provides a certain level of control and safety because one has planned and there are contingencies in place for any complex set of future scenarios. To explore these contingencies, some leaders would play 'devil's advocate':

> Not to look for ten reasons why something could go wrong, but to ensure that all our bases have been covered ... It is a safe space for those uncomfortable, difficult questions to be asked (P2.3/I/M/DH).

One participant claimed that these preventative measures were useful because:

> I think the more anxious leaders become, sometimes the less they listen. They are not open for any ... You will do it this way, because we have always done it this way, and because I said so (P2.5/W/M/DH).
> Ja, you become even deafer … totally deaf and totally blind (P2.7/B/M/SSO).

The narrative implies that anxiety has the capacity to influence a leader to turn deaf. This further entails that the leader loses the capability of listening to the language use of the other. From a potential space perspective, these preventative practices denote 'playing'. Playing with possible scenarios. Playing devil's advocate. Playing it safe. In typical Winnicottian fashion, playing also implies a certain level of safety and creativity (Diamond, 2007; Ogden, 1985). Playing is connected to potential space and has profound value for leadership development and groundedness, because "only in playing can the individual become creative and it's only by being creative that the individual discovers himself' (Winnicott, 1971, p. 76).

7.4.2.4   Working hypothesis 2

Some leaders deal with anxieties by defending against it through reflection or somatic practices. However, when anxieties become unbearable, leaders could easily fail to recognise and value the gift of potential space for reflection and connection. Potential space is not a comfortable space, because leaders tend to reject the ambiguity, paradoxes, and unconscious meanings associated with potential space. This aversion to reflective, potential spaces therefore becomes a defence against the discomfort of ambiguity and results in the insatiable craving for corporate leadership action, which has become a hallmark of the modern organisation.

7.4.3 Anxiety and language use

In this section, anxiety in its relation to language use is discussed. Anxiety as the dynamo (Cilliers, 2005) of language use is explored, as well as language use as the 'debris' of anxiety and as potential weapon to generate anxiety, thereby undermining and de-authorising one's adversary.

7.4.3.1   Colliquation: When anxiety and language use collide

As indicated earlier, the concept of colliquation denotes the action and point where anxiety and language use meet, infuse and take on some of each other's characteristics. Unconscious anxieties could be expressed through the distinctive and nuanced fashion in which one uses language (LeDoux, 1998; Levine, 2003; Turnbull & Arnett, 2002). Similarly, the way in which language is used, could also trigger anxieties (Zaffron & Logan, 2009). Some participants could relate to anxiety taking up the role of dynamo, thereby influencing the way in which language is used.

> I think in my world, I know that we are all different, but I certainly think that my anxiety tends to drive my language more. And so based on that, for me, the lesson and experience is that I must be aware of my own
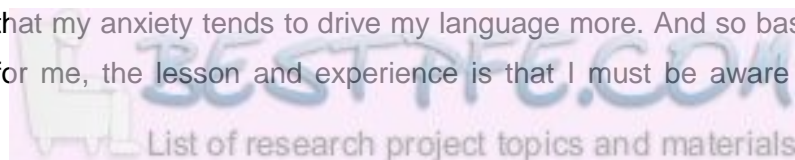
anxiety when speaking, because I can let rip … you know what I am
trying to say? ... For me, the challenging thing is to be aware that my
anxiety can drive my language and it can lead me to say the wrong thing
(P2.5/W/M/DH).

Thus, closer inspection of language would reveal elements of the
presence of anxiety (Souba, 2009), where language use becomes the
'debris of anxiety'. For other participants, however, it was almost the
opposite. One participant shared this:

When the words 'affected', 'anomaly' or 'supernumerary' are used, my
stomach starts to churn. These words awaken seven-headed demons
within me (P2.2/B/F/CM).

Another participant referred to how language is used intentionally to de-
authorise, humiliate, and torment followers (for example, by exposing and
thereby shaming your followers in public – P2.3/I/M/DH). The key here
seems to be that language use has a dark side, but it can also cast an
illuminating light. To manage this dark side, leaders must nurture a mind-
set characterised by awareness if they want to cast more light
intentionally. When leaders adopt this mind-set, language use will have
potential relational value.

7.4.3.2   Working hypothesis 3

In the presence of discomfort, leaders may be inclined to access the dark
side of language use to attack, de-authorise or shame the 'other'.
Language then becomes a weapon deliberately to create tension and
intense anxiety to denigrate the other. When this happens, the regressive
potential of language is elevated above its relational potential.

7.4.4 Dynamics of listening post 2

In hindsight, the second listening post was characterised by a peculiar set
of dynamics – all centring on the one theme of anxiety. My own anxiety as

convener of the event, the anxiety of the participants and rather peculiarly, the anxiety of the transcriber of the recording was an intriguing feature of the listening post.

7.4.4.1   Researcher anxiety

My personal anxiety, as sole convener of the second listening post, related to three aspects of the event. My performance anxiety was triggered by my questions around my personal competence and experience to facilitate this very important part of the data collection process. There were fears around me trying not to appear as being incompetent in the presence of high-profile business leaders, colleagues and associates. Then I was alarmed about whether all the participants would attend the session since I was aware of the logistical implications should the session be rescheduled. Finally, I was anxious about the quality, trustworthiness and usefulness of the data. My scrutiny of the transcript revealed that my anxiety was particularly evident in my language use. The first phase of the event was littered with words such as, 'you know', 'actually', 'so' and 'kind of' which could have made me sound hesitant and apprehensive. The transcript of the second part of the listening post reveals that there was a drastic decrease in the words listed above. Perhaps I was more relaxed, or have been able to contain my anxiety more effectively.

7.4.4.2   Participant anxiety

The energy and excitement was noticeable from the moment the first participant arrived. Once everyone had settled in, the mood in the room turned towards an extreme preoccupation with the recording device. Perhaps there was an element of safety as well. A series of questions then followed:
Is it on?
Is it off?
Is it working?

Is it positioned correctly?

Shall we move it around to the speaker?

When they started to forget about the recorder, the attention moved to their leadership narratives, experiences and wisdom. At times it felt like there was a mini-competition as well, centred on who could share the most impressive leadership chronicle and pearls of wisdom. With so much wisdom to share, they were obviously not very impressed with the way in which I rigidly managed the time boundary. Their response could have been a challenge on my authority as the convenor of the listening post ☺.

7.4.4.3   Transcriber anxiety

It was rather captivating to see how the theme of anxiety also spilt over to the transcriber who assisted with the transcription of the data. It did not make sense initially that an experienced, professional transcriber could be so concerned about the psychological content and unfamiliar psychological terminology to be encountered. She profusely apologised in advance for any possible spelling errors as well as anything else I might not be happy with and insisted that the recording should be submitted in a specific format. I ended up with some very interesting translations. For example, loyalty became 'royalty', driving force became 'driving cause', aggressive type of leader became 'corrosive type of leader', hypothesis became 'goddess' and free-floating anxiety became 'resident anxiety'. This made me curious about the collective unconscious, the contagious nature of anxiety, as well as the anxiety and language use connection. However, in the highly competitive space of the listening post, the transcriber could have heard what we could not hear, and participants could not articulate in a highly contested space (leader attack on each other and language use) under the appearance of sharing wisdom. Furthermore, perhaps the transcriber also experienced some performance anxiety, because she came highly recommended by one of my colleagues. Conversely, the transcriber's anxiety could also have

been reflected in how she interpreted what she heard (language use) on the recording device.

7.4.4.4   Working hypothesis 4

Leaders are always in the spotlight. It is therefore common for them to feel that they are being attacked by being measured, compared, positioned and figured out. This leads to survival or performance anxiety. Leaders then feel that they have to perform a certain kind of behaviour to either create safety, or to confirm that they are 'good enough'. This situation could easily result in self-defeating leadership behaviours in organisations, for example, reverting to what had worked in the past, even if it is no longer applicable in a new context, listening less, and denigrating the other.

7.4.5 Utility value of the model

In this section, I present an illustration of participants' comments regarding the utility value of the theoretical model.

Reflexive and explanatory value: Participants during the second listening post referred to the reflexive value of the model, in terms of raising awareness, as well as its potential explanatory value. They referred to how the nature and sources of their anxieties could be explored:

> [W]hen you are asking certain questions, you might not be happy with the answers. Now you tare trying to find a balance between your emotions, respect and that in itself you are dealing with your own anxiety (P2.5/W/M/DH);
>
> reflected on the significance of past and present leadership behaviours:
>
> [T]he correlation between your past experience and your behaviour, or how you speak now, in the moment, in terms of the scenario, as a result of the trigger. So it could be, in your example, something like happened in the past (P2.3/I/M/DH);

how anxieties impact decision-making:

> But if it was a bad experience, and if you're experiencing it again, your immediate thoughts are that you go back to that negative experience. I don't know if I put that correctly (P2.1/W/M/DH)

and modern challenges to the leadership voice:

> [L]eadership voice also off late is hidden behind a lot of other new technology stuff, email and even telecom … 'whatsapp' (P2.5/W/M/DH).

Particularly middle managers are prone to receiving critique from both sides (top management and their followers).

Coaching value: One participant in particular mentioned the potential of the model as a coaching tool.

> Absolutely, absolutely. And just to mention to use this, it is a model actually just to contain all … and work with a leader I can actually use the model and explore the conflict (P2.4/W/M/SSO).

Role of systemic context: Some participants appreciated how the model highlighted the role of context and the relevance of language in the life of the leader:

> [W]hen your wife sits next to you, you behave like this, as I saw in last year's Christmas function. But you know, in the office, you're a totally different person (P2.1/W/M/DH)..
>
> [L]eaders should strive to become aware that language is what language contains, because it contains things. So we need to be aware (P2.2/B/F/CM).

and finally,

> So, how you use that [language] together with your body language and all of that, will actually, in my case, get the team excited or get the team disgruntled, you know (P2.5/W/M/DH).

7.5   LISTENING POST 3: THEMES AND WORKING HYPOTHESES

The third listening post comprised postmodern discourse analysts. I was

hoping to take advantage of the expertise of the participants who, as postmodern discourse analysts, would look at the model from a linguistic perspective and hone the rigour and trustworthiness of the model. A full description of this sample was provided in Chapter 6 (see 6.2.3.3).

The following themes and sub-themes were identified by participants or resulted from my interpretation of the data.

Theme 1:   Sources of anxiety

Theme 2:   Language as unconscious defence

Sub-theme 1:   Defence against perceived incompetence

Sub-theme 2:   Defence against the anxiety of uncontained information

Sub-theme 3:   Defence against lack of control

Theme 3:   Language as unconscious offense

Sub-theme 1:   Weapon of debilitation

Sub-theme 2:   Weapon of manipulation

Sub-theme 3:   Weapon of ambivalence

Theme 4:   Towards a language of vulnerability

Theme 5:   Dynamics of the listening post

Sub-theme 1:   The emergence of splitting and pairing into trios

Sub-theme 2:   The socio-political accentuation of language

Sub-theme 3:   The unpronounceable colliquation

7.5.1   Sources of anxiety

In this section, the potential sources of anxiety are discussed in relation to how language is used by the leader. Sources of anxiety, include racialised and genderised anxiety, role anxiety, personal and organisational survival anxiety, linguistic paradigmatic anxiety, and finally

context anxiety.

When one is confronted with the difference of the 'other', whether it is in the form of race or gender, anxiety could be provoked (Motsoaledi & Cilliers, 2012; Stevenson, 2012). Some participants referred to how the presence of racialised and genderised anxiety (examples of primitive anxieties) could be reflected through the medium of language.

> For example, a white male addressing a predominantly black student body (P3.2/W/M/RP).

One participant shared his experience of working for his male and female bosses.

> I also worked on two projects with two female bosses. I would get a lot of comments aimed at relationship-building, for example, "You are doing well, stick in there". There was connection, but with males we tend to be more aggressive. When a male boss is stressed, there is a barking of one-liners, orders and questions … a catharsis of off-loading … but when female bosses are stressed, there is sharing and connection … they seem to be more comfortable talking about it (P3.6/W/M/IOP).

Another participant shared his personal encounters when confronted with difference.

> When I address a hostile audience in an academic context, I often, almost depreciate myself as a defence mechanism and say, 'I'm a gay white male, 57 years old and I'm in a relationship.' So I make them very uncomfortable with me and they become vulnerable, and then they don't know how to deal with the situation … and it gives me incredible power … So in one way I am also dealing with my anxiety (senior academics or a manly audience) … I'm actually not one of you and I am okay with it (P3.2/W/M/RP).

The struggle of particularly black females, who have been successful despite the challenges they had to endure, was also highlighted.

> [T]here is a professor at … who keeps reminding her audiences of how poor she grew up and how she had beaten the odds to be where she is

today and it is not self-confidence, a sense of wholeness or I am okay …
there is an edge to it. I'm wondering if that is not anxiety … Almost I can't
believe that I got here (P3.2/W/M/RP).

These sentiments were echoed by a participant who suggested how
difficult it must be for black women, in particular, given their immediate
context, to find their 'words', their 'voice', and their identity and to
unapologetically claim their space, by affirming their success without
feeling guilty, or feeling distressed by the anxiety of being alienated
(Motsoaledi, 2009) by others. Another potential source of anxiety is that
which is inherent in the leadership role (De Jager, Cilliers & Veldsman,
2003; Greyvenstein & Cilliers, 2012). *Role anxiety* is aggravated by
leader and follower myths regarding the leadership function, follower
phantasies and their accompanying projections. This results in fertile
breeding soil for anxiety to take root. In order to manage this anxiety,
leaders would paradoxically retreat even further into the role. One
participant said:

I'm wondering about the structure. You withdraw into the structure and
you play the role that is assigned to you by the structure
(P3.1/W/M/CLP).

The role then reflects one's institutional authority (Beck & Visholm, 2014)
to engage in a set of leadership activities. In the Catholic Church it is
called '*ex cathedra*', when the leader of the church "speaks from the chair
of St Peter" (Lamont & Molnar, 2002). The Speaker in parliament also
appeals to this authority when using the position, the chair and the
location (including the physical location literally above everyone else) to
assert him- or herself.

Honourable member, you cannot speak to the chair like that!
(P3.4/W/M/IOP).

This is not the current Speaker, Mrs Mbethe, the person speaking, but the
authority vested in the chair.

Personal survival anxiety in the system, as well as organisational survival anxiety in the system has also been identified as potential and actual sources of anxiety within a work setting. In our modern turbulent environment with so many risks and uncertainties, the need for self-preservation, as well as the basic psychological need for safety in the form of control and attachment is often triggered (Gaitanidis, 2007; Rossouw, 2011). One participant referred to the anxiety that white males must be experiencing within a specific university's context.

> How difficult it must be for white males within our current … context. We are more and more like neutered dogs (P3.2/W/M/RP).

It is rather interesting, from an unconscious language of images perspective, that somebody else heard 'muted dogs', instead of 'neutered dogs'. The participant continued:

> We have become superfluous, especially heads of department who are no longer HODs. They still have the gravitas, but the future remains anxiety-provoking (P3.2/W/M/RP).

> Also within an employment equity context, another participant mentioned how anxiety-provoking it must be for white males who are perhaps wrestling with the question, "Are we putting ourselves out of a job?" (P3.6/W/M/IOP).

Organisational survival anxiety on the other hand, is often reflected in how religiously performance contracts are managed, subtle changes in the psychological contract introduced (McInnis, 2012) and how corporate language is used ("meeting off-line") (P3.8/W/M/IOP), labelling and subtly dismissing certain issues as "soft issues" (P3.7/C/M/IOP) as opposed to "hard issues" (P3.8/W/M/IOP), deciding whether an employee is involved in "billable activities" (P3.6/W/M/IOP) or determining the value of an employee on the basis of his or her membership of a "profit centre" (P3.4/W/M/IOP) or a "cost centre" (P3.7/C/M/IOP). The phantasy is then kept alive through corporate language and the religious execution of these activities, to ensure the continued survival and sustainability of the

organisation. When conflicting paradigms clash anxiety could also result. Anxiety in language use could be increased when leaders and followers depart from diverging paradigms (Altman, 2005; Connor, 1998; Guba, 1990) resulting in mutually incompatible paradigms. One of the participants provided an example of this phenomenon.

> [A] very senior person, speaking about seniors and juniors and what seniors must do for juniors and I do not construct my colleagues into seniors and juniors. I can acknowledge that and I understand it in the hierarchy, but here you have the two paradigms of language clashing and that increases anxiety (P3.3/C/F/CLP).

Context anxiety can be experienced when leaders find themselves in what they perceive as a hostile, uncomfortable or simply an unfamiliar context. The white males alluded to earlier, who experience personal survival anxiety could also experience context anxiety due to the environment in which they find themselves. One of the participants shared how her previous manager experienced intense anxiety because of the context within which she found herself.

> I've had a white female boss, a black female boss and now I have a white male boss and I am having the time of my life … and perhaps you'd assume that it should have been the case with my black female boss … since we could identify with each other, spoke the same language and we were both black and female … And it was the worst … I think she felt threatened … 'Can I deliver within this white, Afrikaans place?' She would use language to stamp her position, remind us that she was in the lead and that there has never been anyone who could take the department as far as she has (P3.5/B/F/COP).

Even the President or the Speaker in parliament could experience anxiety related to context. When one speaks in a language other than one's mother tongue; when leaders find themselves in a generally hostile environment; when the cameras of the world and millions of eyes are upon them; and when one feels that one's competence is being questioned and that one has to perform and deliver, anxiety will be the inevitable outcome. Within this context, the only weapon is language, and

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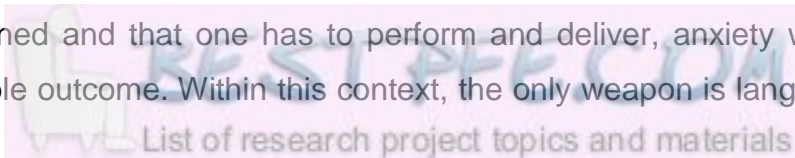
it is often used as a defence to manage our anxiety. Then the anxiety can become so unbearable that one feels, as one participant said, "neutered" (P3.2/W/M/RP) and muted. When leaders find themselves in an uncomfortable (unbearable), anxiety-provoking situation, they could use language to create comfort for themselves by creating discomfort on the part of their followers or an audience. The discomfort that is created at times results in distance, which discourages feedback or an intimidating response. Some of the anxiety is transferred to and taken on by their followers, thus an unequal distribution of power is subsequently effected. Leaders will then feel empowered and followers disempowered.

7.5.2 Language as unconscious defence

In this section, language is discussed as an unconscious defence against anxiety. Language is explored as a tool to manage the anxiety emanating from the perception of incompetence. Secondly, quantification is discussed in relation to its capacity to create containment in a world flooded by overwhelming volumes of information and the subsequent outpour of anxiety. Finally, language is explored pertaining to its capacity as a perceived legitimate object of control. Leaders are expected to provide the boundary conditions to navigate uncertainty in a turbulent world. Khaleelee and White (2014) maintain that the greater the uncertainty, the greater the anxiety and pressure on leaders to provide the resilience and containment for change.

7.5.2.1   Defence against perceived incompetence

Language can be employed as a defence against perceptions of incompetence (Motsoaledi & Cilliers, 2012; Simpson, 2008) not knowing, or not being able to: "I have been working here for five years!" (P3.5/B/F/COP). In this context, tenure denotes experience, competence and knowing. Also, as suggested earlier:

> Can I deliver within this white, Afrikaans place? She would use language
> to stamp her position, remind us that she was in the lead and that there

has never been anyone who could take the department as far as she has (P3.5/B/F/COP).

Another way of masking our incompetence is to "fake it till we make it" (P3.9/W/M/IOP).

7.5.2.2 Defence against anxiety of uncontained information

An alternative way of managing anxiety is the quantification of everything and the formularisation of data. There appears to be security in figures, percentages and numbers.

> Similarly, if it is put on an Excel spreadsheet it can be controlled, managed, processed, contained (P3.2/W/M/RP).
> Also, in business, your value is expressed as a percentage converted into what or how much you bring in (P3.6/W/M/IOP).
> Or your contribution is dismissed and the discourse is "let us get more data on this" (P3.2/W/M/RP).

Data provides a sense of security, but also justification for leadership actions and behaviours ("but the data said") (P3.4/W/M/IOP). It exonerates leaders of any blame. Data then becomes an object, so that the blame can be externalised. The moment leaders can quantify it, or digitise it, it becomes more containable and ultimately more controllable. Leaders are then provided with a false sense of safety and security.

7.5.2.3 Defence against lack of control

One of the basic needs of human beings is control orientation (Fauth & Hayes, 2006; Grawe, 2007). If there is a perception of a loss of control, anxiety is the consequence. As defence against this anxiety, mechanisms will be found to create a sense of control. For example, "staff's contributions to the university's newsletter have to be approved" (P3.2/W/M/RP).

Alternatively, a fake sense of cohesion is created through language, for example, referring to employees of Unisa as "Unisans". One participant enquired, "unisins?" (P3.7/C/M/IOP). It also happens when academics call their students "[t]hese kids" [or] "my babies" (P3.5/B/F/COP).

These could be forms of manipulative control.

7.5.2.4   Working hypothesis 1

When leaders experience free-floating anxiety, vulnerability is created, because anxiety triggers or releases 'stuff' that tend to fill up space. Thus, anxiety takes up space and reduces space, resulting in the leadership experience of being threatened and suffocated. When anxiety becomes so unbearable that there is not enough space to accommodate the 'other', energies and focus is defensively rechannelled into activities that will serve the interest of self-preservation using language as defence.

7.5.3   Language as unconscious offense

In this section, a different quality of language is explored, namely as a weapon of offense. The equivalent of the word 'sarcasm' (sharply mocking or contemptuous language) in Greek is *sarkazein,* which literally means 'to tear flesh' (Ilson & Crystal, 1984). In this context, language is used as a weapon to debilitate, manipulate and to create disruption through ambivalence.

7.5.3.1   Weapon of debilitation

Language can also be used to make the other feel uncomfortable. This discomfort often creates distance and an unequal distribution of power.

> It creates comfort for the speaker, and discomfort for the receiver … ultimately the receiver sits with the discomfort and the speaker is comforted, maybe also transferring some of their anxiety onto the receiver (P3.2/W/M/RP).

Another participant shared:

> Our Dean came with a one-way approach. Can I say what I want to say and leave? But how do you ask questions after that aggression … and then the speaker is in a clear position of power … So egocentric, they cannot recognise anybody else, except themselves (P3.5/B/F/COP).

Aggression in the presence of anxiety is accepted and affirmed by other organisational stakeholders under the disguise that 'the leader is taking action!' (Benoit, 2011; Mindell, 1995). There is often safety in this approach, because then it is not me, John, it is prescribed by the role and it is a business imperative. Another participant alluded to how the Speaker in parliament can use the rules, decorum and language of the house to "legitimately ignore" other members, or refuse to acknowledge/recognise a potential speaker. When the Speaker says, "Honourable member, please sit down. I did not recognise you!" she could be using the language and rules of the house to defend against her anxiety, but she cannot be accused of not following the rules or of using the wrong contextual language. Hence, language can be used according to the rules to subtly oppress or disarm an opponent, whilst at the same time dealing with the anxiety of the situation and the speaker. As another participant put it:

> It is like a language within a sub-culture … there is the depersonalisation (dehumanisation) in the language to contain something … the rules of the context, the codex (P3.8/W/M/IOP).

In other words, when one is not recognised, that person is put down. When leaders treat their followers in this fashion, they are put in their place, or even worse, they are rendered invisible, extinct, eliminated. The evidence for this is often revolt. "Somebody has muted me!" (P3.9/W/M/IOP), meaning, "My microphone has been muted", and that the speaker has also been muted. Or, "[T]at being muted, or not recognised causes people to jump up and down, wear red, make a noise, break things" (P3.9/W/M/IOP).

This revolt was linked to the recent student protests on South African campuses by another participant, "same with the student protests … can leadership just see us, talk to us, listen to us, acknowledge us" (P3.3//C/F/CLP).

Leaders can use language like a double-edged sword – they can acknowledge their followers by calling them almost into being, but they can also annihilate their followers (Boroditsky, 2009; Strawbridge, 2010). Examples are:

I will crush you (P3.5/B/F/COP),

or:

[T]hrough what the leader is DOING [my emphasis] through language (P3.8/W/M/IOP).

7.5.3.2   *Weapon of manipulation*

Language can be used to manipulate (Boroditsky, 2010; Macaux, 2014) the other into behaving in a specific manner. It is then disguised as defence, but in reality, it is a form of offense or attack. The leader is not defending. The leader is actually fighting an opponent. Leaders can manipulate their environment to provide them with more control and in the process, their level of anxiety is reduced. One participant shared how students would refer to each other as leadership.

The student body aspires to be called leadership, because then they have made it … and they may not even have been elected into a leadership position or formal role, but the student community sees you as someone they can look up to (P3.5/B/F/COP).

This behaviour, when someone is called a leader, or the phantasy that as a leader you would be looked up to, could be a form of manipulation, particularly if one has a valence to be manipulated (Stevenson, 2012), and can then be easily seduced into taking up this role so that others can feel safe. The person who carries the valence will then become a vehicle for other people's needs and aspirations (parent/hero/saviour/messiah) and when the person fails, there is someone to be blamed and to be

sacrificed (Shapiro, 2013).

7.5.3.3   Weapon of ambivalence

Leaders can consciously or unconsciously feed the increasing levels of anxiety and job insecurity of employees by creating even more anxiety by using anxiety as a tool of control. By stirring and creating ambivalence (Diamond, 2007; Hannum, McFeeters, & Booysen, 2010; Kahn, 2014) they create guilt, self-doubt, shame and more anxiety. As one participant put it

> They just throw it up in the air (P3.2/W/M/RP).

Alternatively, they would say:

> We have heard that some lecturers leave early, do not answer their phones, arrive late … It sounds just enough like an accusation (P3.2/W/M/RP).

When this ambivalence is owned by the leader, or introjected, for example, self-doubt would be created and then anxiety would take over. Thus, both leaders and followers experience anxiety within this mutual relationship. When leaders claim certainty regarding organisational matters or to know it all (introjection), this behaviour could be emblematic of potential projections (Czander & Eisold, 2003; Erskine, 2010; Sullivan, 2002) from followers (or other stakeholders, like shareholders) onto leadership. Followers through their need for safety, myths about leadership and comforting phantasies, put it into leaders to be everything and to know everything and then these leaders take on those projections (Colman & Geller, 1985; Corradi, 2006; Diamond, 1993; Hirschhorn & Barnett, 1993). The opposite could also happen. Leaders can project self-doubt, shame and incompetence onto followers, as in the example above, thereby questioning follower commitment to the organisation.

Language has the capacity to be used as a weapon to debilitate, manipulate and to create disruption through splits and ambivalence. When leaders take on these projections and defend themselves against subsequent anxieties through, for example, the offensive use of language, followers tend to feel safe. However, when a projection is repudiated, or an introjection is dislodged and expelled, language is transformed and the leader's anxiety simultaneously dissipates.

7.5.4 Towards a language of vulnerability

Leaders employ all the above-mentioned defences to defend against anxiety and vulnerability and yet, anxiety and vulnerability remain integral parts of the human condition (Cytrynbaum & Noumair, 2004; Koestenbaum, 1991; Lazar, 2011; Rao, 2013). Leaders seem to struggle to come to terms with the perceived paradox of 'leadership vulnerability'. The leadership myth and phantasy appear to propagate that leaders should be invincible, in control and all-knowing. However, leaders often do not know, are weak and have their own limitations. Within particularly, the leadership context, vulnerability becomes a sign of life (Block, 2001). Recent developments, for example, an increase in virtual worlds, the destruction of relationships and the ideology of performance, have had an additional corrosive impact on humanity and well-being (Vansina, 2014). Anxiety creates vulnerability and contains an inherent tension. One participant phrased the challenge as follows:

> Can I allow myself to be vulnerable and under which conditions can we as dialogue partners allow ourselves to voice our vulnerability in the moment? (P3.2/W/M/RP).

When leaders find themselves in a space of anxiety and vulnerability, and they are unable to confront themselves with the above-mentioned question, language is used as defence against this vulnerability. My interpretation of the narrative above is that a language of vulnerability

starts with honouring my anxiety in the moment and the courage to own and find strength in personal vulnerability as a leader. Hence, no topic for intelligent leadership conversations is perceived as more helpful than conversations about anxiety (Koestenbaum, 1991). Anxiety freely accepted, and vulnerability courageously embraced translates into a strength, which is difficult to dislodge (Koestenbaum, 1991).

Vulnerability can surface as feelings of insecurity and reduce adaptive capabilities. It has the inherent potential to become a helpful warning signal for reflexivity. Reflexivity enables leaders to respond differently, both from a relational and an emotional perspective. Leaders can then recognise and appreciate the vulnerabilities of the 'other', thereby reaching out in a more compassionate fashion. However, the inability or reluctance to express vulnerabilities and need for help, could result in what Macaux (2014) refers to as the death spiral of denial and defences. This defensive behaviour is often aggravated by the absence of a psychologically safe environment (Tuber, 2008; Wachtel, 2008). Leaders find it difficult to learn new insights and new adaptive behaviours because the threatening nature of the modern world of work is intensified by unrelenting uncertainty, pounding pressure and perpetual turmoil. Unfortunately, when feelings of insecurity and vulnerability are triggered, most leaders defend against this by employing their offenses and defences. Sadly, very little reflection and learning can occur in this contested space.

7.5.5 Dynamics of the listening post

The final listening post also revealed its own unique dynamics. In this session, the theoretical model and language took centre stage. What was conspicuous was the composition of the session and pairing/splitting during the session, the influence of the immediate socio-political context of the listening post in which language was very prominent in the media, and how participants struggled to pronounce the concept of colliquation during the session.

7.5.5.1   The emergence of splitting and pairing into trios

The final listening post eventually consisted of six white males, one black female, one coloured female and one coloured male. The absence of the white female voice and the Indian voice was also conspicuously silent, who were also invited to the session. Within this context, there was a clear pairing (Czander, 1993) between the black and coloured female, as well as between the convener and one of the co-conveners of the session. However, what was even more remarkable was the splitting into trios around the table: the three white males on the left, the three white males on the right and the three 'black' participants (Employment Equity Act definition of being black) in the middle of the table. These trios could have been a reflection of the researcher and the two promoters (triad) who have been journeying together during this study.

7.5.5.2   The socio-political accentuation of language

Language formed one of the pillars of this study. It was fascinating from a language perspective to see how language was used rather creatively and insightfully, in the media leading up to and during the final listening post. The period leading up to the President's State of the Nation Address (SONA) and its aftermath, was characterised by a number of words and descriptions in the media, which resonated very strongly with me. These words and expressions included 'Zupta', 'state capture', 'Guptacracy', 'Zuma sees his Goliath in court', 'collective systemic greed', etc. These words aptly captured what was and have been in the nation's collective consciousness and unconscious. As a nation, we did not always know exactly how and to what extent corruption and other related unethical activities have been part of our society. Language helps us in this regard, by naming these phenomena. In the South African context, for example, corruption is characterised by a violent and hostile turning away from internal objects (values, parents, religious icons, respected politicians, etc.) (Sher, 2010), and the collectivisation of corruption, through which

individual intrapsychic corruption is galvanised into a group or system (Czander, 2012; Long, 2008; Obholzer & Roberts, 1994; Stein, 2016).

7.5.5.3 The unpronounceable "colliquation"

The final listening post was also characterised by the inability of some participants to pronounce the concept of 'colliquation'. This struggle was significantly more intense compared to the previous two listening posts. What makes this struggle significant was that the almost unpronounceable 'colliquation', to some extent, facilitated the 'slip of the tongue' phenomenon. For example, "muted dogs" and the evocation of images and metaphors during the listening post. Some notable examples are 'coffee and milk' to explain the colliquation process, 'an oar in the water' which describes language as an oar that propels us in a certain direction, 'a calabash' as the theoretical model nestled inside and presented as a calabash, 'a lad' or Leadership Anxiety Dynamics (LAD) versus lad (a boy, or young man), etc. During the session, it was evident how the model emerged as language (having its own peculiar language) and discourse (as the object of conversation/having its own story to tell). It became apparent that the model was anxiety-provoking and participants had to defend against this anxiety. Their defences assumed a number of forms. Some participants emphasised the potential danger and manipulative potential of the model in the wrong hands, the mysterious nature of the 'black box' concept and questioned the capacity of the model definitively to explain certain unconscious phenomena.

7.5.5.4 Working hypothesis 3

Because the model was anxiety-provoking in itself, there was an attempt to defend against this anxiety. Perhaps participants became frightened about what the model (as discourse) would tell them and disappointed at what might be reflected back at them. Thus, when participants are challenged (potential exposure) they become anxious and being exposed makes them vulnerable, because they will be confronted by their personal

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inadequacies and limitations.

Anxiety creates vulnerability and vulnerability in turn, creates anxiety. This calls for the capacity to respond counter-intuitively by honouring and boldly exploring anxiety by listening for the gentle whispers hidden in precious vulnerabilities.

7.5.6 Utility value of the model

In this section, I present an illustration of participants' comments regarding the utility value of the theoretical model.

Reflexive potential of the model: In the third listening post, participants suggested that the utility value of the theoretical model resides in its reflexive potential, insofar as it helps leaders to explore their authority relations and projections, for example:
[T]hat somehow your language is influenced when you can give up the projection that is coming your way … so it sounds to me something about not taking on the projection, also influence what happens with the anxiety and what happens with the language (P3.3/C/F/CLP);

The model also highlights the potential role that valence could play in the behaviour of leaders
> [T]hen the [last one] in the box sounds like valence in a way (P3.8/W/M/IOP).

Potential to awaken leadership curiosity: The model could further awaken leaders' curiosity regarding a number of things, for example:
> [Y]our model in a way challenges our ways we got used to talking about the unconscious. It challenges it. It kind of throws it on its head. You know above the surface below the surface but many of the things above the surface are also below the surface … but I think your question here was comment on the utility value, so if the utility, what you are going to use this for is to get into a conversation with a manager or a leader, it's very rich and I think it ... it gives some frame to talk to, and to explore the

things that a manager that was not aware of before and the richness of these various elements here (P3.1/W/M/CLP);

The model also stresses the importance of leadership and systemic context (influencing leadership behaviour):

I was just wondering after he spoke was just the time … time element … tomorrow it may look different as the context change or myself efficacy changes or myself, what do you call it, leadership anxiety, dynamic change, my maturity level, my safety changes as a result of the change in the environment (P3.2/W/M/RP)

and the "black box" phenomenon

[S]o all of these are in the black box and they are … dynamically related and you may or may not see those, because it's a black box, okay (P3.6/W/M/IOP)..

My first response was the black box becomes significant after the crash (leadership derailment perhaps) (P3.7/C/M/IOP).

Within the bigger organisational context, the awakening of leadership curiosity would then also speak to coaching and consulting interventions. Language use as a potential lens in coaching and consulting: Finally, it offers language use as a lens to explore leadership behaviour.

[H]ow are these things manifested in language, but also how can your listening to language give you another, and especially I think I am coming with this thing of the slip of the tongue you know, it gives you an extra avenue (P3.9/W/M/IOP).

The model could be transformed into a coaching tool:

I would say it's a very powerful coaching tool. You know if you, if you use this in an established relationship with a leader (P3.1/W/M/CLP).

7.6 THE INTEGRATION OF FINDINGS

In this section, I commence by presenting a brief comparative discussion of the listening posts, including their dynamics, followed by an integration of the findings.

An analysis of the themes emanating from the data reveals the following: Commonalities across themes from the listening posts include, first, the nature of the themes. For example, the themes of language, anxiety, how ambivalence creates anxiety, and how ambivalence and anxiety cause vulnerability. What is also noteworthy is the strong phenomenological stance (their lived anxiety experiences) business leaders had taken during their session, but comparatively less so than by the systems psychodynamic practitioners during their listening post. The centrality of language in how leaders show up in the world also stood out and from different perspectives. For example, practitioners use language to intervene into their client systems, business leaders use language to communicate, authorise, galvanise and mobilise in support of the primary task, and for discourse analysts language use is the focus, product, medium or outcome of their scientific discipline. How participants also 'acted' or performed in the drama unfolding on the listening post stage with anxiety as the dynamo backstage played out consistently across the three listening posts.

What appears to be different across the listening posts is the dynamics of the respective listening posts, reflected in the uniqueness of the themes, as well as the unique thrusts of these sessions. For example, the preference for conceptual engagement stood out during the practitioner session, while the business leader session was characterised by competition, performance anxiety, and speaking from an 'our world' (we-ness) phenomenological stance. The discourse analyst session, presented a much-focused attention to language and in particular, the offensive and defensive properties of language. A strong undercurrent to engage in a language of vulnerability also characterised the themes of the sessions.

A surprising element, which is indicative of my expectations, phantasies, projections and stereotypes, was how practitioners were more comfortable with conceptual engagement, relative to phenomenological engagement. This comes across as a form of conceptuality as defence

against the vulnerability of the phenomenological. Language is used to perform, because leaders are often evaluated on the basis of how they 'sound' (language), and how the 'pieces' of the collective unconscious could be in sync across the listening posts when looking at the themes and nature of the themes that were discussed.

The assignment of a new title (taking on of a new role) can be anxiety-provoking for both leaders and followers. To reduce this anxiety, the leader has to authorise and establish the self in the new role often through a new language. Follower anxiety is reduced through the negotiation of this new role. The leader's inability to contain anxieties could result in a split in the self and introduce paranoid-schizoid dynamic in the language.

Language is potential space, in terms of its relational, regressive and defensive properties. As transitional object, it can be used to defend, to authorise and manipulate, but also to project and to perform. In silence, drawing on the relational value of language, the 'other' is seen as more than just an object, but is respected and treated as a sacred experiencing subject (Stein & Allcorn, 2014).

Anxiety, as it manifests itself within the phenomenological world of the leader, can be triggered from the inner world, could emanate from the role itself, or from triggers that are located within the external environment of the leader. The implication of this tension is that leaders must learn to hold the often resultant splits (Henning, 2009) emanating from their responses and cultivate an attitude through which anxiety is welcomed and embraced. Thus, understanding anxieties is critical to gaining insight into leaders' self-defeating, narcissistic, manipulative and other derailment behaviours (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002).

Leaders defend against anxieties, for example when a leader's competence is being questioned, when anxiety is provoked by perceptions of a lack of control, or the overwhelming feeling of enormous quantities of information. Language can be consciously or unconsciously

used as a weapon of offense, whether it is to debilitate or manipulate an opponent, or perceived threat, or in the form of creating a disruption through ambivalence. When projections and introjections are returned (Fraher, 2004; Klein, 1986; Townley, 2008) language is transformed, anxiety is relieved, and the potential for relationships to thrive is cultivated.

Central to this reflection is how language use, in the context of object relations, could be used as transitional phenomenon (object) by leaders in pursuit of the primary task of the organisation. Language use as object of meaning, attachment and memory is used and carried by leaders into different organisational spaces. Furthermore, language use has the capacity to play an auxiliary ego function (Tolpin, 2017) for followers to experience a deeper sense of self. It is through language use that space is created for the development of the self (leader or follower) in relation to the other (leader, follower, or fellow colleague). In line with this thinking, Bakhtin (1981) is of the opinion that language use has the capacity to hold and express a wide array of shifts and representations in particular, the social world of the leader, because it carries both shared and contradictory meanings. It is therefore through language use, and in Winnicottian transitional spaces, where the potential exists for the expansion of self-consciousness and other-consciousness. It is in this object relations space where an appreciation could be nurtured by leaders for the subjectivity of the other, but more importantly, exploration that the object (follower or leader) is simultaneously also a sacred subject. Language use then functions as container of dynamic complexity between object relations and social relations, objectivity and subjectivity, self and others. As the leader evolves in the worlds of objects *and* people (because there is no rigid distinction between self and object) (Harris, 1992), through awareness of language use, leadership commitment could be nurtured to complex subjectivity and intersubjectivity (Clarke et al., 2008). Thus, in Winnicott's (1953) 'intermediate area' language is used not only to escape painful reality, but to create a (new) reality, by providing existing transitional and cultural objects with new significance.

Language use becomes the object through which leaders interact with, and create functional working relations with, their followers. Furthermore, the unconscious language of images could either reflect inner comfort and security, or anxiety, insecurity and unhealthy attachments. Thus, like the dialogue between mother and child, the language use of the leader becomes the space, or site, for self-construction and identity formation. By becoming aware of language use, for example, the unconscious languages of images, actions and relations, the insight achieved will become a leveraging resource for leaders to initiate the healing of splits by integrating part-objects into whole-objects. A final implication of the study, was the potential of language use to become an almost 'extended holding environment' where the leader 'holds' followers in their language (consciously or unconsciously). By taking up this critical leadership role, leaders will be able to bring their followers from the unconscious to the conscious, from relatedness to relationships. This shift in the holding of followers will be reflected in the unique language use and content of speech of the leader.

The theoretical systems psychodynamic model that was being proposed is suggested as a lens to serve as a reflexive, diagnostic or intervention tool on the boundary where unconscious anxieties and language use seamlessly coalesce. Central to this reflection is the cultivation of a language of silence and non-silence, and vulnerability, which are critical to the formation of good-enough leadership containers.

With images being one of the potential languages of the unconscious, I present a picture of 'Language as potential space'. The picture below (Figure 7.1) illustrates (to me, since it is my own projections) the different properties of language and how these properties can almost peacefully and seamlessly co-exist: from dazzling beauty (houses on the left) and perilous stormy shores (front right of the picture) to the silent mysteries of the deep blue sea (background). I present to the reader this picture to continue reflecting and exploring the nature and properties of language in relation to leadership anxieties and preferred defences.

Figure 7.1.   Properties of language (Author, unknown)

7.7   REFINEMENT OF THE MODEL: INFLUENCE OF EMPIRICAL DATA ON THEORETICAL MODEL

The refinement of the theoretical model by reporting on the influence of the empirical data on this model was not part of the original design of this study. During the data collection process, I was pleasantly surprised when I observed the shifts in the theoretical model as participants reflected upon and commented on the theoretical model. As the empirical model started to take shape in my mind, I became intrigued by its simplicity and became fascinated because a new model, which had never existed before, was emerging from the empirical data. The empirical component of the study added new, crisp, rich, descriptive and phenomenological data to the study. It contained so much value and novelty that I had decided to include this component in the study. In the next section, I therefore, report on the emergence of the empirical model so that the reader can follow the process. I conclude this section by presenting the empirical model.

The empirical part of this study resulted in some aspects of the theoretical model, as reported in Chapter 5, coming to the fore, other components moving into the background and perhaps now the model could be presented in a simpler fashion. The potential impact of the empirical data on the model was mentioned in Chapter 6. Some notable components with regard to the changes of the model are the following:

- The potential value of *language as lens* and as transitional phenomenon, in the contested space where the regressive, relational and defensive potential of language interplay;

- The *systemic realities* of leadership – the space where the leader carries certain realities, for example, attachments, wrestles with authorisation and is influenced by the organisation-in-the-mind, into the organisational systemic environment where the system's identity (and behaviours) impediments and its capacity to contain (or not contain) play a critical role;

- The construct of *colliquation* plays out on a number of levels, where the leader meets (collides) with the organisational system, thereby triggering anxieties and defences, where the emotional life of the leader collides with the emotional life of the system, where the leader's vulnerabilities clash with the vulnerabilities of the system and where anxieties and language use become intertwined;

- The importance of *connecting to the emotional life* of the leader and that of the organisation as a system.

The following is a visual presentation of how the model had developed as a result of the influence of the empirical data (listening post 1 to listening post 3). The idea is therefore, not necessarily to replace the first model with the second one, but to indicate to the reader the dynamic movement of certain components of the model, because of the impact of the empirical data. This also indicates the iterative nature of the development of the model. As discussed in Chapter 6, a predominantly intuitive and iterative process was followed. The process was guided by the following

steps: I identified preliminary concepts and noted my impressions as I interacted with the empirical data. I then entered into a more formal identification of constructs and relationships between constructs, and then followed further analysis of relationships, which were brought together in the form of a visual presentation (Briggs, 2007).

Figure 7.2 (Listening post 1) below, is a reflection of what had stood out during the first listening post. I was essentially left with the following concept:

- (1A)   colliquation,
- (1B)   the systemic nature of realities,
- (1C)   the importance of the leadership context, and
- (1D)   language use as transitional phenomenon in the context of potential space.
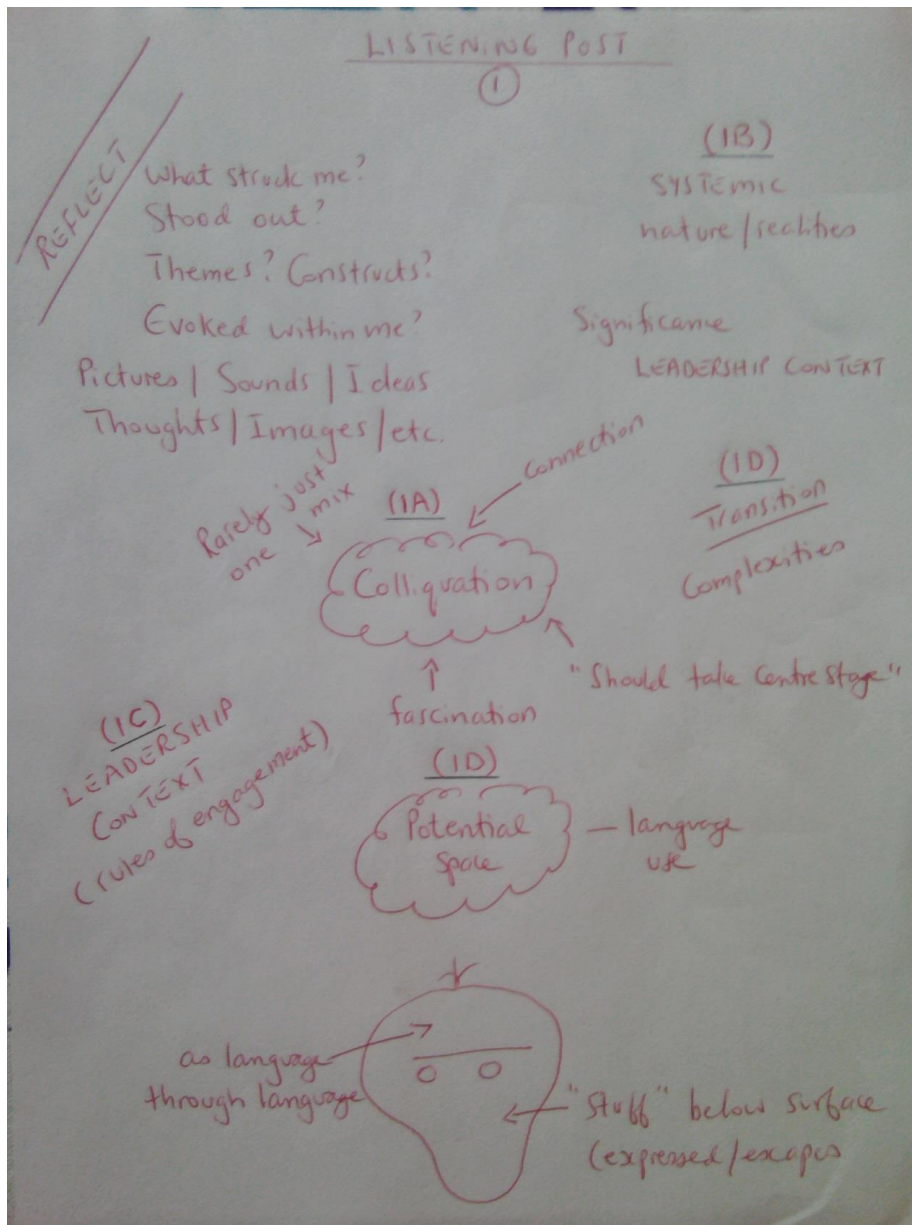
Figure 7.2.   Pencil sketch of listening post 1

Figure 7.3 (Listening post 2) below, reflects how the following elements of the model had moved to the fore, namely:

- (2A) the reality of the organisation-in-the-mind,

- (2B) the characteristic of the workplace/organisations as a defensive institutions,

- (2C) attachments,

- (2D) identity,

- (2E) the role this psychological reality plays during transition, and

- (2F) regression/regressive potential.
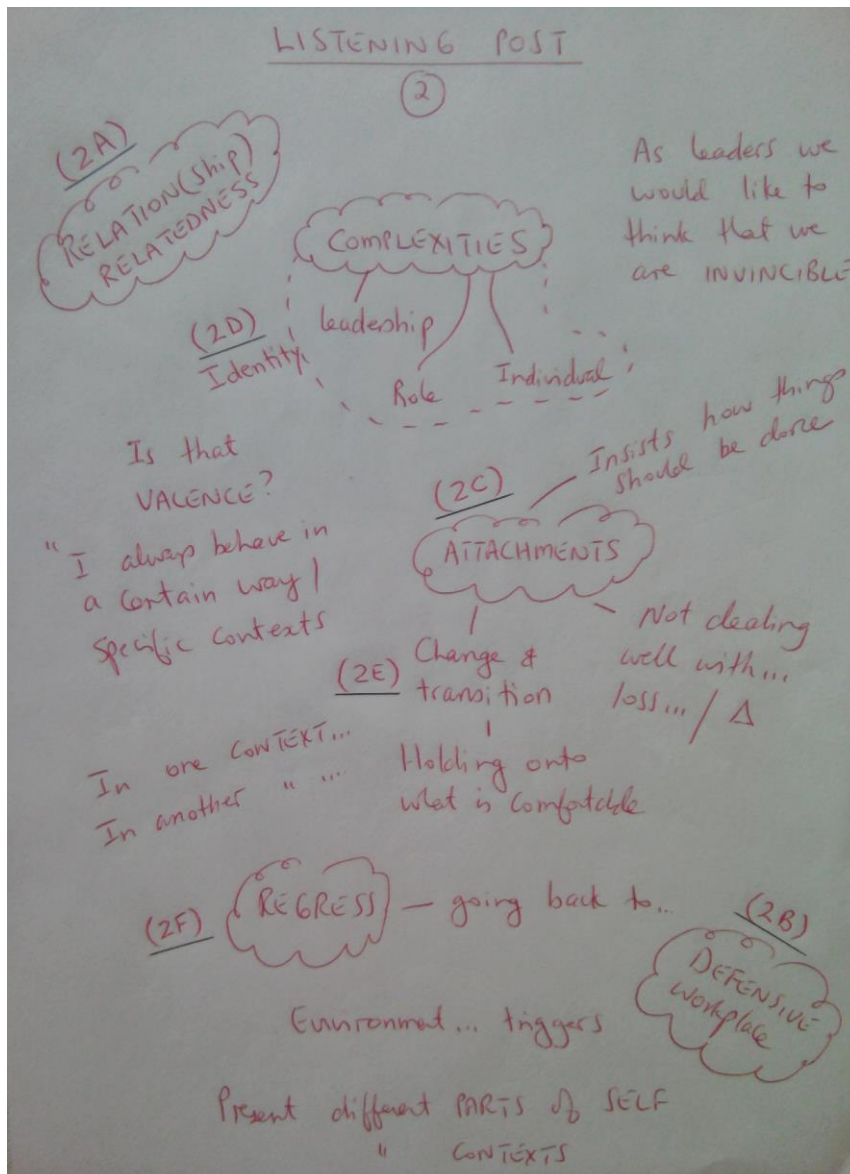
Figure 7.3.   Pencil sketch of listening post 2

In the final Figure 7.4 (Listening post 3) below, language use took centre stage in the session with the post-modern discourse analysts. Here, the following components were highlighted:

- (3A) organisation-in-the-mind,

- (3B) the concept of colliquation once again came up,

- (3C) the peculiarities of systems (identities),

- (3D) leadership vulnerabilities,

- (3E) how these are defended against through the language use of the leader (linguistic defences), and

- (3F) language use as 'carrier' and as potential space.

Finally, how anxiety serves as the dynamo of any system was echoed through the words:

I cannot see how any system can exist without anxiety.
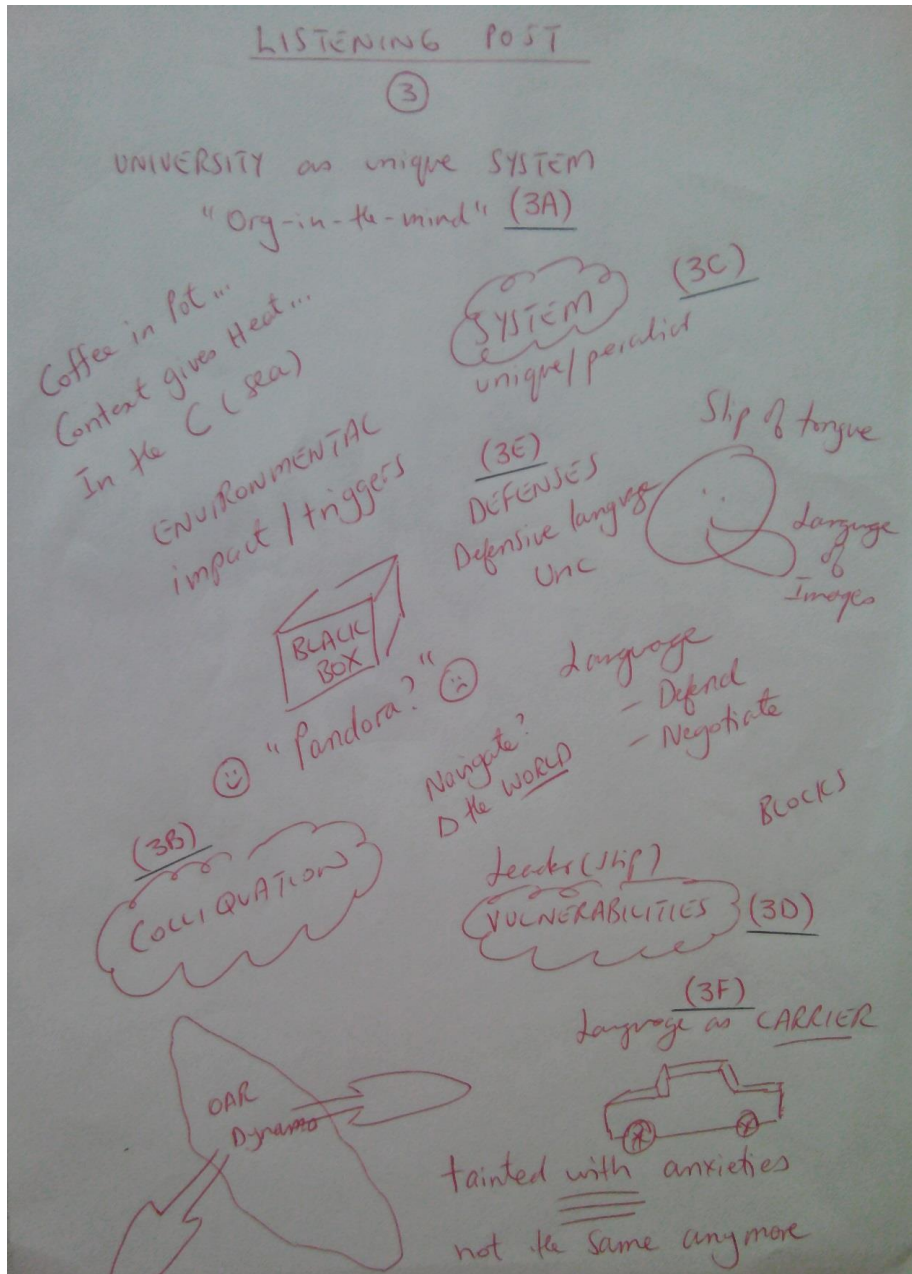
Figure 7.4.   Pencil sketch of listening post 3

Pertinent aspects of the 'refined' model, as outlined above, are presented below visually.
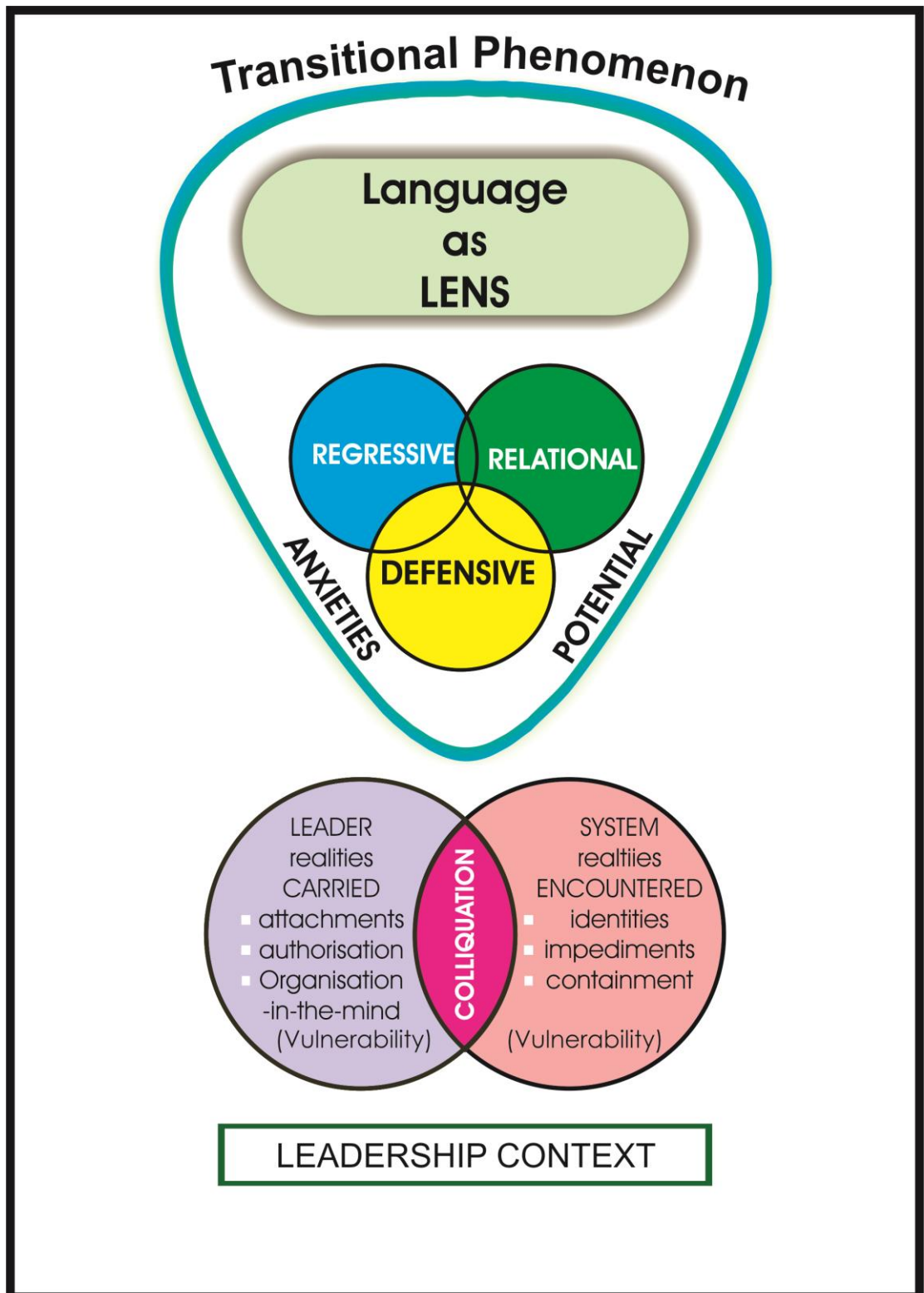
Figure 7.5.   Systems Psychodynamic model on language use as manifestation of leadership anxiety dynamics (refined)

In conclusion, I want to suggest that the refined model, which did not exist, could extend existing research in the following manners.

- The model advocates language use as lens to explore the unconscious use of language by leaders.

- The model introduces the concept of colliquation and specifically suggests that when the leader-in-role (as a system) collides with the organisation (as a system), anxieties and defences are triggered, because the leader and the system have their own vulnerabilities with which to contend. This presents a rich field for exploratory research (terrains of tension) at the point where anxieties and language use collide and become intertwined.

- The model proposes language use as a transitional phenomenon within the context of potential space, which could be used as a tool, or resource to explore leadership blocks, blind spots and derailment.

- The model re-emphasises the increasing significance of the 'leader as individual', where the leader as person, the leadership role and the organisation collide with each other.

- The above implies the following: by being open to psychological, unconscious linguistic data, leaders will be able to understand the anxieties in the organisation as a system and perhaps the collusion that is happening to sustain organisational practices. Being sensitive to the unconscious messages being carried in language use could provide access to the organisation-in-the-mind, which could result in leaders stop seeing 'problematic employees', but 'problematic systems'.

7.8   INTEGRATION OF THE UTILITY VALUE OF THE MODEL

One of the empirical aims of the study was to explore the utility value of the theoretical model from a systems psychodynamic perspective, with systems psychodynamic practitioners, business leaders, and postmodern discourse analysts. I have already highlighted the utility value of the model after every listening post by including the empirical data. In this

section, I discuss what constitutes the rigour of a qualitative model by reflecting on the research process. I then provide an integrated discussion of the potential utility value of the model, as suggested by the participants.

The criteria to establish the utility value in qualitative research depend very much on the paradigmatic bedrock of the discipline within which the study was situated (Haase, 2010; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012).

The absence of rigour strips any kind of research of its potential value and utility. Rigour presents a consistent challenge in the context of qualitative research. Krefting (1991, p. 215) proposes that trustworthiness relates to the credibility of findings. When findings are credible, the researcher is confident that discoveries and subsequent conclusions can be trusted based on the selection of an appropriate research design, the research participants and research setting (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

In keeping with these sentiments, the utility value of the theoretical model has been evaluated according to the criteria, as discussed in Chapter 6 (see 6.2.3.7).

Table 7.2

Utility value of the theoretical model

Criterion	EVIDENCE PERTAINING TO THIS STUDY
Authority	My role was clearly defined as a doctoral student with experience in qualitative methodologies as well as experience in the systems psychodynamic stance (Eisner, 2003), which was the theoretical and empirical paradigm of the study. Promoters also have illustrious careers in the field and international research and consulting experience in the group-relations paradigm (Long, 20130. In this context the model also has consensual validation (Maree, 2016) in the sense that participants to the first listening post were trained and experienced systems psychodynamic practitioners (including the convenors who were active participants) who also suggested themes and working hypotheses during the data collection phase.
Expertise	The expert opinion of the participants (Creswell, 2014; Silverman, 2004) was another critical consideration given their experience, training and qualifications. I relied on the expertise and lived experiences of the participants emanating from systems psychodynamic practitioners who were familiar with the paradigm and technical language, business leaders who shared their leadership experiences and post-modern discourse analysts who drew on their unique insights and expertise.
Parsimony	A parsimonious study is a reflection of the use of clear unambiguous concepts (Babbie & Mouton, 2006; Charmaz, 2002). The model, which was constructed from the systems psychodynamic literature, was presented to participants during the first phase of the listening posts to determine the utility value of the model. Participants during the first listening post could easily relate to the concepts and immediately started to use some of these concepts. However, participants to the second (business leaders) and some in the third listening post (postmodern discourse analysts) could not relate to some of the concepts. Parsimony, though present, was thus restricted to those with a background in psychology and those trained in the systems psychodynamic stance in particular.

Perspicuity	Perspicuity, which involves the conducting of a thorough literature review (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) based on systems psychodynamic theory, followed by a theoretical analysis and synthesis (Green & Thorogood, 2004) was accomplished, in that the researcher explored the relevant literature pertaining to language use as manifestation of unconscious leadership anxiety dynamics. This resulted in the creative design of a theoretical model explaining the nature of the relationship between these constructs. Perspicuity was thus achieved with respect to the utility value of the model.
Reflexivity	Reflexivity is a critical opportunity to assess the extent to which my presence in the form of my profile, experiences and understanding impact the research inquiry (Greenwood & Levin, 1998). This reflexivity was maintained by me keeping formal and informal notes on research activities, personal reflections on perceptions, reactions, bias, prejudice and emotions, consulting with colleagues, experts and promoters, and taking the proverbial stance of naïve interpreter. This reflexivity allowed me to be *responsive* by being flexible, sensitive and creative, which enabled a timeous response to potential challenges to the rigour of the model (Patton, 2002).
Referential adequacy	The model has referential adequacy (Langdridge, 2007) in the sense that the concepts in the model are used in the systems psychodynamic literature, but also in other well-known and related theories of a psychodynamic and systemic nature. Referential adequacy was also established by including relevant documents as appendices for academics and other scholars to assess ethical and academic integrity (see appendices).
Structural coherence	A model (and study) of this nature should also possess structural, methodological and theoretical coherence (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Moerdyk, 2015). This was achieved by the researcher integrating relevant pieces of data, including sufficient participant-generated data from the three listening posts to support the utility value of the model; aligning the research question, aims and the methodological design of the study, triangulating three different data sources by including three different listening posts comprising three different, yet relevant samples and by ensuring theoretical triangulation by conducting a well-defined literature review and communicating the theoretical parameters of the research.

In addition to the above, across the three listening posts, which were conducted, the following summary of the potential utility value of the model was proposed by participants:

a. The capacity of the model to be used as a consulting tool

Participants suggested that the theoretical model could be used as a consulting tool. This could be applied by consulting to organisational dynamics by raising awareness, or assessing the presence of certain dynamics and how these could potentially impact the primary task (Neumann & Hirschhorn, 1999; Obholzer, 2000; Reciniello, 2014). Organisational dynamics could be explored by reflecting on all the components of the theoretical model, both in terms of how the leadership role is taken up and the identity of the system as it is manifested in the here and now.

b. The capacity of the model to be translated into a coaching framework for leaders

Participants recognised the potential capacity of the theoretical model to be used as a coaching framework or model. Since anxiety is an integral part of the leadership role, the model could be used as a starting point to identify, process and manage anxiety in leaders, as well as in followers, through how language is used, particularly the kind of anxiety provoked during the implementation of change projects and other interventions. The pervasive nature of anxiety results in its capacity to impact relationships, organisational structures and processes, as reflected in system domain defences (Bain, 1998; Stevenson, 2012), day-to-day organisational activities as well as the phantasies and vision of the organisation. This framework could take a double-lens approach. Anxiety could be explored first by examining the way in which leaders take up their role and execute tasks (unconscious language of actions and relations) and in particular, how it manifests in dynamics around authorisation, boundary

management and identity. Secondly, anxiety could be observed by scrutinising its manifestation linguistically in the language of image and speech, the language of relations and relatedness as well as the language of action and omission.

c.   The reflexive value of the model as diagnostic tool

There seemed to have been consensus around the utility value of the model as a reflexive tool, which is related to the discourse above. Leaders are expected to engage in regular, systematic reflection on their own behaviour as well as the dynamic environment within which they operate. The model raises awareness pertaining to what potentially happens when two unique worlds collide with each other (i.e. on the seam where the world of language use and the world of anxieties coalesce). A certain level of awareness (including how the leader and followers use language) will potentially create what is known as leadership *reverie,* which is a state of receptivity to the leaders' unconscious experiences (Bion, 1961; Boxer, 2014; Fairholm, 2009). Indeed, a leadership moment when one is opened up, "takes something up, and is taken up by it: because in leading, one is also following …" (Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011, p. 33).

In particular, the framework could be used as a diagnostic tool for the systematic exploration of, for example, their leadership identity, defences, language use idiosyncrasies and anxiety triggers, thus nurturing consciousness of both the 'inner world' and external realities of the leader. The constructs of identity, authorisation and role, in particular, could assist with the 'sense-making of the unconscious inner life of the leader', as suggested by one of the participants, which is applicable on the micro, meso- and macro-levels (Li, 2012). Bain (1998, p.423) draws attention to the significance of reflection and learning spaces in organisations, thereby allowing the creation of awareness of the 'whole', which is the organisation and its connected parts.

[A]s awareness of the social defences against anxiety develops, in other words

people become conscious of them rather than remaining unconscious, other ways of exploring and modifying this anxiety become possible, so the maladaptive aspects of the social defences will change.

These reflections could take the shape of a series of conversations (language use) with a leader because different aspects of the model touch on dynamics that could potentially influence how the leader takes up his or her role and to explore related conscious and unconscious phenomena.

d.   The capacity of the model to optimise the potential value of language use

This potential value of language pertains to its capacity as both a relational, holding and containment device. Since anxiety is predominantly an unconscious phenomenon, leaders have to find alternative mechanisms to identify and manage it. Language use could be one of those useful mechanisms. Its relational value also lies in its capacity to accelerate real collaboration and community-in-the-making through the application of dialogical relational practices (Bakhtin, 1981; Bouwen & Hovelynck, 2006; Monk & Winslade, 2013). The framework/model also highlights the role of language in social construction (Geldenhuys, 2015; Simpson, 2008). If teams, communities and organisations are socially constructed, living, dynamic entities, these life-forms are thus constructed and maintained through language. Potential terrains of tension and conflict could be explored through narrative mediation: how language can limit, but also liberate.

Once a certain level of reflexivity has been reached, language could be used as a conscious holding and containment device. 'Not only to contain their own anxiety'*,* as suggested by a participant*,'* but more importantly to also hold and contain the anxieties and ambivalence of their followers'*,* to facilitate the creation of a conducive environment for critical work to be done. The anxiety when taking up a new role often results in debilitating anxiety for both leadership and followership. Good-enough containers, as
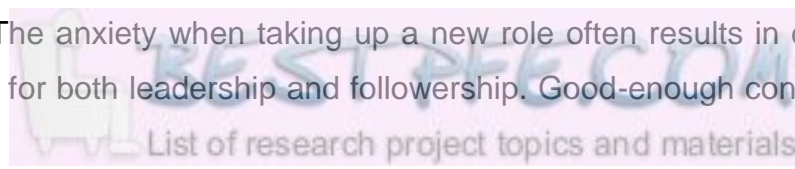
another participant put it, 'will initiate virtuous cycles, instead of the often inevitable vicious cycles which are characteristic of modern organisations'.

e.   The somatic nature of anxiety

A number of participants pointed out how the model triggered the significance of body language and how a leader's or follower's discomfort, consciously or unconsciously, is carried and reflected through the body. To lead effectively in turbulent times, one must not only nurture self-awareness and strength of character, but also somatic intelligence, which is the ability to read accurately and respond to one's direct, unmediated sensory experience of the world (Johnson & Blake, 2009). This alludes to the intimate connection between the body (soma) and the unconscious. Messages are relayed to the body (as container) first, before it emerges on a conscious level. Events that occur in our lives, impact our whole being, the physical, emotional, cognitive and spiritual (Caldwell, 1996). This emphasises the importance of leaders being in tune with, respecting and being aware of the ways in which the body communicates, particularly dynamic unconscious content to us. This is where the language of images and symbols play such an important role. From a theoretical perspective, the three main psychological schools of thought on the nature and causes of anxiety are psychoanalytic theories, behavioural theories, and biological theories (Baran, 2005; Bateson, 2000). Irrespective of the school of thought, the symptoms of anxiety manifest in different ways, namely physiologically, cognitively, emotionally, and behaviourally. Physical reactions to a perceived threat could include muscle tension, nausea, headaches, heart palpitations, or sweating (Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007). When muscles tense up, a feeling of a 'knot in the stomach' is often experienced. These are the potential messages that the model highlights and that should be used by leaders as communicative signals by the unconscious. Leaders' ability to

remain receptive to inner sensation and energy in an unconditional manner is often seen as a central component of a healthy self-identity (Bohm, 2012).

f.   Accessing the unconscious through social dreaming

One of the participants shared how he would often dream about disconcerting encounters at the office, or would experience a deep sense of anxiety about something that he 'cannot quite put his finger on'. Perhaps the former experience indirectly relates to the phenomenon of 'social dreaming', which is the name given to a method of sharing dreams when a collective has been summoned for that purpose (Manley, 2014). The purpose of social dreaming is to provide a platform for the sharing of hidden or unspoken feelings and thoughts about social realities of the participants (Baglioni & Fubini, 2013; Lawrence, 2005; Long, 2008). Certain aspects of the model could be used to assist with the interpretation of these dreams, for example, the specific language of the unconscious being used, and through reflexive practices determine what is being communicated by the unconscious. Creativity could be unleashed when leaders tap into the shared or social unconscious as a source of inspiration and discovery (Boroditsky, 2010; Manley, 2014) by also combining unconscious images from dreams with conscious aspects of the universe, resulting in the provocation of new thoughts and a different kind of thinking (Clare & Zarbafi, 2009; Lawrence, 2010). This experience should not be underestimated as Balogh (2015) suggest that dreams are excellent at providing access into the world of image and cognitive spaces where self-consciousness rarely exists.

g.   Leadership derailment

There are numerous examples of leaders coming unstuck in the process of taking up their leadership role in organisations. Slattery (2009) claims that leadership failure, executive derailment, leadership incompetence are pervasive modern-day organisational phenomena. Ignoring this so-called

'dark side' of leadership, could result in incomplete knowledge and limited understanding of these phenomena. One example of this behaviour that could escalate was cited in a previous section:

I think the more anxious leaders become, sometimes the less they listen. They are not open for any ... You will do it this way, because we have always done it this way, and because I said so … Ja, you become even deafer … Totally deaf and totally blind.

Leadership derailment is conceptualised as behaviours of leaders that are counterproductive to personal and organisational success. These leaders have ineffective character flaws and they are unable to manage their emotions and sustain satisfactory interpersonal relationships (Inyang, 2013; Pienaar, 2011). The potential value of the model could lie in its reflexive capacity to help leaders uncover what could lurk consciously and unconsciously beneath their leadership ineffectiveness in the form of unmet needs, expectations, assumptions, attachments and perhaps role, identity, and authorisation demons with which they are wrestling. The following individual components of the model could serve as useful entry point for leadership reflection.

- Unmet needs (the *basic human needs* component of the model)
- Dysfunctional attachments, role context and authority relatedness (the *leadership risk profile* component of the model)
- Expectations and assumptions (the *motivational schema* component of the model).

These dynamics could contribute to leaders losing the proverbial plot (Furnham, 2010), and engage in petty tyrannical, toxic and narcissistic practices (Ashforth, 1994; Higgs, 2009; Padilla et al., 2007). To maintain some kind of balance, Cohen's message, cited in Baran (2005, p. 49) should always be heeded.

Ring the bells that still can ring

Forget your perfect offering

There is a crack in everything

That's how the light gets in.

7.9   CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the findings of the study were presented and discussed by reporting on the themes and sub-themes. The findings were interpreted and linked to existing systems psychodynamic literature. Each theme was followed by a working hypothesis. Findings across the listening posts were integrated, and the impact of the empirical data on the model was discussed. I concluded the chapter with the utility value of the model and a summary.

In the next chapter, I formulate conclusions in terms of the general and specific aims of the study. I then propose limitations pertaining to the literature study, theoretical model and empirical study. I conclude by suggesting recommendations for industrial and organisational psychology and future studies.

CHAPTER 8:   CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, conclusions and limitations pertaining to the results of the study are provided. Recommendations for future research based on the conclusions and limitations of the study are then given. The fourth empirical aim of the study is therefore addressed. The chapter concludes with a summary.

8.2   CONCLUSIONS

In the following section, conclusions drawn from both the literature review and the empirical study are discussed. These conclusions were drawn based on the findings and my reflections on this study.

I remind the reader of the general aim of this study, as communicated in Chapter 1 of the study:

The general aim of the research was to explore by developing and describing a systems psychodynamic model of language use as manifestation of leadership anxiety dynamics, to refine this theoretical model and to explore the utility value of the theoretical model.

8.2.1   Specific literature aim 1

Specific literature aim 1 was articulated as follows:

To explore the operational research construct of **anxiety** in leaders from a systems psychodynamic perspective.

This aim was achieved in Chapter 2 of this study by exploring current systems psychodynamic literature. These conclusions are as follows: Systems psychodynamics traces its roots back to psychoanalysis, open systems theory and object relations theory. As an interdisciplinary field of

study, it explores collective psychological behaviour within and between groups and organisations (Fraher, 2004; Neumann, 1999). This paradigm stresses that it is not simply the rational overt, but also the hidden covert and unconscious personal and institutional forces that influence personal, group and organisational behaviour and advancement. It therefore highlights conscious and unconscious phenomena in individuals, groups and systems and the often complex dynamic interactions between them. The systems psychodynamic stance was selected because it provides a conceptual framework that deals with complexity and enhances understanding of the hidden, covert meaning of human and organisational behaviour and experiences (French & Simpson, 1999; French & Vince, 1999; Obholzer, 1996).

The utilisation of this paradigm enabled me to explore the operational research constructs of this study, namely anxiety, leadership and language use. It is an applicable paradigm because anxiety is viewed as a predominantly unconscious phenomenon, while leaders' behaviours are driven by both conscious and unconscious forces (Amado, 2007) and language does not only serve a conscious purpose, but, more importantly, an unconscious agenda as well. It is often the underlying, unconscious phenomena that sabotage leaders in the taking up of their leadership role. Despite the unconscious nature of these forces, an awareness of some of these unconscious elements and how they manifest would alert leaders to take appropriate action before these forces come into play. The systems psychodynamic paradigm therefore accentuates this emotional human relations component that other paradigms often overlook or downplay. This theoretical lens highlights the inner and outer worlds of the leader, as reflected through anxieties and the language use of the leader, but also the intricate connection between these inner and outer realities (Dimitrov, 2008).

The second part of this research aim was also achieved and reported on in Chapter 2 of this study. The conclusion drawn is that conceptualisations of anxiety vary greatly. It is generally defined as an

emotional and/or physiological response to known and unknown causes that may range from a normal reaction to extreme dysfunction, affect decision making and impair functioning and/or affect quality of life. Anxiety is viewed as energy, fear of the future and central to who we are as human beings (Cilliers & Terblanche, 2010; Lazar, 2011). It manifests as hope or fear in the sense that all systems defend against anxiety. It is therefore not surprising that it is located at the core of both distorted and creative work relationships (Hirschhorn, 1993). Much individual and organisational behaviour can be attributed to responses or defences to anxiety.

Ironically, leadership lies at the core of what individuals deeply desire, but what also creates paralysing anxiety for them. Continuous transitions create increasing levels of anxiety in leaders (Amado & Elsner, 2007). These uncontained anxieties leave leaders exposed, vulnerable and open to bias for threats in their internal and external environment that could result in a fear-driven type of leadership style. As a defence against this anxiety, leaders attempt to protect themselves by employing defence mechanisms. When leaders are defensive, followers often respond with defensive reactions, thereby taking both into a downward spiral and creating more anxieties in this psycho-dynamic process.

Distinctions have been made between reality, neurotic and moral anxieties; *primitive anxieties* (of the persecutory and depressive types), anxieties arising from work, and personal anxieties; *paranoid-schizoid anxieties* – these anxieties represent threats and dangers to the self (Obholzer, 2000); they therefore evoke corresponding feelings of fear for, or of persecution of the self (paranoid anxiety) resulting in a tendency to rescue the self by splitting them off and projecting them outward or inward into external objects (schizoid defence mechanism); the vast majority of anxieties experienced, are of this nature where the focus is on the survival of the self; *depressive anxieties* – here there is a concern for the well-being or survival of the other (object) (Lazar, 2011); the other is on the receiving end of one's aggression and hostility; the inability to come to

terms with the depressive position result in splitting to manage the guilt, loss and anger; and *free-floating anxiety* – with reference to the objectless nature of this anxiety, is a common form of anxiety – it is pervasive and unrealistic which exerts pressure on the individual or the system as a whole. In this study, anxiety was conceptualised as an emotional state and/or the emotional and psychological reaction of the dynamic unconscious to perceived threats in the external or internal world (of the leader), which serves as impetus to personal and organisational behaviour, thereby either developing or impairing leadership functioning.

In an attempt to contain their anxieties, leaders use defence mechanisms to defend themselves against this apprehension, which results in a sense of being safe and in control. People may then set up psychological boundaries or simply project unwanted or uncomfortable thoughts and feelings onto others (Blackman, 2004). It has been proposed that understanding anxieties is crucial to uncovering the conscious and unconscious motivations of how leaders tend to sabotage themselves on a personal and group level throughout the organisation. In working with and through defences, the following useful contributions have been made (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008):

- An attempt should be made to determine the reasons behind the sometimes observable, inappropriate behaviours and ways of working and finding ways to manage the 'reasons' behind these behaviours.
- Defensive behaviour often triggers defensive reactions, leading to ineffective reactions.
- It is more effective to self-reflect on what is triggered off.
- Defensive processes are managed insofar as they create an ineffective working environment and adversely affect people's integrity and development.
- Attention should be drawn to the illogical quality of the behaviour for people to reflect and to decide on a course of action.
- Anxieties must be explored in relation to defences and an

appropriate intervention (if any) in the context of the situation should be chosen.

It can also be concluded that it is possibly easier to defend against anxiety coming from one's external environment, but that it is virtually impossible to effectively manage anxiety emanating from the self or inner world of the individual (Blackman, 2004). This poses significant implications for leaders, because the greater the perceived threat (presented in the form of a new role, organisational transformation, unrealistic expectations, and so forth), the greater the anxiety and the more likely it will be for the leader to rely on unconscious defences to ease this unbearable situation. This is where the effective holding and containing of structures, capabilities or environments could play an important role (Hoggett, 2010). However, in the absence of these containing spaces, ineffective 'flight' or even 'fight'' responses could be the inevitable result. Another conclusion is that as organisational systems become more and more turbulent, ambivalent and threatening, the deeper the leader could retreat (forming an internal laager) into a safe inner world, as defence against this intolerable situation. A further implication is even more ominous. As the leader retreats, the 'lens' through which the organisational environment is 'viewed' will lose its focus and the critical leadership functions of boundary management, the execution and monitoring of the primary task and on-task behaviours, as well as how the personal authorisation of the leader is taken up could be adversely affected.

Finally, it is evident how anxiety, defences and the leadership role are inextricably intertwined. The more the anxiety, the greater and stronger the defences (automatic psychological processes that serve to remove unpleasant affect to protect against the awareness or the presence of a threat) (Blackman, 2004). From a leadership perspective, when the leader's defences are always up (shields are raised), it could become part of the identity of the leader. Examples of these personalities are littered across the national and international landscape. I postulate that it could

then become very difficult to engage in effective leadership and other interventions under these unsafe and threatening situations. It is therefore likely that the leader would remain vigilant and defences would then remain to be employed (shields are always raised) to secure the safety, position, power, control and continued security of the leader.

8.2.2 Specific literature aim 2

Specific literature aim 2 was formulated as follows:

> To explore the contextual research construct of **leadership** from a systems psychodynamic perspective

This aim was achieved in Chapter 3 of this study. The conclusion drawn is that what could be gleaned from the leadership phenomenon is that there is incredible subtlety at the core of leadership in terms of what it is, what it means and how it is supposed to work. The notion of leadership is still predominantly driven by the assumption that the 'leader' is positioned at the pinnacle of the organisational hierarchy, as well as by the notion of the 'perfect leader'. Because all human beings are flawed, leaders will inevitably also be imperfect in how the leadership role is taken up (Block, 2001; Western, 2013). There is a growing interest and trend in the leadership literature towards a new psychology of leadership, which emphasises the following:

- Successful leadership depends on context.
- Leadership is a quality of leaders as well as the relatedness between leaders and followers.
- Leadership is about existing social realities and the transformation of social reality.

I therefore want to suggest that leadership is a way of being that finds expression in shared, social interactive practices and context-dependent relations through which a leader creates and embeds a sense of social identity, from which followers derive a personal sense of purpose that leads to meaning and inspirational value. As organisational systems are

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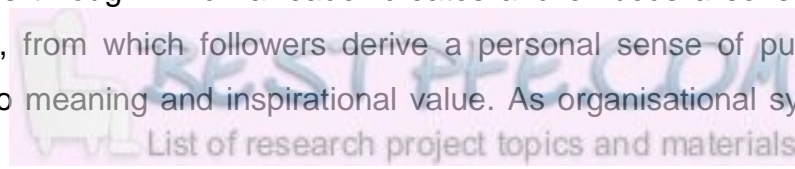
characterised by consistent change, perpetual conflict, paralysing paradoxes and limited resources, the impact on leaders is telling in the form of survival and performance anxiety, making them feel disorientated, lost, lonely, doubtful, not 'good enough', vulnerable and under constant pressure to perform their task and manage their relationships effectively (Greyvenstein & Cilliers, 2012; Huffington et al., 2004).

It is within this complexity of the leadership role that the systems psychodynamic perspective of leadership adds significant value. This perspective entails the management of what is inside the boundary in relation to what is outside of the boundary (Czander, 1993). This is rather challenging, as it requires an inward and outward focus simultaneously. Poorly designed and managed boundaries often lead to feelings of being overwhelmed and to stress and anxiety. The leader therefore has to be positioned on the boundary between the organisation and its external environment (Rice, 1965) in order to create a controllable environment. Activities would become more organised, resulting in a more effective response to what happens within the organisational environment. Furthermore, leadership is a direct response to the primary task of the organisation and involves the monitoring of the abuse of power, ensuring on-task leadership activities and the management of the occurrence of what is known as basic assumption activities throughout the organisation. In other words, leadership should be exercised in such a way that followers are enabled to perform their primary task and that relationships are managed with the whole as well as its individual parts. This primary task of leadership therefore involves boundary management by managing the relations between an institution and its environment in the execution of the primary task (Czander, 2012).

It can be concluded that leadership is exercised between roles, in the relation as well as the associated relationship between leaders and followers, and finds expression in multiple bases (Long et al., 2010), such as:

- a group task function holding power or legal authority;

- a role relation between leader and follower in relation to the exercise of tasks;

- an associated relationship (in the mind) between leader and follower; and

- a symbolic expression of eternal human stirrings, strivings and deep desires.

Leadership is therefore a role that is taken up and exercised at different levels throughout the organisation, being one of multiple roles. Hence, one of the key roles of leadership is to efficiently manage boundaries and relationships, as well as to deploy personal and organisational resources in the interest of the primary task.

In the modern world of work, leaders are expected to take ownership, take up their personal authority and strive to be 'psychologically present' to their followers (Bell & Huffington, 2011). Followers and other stakeholders also tend to project their phantasies and dependency needs about leadership onto leaders in the organisation. This follower anxiety and regressive behaviours are often triggered by the realisation that leaders do not always have all the answers; that they are human and therefore not always in control of all organisational processes. Effective leaders therefore have to find new ways to take ownership, to take up their authority, even in the absence of power, and to establish effective authority relations in the workplace. Because there will always be resistance, leaders need to know how to encourage and generate appropriate forms of resistance. This is inspired by a transitional spirit, which is characterised by the open search for meanings together with collective ethical action (Amado, 2007). Therefore, effective leadership in contemporary society involves the following number of key capabilities (James & Ladkin, 2008):

- perceiving (leadership capability to 'notice what they notice' about the self, others and the environment);

- interpreting (leadership capability to read cultural, political and organisational realities and to act from this understanding); and

- connecting (leadership capability to work as facilitators of dialogue across agendas and organisations).

Increasing systemic complexity and the call for greater organisational integration will lead to the leadership role becoming even more of a boundary negotiation function. In this study, I defined leadership as a negotiated, boundary management role that leaders take up (managing within from that which is without) consciously and unconsciously, by exercising their authority relations (relationships and relatedness) within a given, unique, connected and emotional organisational system in service of the primary task.

Therefore, in the face (furnace) of anxiety, leaders become unsettled. Authenticity is what makes them genuine and grounds and grants them the capacity to be at peace with themselves. The leadership challenge is: As I find myself in the eternal turbulence of life, how do I dance more authentically with anxiety in the moment? What separates good from great leaders is how they perform in the presence of anxiety. What is needed is leaders who have the capacity to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty and to play with illusion – *in-lusio* (entering into play) (Adams, 1994; Ilson & Crystal, 1984) – while keeping a solid relationship with reality.

8.2.3 Specific literature aim 3

Specific literature aim 3 was articulated as follows:

To explore the operational construct of **language use** from a systems psychodynamic perspective.

This aim was achieved in Chapter 4 of this study. The conclusions drawn can be reflected upon as follows:

Language seems to possess a symbolic, but even more importantly, a constitutive function. Pertaining to the constitutive power of language, it appears to have the capacity to influence shifts in cognitive thinking and emotions. Language is defined as the capacity for acquiring and applying complex systems of communication. In any language, alternative nuanced ways of speaking lead to a particular social status. This conventional, unique usage or habits are referred to as language use (Kennison, 2013; Tomasello, 2008). This implies the communicative meaning of language, which includes spoken and written communication, including body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, and any other actions with symbolic intent.

Because leaders bring conscious and unconscious content into their personal and working relationships, their primary tool of communication, language, should also be explored. The unconscious constantly seeks ways to reveal itself (communicative capacity) through here-and-now experiences and reveals itself through images, symbols, words and phrases (often unexpectedly entering consciousness), including emotional reactions and symbolic actions (Amado, 2001; Klein, 2005; Krantz, 2010). The unconscious uses several 'languages' to reveal itself, some of them being the language of images, relations and actions (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). The unconscious uses 'languages' (i.e. of images, actions and relations) that are fundamental in understanding individual and organisational behaviour and functioning in the form of the unconscious *language of images* – reflected through the 'slip of the tongue' phenomenon (Freudian slip), when images come into the mind when in a conscious state, or through a dream. This communicative capacity of the unconscious allows leaders to experience what is known as 'social dreaming'. Images that leaders have about themselves and apply to themselves (unconsciously) could also reveal unconscious content; the unconscious *language of actions* – revealed

when exploring the content of the unconscious behind, for example, how tasks are performed, through symbolic actions, and how leaders are emotionally affected by intense emotional situations. Human beings use actions to express their guilt, shame, envy and disappointments or to reveal their deepest desires. The unconscious *language of relations* is expressed through, for example, the psychological processes of transference, counter-transference and projective identification. The unconscious therefore reveals itself through the way in which relationships are structured, negotiated and coloured as leaders interact in a dynamic way on a daily basis. The 'full meaning of life' consequently emerges through stories, images, reactions, performance, symbols and tensions in the ebb and flow of human encounters (Cole, 2016).

Therefore, language can be used as vehicle to reflect and contain unconscious anxieties in the form of a number of defences. This implies that by examining language use (leadership narrative, or discourse), one could access the type of defences employed, and in turn potentially identify the anxieties (intrapsychic conflict, insecurities and feelings of anger, guilt, shame, being overwhelmed and loss) of the leader. This carries particular significance in the face of performance anxieties, because of the paralysing fear of being exposed as incompetent, humiliated or ultimately rejected by others (Kets de Vries, 2001). I can personally identify with the need to attain perfection and the often impossible expectations that I set for myself. This fear is also encapsulated in the saying that one's strategy should be to 'under-promise with the possibility of over-achieving', which sounds like a form of under-promising as a defence against vulnerability disguised as incompetence.

If language has defensive potential, it should also contain other forms of potential. The findings of the study highlight the regressive, but also the relational potential of language. Language use has immense potential as transitional phenomenon within the potential space domain (Tolpin, 2017). Leaders as boundary managers across systems and institutions

should be aware of this potential, particularly in their role as managers and nurturers of relationships in an increasingly complex and networked organisational environment. The unconscious component of language use should also foster renewed empathy and appreciation for how people express themselves. Leaders, and by implication followers, do not always know (consciously) why they behave in a certain way, or why they speak (language use) in a certain way. How often do we exclaim: "Did I really say that?", or "I can't believe I said that!"? I want to postulate that language is an example of how leaders use language not only as a personal defence, but as a social defence and system domain defence as well. In a university context, who I am (my identity) and my value (my impact) are often determined by my citation impact score (my language use) within the Integrated Performance Management System (IPMS) of the university. My personal performance anxiety therefore meets the survival anxiety of the institution and how these two entities collude to maintain the status quo. This drama also plays out in business organisations across the globe.

Leaders live and experience modern-day organisational complexity, uncertainty, ambivalence, turbulence, moral decay, and so forth through language. The modern volatile world of work requires of leaders to nurture a conscious awareness (Meyer & Boninelli, 2007) of what language is, what language contains and of what its essential properties consist (Vansina, 1993; Zeddies, 2004). This heightened sense of consciousness will propel language to become a tool in the hand of the leader to create and co-create a shared organisational vision, resulting in committed organisational citizenship. Language becomes aluminiferous and dynamic when its potentially social constructive properties are harnessed (Geldenhuys, 2015) in the interest of effervescent organisational transformation. It is through language that leaders announce their presence and create space for themselves (Cole, 2016) in the world. Leaders must therefore learn to consciously use language to reflect on the complexity of the human condition and to align it with their unique, phenomenological lives and who they authentically are in the

world. Because, as Cole (2016, p. 21) reminds them, "even in the smallest of interactions we can create connections … there are not more important things to think about than words (language)". Language can be used as a lens to nurture leadership development, instead of fostering leadership derailment. The exploration of language as both a reflector and a contributor to leadership behaviour will assist in attaining a deeper understanding and appreciation of the unique, often uncontained anxiety experiences of leaders as organisational life shows up as an 'interpretive encounter'. The source, nature of the anxiety, perceived impact and unique risk profile of the leader often determine how language will be used, whether defensively to protect vulnerabilities, offensively, or more counter-intuitively by working with human and leadership vulnerabilities. This counter-intuitive working with anxiety could be done by focusing on how the unconscious reveals itself through language as speech and image, the language of relations and relatedness, as well as the language of action and omission.

8.2.4 Specific literature aim 4

Specific literature aim 4 was articulated as follows:

> To develop and describe a **theoretical model** relating to language use as manifestation of leadership anxiety dynamics from a systems psychodynamic perspective.

This aim was achieved in Chapter 5 of this study, where the theoretical model was presented and described. What stands out about the model is that how in its complexity it confirms the deeply intertwined nature of anxiety, defences, language use and other relevant unconscious material. It was interesting to observe how specific components of the model came to the fore, for example, *attachment* (how leadership behaviours and relationships emanate from the secure or insecure psychological base provided by significant attachment figures and how this influences the attachment style of the leader), *identities* (threatened or questioned through ambivalence in the workplace), *organisation(s)-in-the-mind* (how

it informs our meaning making and influences behaviour and decisions), ability to work with *authorisation* and capacity to *contain* organisational dynamics. Another notable observation is the way in which the 'colliquation' construct in terms of how elements connect and 'collide' surfaced, referring to, for example, anxiety and language use, as well as the leader system versus the organisational system.

8.2.5 Specific empirical aim 1

Specific empirical aim 1 was articulated as follows:

> To explore language use and anxiety phenomenologically from the perspective of participants to this study.

This aim was achieved and reported on in Chapter 7 of this study. The conclusions drawn can be reflected upon as follows:

Firstly, when a leader has not positioned, authorised and negotiated the self in a new role, anxiety is created in the leader as well as the followers. Leaders therefore have to authorise themselves in the new role in order to reduce their level of anxiety. When a title is owned, effective containment and boundary management can be effected, anxiety will be reduced and performance can be enhanced. Anxiety can also be created when there is significant change, transformation or subsequent uncertainty, or even when ambivalent authority has been granted to leaders (Amado & Elsner, 2007). Leaders in acting positions often experience this situation. Leaders display regressive behaviours, engage in manipulative practices, or would deliberately keep relationships ambiguous to contain their anxiety. Language could then be used as defence against this relational, task or performance anxieties. When leaders and even followers get the impression that they are being silenced, they use 'noise' as defence against this experience. Violent protests, notably in Pretoria (South Africa) just prior to the local government elections (during August, 2016), as well as student protests on South African university campuses, come to mind. "We are only taken

seriously when we are violent, burn and destroy property". This 'loudness' is however often misconstrued as 'noise' (dismissed), as disgruntled members who cannot get their way, or irresponsible, rebellious students. The organisation is then perceived as the parent and the students seen as rebellious children. Therefore, as leaders and followers experience that their safety is being threatened, more effective mechanisms will have to be found to hold, absorb and contain their anxieties.

Secondly, within an increasingly turbulent business context, anxieties could also be triggered by the tension being created by the struggle for leadership authenticity on the one hand and the threat to self-preservation, for example, losing one's power or job, on the other hand. Leaders are then faced with the choice between being true to their personal value system, with the possibility of being fired, or opting for self-preservation with the possibility of compromising their personal and leadership identity. It was also evident how leaders defend against anxieties (Amado, 2001) through reflection and somatic practices. When on the defensive they could quite easily fail to recognise the value of potential space for reflection and connection. Leaders dislike potential space because the uncertainty inherent to potential space could create even more anxiety. Leaders access the dark side of language when it is used as a defensive weapon to de-authorise, humiliate or shame the 'other'. Language then becomes a weapon to denigrate the 'other'. The regressive potential of language is then accessed, instead of its relational value. Furthermore, leaders often experience that they and their performance are being measured, which could trigger survival or performance anxieties. They then feel almost compelled to perform to create safety by providing evidence that they are indeed good enough. Over the long term, these behaviours could lead to leadership derailment in organisations (Pienaar, 2011).

Finally, leaders can use language to defend against perceived incompetence, lack of control and feelings of being overwhelmed. Anxiety tends to 'fill up space', resulting in feelings of being threatened and

suffocated. Therefore, when there is insufficient space to accommodate the other, activities are aimed at self-preservation (Gomez, 1998) through the use of language as defence. Language also has the capacity to be used as weapon to debilitate, manipulate and create disruption. For example, when leaders take on followers' projections, followers tend to feel safe. However, when projections are repudiated, the language use of the leader could be transformed and the leader's anxiety could be released. Anxiety could trigger feelings of vulnerability, and this leadership vulnerability could lead to anxiety (Mnguni, 2010; Rao, 2013). Unfortunately, when these vulnerabilities are triggered, leaders employ offenses and defences to contain their anxieties. Little effective learning can happen in this contested space. The theoretical model as language of discourse and language of image also created anxieties for the participants in this study, but it could quite easily be mined for its potential and relational value.

From a potential application perspective, anxieties and defences have repercussions for leaders and coaches. Coaches need to be able to recognise defences in their clients and decide how to deal with this information, either to help 'normalise' these preferred defences for the leader (client), or to use it to improve the coach's understanding of the leader. The leader could also be helped to become more aware of these behaviours so that a more appropriate 'response' could be selected by the leader to deal with these behaviours in the workplace. Because organisations also use these social defences (Hoggett, 2010), the leader could be assisted to reflect on these organisational defences (stabilising the inner life of leadership) and what they could mean.

8.2.6 Specific empirical aim 2

Specific empirical aim 2 was articulated as follows:

> To refine the theoretical model by reporting on the influence of the empirical data on this theoretical model.
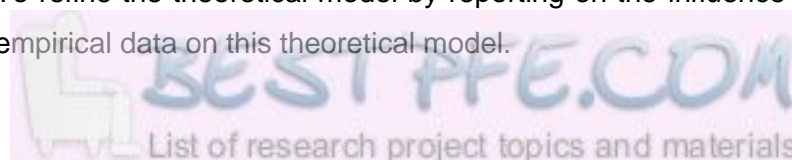
The second empirical aim was also achieved in Chapter 7 of this study. The empirical data had an impact on the theoretical model as presented and described in Chapter 5 of this study. Some notable shifts in terms of the components of the refined model are the following:

- Language use was highlighted as a potential lens in the space where the regressive, relational and defensive potentials of language overlap and interplay.

- The systemic realities of leadership came to the fore. The leader carries attachments (works with authorisation and the organisation-in-the-mind) into the organisational systemic environment where the system's identity plays a critical role.

- The construct of colliquation plays a role where the leader meets with the organisational system, and where anxieties and language use become intertwined.

- The model also highlight the importance of connecting to the emotional life of the leader and the organisation.

It is suggested that, as no other model connects and integrates anxiety, leadership and language use, the refined model is in itself another contribution to the literature. The findings address the isolated nature of existing theories and models on leadership, anxiety and language use by combining these constructs in an integrated and meaningful manner. No other model connects leadership, anxiety and language use in this integrated fashion. This study also extends existing research in the following manner:

- The model purports language use as potential lens to explore the unconscious use of language (as image, actions and relations) by leaders.

- The model presents the concept of colliquation, which is new to the systems psychodynamic literature and suggests that when the leader-in-role (as a system) collides with the organisation (as a system), a rich field for exploratory research is opened up. When these systems collide, leadership anxiety is elevated and leaders

may access the destructive properties of language use. It is suggested that leaders act counter-intuitively by accessing the potential space (relational value) in language use to alleviate leadership anxiety.

- The model proposes language use as transitional phenomenon, which could be used as an instrument to explore leadership blocks and blind spots.

- The model raises awareness in that leaders need to be sensitive to problematic systems and the ever-present organisation-in-the-mind, which could be accessed by exploring the language use of leaders and followers. This study therefore makes a significant contribution, not only to the systems psychodynamic literature, but by also offering a systems psychodynamic model with proven utility value as suggested by, for example, systems psychodynamic practitioners.

8.2.7 Specific empirical aim 3

Specific empirical aim 3 was articulated as follows:

To explore the utility value of this theoretical model in terms of its potential application by systems psychodynamic practitioners from a systems psychodynamic perspective.

This research aim was also achieved and was reported on in Chapter 7 of this study. Participants from the three listening posts, namely systems psychodynamic practitioners, business leaders and postmodern discourse analysts, suggested how the model could be applied in an organisational work setting.

The following conclusions were drawn:

- The model has the capacity to be translated into a consulting tool and coaching framework for leaders. This framework could be used from two perspectives: Anxiety could be explored by examining the way in which leaders take up their role, particularly how it manifests in authorisation, boundary management and

identity dynamics. The manifestation of anxiety could be observed by examining its exhibition in the unconscious language of images, actions and relations.

- The model has a reflexive value as diagnostic tool. The framework could be used as a diagnostic tool for the systematic, conscious exploration of leadership identity, defences, language use and anxiety triggers. This practice would enhance the consciousness of the 'inner world' and 'external realities' of the leader (Stein, 2000).

- The model has the capacity to optimise the potential value of language use. This potential value of language pertains to its capacity as both a relational tool and a holding and containment mechanism. Leaders will then function as good-enough containers for themselves as well as their followers.

- The focus of the model is on the somatic nature of anxiety. Anxiety is also carried and reflected through the body. This stresses the importance of leaders being in sync with and aware of the ways in which the unconscious communicates through the body as dynamic container (Caldwell, 1996).

- The model offers access to the unconscious through social dreaming. There are facets of the model that could be used to assist with the interpretation of social dreams, for example, how 'languages of the unconscious' are used to communicate unconscious content.

- The model has the capacity to shed light on the leadership derailment phenomenon (Slattery, 2009). The potential value of the model also lies in its reflexive capacity to help leaders uncover what lies beneath their leadership ineffectiveness.

- The model also has relevance for leadership theories. It is suggested that conversations about the nature, source and impact of anxieties could provide the dynamo for leadership transformation. This transformation process could be facilitated by becoming aware of and then using language use as transitional phenomenon in the object relations space.

8.2.8 Specific empirical aim 4

Specific empirical aim 4 was articulated as follows:

> To formulate conclusions in terms of the general and specific research aims of the study; propose limitations in terms of the literature study, theoretical model and empirical study; and suggest recommendations for industrial and organisational psychology and for future studies.

The fourth empirical research aim is achieved and is reported on in sections 8.2 to 8.4 of this chapter.

8.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This section presents some of the limitations of the study by reflecting on the literature review, the theoretical model that was constructed, as well as the empirical component of the study.

8.3.1 Limitations of the literature review

The literature was extremely rich pertaining to the constructs of anxiety and leadership, particularly, as distinct constructs. However, there was a paucity of research on the construct of language use within the scope of this study, as well as very little research combining the constructs of anxiety in leaders and language use from a systems psychodynamic approach within the global and South African context. This study was an attempt to address the paucity of systems psychodynamic studies in this regard. This limitation made it difficult to refer to previous related studies or to interpret findings in the light of related research studies.

The delineated nature of the study also made it difficult to fully utilise relevant discoveries in the fields of related disciplines, for example neuropsychology (biological origins of anxiety) and therapeutic psychology (language use as tool in therapy) pertaining indirectly to the

study. This was a difficult limitation to overcome because the purpose of the study was to explore the interface between anxiety, leadership and language use from a systems psychodynamic perspective.

A related limitation is that the study was limited to the constructs of anxiety in leadership, language use and the unconscious. References were made to other related constructs and models, but these were not directly applied to this study due to the scientific and paradigmatic boundaries, which have been clearly delineated.

8.3.2 Limitations of the theoretical model

The conceptualised theoretical model from the relevant systems psychodynamic literature also has its limitations. Some of the major limitations are as follows:

It was discovered that, despite the fact that the participants had approached the model from their unique perspectives, the utility value of the theoretical model was also dependent on their understanding of the systems psychodynamic constructs and paradigm. The unconscious, potential sources and how leaders experience anxiety, as well as how these predominantly unconscious dynamics manifest in language use, are extremely complex phenomena. Perhaps the participants in this study should have been restricted to psychologists from the systems psychodynamic fraternity.

The model also appears to present a 'static snapshot' of the interdependent influences of the identified constructs, which is not the case in reality and which is not well reflected by the model. The dynamic nature of these interrelationships could have been better communicated.

Because the model is based on the systems psychodynamic paradigm, it would also be more attractive to systems psychodynamic practitioners who are more acquainted with the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions of the paradigm. Therefore, the model would

be more appealing and more likely utilised by systems psychodynamic practitioners who are more acquainted with the constructs and have a better grounding of the assumptions of the paradigm. This limitation could be addressed to some extent if systems psychodynamic practitioners raise awareness of the different components of the model by entering into a coaching relationship with leaders.

These limitations definitely reduce the application value and prospects of the model from a practitioner perspective. However, despite these limitations, the utility value of the model remains intact, as corroborated by three different and independent sample sets in the form of systems psychodynamic practitioners, business leaders and postmodern discourse analysts.

8.3.3 Limitations of the empirical study

Like any other research endeavour, this study also poses a number of limitations pertaining to the empirical component of the research. The principle limitations are as follows:

This study strove to explore a phenomenon – the human unconscious – and how it reveals itself, which is by its nature an invisible, unknown and intangible reality difficult to explore and to research. Furthermore, the empirical study was conducted in English; language is potentially one of the limitations of phenomenological research because participants must be able to express themselves well (Kidd, 2002), which could have affected the outcomes of the study, particularly with language, anxiety and the unconscious being at the centre of the study.

The researcher's own subjective bias, which has been suggested as a limitation of hermeneutic phenomenological research, including pure bracketing (Kafle, 2011), interpretive capacities, as well as conscious and unconscious issues, could have been another limitation in the form of transference onto the data and the descriptions of the findings. However,

these were managed and limited by the trustworthiness criteria and verification strategies employed throughout the study.

The composition of the convenors of the listening posts (one coloured man and one white man, listening post 1; and one coloured man, listening post 2) could also have had an influence on the nature of the data that were evoked and shared in response to the primary task. Furthermore, the way in which the primary task was formulated – to provide participants with the opportunity to reflect on their personal experiences of anxiety in leaders and language use and to comment on the utility value of the model – could also have led to specific types of experiences being evoked and shared during the listening posts. Having said that, I believe that the primary task was formulated in such a way as to elicit the most relevant phenomenological experiences of the participants.

Despite these limitations, the integrity of the findings was not affected (see sections 6.4.7 and 7.6) and the findings hold promise for further exploration into the relationship, impact and relatedness of the different dynamics of this study.

8.4   RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made to inform future research based on the findings, conclusions and limitations of the study:

8.4.1 Recommendations for industrial and organisational psychology

The following recommendations are made to be considered for implementation at the micro-, meso- and macro-levels. The core of this study (language use as manifestation of leadership anxiety dynamics) seems to suggest that leaders are often derailed by the way in which anxiety is triggered, manifested and their leadership thinking and behaviour impacted. It should be noted that these recommendations are

not meant to be a 'foolproof recipe for success', but to raise collective awareness of unconscious dynamics in different work contexts, to stimulate conversation and to support current on-task behaviours at individual, group and organisational level.

8.4.1.1 *Grounding leaders by transforming the model into a consulting tool and coaching framework*

Leadership coaching has become the preeminent way of developing talent throughout organisations (Bardwick, 2002; Brunning, 2006; Campbell & Gronbaek, 2006; Kilburg & Diedrich, 2007). The possible reasons for this spike in attention to coaching have been attributed to business and industry facing a dynamic environment of change and innovation; employee relationships are impacted because of, for example, downsizing and reengineering and globalisation has altered the business environment and a multicultural business environment has emerged (Campbell, 2007; Flaherty, 2005). Leaders are confronted with the challenge of how to ground themselves in an increasingly uncertain, complex and turbulent environment. The theoretical model that has been developed could assist with the grounding of leadership by translating the model into a coaching framework to develop leaders' awareness of their personal authority, identity, attachment behaviours, the nature of organisations-in-the-mind, preferred defence mechanisms, potential sources of anxiety (Lazar, 2011; Rao, 2013) and the effect this could have on their behaviour and relational and decision-making practices.

8.4.1.2 *Creating safe contained spaces for leadership conversations*

It has been argued that the effective resolution of current and future organisational challenges will depend on the ability of leadership to embrace change and lead courageously during these turbulent times. In equipping leaders and developing leadership best practices, the role of anxiety and language use should be further explored, as well as training on how to recognise their own dysfunctional behaviour (Peltier, 2010). It

is therefore suggested that safe, contained spaces should be created for leaders to reflect on their unique and collective experiences, thereby making an attempt to work more consciously with their behaviours on an individual, group and organisational level (James & Huffington, 2004; Kets de Vries, 2006; Reciniello, 2014). This will hopefully assist with the creation of better holding and good-enough containment in organisations (Stein, 2013b). Psychologists with the relevant expertise can play a critical role in this regard. The volatility on the South African higher education and training landscape also comes to mind. Perhaps this is a critical opportunity for leaders to make meaning of what is happening consciously (also how stakeholders are complicit through collusive practices), but particularly from a psychodynamic (unconscious) perspective.

Designed potential spaces could also extend beyond individual and collective spaces for leadership. Contemporary organisations are far from safe spaces. They have often been referred to as 'sites of moral violence' (Diamond & Allcorn, 2004). Here the emphasis is on employees. Potential space is a sacred space; a "resting place for the individual" (Winnicott, 1971, p. 143). Leaders have to consider how they could create this "secret garden for organizational employees" (Amado, 2007, p. 78). It is only in these spaces where Mnguni's (2015) "purposeful play and playful work" will become an organisational reality. These spaces have healing and transformative potential. This is what South African organisations seem to need during this time of racial strife, economic uncertainty, political turmoil and leadership ambivalence. Leaders therefore need to work on the three things critical to creative and interpretive playing, namely the setting, the containing function and the transitional functions (Amado, 2007; Stein, 2013b).

Leaders could also consciously develop what is known as negative capability. Leaders tend to keep locked inside themselves feelings of shame, loneliness and incompetence. This threatens their leadership psychosomatic integration; the capability to tolerate uncertainty, ambiguity

and destructiveness. It involves being resilient and holding the tension between the 'created' object and the 'found' object (Dore et al., 1976; Tolpin, 2017).

8.4.1.3 *Training and development of future industrial and organisational psychologists*

Diamond (1993) points out that tension often arises due to external organisational demands, for example adaptation and compliance, and internal individual needs, for example self-identity and independence. In line with this observation, this study contains implications for the training and development of industrial and organisational psychologists in that the nature, impact and manifestation of unconscious, covert and irrational forces should be re-emphasised as a critical component of the repertoire of industrial and organisational psychologists. A concerted effort should therefore be made to train more systems psychodynamic practitioners, in an attempt to coach leaders and consult more from this stance, but also to do more research from this psychodynamic and systemic paradigm. It is recommended that systems psychodynamic practitioners make use of the theoretical model to explore language use as manifestation of leadership anxiety dynamics in the modern work setting. Consulting from this stance has always been the target of critique from some quarters, possibly as a defence against working with the painful, shameful and behavioural complexities of organisational life (Cilliers & May, 2010).

8.4.1.4 *Linguistic practices that support containment*

IO psychologists as behavioural specialists could also focus more on the creation of organisational cultures and climates that support containment and reflexive practices (Rao, 2013; Stein & Allcorn, 2014), given our ever-changing, complex and turbulent work environment. Based on the findings of the study, language located within the potential space as 'playground' (Grady & Grady, 2013; Winnicott, 1971) has the potential for relationships, but leaders should be aware of its perilous potential for

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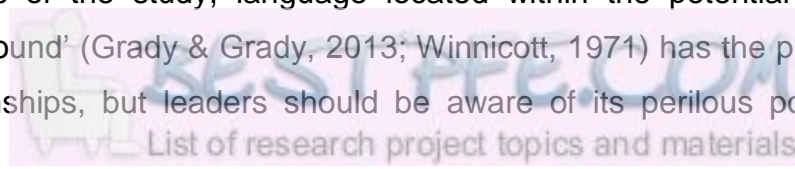
regression. Numerous business, social and political institutions are currently characterised by relational stalemates and even staler ideologies. From a South African perspective, we still tend to resist interacting and relating with one another in new ways, and perhaps it is because as South Africans we simply do not know how to do this (Cilliers & May, 2002). Leaders are therefore encouraged to work with their anxieties, as opposed to working against them, by harvesting language for its relational value. Because language use lies within the relational space, this capacity could be consciously applied to create more energising, authentic relationships.

8.4.1.5 *Silence as authentic engagement*

Leaders are often tempted and seduced into thinking that they are always at the podium and have to literally talk all the time. They need to be aware that silence is a container of potentially rich meanings with the inherent capacity to create authentic connections with the 'other' (Stein, 2013a). As noted earlier, when engaging in silence, we treat the 'other' not as object, but as an 'experiencing subject' (Stein & Allcorn, 2014). Leaders need to learn how and when to be silent. They need to learn how to tolerate the discomfort of uncertainty and the distress of not knowing (negative capability). Silence can therefore be used for different purposes. Paradoxically, it is often in the silence that leaders allow themselves to be heard, which facilitates authentic engagement and enables their followers to find and embrace their own voice.

8.4.2 Recommendations for future studies

One of the literature aims of this study was to develop a systems psychodynamic theoretical model that seeks to explore the relationship between anxiety in leaders and their language use. The utility value of this model was subsequently tested through the utilisation of three listening posts. It is therefore proposed that the same phenomenon could be explored by employing a different, more experiential design, for

example as used in action research. This phenomenon could also be explored in relation to other wellness constructs, for example psychological attachment, and personality profiles, such as narcissistic leadership practices, and how these experiences result in leadership derailment. Future research could also use cases of leaders to test the validity of the model.

The drivers (personal, social and organisational) of anxiety in the modern work setting could also be further investigated, given current realities in the form of generational trauma, the impact of social media, organisational shame, reality television, and so forth. It will therefore be fascinating to see how the model evolves if there are different sets of empirical data to be worked with, for example a social dreaming matrix.

Future studies may also consider exploring these relationships in a more naturally occurring work setting, for example business meetings, executive presentations, board meetings, in parliament, and so forth, where anxieties are easily provoked. However, this would inject other research challenges into the research setting in the form of artificially induced anxiety.

I also propose that future studies adopt an even more multidisciplinary approach by taking recent developments in neuroscience, psychotherapy and neuro-psychotherapy into consideration. There is increasing evidence for the impact of mirror neurons on language use (Rossouw, 2011, 2014). Indications are that these neurons are central to social learning, imitation and the cultural transmission of skills, attitudes and the "pressed together clusters we call words" (Rossouw, 2014, p. 211). Even Freud (1959) proposed that all ideas in psychology would one day be explained by organic substrates.

8.5   RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

In the following section, four research hypotheses are presented in an

attempt to contain and integrate the principal findings of the study.

8.5.1 Research hypothesis 1

Amid the complexity and turmoil of the 21st-century working environment, leaders and followers become persecutory objects of one another, where followers perceive (project onto and into) their leaders as demanding, terrorising and hostile. Leaders need to resist the temptation and regressive pull to engage in collusive practices (by taking on these projections) to reduce the complexities with which they are faced. This is precisely where language use could play a significant role.

8.5.2 Research hypothesis 2

There is nothing arbitrary or coincidental about language use. Unconscious anxiety dynamics are reflected in the way leaders use language, particularly under anxiety-provoking conditions. Language use as object and transitional phenomenon serves conscious and unconscious purposes. The 'inner world' of the leader and how the external world is experienced are presented through discourse (language). Language as container as well as transitional phenomenon is a carrier, holder and container of our anxieties, defences, offenses and vulnerabilities – that is, what makes us authentically human. Language has the potential to be used for its defensive, regressive and relational value. It has potential for pain, shame, bullying and leaders to attack followers, but also for authorisation, recognition and self-esteem. Language use as positive potential lens could enable leaders to make an emotional investment by fostering a culture where collective reflection is valued, judgement and desire are suspended, complexity is embraced and the other's presence and identity are acknowledged.

8.5.3 Research hypothesis 3

Colliquation, as collisions, occur all the time on the leadership landscape,

whether it is on individual or systemic level. When collisions happen, leadership anxiety is elevated and the dark side of language is used by leaders when they access the regressive (aggressive) properties of language. This behaviour may take leaders into a conflicting, vicious cycle. However, when collisions happen, leaders should go into a reflective, potential space (transitional space) by harnessing the relational properties of language. When this happens, object relations are turned into social relations and leadership anxiety is reduced. This behaviour, in turn, may take leaders into a collaborative, virtuous cycle.

8.5.4 Research hypothesis 4

Leaders find themselves under increasing attacks by their peers and followers – defended leadership. This poses significant threats to their psychological safety. When they experience these psychological threats, language use could be used as transitional phenomenon (object) to serve as a good-enough container of personal and organisational anxieties. Language use should then have the capacity to play an auxiliary ego function to experience a deeper sense of self in the form of self- and other-consciousness. In this complex world of objects and people, language use will then become the object and space for self-construction and identity formation by initiating the integration of part-objects into whole-objects.

8.6   CONTRIBUTION OF THE RESEARCH

The study contributes on three levels to the field of industrial and organisational psychology, namely the theoretical, empirical and practical levels. The personal contributions of this study in terms of my roles are also explored.

8.6.1 Contribution on a theoretical level

This study contributes on a theoretical level in a number of ways. It

expands on the literature in terms of the nature of the relationship between the unconscious, anxieties in leaders and language use. Furthermore, the confirmation that language is a transitional phenomenon and its location within potential space put it in the spotlight in terms of how its relational properties could be enhanced and its regressive and defensive properties managed and contained.

The theoretical model adds new knowledge to the systems psychodynamic literature in terms of the leadership anxiety and language use interface (colliquated space). Furthermore, the study has implications for leadership theories and leadership development; it places 'linguistic leadership' within the wellness and well-being space and challenges the paradigmatic boundaries in terms of multidisciplinary research.

8.6.2 Contribution on an empirical level

On an empirical level, the study contributes by offering a systems psychodynamic theoretical model with accomplished utility value through its engagement with systems psychodynamic practitioners, business leaders and postmodern discourse analysts. The study also offers a second model, which has emerged because of the impact of the empirical data. There is no theoretical/empirical model of its nature and this is my contribution to literature in the form of a theoretical model expanded on by empirical findings.

The study also combined critical discourse analysis and systems psychodynamically informed discourse analysis as data-analysis techniques, which, to my knowledge, has not been utilised collectively before, and particularly in the African context.

8.6.3 Contribution on a practical level

Industrial and organisational psychologists find themselves in an excellent position to engage stakeholders, such as human resource practitioners,

business executives and wellness and labour relations practitioners, on how language could be used as a leveraging device to create effective holding environments (object relations), the containment of anxiety and the creation of different narratives in organisations with potentially different outcomes in our current emotionally turbulent and toxic environments.

The findings of the study will also add value as a potential coaching framework in the context of coaching and consulting psychology and wellness practices and to inform leadership development protocols in organisations. The model also enables linguistic relations by providing business with distinct theoretically grounded linguistic practices.

8.6.4 Contribution on a personal level

I lived, breathed and carried this study for the last three years. I authorised myself to dream about the project and invited my unconscious (Lawrence, 2005; Manley, 2014) to speak to me. I regularly dreamt about the study and slept with paper and pen next to my bed just in case I needed to record any significant thoughts, ideas or experiences. There was a time when I was haunted by the fear (anxiety) that I would 'lose' pertinent ideas, so I was always carrying a pencil and piece of paper in my pocket. At night when an idea came to me, I would disappear into the bathroom to record my thoughts and feelings, trying not to disturb my wife. My wife would often catch me with 'the other woman in my life', as she later started to refer to the study. The drama (jealousy, envy, rivalry, seduction, competition for my attention, and so forth) between my wife and 'the other woman' was my constant companion.

The study also raised my personal consciousness in terms of my anxieties, language use and possible (preferred) defences (Lazar, 2011). The project confronted me with my own history in terms of the constructs of the research. I was reminded of times when I would use language to hurt, humiliate and attack others; the time when I had my first real

encounter with anxiety (Hoggett, 2013); all the leadership roles I declined because I could not contain my performance anxiety; the times when I judged others as incompetent leaders (projecting my own feelings of incompetence onto them). My valence to be and to be seen as competent, as making a positive contribution, also confronted me.

Furthermore, the study stimulated my curiosity in terms of dynamics in my own organisation and what these things could mean: positions in the organisation, structures, artefacts, location of my colleagues in the department, graduation ceremonies and other rituals, procedures to follow when you have to apply for leave, working from home, conference funding, and so forth. In a way, these dynamics became part of the language of images, symbols and rituals in the organisation (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). My compassion for those in formal leadership positions has also grown. I attempted to remind myself that maybe some leaders also feel threatened and are therefore unconsciously compelled to defend against these anxieties. I therefore often tried to catch myself before passing judgement upon other people's actions and behaviours. A significant part of this learning was to recognise and more importantly to voice my anxiety when I felt uncomfortable. This often made me feel vulnerable, especially when I was ridiculed because of this anxiety.

These experiences have prompted me to enter into a formal coaching relationship to help me reflect on my challenges in terms of my personal authority, boundary management, leadership identity, and so forth. Towards the end of the study, I also had the opportunity to attend a writing retreat workshop. The language of the workshop reminded me of the importance of quality in the form of scholarship, the significance of moving from the factual and interpretive to the conceptual level, and the importance of my own voice, meaning making, refined insight and scientific contribution. These words created immense anxiety for me and reminded me of the feedback from my promoters on previous drafts of the study: 'research gravitas', 'academically grounded', and so forth – words that really slowed me down and which transported me to important

reflexive spaces (Jemstedt, 2000; Prins, 2002).

This study also contributed to my role as an emerging researcher in a number of ways. It enhanced my understanding of the vulnerability locked up in the lived experiences of my research participants and how these experiences should be honoured and respected. This experience has informed my research identity by highlighting the ethical manner in which research should be approached and conducted. The often popular discourse from certain sections of the research community that 'qualitative research is not real research' made me wonder how some researchers could say this when in my experience my research experience was so real, stirred up personal and other people's vulnerabilities on so many different levels and was so deeply authentic. It made me realise that I was privileged to be part of conversations that some people do not even share with their most significant others. What therefore ensued was a profound appreciation and respect for phenomenological research. I was reminded of how as researchers we often 'take' from our participants, never to 'return' again, and that responsible, relevant, scholarly and ethical research will always lead us back to our participants. Good re-search must always make us to re-turn to our participants. I would therefore endeavour to ensure that reflexivity, meaningful contribution and the rest of these principles become and remain critical dimensions of my research identity.

8.7 SELF-REFLECTION

In this final section, I present a reflection on my experiences of this study. It provides additional information to the reader in terms of how the research process unfolded from a methodological perspective and insight into how as qualitative researchers we become intertwined with the research study and how my experiences could have influenced my decision making at various points during the research process. I also attempt to interpret my experiences from a systems psychodynamic perspective, thereby inviting the reader deeper into my world as the

researcher of this project. As worded by Wheatley (1999, p. 125): "We have to appreciate how life changes, if we want to dance more gracefully in this dynamic universe".

Prologue

My understanding of my own anxiety and how I use language has evolved during this study. This has created a deeper awareness of when I sense my personal anxiety, which has resulted in a tendency to voice it and to question its source. My journey has also given me snippets of how these constructs are interrelated and intertwined. I have made a few steps towards the point where I can see not only the painful beauty of anxiety, but also its potential for growth and transformation. I am starting to grow an appreciation for what Nel (2014) alludes to when he says that if we want to grow, we need to be courageous and act counter-intuitively, by going to where the anxiety is. Anxiety has therefore become a rich source of information for me. It has so many layers and is triggered by so many fears and assumptions. The study also originates from observations of how some leaders behave in the presence of anxiety. In my role as a behavioural specialist, I witnessed how leaders faltered because of their inability to consciously recognise their anxiety, and how their language changed, which alludes to a potential theoretical connection between language use and anxiety.

Dialogue

The period leading up to the data collection phase was characterised by uncertainty, doubt and intense anxiety. I started to question the value of the theoretical model I had to present to the first listening post, which comprised of systems psychodynamic practitioners. I was preoccupied with questions such as:

–   Did I reflect enough on the salient elements of the model?
–   Did I spend enough time exploring the literature?
–   Did I use the correct language to conceptualise the constructs?

–   Will the model be good enough?"

I felt extremely vulnerable. I did not want to embarrass myself by making a fool of myself in front of my promoters, participants, colleagues and friends. Then the guilt took over: "People will be coming out in the dark, in the middle of winter to listen to a half-baked excuse for a theoretical model". The anxiety became even more. "Aden, you will be wasting people's time", I heard myself saying. I subsequently became disturbingly compulsive. The result was a return to the literature, which resulted in another version of the model, and another and another … In hindsight, my desire (phantasy) was for a perfect model, a model worthy of a standing ovation. On reflecting on my experiences, I realised that leaders are also tormented by these human realities: the uncertainty, the performance anxiety, the doubts of whether they are good enough. Do I have all the right answers? Will I be loved, accepted, understood and respected by my peers and subordinates? I therefore, because of my introjections, found it very difficult to suspend judgement, memory and desire and yet I was always quick to offer this advice to clients.

In my dependency, my anxiety became so overwhelming and paralysing that I could not decide on a date for the listening post. I also decided that I should request my promoters to act as convenors of the listening posts. One of my promoters gently reminded me that it was actually *my* research and that this aspect of the research could not be 'outsourced'. When I eventually decided on a date and the invitations had gone out, a new kind of anxiety kicked in: "Will participants respond and accept my invitation, and if they do accept, will they actually turn up on the night?" While I was struggling with my own demons, a parallel process was unfolding. One of my masters' students who was also in the middle of her data-collection phase also wrestled with her anxieties. I received a rather unusual request to sit in during her interviews and 'chip in' where I pick up some areas that need to be explored. Our anxieties therefore created so much tension that it resulted in a serious form of dependency.

What assisted me to contain my anxiety were the reflections from colleagues. For example, one colleague said:

> Aden, this is not an examination, yes, participants will reflect on the model, but it is not an assessment of you, but an opportunity to share their experiences and perceptions of the model and the phenomenon under investigation.

I eventually came to the conclusion that there will always be an element of performance anxiety present. I then started to objectify the model by externalising it. In this way I was able to create distance between the research and myself, resulting in the research being 'out there' as opposed to 'in here'.

It was also interesting how I would always refer to 'our research' when I had a meeting with my promoters, which always evoked a response from one of my promoters. This 'we-ness' was therefore also a very clever anxiety-containing mechanism. I always knew that it was 'my research', but the acknowledgement that two other professors were accompanying me on this journey made the journey more bearable, less lonely and less daunting. Perhaps this was a way of managing my personal performance anxiety, as I had to take full accountability for the research project. I also projected competence onto my promoters and they in turn helped me to contain some of my anxieties. This 'we-ness' re-emerged when I had to send out the invitations for the listening post. I concluded the e-mail with: "We look forward to seeing you and working with you." I must have read the invitation to the participants a million times to ensure that every word and sentence were absolutely correct, and then my anxiety came flooding back again when I hit the 'send' button. I also found one of my promoter's words incredibly reassuring when he said that I would be taking the most recent version of the model to the listening posts. This open-endedness, paradoxically, also helped to contain some of my anxiety. It implied that I could 'fiddle with it' until it had to be presented. What gave me an incredible boost was a conversation with one of the potential participants for one of the listening posts. He commented on my research question

and design and said that in his private practice he comes across leaders on virtually a daily basis who struggle with the anxiety–language use dynamic, which gave me the reassurance that I was not completely crazy after all.

My familiarity with some of the participants posed a number of advantages and disadvantages. The challenge of doing research with peers and colleagues has been highlighted by a number of scholars. A distinct advantage was that my familiarity facilitated access to my sample. The existing rapport and cohesion also made reflection and the sharing of phenomenological experiences much easier within this container. However, there were also a number of disadvantages. This familiarity certainly added to my performance anxiety and made it difficult for me to connect to the other participants with whom I was not familiar. There was a time during the second listening post that the session almost felt like a 'reunion'. I could sense that I was extremely tense and even started to doubt if I would obtain the correct data under these circumstances. This situation led me to manage the time and task boundaries even more tightly, which was not appreciated by some of the participants. I also felt being seduced or being idealised when I presented certain aspects of the model and had to probe for evidence in an attempt to remain grounded in the moment.

My second listening post became another anxiety-provoking event for me. My co-promoter, who would also have taken up the role of co-convenor, suddenly fell ill and lost his voice; perhaps in some peculiar way, my co-convenor had 'no language'. I was compelled to step into this void. This unfortunate turn of events became incredibly authorising in a weird way, because I suddenly realised that now I was the primary researcher and the only convenor of the listening post on the day, with all the responsibilities that go with these very important roles. But I felt incredibly empowered, alive and connected to my core in the moment! Perhaps I was able to authorise (self-authorise) myself in the absence of my promoters. It was also rather intriguing within the context of my research

and the centrality of language that my co-promoter lost his voice. And I was thinking perhaps he had to *lose his voice* in order for me to *find my voice* as primary researcher and convenor of the event. It was as if one voice was passed onto another, which resembled the passing on of the baton in athletics. Also within the meta-context of so many 'voices' in my life at the time (promoters, colleagues, participants, scholars, my wife, etc.) it was an opportunity for me to listen to, own and authorise my own inner voice … indeed a profound moment of self-authorisation.

There were also a couple of interesting language-related events during the data-collection phase. Firstly, there was a time when President Jacob Zuma could not read numbers during official public events. It created so much consternation that it became the focal point of social media throughout the country. Then the same president could not stop laughing during several parliamentary question-and-answer sessions. Some national newspapers started referring to him as the 'laughing president'. He subsequently responded by saying, "laughing is good for my health". Maybe he was correct because laughing (it off) became his defence against the anxiety of being confronted with taking accountability for serious national challenges. The topic of language also took centre stage at the annual Robben Island Diversity Experience 2015, where I was part of the consulting team. Fellow consultants remarked that language has always been an important diversity issue, but never featured so prominently in the past. It felt as if my research was haunting, or perhaps even shadowing me. Then the language policy at Stellenbosch University came under fire. Some students claimed that language was being used not as a relational device to build rapport, cross boundaries and embed relationships across the diversity divide, but that the university was tapping into the regressive and defensive properties of language by using language to exclude and de-authorise the 'other'. During this same period a religious sister from Japan, who is a close friend of mine, shared with me how anxiety provoking it is for her to speak English, especially when she has to deal with sensitive situations. She said that in Japanese, which is her mother tongue, she has access to so many words, images,

phrases, emotions and narratives that do not have adequate English equivalents. She said that it always feels that the harder she tries, the more muddled up she becomes and the more damage she creates in the process. Sensitive and conflict situations tend to trigger such overwhelming anxiety for her that her English would simply 'evaporate'.

Towards the end of the data-analysis process, I also started to dream about certain aspects of the theoretical model and how the various dimensions of the model should speak to one another. At times it was so vivid that a specific dream would directly respond to specific questions by participants during the third listening post.

Epilogue

My conscious reflections have enabled me to become more aware, to be more flexible and to be responsive to potential threats to trustworthiness throughout the research inquiry and make the necessary adjustments to my methodology as and when this was required. This highlights the significance of the Wheatley quote, at the beginning of this self-reflection, for this study. As in life, research is also a dynamic and iterative process of discovery and reinvention, which reminds me in turn of the following Paul Coelho (2011, p. 11) quote:

After weeks on the road, listening to a language you don't understand, using a currency whose value you don't comprehend, walking down streets you've never walked down before, you discover that your old 'I', along with everything you ever learned, is absolutely no use at all in the face of those new challenges, and you begin to realise that, buried deep in your unconscious mind, there is someone much more interesting and adventurous and more open to the world and to new experiences.

I conclude this thesis with a parting blessing to leaders by Maureen J. Hilliard (Kegan, 1994):

> May you be blessed with vision
>
> in these shadow times.

May light invade the darkness.

May it be a soft brilliance,

as bare as candlelight,

guiding you through twilight 'til dawn.

And when the dawn breaks,

may you find yourself upon a threshold.

May you enter and go through,

and may you emerge into the dance –

a whole and holy new

dance of grace.

8.8   CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter conclusions and limitations were discussed and recommendations for future research were presented, based on the findings of the study. The chapter commenced by drawing conclusions on the general aim, specific aims and the utility value of the study. Thereafter, limitations of the literature review, the theoretical model and the empirical research were discussed. Finally, recommendations for future research were made and research hypotheses were presented, and the chapter concluded with an evaluation of this study from a theoretical, empirical, practical and personal perspective and a hermeneutic self-reflection.

This brings to a close this research on a systems psychodynamic exploration towards the development of a model of language use as manifestation of leadership anxiety dynamics. As outlined in Chapter 1 of this study, the research question as well as the general and specific aims (both literature and empirical) have been addressed.

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ADDENDUM A: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPANT CONSENT

DEPARTMENT   OF   INDUSTRIAL   AND   ORGANISATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

I hereby agree to take part in the research study (Listening Post) convened by Aden-Paul Flotman as part of the requirements for his Doctor of Commerce degree in Industrial and Organisational Psychology at the University of South Africa (Unisa).

My participation is voluntary and I understand that the information that I will supply will be confidential and will not be disclosed to a third party. The researcher will protect my identity and hence ensure my privacy and anonymity. I have also been informed of the following:

- That withdrawal can take place at any stage and without reason or consequence, in which case any information that I have supplied will not be used, and any records held relating to my contribution will be destroyed.
- That no potential risk or harm is anticipated due to the study.
- That approval for the research has been granted by the University of South Africa.
- That the results of this study will be utilised for research purposes and may be included in a scientific journal, where only the general patterns found in the results will be discussed. Individual results will not be reported on.
- That you agree to the recording of your responses in a qualitative data set.

Finally, storage of information will be for the duration and purpose of completing the research with access restricted to authorised personnel

involved in the research. All received information will be discarded immediately after the purpose has been achieved.

If you have any questions concerning the study, these should be directed to Mr Aden-Paul Flotman either telephonically (012 429 4879 / 082 783 9970) or by e-mail (flotma@unisa.ac.za or Aden.Flotman@gmail.com).

Signed on this _____ day of _____ 2015

NAME OF PARTICIPANT

_____

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

_____

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER

_____

ADDENDUM B: LISTENING POST 1: SYSTEM PSYCHODYNAMIC PRACTITIONERS

LANGUAGE USE AS MANIFESTATION OF LEADERSHIP ANXIETY DYNAMICS

TUESDAY 01 SEPTEMBER 2015, 18:00–20:00
Participants: Systems psychodynamic practitioners
Venue: Unisa Main Campus, AJH van der Walt Building, 4-34

CONVENORS:

Mr Aden-Paul Flotman & Prof. Frans Cilliers

Industrial and Organisational Psychology Department, UNISA

METHOD: Systems psychodynamic listening post (SPLP)

PRIMARY TASK OF THE LISTENING POST

To collect data which will help to assess the utility value of the Leadership Anxiety Dynamics model

PROCEDURE (120 minutes)

- <u>Part 1</u>: **The sharing of preoccupations and experiences (60 minutes)**

Primary task. To provide participants with the opportunity to reflect on their personal experiences of anxiety in leaders and language use and to comment on the utility value of the model

<u>Focus</u>. The participant's social or external world

- <u>Part 2</u>: **Identification of major themes (30 minutes)**

Primary task. To provide participants with the opportunity to identify the major themes emerging from Part 1 collectively

<u>Focus</u>. The participant's critical analysis of content, process and dynamics

- <u>Part 3:</u> **Analysis and hypothesis formulation (30 minutes)**

Primary task. To provide participants with the opportunity to identify collectively the predominant and underlying dynamics, both conscious and unconscious, which manifested in Parts 1 and 2 above, and to develop working hypotheses as to why they might be occurring at the moment

<u>Focus</u>. The internal world of participants where their collective ideas and ways of thinking both determine how they perceive the external realities and shape their actions towards them

ADDENDUM C: LISTENING POST 2: SENIOR BUSINESS LEADERS

LANGUAGE USE AS MANIFESTATION OF LEADERSHIP ANXIETY DYNAMICS

WEDNESDAY, 14 OCTOBER 2015, 18:00–20:00
Participants: Business leaders
Venue: Unisa Main Campus, AJH van der Walt Building, 4-34

CONVENOR:

Mr Aden-Paul Flotman

Industrial and Organisational Psychology Department, UNISA

METHOD: Systems Psychodynamic Listening Post (SPLP)

PRIMARY TASK OF THE LISTENING POST

To collect data which will help to assess the utility value of the leadership anxiety dynamics model

PROCEDURE:

The listening post process is divided into three distinct parts, namely:

Part 1: **The sharing of preoccupations and experiences (40+40=80 minutes)**

Primary task – To provide participants with the opportunity to reflect on their personal experiences of anxiety in leaders and language use and to comment on the utility value of the proposed model

Comfort break: 10 minutes

Part 2: **Identification of major themes (15 minutes)**

Primary task – To provide participants with the opportunity to identify collectively the major themes emerging from Part 1

Part 3: **Analysis and hypothesis formulation (15 minutes)**

Primary task – To provide participants with the opportunity to interpret collectively and present a proposition of what could be happening in terms of anxiety, leadership and language use

ADDENDUM D: LISTENING POST 3: POST-MODERN DISCOURSE ANALYSTS

LANGUAGE USE AS MANIFESTATION OF LEADERSHIP ANXIETY DYNAMICS

WEDNESDAY, 16 MARCH 2016, 18:00–20:00
Participants: Business leaders
Venue: Unisa Main Campus, AJH van der Walt Building, 4-34

CONVENORS:
Mr Aden-Paul Flotman
Prof. Michelle May
Prof. Frans Cilliers
Industrial and Organisational Psychology Department, UNISA

METHOD: Systems Psychodynamic Listening Post (SPLP)

PRIMARY TASK OF THE LISTENING POST
To collect data, which will help to assess the utility value of the leadership anxiety dynamics model

PROCEDURE:
The listening post process is divided into three distinct parts, namely:
Part 1: **The sharing of preoccupations and experiences (80 minutes)**
Primary task – To provide participants with the opportunity to reflect on their personal experiences of anxiety in leaders and language use and to comment on the utility value of the proposed model
Comfort break: 10 minutes
Part 2: **Identification of major themes (15 minutes)**
Primary task – To provide participants with the opportunity to identify collectively the major themes emerging from Part 1

<u>Part 3:</u> **Analysis and hypothesis formulation (15 minutes)**

Primary task – To provide participants with the opportunity to collectively interpret and present a proposition of what could be happening in terms of anxiety, leadership and language use

ADDENDUM E: ETHICAL CLEARANCE FROM THE UNIVERSITY

UNISA | university of south africa

ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL AND ORGANISATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

STUDENT: **ADEN-PAUL FLOTMAN**
STUDENT NUMBER: 33004625
SUPERVISOR: Prof M May
Joint supervisor: Prof F Cilliers

This is to certify that the application for ethics clearance submitted by

ADEN-PAUL FLOTMAN

(Student number: 33004625)

For the Study

LANGUAGE USE AS MANIFESTATION OF LEADERSHIP ANXIETY DYNAMICS

Decision:
Application approved

The application for ethics clearance for the above mentioned research was reviewed by IOP *unit committee* on 20/11//2013 in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics.

Ethical clearance has been granted.

Please be advised that the research ethics review committee needs to be informed should any part of the research methodology as outlined in the Ethics Application (Ref. Nr.: 2013/CEMS/IOP/040), change in any way.

The Research Ethics Review Committee wishes you all the best with this research undertaking.

Kind regards,

Dr O M Ledimo
(On behalf of the IOP Department Ethics Committee)

ADDENDUM F: LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

Jackie Viljoen
Language Editor and Translator
16 Bergzicht Gardens
Fijnbos Close
STRAND 7140

Accredited member of the South African Translators' Institute
No APSTrans 1000017
Member of the Professional Editors' Group (PEG)

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DECLARATION

I hereby certify that the thesis by **ADEN-PAUL FLOTMAN** was properly language edited but without viewing the final version.

The track changes function was used and the author was responsible for accepting the editor's changes and for finalising the reference list.

Title of thesis:

A SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMIC EXPLORATION TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MODEL OF LANGUAGE USE AS MANIFESTATION OF LEADERSHIP ANXIETY DYNAMICS

The editor did not write or rewrite any part of the thesis on behalf of the client, including passages that may have been plagiarised. The academic content is the sole responsibility of the client as author of the work. The editor could not and did not test definitively for plagiarism, nor is there any explicit or implicit guarantee that the content that was edited contained no material used without consent. The editor accepts no responsibility for any failure on examination of the thesis by the university.

JACKIE VILJOEN
Strand
South Africa
08 February 2018