



Love leadership: an exploration of agapé in leadership practice

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Love leadership: an exploration of agapé in leadership practice

Helena Klipan

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Sheffield Hallam University
for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration

June 2022

Candidate Declaration

I hereby declare that:

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2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.
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Abstract

This thesis is an exploration of love in leadership. Love within the context of this research is understood in the sense of *agapé*, as unconditional, moral love for oneself and others, grounded in compassion and appreciation of our common humanity. Leadership literature suggests a need for empirical research at the motivational level of leadership and for further research on love in leadership. To contribute to the body of literature and to advance insights for practitioners, the exploration was guided by the research question: How could love look like in leadership practice?

The research was designed and conducted as qualitative research in which the researcher takes an acknowledged, active role in the process. Participants were selected based on meeting the criteria of being in a position of authority and considering people-centricity, care, or *agapé* in their leadership. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with a duration of 45-120 minutes and collected further insights after the interviews from those participants who were willing to share additional experiences from their leadership practice. Within the context of leadership, participants reflected on their life history, on who they are, what matters to them, what guides them in their interaction with themselves and others, and why.

After 16 interviews, a perceived saturation of insights was reached. The interviews were transcribed and analysed in a reflexive thematic analysis in which the researcher engaged with the data from different perspectives and in an iterative way. The findings were interpreted in relation to the research focus and identified that the conceptualisation of love in leadership practice contained four main perspectives: inner, perceptual, relational, and conscious. Relevant quotes from the data set supported the identification and presentation of these as major themes.

The findings were contrasted against existing literature. Supporting and countering aspects were emphasised along the identified themes. Love in leadership as identified within this thesis suggests the need for a sustained inner love towards oneself, a perception of equality with others, a congruence in purpose, and a conscious attention at each level: inner, perceptual, relational, and conscious; all of these are interconnected, grounded in and tested against the compass of *agapé*. For each theme, key contributions to theory were outlined and include a shift from demarcation to a perception of connectedness and to establishing a sustained stability within the leader before attempting to serve others. Mutually shared aspects of humanity and opportunities to come together in equal strength and value become more important than hierarchical distinctions, such as leader and follower, or identities, such as types of people. Attitudes and perceptions are aligned to *agapé* and reflected in the active choice of behaviours intended for the mutual benefit of oneself and others, derived from conscious attention and dialogue. Prescriptive behaviours are replaced by conscious attention enabling leaders to choose their behaviours and be flexible to adapt to the needs of different situations and contexts.

Key contributions to practice were presented and include a selective dedication of conscious attention to each of the identified perspectives and a reconsideration of the leadership of self, others, and organisations through the lens of *agapé*. Leadership development could benefit from including these learnings to enhance established practice and develop new ways of approaching leadership in organisations, at individual, group, and organisation wide levels. Further research could explore the practicality of implementing the findings of this thesis in leadership practice, test the concept from different research perspectives, or expand its geographical and cultural scope.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the context of research, the research problem, research aims, objectives, and research questions. It addresses how this research contributes to knowledge and business practice. The chapter concludes with an outline of the content of this thesis.

Context of research

Theory around leadership has evolved from being connected to a certain type of person, or their characteristics, or leadership as a set of specific behaviours, to a social phenomenon beyond roles. Researchers increasingly investigate what is behind leadership, what is behind the obvious, trying to get to the core, to the motor that drives this phenomenon of leadership, to the motives. This is where leadership becomes very personal and where research engages with the depth of people's identity – with who we are, what guides our actions and how we choose to engage with ourselves and those around us.

My personal journey led me to an investigation of what major world religions had in common, as their shared core. I studied spiritual texts and statements of spiritual leaders within their denomination and understood that this shared core is love. Love in the sense of spiritual, divine love, also referred to as *agapé* or charity (Lewis, 1960), an unselfish moral love grounded in compassion and appreciation of our common humanity (Patterson, 2003).

The exploration of love as foundational core within the spiritual context led me, as a business professional, to wonder how this divine love could look like in business practice. Leadership is an exciting field within the theory of business and beyond. Leadership is often set equal to influence, to the power behind change (Burns, 1978; Hollander, 1958). As such, it could be an impactful means by which love could be integrated with business practice.

Indeed, love has found appreciation within the theory of leadership. Authors suggest that love in leadership might be a catalyst for change towards the greater good (for example Caldwell & Dixon, 2009; van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). They argue, for example, that “love should become the regulative ideal for the motivation of actions” (Farmer 2002, quoted in Farmer & Patterson, 2003, p. 110) and highlight multiple beneficial effects of love in leadership (for example Underwood, 2008; Pellicer, 2008; Gunn, 2002). It is in this context in which this research is placed.

Research need

As will be described in more depth as part of Chapter Two, several authors in the field of leadership theory point to the need for research at the motivational level of leadership (for example Ladkin, 2008; Jackson & Parry, 2011; Kempster, Jackson & Conroy, 2011; Ciulla, 2005). Love has found justification in leadership literature and many authors see a need for empirical evidence within this field (for example van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015; Caldwell & Dixon, 2009; Underwood, 2008; Pellicer, 2008; Gunn, 2002).

Research intent

Research aim: Given the need for research on motivational aspects of leadership and the potential associated with leadership building on love, as identified in the literature review, this thesis aims to explore love in the context of leadership.

Research objective: The specific objective within this research is to theorise how love could look like in leadership practice.

Research question: This research is guided by the research question (RQ):

How could love look like in leadership practice?

Research significance

This thesis will contribute to the body of empirical research around leadership by offering insights into intrinsic aspects of leadership within the context of love. This will help address the current need for empirical research in this area and contribute with insights relevant for leadership theory and practice.

Limitations

Participants were selected through purposive sampling to include people in positions of authority who claim themselves or are observed by other people to have a leadership approach which reflects people-centricity, care, or love for others. As such, the insights from this research could potentially be limited to people meeting these criteria.

The selection of a qualitative methodology for the purpose of this research could be considered as subjective. Indeed, this thesis does not claim generalisation, but offers potential perspectives on the topic derived from theory and practical leadership experience and acknowledges the role of the researcher as co-creator of meaning.

This research's geographical scope was limited to Germany and Switzerland due to practicality. Therefore, experiences and findings could potentially vary in different geographical and cultural contexts.

Structure of thesis

This thesis is structured into six chapters. Chapter One introduces the context of this research on love and leadership. It states the research aim and objective and identifies the research question. The chapter presents the potential value of the research to theory and practice and the limitations of the research.

Chapter Two presents the existing literature in the field of leadership and love in the context of leadership. It identifies key approaches within the history of leadership theory and positions the theory on love leadership in the wider leadership theory. This chapter underlines the research need and places this research in its theoretical context.

Chapter Three explains philosophical assumptions guiding the understanding and decisions taken in relation to this research. It covers methodological aspects which were considered for this research, the intended research design, and reasons behind the methodological decisions, including the limitations thereof. This chapter provides insights into the rationale and practicalities of the data collection process and of the data analysis process.

Chapter Four outlines the key findings and presents the findings in detail, supported by representative quotes from the conversations with research participants around the main identified themes and sub-themes. The chapter closes with concluding remarks.

Chapter Five summarises and synthesises the findings identified in Chapter Four, and contrasts these against the existing literature. It includes a discussion on how the findings of this research relate to earlier research on love and leadership and to the wider leadership literature. It contains an evaluation on how this research is positioned within existent literature and highlights key differences. This chapter includes conclusions on the findings in relation to theory and practice and explores potential contributions it could offer to leadership theory and practice. The chapter ends with recommendations for future research and concluding remarks.

In line with the philosophical perspective and the acknowledgement of the aspect of co-creation, of the creative and active role of myself as researcher (Foster and Parker, 1995), I at times chose to use the first person in this thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter gives an overview of literature addressing the field of leadership and love. It highlights the main directions of leadership literature, provides insights into the understanding of spiritual love, and presents key perspectives within literature focused on love in leadership.

Leadership

Leadership literature has evolved from asking “Who is the leader?” and “What do leaders do?” to a more recent turn of asking “What is going on in leadership?” (Jackson & Parry, 2018). The following sections will review on a high level the developments of broader leadership literature under the frame of a) the identity theory, b) the social exchange theory, and c) the purpose theory.

The identity theory

In the initial identity, trait or skills approach to leadership (e.g. Bingham, 1927; Bowden, 1927), a person was considered a leader on the basis of personal qualities and characteristics (Gordon, 2011). Research then shifted towards the analysis of leaders’ behaviour (e.g. Likert, 1961; McGregor, 1960) which implied that the leader can shape their leadership by adapting to certain prescribed behaviours (Northouse, 2021).

Later, transformational leadership emerged as a new leadership paradigm (e.g. Eden, 1984; Field, 1989). It complemented transactional leadership (e.g. Greene, 1975; Hollander, 1979) which is considered a directive way of leading, i.e. clearly advising followers of what the leader wants them to do (Bass et al., 2003). Although both are still primarily concerned with the leader’s identity, transformational leadership suggests moving away from directive leaders to leaders as managers of meaning (Smircich & Morgan, 1982) or sense-making (Weick, 1995; Pye, 2005). This led to the development of, for example, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire

(MLQ) which concludes that transformational leadership supports desired outcomes in terms of performance of subordinates and colleagues (Bass & Avolio, 1996).

Researchers then attempted to measure the degree to which a manager fulfils certain transformational factors and identified behavioural recommendations on how to become a transformational leader (Podsakoff et al., 1990), which other authors elaborated further and proposed a Transformational Leadership Questionnaire (TLQ) (Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe, 2001). Research very much focused on measuring the observable and relied largely on quantitative methods in researching transformational leadership. Increasingly, researchers were demanding a greater use of qualitative methods (Bryman et al., 1996).

Transformational leadership and charismatic leadership were often used interchangeably. The key variable of charismatic leadership is to create motivation and a positive response from followers, mostly in the political area (Conger, 2011). Charismatic leadership is expected to generate increased self-esteem in followers, increased self-efficacy and collective efficacy, personal identification with the leader, identification with a prestigious and distinctive social group, and internalisation of the values of the leader (Shamir, 1992).

Some authors suggest that while the behaviour of some people might be transformational at the surface, “what is in their heart might not be as honourable as they might want their followers to believe” (Parry et al., p. 8, referring to Gustafson & Ritzer, 1995 and Babiak, 1996). One could bring forward that charismatic leadership can be a powerful means which is worth to be considered in light of its underlying motivation.

Gollwitzer and Bargh (1996) gave an example of mental health as desired outcome of religious behaviour. They found that people who pursue religious activities out of identified

reasons were healthier than those who engaged in religious activities out of guilt or compulsion (p. 13). Both statements show that there is a need for research beyond behavioural aspects only.

Bass & Steidlmeier (1999), in reacting to those concerns towards transformational leadership, noted the importance to distinguish between *authentic* transformational leaders and *pseudo* transformational leaders and found that “truly transformational leadership must be grounded in moral foundations” (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999, p. 181). It is likely that this critique on transformational leadership has given rise to the field of authentic leadership (Michie & Gooty, 2005).

Harter (2002) defines authenticity as knowing one’s true self and acting in accordance with it, which finds resonance among other researchers (for example Kernis, 2003; Gardner, Avolio, May, & Walumbwa, 2005). Although there are various potential positive effects derived from authentic leadership (see Walumbwa et al., 2008), there seems to be little research conducted in this area (Caza & Jackson, 2011). Gardner et al. (2005) note: “We are struck by the uplifting effects of lower profile but genuine leaders who lead by example in fostering healthy ethical climates characterized by transparency, trust, integrity, and high moral standards. We call such leaders authentic leaders who are not only true to themselves but lead others by helping them to likewise achieve authenticity.” (p. 344). We could also argue that the statement of Gardner et al. (2005) directs towards a balanced perspective of leadership, one that is concerned with both, one’s own and other’s growth.

Related to the aspect of authenticity, Collins and Porras (1995) found out that sustainable, long-term success, a firm’s superior performance over several decades, was related to people sticking around through good *and* bad times. Also highlighting the long-term success, Collins introduced the concept of level-five-leaders, as a superior level to level-four leaders. The latter

are highly effective in the short-term but, according to the authors, predestined to fail in the longer term due to their character flaws (Collins, 2001a). In contrast, he describes level-live-leaders as follows: They are “modest and wilful, shy and fearless, act with quiet, calm determination [...] they also look in the mirror, not the window, to apportion responsibility for poor results, never blaming other people, external factors or bad luck. Similarly, they look out of the window to apportion credit for the company’s success to employees, external factors or good luck” (Collins, 2001b, p. 73). Those leaders are leaders who are “leading quietly” as Badaracco (2002) puts it.

We can observe that the leader takes more of a humble role, having an influence on people and thereby remaining authentic, accepting the highs and lows, the good and the bad times. Related to the above is the field of power in leadership (see for example Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Bennis (2007) suggests that due to the power which is immanent in leadership, we should study leadership with the same concern as for a nuclear catastrophe or a world-wide pandemic. In the political context on leadership and power, authors point out that power is, however, usually used for personalised benefit, rather than for the greater good (Linstead, Fulop, & Lilley, 2004; Hardy, 1994).

Related to the aspect of the greater good, Yukl (2002) identified five traits which predict leadership effectiveness, thereof a need for leaders to have a high social power motivation, meaning the intent to use power for the benefit of others. And Burns (1978) states that we should be “using power to achieve the ultimate test of leadership – the realisation of collective purpose is in unleashing real and intended change” (p. 40).

We can observe that leadership moved from the “larger-than-life visionary charismatic business leaders [...] to the more humble, ethical and understated business leaders” (Jackson &

Parry, 2018, p. 35), and from an ego-centric leader to leadership seeking to help others and initiate change for the greater good. At the same time researchers are demanding for more qualitative research and to being attentive to the motives behind leader's behaviour.

One sees however that research was predominantly concerned with the perspective of the leader. In reaction to this, scholars increasingly supported a follower-centred perspective of leadership. Meindl et al. (1985), for example, observed a widespread recognition of the role of the leader in the leadership equation and noticed that followers took a minor, supporting role. There are different perspectives within the field of follower-centred views on leadership. For example, Shamir (2007) elaborated five roles that followers traditionally took in leadership theory: followers as recipients of leader influence, followers as moderators of leader impact, followers as substitutes for leadership, followers as constructors of leadership, followers as leaders; and added later a sixth role: followers as co-producers of leadership.

Another view on followers as constructors of leadership is the social identity theory of leadership (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). The authors make the argument that if a leader is accepted or not by the followers will depend on how "prototypical" the leader is relative to the group, that is how closely the potential leader represents the group's culture. In this context, Krantz (2006) presents the concept of virtuous betrayal. He describes the phenomenon that followers will stop supporting the leader if the leader fails to represent the interests of the group.

Both, leader-centric perspectives as well as follower-centric perspectives evolve around leadership as an identity, be it the identity of a leader or the identity of a follower, and with behaviours associated with this identity. Researchers highlight a need for more qualitative research on leadership and research concerned with motivational levels to consider more potential underlying reasons and purposes.

The social exchange theory

Leader-centredness vs. follower-centredness was considered dialectic, one in contrast to the other. Yukl similarly criticised transformational leadership as being at a “dyadic level [in which t]he major interest is to explain a leader’s direct influence over individual followers” (Yukl, 1999, p. 287). Researchers increasingly considered leadership as a social process, as a phenomenon rather than something inherent in an identity (Parry, 1998; Uhl-Bien, 2006).

Leadership was then described as a “two-way influence and social exchange relationship between leaders and followers” (Hollander, 1979 quoted in Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 657) and as a mutually beneficial relationship in which leaders attempt to provide followers with: vision and direction, protection and security, achievement and effectiveness, inclusion and belongingness, pride and self-respect (Messick, 2005).

The Leader-Member Exchange theory (LMX) looks at this process in more depth and acknowledges that there are differences to the quality of the relationship leaders had with individual followers. According to this theory, leader-follower relationships evolve through three phases: the stranger phase, the acquaintance phase, and the mature phase, and some relationships never evolve from the stranger phase (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Some authors pointed at a flexible nature of leadership when they highlighted, for example, that leadership and its effectiveness depended upon the context and will change if the context changes (Osborn et al., 2002). The work of Hofstede (1980) on cross-cultural leadership was an attempt to address leadership within the context of culture. This work was criticised as sophisticated stereotyping (Osland & Bird, 2000) and my view is that it could likewise be extended to the GLOBE study (see House et al., 2002). Although the GLOBE study provides a larger coverage, one could argue that the prescribed actions, which are based on stereotypes of

contexts and people, are rather limited and that addressing leadership at the motivational level could bring more flexibility with regard to adequate potential behaviours in varying contexts. Just as Martin (1993) described culture as something that is always in the process of being created by everybody concerned within the organisation, so, could one argue, is leadership always in the process of being created by everybody involved in the process of leadership.

This contextual view moved leadership research beyond the prescriptive stage of ideal behaviours to leadership as a flexible construct. Although Hollander, Messick and Graen & Uhl-Bien underlined this relational and co-creational aspect of leadership, they yet remained in the distinction between leaders and followers.

Shared or critical leadership rejected this distinction between leader-centred and follower-centred views and considered leadership as a phenomenon (Pearce & Conger, 2003), as a process in which all people can participate (Jackson & Parry, 2011). Leadership was now viewed as “a dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals [...] This influence process often involves peer, or lateral, influence and at other times involves upward or downward hierarchical influence” (Pearce & Conger, 2003, p. 1). Bligh (2011) cited the VISA founder (Hock, 1999, p. 72): “in the deepest sense, the distinction between leaders and followers is meaningless. In every moment of life, we are simultaneously leading and following”, underlining the new perspective on leadership.

Hunter takes an egalitarian view on leadership which is in line with the recent developments in leadership theory: “Everyone is a leader because everyone influences other people every day, for good or not so good, which is why you don’t have to be the boss to be a leader” (Hunter J. C., 2012, p. xvii). He brings forward the argument that “whenever two or more

people are gathered together for a purpose, there is an opportunity for leadership” (Hunter J. C., 2012, p. 28).

In the same way as we cannot not communicate (Watzlawick et al., 1967), one could argue that all people not only *can* participate in the process of leadership, but probably automatically *do* participate. “The shrewd leaders of the future are those who recognize the significance of creating alliances with others whose fates are correlated with their own.” (Heenan & Bennis, 1999, p. 6). This view underlines the important aspect of collaboration and also requires a reflection on potential correlations.

Research focused first on the identity of the leader, on their traits, behaviours, of their transactional or transformative nature. It then shifted to consider the follower side, underlining that both, leaders and followers shape this social exchange. Later, researchers rejected the leader-follower distinction and identified leadership as a shared and flexible phenomenon.

The purpose theory

Theory on leadership increasingly developed away from egocentricity to leadership interested in the well-being of others and in the greater good, from personalised leadership to socialised leadership. While personalised leadership is interested in the good of the leaders and their immediate followers, socialised leadership focuses on the greater good (House & Howell, 1992), closely linked to the idea of social power presented earlier (see Yukl, 2002).

According to Hunter (2012, p. 28), leadership is the “skill of influencing people to work enthusiastically toward goals identified as being for the common good”. In a coordination game, Gillet, Cartwright and Van Vugt (2011) found out that many people would choose to be a leader for the social good, even if it can be costly for themselves.

Socialised leadership is a direction of leadership theory that is more closely concerned with the underlying motivation and goals, one that intends to “leading beautifully” as Ladkin would phrase it (2008, p. 31), which “alerts us to the possibility of a leader’s goals being directed towards the best of human purposes (Ladkin, 2008, p. 40) and highlights in this context the importance of self-mastery, of congruence of one’s acts with the “measured” expression. Leadership research now moved beyond traits, behaviours, the process and construct of leadership and their effects to investigating underlying motives and goals in leadership.

Some authors suggested that we need to learn from bad leadership (for example Kellerman, 2004). It is difficult, however, to separate good leaders from bad leaders in terms of traits because both have qualities enabling good and bad leadership (Conger, 1990). Consequently, we return to the need for research beyond the observable, or, in other words, “we really must look past charisma and delve into the motives of the leader. We must also look past leader behaviours and into the heart of the leader [...] The fundamental “leadership for what?” question is probably the most important yet also the most difficult question to answer” (Jackson & Parry, 2011, p. 113). There is not enough emphasis in current research on the purpose and its relationship with leadership (Kempster et al., 2011).

A strand within leadership theory which one could consider being closely linked to a purpose of the wider good, are the fields of ethical and spiritual leadership. In a comparative analysis of leadership driven by ethics, honesty and spirit, Brown and Trevino (2006) identified that those aspects have in common a concern for others which is derived from altruism.

According to Ciulla (2005, p. 230) an ethical and effective leader can be defined as “someone who does the right thing, the right way and for the right reasons”. According to Ciulla, leaders are good at a maximum of two of those criteria. A related critique is also expressed by

Jackson & Parry (2018) who write that business schools and the business practice support a view of the world which promotes financial greed above all, questioning if the education of future leaders is built on the right reasons.

Price (2000) notes that leaders are held to account for a higher level of ethical and moral standards than followers because their actions have an impact on many people. This relates to the notion of power in leadership mentioned earlier. Leadership has power to influence (Hollander, 1958) and bears potential for change for the wider good.

Hicks (2002) observed that several characteristics in leadership theory have a spiritual connotation such as, self-awareness, authenticity, management of meaning, intrinsic motivation, wisdom, transcendence, and interconnectedness. Fernando has found out that workplace spirituality tends to provide greater meaning to work, superior ethical practices, and greater effectiveness and profitability (Fernando, 2011).

Fry's definition of the purpose of spiritual leadership is to "tap into the fundamental needs of both, leader and follower, for spiritual well-being through calling and membership, to create vision and value congruence across the individual, empowered team, and organization levels [...] to foster higher levels of employee well-being, organizational commitment, financial performance, and social responsibility" (Fry & Cohen, 2009, pp. 266-267).

This statement appears to be the culmination point of the earlier literature: It goes beyond the dialectic concept of leaders vs. followers, it underlines the interrelatedness of oneself, the team, the firm and wider context and seeks to contribute to others (which goes beyond the firm) with something good. This seems to fit to the findings of a case study conducted in Sri Lanka: Fernando, Beale and Geroy (2009) found out that spirituality of leadership can elevate a leader

from transactional leadership, on to transformational leadership, and up to a transcendental level of leadership.

There is a strong link of spiritual leadership to Greenleaf's (1977) servant leadership, which Daft summarised in four key principles: service before self, listening as a means of affirmation, creating trust, nourishing followers to become whole (Daft, 1999). Fernando summarises those points as connectedness which he notes as a key concept in spiritual leadership (Fernando, 2007).

Greenleaf notes that while leaders should strive to become servant leaders, followers will in turn provide those leaders with positive resonance such as "focus and self-direction, gratitude and loyalty, commitment and effort, cooperation and sacrifice, and respect and obedience" (Greenleaf, 1977, quoted in Jackson & Perry, 2011, p. 63). There might be an underlying implicit contract, potentially a psychological contract in the sense of Argyris (1960), between leaders and followers who agree to keep an equilibrium of giving and receiving. This contract would need to be renegotiated if the relationship of giving and receiving becomes unbalanced (see Greenleaf, 1977). It seems that Greenleaf hints at the interdependency of the participants in the leadership process and underlines the non-egoistic, altruistic motivation of leaders which is in line with the more recent turn on leadership theory as described above.

Tourish and Tourish (2010) see a risk that managers might use spirituality as a tool to manipulate their subordinates and therefore bring forward the argument that work and life should be kept separate. They also say that spirituality should never be used to deceive workers with hypocritical spirituality (Tourish & Tourish, 2010). This links to the theory on authentic leadership in contrast to pseudo-transformational leadership. As with all great tools that

leadership theory has identified throughout the years, recent literature points us more and more towards the need to align the tools to a purpose that is directed towards the greater good.

Hunter (2012) gives an example of a challenge we can face in bringing motivation together with behaviour: “I have ten crazy, command-and-control, Gestapo-like supervisors in my building, so I told them to read your book. They liked your book [The Servant]. They agreed with your book. But they are still crazy! How do you get them to change? [...] Where are all the servant leaders?’ Therein lies the crux of the problem. (p. xxii) [...] The key is to get people practicing the new behaviours even if they have to fake it to make it” (p. xxvii). People might understand the positive effects of translated love in practice of leadership, but they might be used to certain behaviours and could experience difficulties to modify these behaviours, even though the intention might be there.

Taylor’s (2020) work on defining compassion and compassionate behaviours suggests that behaviour is a result of an underlying motivation and attitude. One could, therefore, argue that the motivational level is worth an in-depth exploration in the context of leadership. In leadership practice, it can be expected that there will be multiple, unpredictable situations in which certain prescribed, specific behaviours will not meet the needs of the situation. A certain long-term motivation, however, could result in numerous facets of behaviour reflecting this motivation in response to a situation at hand: “What marks all great leaders who run such companies is their ability to say or do the right thing whenever the moment requires it” (Gunn, 2002). Investigating love at the level of motivation, together with attitudes and behaviours, has the potential to inspire adequate actions in various contexts.

In their analysis of compassion, Goetz, Keltner and Simon-Thomas (2010) observed that 1) babies are born and need someone to take care of them, 2) it makes sense to choose partners who will remain bonded to the relationship in order to protect the young in their vulnerable years, and 3) altruism helps building communally advantageous relationships which in turn will lead to broader social networks, stronger cultures, greater chance of survival. The authors highlight important phases: as we mature, we need less support and become more responsible for our immediate surrounding and as we continue growing, we become more and more responsible for the society around us. Interestingly, I observe a parallel to the development of leadership theory, one that matures from an ego-centric leader to a reciprocal and transcendent leadership, taking on increasingly more responsibility for oneself and others.

Hunter's view is in accord with the view on taking on responsibility: "Great organizations are a group of all leaders, where everyone is taking personal responsibility for the success of the team and their individual influence on the customer and one another" (Hunter J. C., 2012, p. xvii). Hunter further makes a connection to servant leadership: "Being the servant is simply the business of identifying and meeting the legitimate needs of the people entrusted to your care. Meeting their needs, not their wants – being their servant, not their slave. And what they need may not be what they want" (Hunter J. C., 2012, p. xviii). "And isn't leadership simply doing the right thing for the people entrusted to your care?" (Hunter J. C., 2012, p. xvi).

In my opinion, the term "entrusted to your care" should be extended, however, to on whom and what we have influence. "It took me nearly a lifetime to learn the great truth that all of life is relational – with God, self, and others. And this is even and perhaps especially true in business because without people there is no business" (Hunter J. C., 2012, p. 41).

With a focus on socialised leadership, research explored more and more the motives and reasons in leadership. Servant leadership is an example of a turn from egocentricity to altruistic motives in leadership, albeit remaining in the leader-follower distinction. Research on ethical and spiritual leadership highlighted aspects of interrelatedness with motives to act to the benefit of the greater good, paving the way for transcendental leadership.

This concludes the review of the wider leadership literature which highlighted key developments of theory as well as the need for qualitative research concerned with potential motives and purpose of leadership. The intent of this research is to contribute with empirical insights in this area, exploring leadership and its motives from the perspective of love within the phenomenon of leadership. The next section focuses on literature specifically relating to love in leadership.

Love and Leadership

This thesis is concerned with the concept of love as potential motivation and purpose in leadership. As love is a term with many definitions, it is important to note that love in the context of this thesis is understood as spiritual love or divine love, also referred to as *agapé* (see Collins, 2021).

Spiritual love

My interest in love as motive in leadership was inspired by my personal journey. I saw how, particularly in the context of the world religions, members would rather highlight the differences of their organisation compared to others than what they had in common. At this time, I came across a book written by the Dalai Lama – its German title can be literally translated as *The Heart of the Religions*, the English original is titled *Ethics for a Whole World*. In this book, the Dalai Lama highlights that the essence of all religions is love (H. H. the Dalai Lama, 2012).

Over the next years, I explored spiritual texts and speeches from spiritual representatives from Buddhism, Christianity, and Hinduism and found that they indeed pointed at love as common basis of these world religions:

God is set equal to love, for example in The Bible, 1. John, 4:7-8 (NKJV):

Knowing God Through Love

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

The most important commandment within the Christian faith is to love, as stated for example in Mark 12:29 (NKJV):

29 Jesus answered him, “The [k]first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ [l]This is the first commandment. 31 And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

[k] *foremost*

The Upanishads, a collection of foundational philosophical texts within Hinduism, also contains texts which support this view, for example in the Upanishads, page 193:

The Lord of Love shines in the hearts of all.

Seeing him in all creatures, the wise

Forget themselves in the service of all.

The Lord is their joy, the Lord is their rest;

Such as they are the lovers of the Lord.

By truth, meditation, and self-control

One can enter into this state of joy

And see the Self shining in a pure heart.

Throughout the Upanishads, we can read of the “Lord of Love”, which is derived from *devatmasakti*, which literally means “god-self-energy” (Easwaran, 2007, p. 360). These are a few

examples of spiritual perspectives pointing at love as shared essence of the world's religions and help framing the understanding of love in the context of this research.

The exploration of love as foundational core within the spiritual context led me, as a business professional, to wonder how this divine love could look like in business practice. Leadership is an exciting field within the theory of business and beyond. Leadership is often set equal to influence, to the power behind change (Burns, 1978; Hollander, 1958). As such, it could be an impactful means by which love could be expressed and integrated with business practice.

Love in leadership theory

Love found appreciation and justification in the theory of leadership. Research on love and leadership considered love as a combination of attitudes and behaviours, as reciprocal serving, and as inspiration for the good. Researchers identified impacts expected from love in leadership, attempted to scale love in leadership and all point at the need for further research on love in leadership. The following sections will describe prior research in more depth.

In the context of leadership, Patterson (2003) referred to love as *agapé*, as an unselfish moral love grounded in compassion and appreciation of a common humanity (Patterson, 2003). Van Dierendonck and Patterson (2015) explored this compassionate love and positioned it at the core of servant leadership (see Greenleaf, 1977), as “a practical translation for the need to serve” (p. 119). According to the authors, compassionate love will lead to moral emotions and strengthens virtuous traits and attitudes, such as humility, gratitude, forgiveness, and altruism, which in turn will encourage servant leadership behaviour in leaders and ultimately improve their followers' well-being.

The authors identified that the leader with compassionate love as motivation is someone with a focus on the employee first, then on the talents of the employee, and lastly on how this

benefits the organisation. According to the authors, servant leaders build on compassionate love as motivation as they learn the gifts and talents of each one of the followers (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). They take the view that an attitude grounded in love will be seen in actions and expressions.

Van Dierendonck and Patterson highlight valuable potential aspects of love in leadership as they link it to servant leadership. The authors point at an interrelatedness of traits and attitudes, building on love, with servant leader behaviours and the resulting expected wellbeing of followers. It is important to note, however, that servant leadership remains within the dialectic identity of leader and follower. It might be worth considering love within the paradigm of transcendental leadership.

Within the leader-follower paradigm, other authors express similar perspectives: According to Russel (2011) compassionate love in servant leaders is about expressing a genuine appreciation for followers and caring for their people (Russel & Stone, 2002). “It is about seeing followers as hired hearts versus hired hands. It is shown by leaders who consider each person as a total person – one with needs, wants and desires” (Winston, 2002, p. 9, referred to by van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015, p. 121).

Winston (2002) brought forward that compassionate love encourages a leader to do something good for the follower because it is the right thing to do. An important aspect for the author is that the leader thereby does not seek praise for his or her behaviour.

These perspectives oscillate around an intrinsic motivation of love and care which is enacted to the benefit of followers. Some authors support the view that this enacted motivation of love is reciprocated by benevolent behaviour from followers: According to Ferch & Mitchell (2001), for example, to lead by love is to be emotionally, physically, and spiritually present for

the follower and this relationship is reciprocal. It also includes the premise of challenging any behaviour that is inconsistent with love.

Daft (2002) also highlights reciprocal effects of leadership. The author investigated the effects of fear as an antidote to love in leadership and observed that fear led to a “loss of the best people along with the knowledge they take with them, the lack of allowing employees to perform at optimal levels, and the dreaded avoidance that will occur as employees feel disconnected”. It “stifles innovation and creativity as there is little room for learning, growing or risk taking” and followers will lose confidence, commitment, enthusiasm, imagination, and motivation. On the other side, the author found that leading with love will lead followers to feeling alive, connected, and energised. Love encourages “acts of helping, cooperation, sharing and understanding” (Daft, 2002, quoted in van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015, p. 123), thereby underlining promising effects of love in leadership on followers and the organizational behaviour.

Gunn (2002) likewise observes similar aspects of reciprocity when the author explains that servant leaders exhibit love by leading with feeling; this in turn would foster understanding, gratitude, kindness, forgiveness, and compassion. However, one could argue that feelings are rather volatile and dependent on various circumstances and therefore are potentially not a solid basis for love leadership as understood in this thesis. Or, in other words, love is a decision, not a feeling (Smalley & Trent, 1989).

Interestingly, Daft points not only at the reciprocated behaviour from followers, but also highlights that the leader, who leads by love, is perceived differently. Daft (2002) also noted that while those who lead by fear show “arrogance, selfishness, deception, unfairness, disrespect”, those who lead with love manifest “dignity, respect, and honor” (Daft, 2002, quoted in van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015, p. 123).

To measure love perceived by followers, Ricciardi (2014) investigated love as an independent variable and leadership as a dependent variable and tested the perceived level of a leader's love using Sternberg's 45 question triangular love scale (Sternberg, 1987). Ricciardi translated love into types of leaders and types of behaviours associated with those types of leaders.

As Daft, Boyatzis, Smith, & Blaize (2006) also see beneficial effects for the leader: They found out that coaching others with compassion will bring forward beneficial psychophysiological effects with resulting increased well-being of the leader and their long-term effectiveness. Similarly, Gunn (2002) suggests that love will lead to serving the best interest of others, "illuminating the corporate culture, and freeing the leader from self-doubt, self-criticism, and self-imposed limitations" (Gunn, 2002, quoted in van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015, p. 123).

Overall, the authors above see the enactment of love in a leader doing something good for their followers with various facets of expected positive impacts. Also, they highlight reciprocal aspects of this relationship and beneficial effects on the perception and wellbeing of the leader. These authors have in common a focus on the leader and an intent to act in the interest of the followers. The categorisation into types of leaders and types of behaviours could be challenged as stereotyping, similarly to Hofstede's work and the GLOBE study (see social exchange theory in Chapter Two), and the distinction into leader and follower considered as unnecessarily dialectic. Nonetheless, these authors provide helpful views on how love could look like in leadership practice in terms of a leader's behaviour and expected positive impacts.

There are however also perspectives on love, its enactment and its beneficial impact which go beyond the leader-follower distinction. Authors refer here to *others* or to *people* as

recipients of love leadership. Underwood (2008), for example, suggested that compassionate love is *others-centred* and that it includes attitudes, actions, and expressions. Cameron (2003) sees positive effects if leaders *love those with whom they work* such as: “higher commitment, greater synergy, increased creativity, and improved quality” (quoted in Caldwell & Dixon, 2009, p. 93).

Covey (2004, p. 98) suggests that “leadership is communicating to people their worth and potential so clearly that they come to see it in themselves” and compares great leaders’ treatment of others to grandparents’ love and care about their grandchildren. The comparison with the grandparents’ love offers the opportunity to consider that leadership behaviours and character traits could be different depending on the needs of the recipient, just as the grandchildren have different needs and the grandparents will adapt to these needs, and all could have its deserved place if grounded in love. Similarly, leadership grounded in love can become visible coming from different people exhibiting different behaviours and traits.

Sprecher & Fehr (2005, p. 630) see compassionate love as an “an attitude toward other(s), either close others or strangers or all of humanity; containing feelings, cognitions, and behaviors that are focused on caring, concern, tenderness, and an orientation toward supporting, helping, and understanding the other(s)”. However, these authors also add: “particularly when the other(s) is (are) perceived to be suffering or in need.”. These authors underline that compassionate love includes a focus on alleviating somebody's struggle. In contrast to this, Oman (2011) highlighted that love is not necessarily limited to those who suffer or to offenders, as the term compassion or forgiveness may suggest.

Some authors highlight the focus of love should be directed to the benefit of others, as opposed to taking advantage of them: According to Autry (1991) “good management is largely a

matter of love. Or if you're uncomfortable with that word, call it caring, because proper management involves caring for people, not manipulating them" (p. 17).

Caldwell and Dixon (2009) support this view of focusing on employee's welfare rather than seeing them as a means to achieve goals. They see a translation of love into leadership practice "when leaders care, commit to the welfare and happiness of people within their organization, and thereby change their focus on employees' worth and potential, instead of seeing them as means to reach organizational goals". They argue that this "helps an organization to be based on trust instead of on control" (Caldwell & Dixon, 2009, quoted in van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015, p. 122).

In addition, they make the argument that love, together with forgiveness and trust, are critical values of today's organisational leaders who are committed to maximising value for organisations *while* helping organisational members to flourish. The authors provide here a new perspective: organisational success does not have to be at the expense of organisational members, but can go hand in hand if built on love.

Caldwell & Dixon (2009) describe love as "the unconditional acts of respect, caring and kindness that communicate the worth of others and that promote their welfare, growth and wholeness. Great leaders recognize that investing in others, by demonstrating a commitment to their best interests, not only strengthens relationships and enriches lives, but improves organizations along the way".

Similar to Covey (2004), the authors underline the importance of love in leadership to be helpful to the self-worth of others. They conclude that "a leadership model that is personal and authentic enables leaders to touch the hearts of those with whom they work – encouraging

colleagues to both become their best and to achieve the excellence required to excel in a global marketplace” (Caldwell & Dixon, 2009, p. 98).

In addition, the authors speak about love as part of a culture of an enduring work environment: “Perhaps, the greatness of a culture that embraces love, forgiveness, and trust as its core values is, that it seeks to create not a perfect work environment but an enduring one – an environment that touches hearts, inspires individuals to self-discovery, and builds relationships that extend beyond the context of work alone to help people in all the facets of their lives” (Caldwell & Dixon, 2009, p. 98).

Their view of love as part of a culture is supported by other authors: Argandona (2011) argues that love helps creating a better, more human climate in the workplace, and Williams (2004) speaks about creating “a caring culture that emphasizes the relationship between love and leadership” (p. 4), referring to unconditional self-sacrificing love for others.

Research on love and leadership directs at love as basis for behaviours aimed to benefit followers, others more generally, or both, the organisation *and* its members. Some authors go further and suggest that caring leadership is not what one does but what one *becomes* (Pellicer, 2008) and that love is primarily about seeing others differently, namely from a basis of oneness: “a consciously chosen mind-set that allows us to see others differently – a deep respect based upon a oneness with others” (Ferris, 1988, p. 42) which is closer to the more recent transcendental understanding of leadership as interrelated phenomenon directed at the wider good.

In her dissertation *Love and Organizational Leadership*, Self investigated love in leadership as derived from the Bible, Corinthians 13. According to the author, “leaders who lead others from love (agapé) [...] a) create connections with followers, b) passionately stand against

wrong with honesty and compassion, c) engender mutuality and community, d) respond naturally from the internalized Spirit of God, e) authentically exemplify integrity of self, f) demonstrate equal regard for self and others, g) are inviting and accessible to all, h) create dependable and sustainable individual results, i) act from an authentic presence of incarnational love, and j) offer a viable model for contemporary leadership” (p. iii).

Self’s investigation of love mirrors various facets of leadership research on love discussed before. We can see aspects of connection and mutuality, of defending the good, and acting from a basis of love. The author also adds a new perspective: the equal regard for oneself and others which is close to this thesis’ understanding of spiritual love.

Concluding remarks

In summary, leadership literature shows a development from an identity theory to a social exchange theory and increasingly towards leadership as interrelated phenomenon which acknowledges the responsibility of all participants in the process while aligning organisational activities to a purpose that is directed towards the wider good. It highlights the need for leadership research concerned with motivational aspects.

Love finds its place in leadership theory and offers a justified potential in leadership, not only in terms of motivation, but as an aspect permeating different aspects of leadership, such as attitude, actions, purpose, and impact, thereby highlighting the interrelation of love as motivation with resulting behaviours. It provides valuable insights into how love could look like in leadership. At the same time, there is a need for empirical research on love and leadership to confirm, complement, or contrast existing theories. This thesis aims to contribute to informing literature with new insights love in leadership and motivational aspects in leadership, more broadly.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, I will present the role of reflexivity as part of this thesis. I will describe and explain my philosophical assumptions that have shaped this research and give insights into my preunderstanding and the chosen methods related to the purpose of this research as well as the rationale behind these decisions. The ontological and epistemological considerations are followed by a description of the research design, in which I will explain which decisions I have taken and why. I present considerations related to the data collection and to the analysis of the data.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity has been key at every stage of this research. It allowed a personal exploration of philosophical assumptions and helped me to raise my level of awareness, understand in more depth, and be transparent in my role as a researcher as well as in the decisions which I took in relation to this research.

Lynch (2000, p. 29) points out different meanings of reflexivity. In line with this perspective, reflexivity within this research is understood as philosophical self-reflection and methodological self-consciousness. The first “involves an inward-looking, sometimes confessional and self-critical examination of one’s own beliefs and assumptions”. The second “takes into account one’s relationships with those whom one studies”. I would add to the methodological self-consciousness, conscious decisions taken throughout the design, data collection, and analysis which Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest should be an integral part of a thematic analysis.

According to Bryman (2016), “the researcher is viewed as implicated in the construction of knowledge through the stance that he or she adopts in relation to what is observed and through

the ways in which an account is transmitted in the form of a text. This understanding entails an acknowledgement of the implications and significance of the researcher's choices as both observer and writer." (p. 388) In the hermeneutic tradition that I have adopted throughout this research and given the spiritual aspect of the work, I acknowledge to be a part of this research and not separate from it. Bryman's view underlines my understanding and acknowledgement of the active role I take as a researcher in the process of this research (Foster and Parker, 1995), making it a "part of the analysis rather than a polluting element" (McAuley, 2004, p. 198), which becomes evident, for example, in the choice of the first person throughout this thesis.

In agreement with Schwandt (2000), I have engaged with my own biases as a prerequisite for understanding. The alignment and spiral engagement with the literature as suggested by Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) helped to facilitate my own reflexivity and provide academic authenticity.

Philosophical assumptions

The identification of philosophical assumptions underpinning this research inspired my self-reflection and was essential in designing, conducting, analysing, and interpreting this research. "To ensure a strong research design, researchers must choose a research paradigm that is congruent with their beliefs about the nature of reality" (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006, p. 2).

I have become increasingly cognisant that my reality is not necessarily the one which others perceive. What I believe to be truth is not necessarily considered as truth by others. When I started my doctoral journey, I could have easily assumed that others might agree with me once I convince them. Now I can say that every perspective has its equal right to exist.

To accept this ambiguity has been one of my great learnings throughout this research process. Let me therefore briefly explain how I understand reality, what I consider as knowledge and what impact my perspective had on this research.

As King points out, “any framework for identifying philosophical positions inevitably involves some simplification and portrays positions as more distinct and discrete than they actually are” (King et al., p. 18), and I can relate to this statement. However, within the existent paradigms, as an individual and in my role as researcher, I see myself tending towards the idealist and critical space.

I consider my ontology as realist – I do believe that there is a reality outside and independent of our minds – but I do acknowledge that my perception of it is limited by several aspects that constitute our human nature, such as our cognitive and sensory abilities, to be able to see things (material things or social realities) the way they truly are.

I believe that interpretivist epistemological perspectives acknowledge the imperfection of knowing, or the transitive nature of knowing, as well as the imperfection of the knowledge generation process in itself. Therefore, my epistemological positioning can be considered subjectivist (Mc Auley et al., 2014).

With this perspective, I agree with Kant’s transcendental idealism and Schopenhauer’s perspective on the same. In their view, transcendental idealism distinguishes between the phenomenon and the thing in itself: “I know things only as they appear to me, as I represent them in virtue of the constitution of my intellect” (Schopenhauer, 1928).

In this sense, I consider Bhaskar’s critical realism close to transcendental idealism as “critical realists believe there is a world that exists independent of the human mind but cannot be accessed in its entirety, rather only as glimpses or partial fragments” (Letourneau & Allen, 2006,

quoted in Levers, 2013, p. 2). I agree with Bhaskar when he underlines the interrelatedness of our world's phenomena – physical and spiritual – as part of his later work on meta-reality (Bhaskar, 2002). However, I cannot agree with his earlier works, in which he denies the relevance of well-established positivist and subjectivist research methods (Strydom, 2007), as I do acknowledge the relevance of both approaches.

Guba and Lincoln, representatives of subjectivist ontology, say: “Reality from a relativist perspective is not distinguishable from the subjective experience of it” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, quoted by Levers, 2013, p. 2). This seems to be close to transcendental idealism in the sense that what we perceive as reality, ultimately *is* our (version of) reality. However, relativist (or subjectivist) ontology assumes there is no other reality than the perceived one, whereas the critical realism (or transcendental idealism) assumes a reality beyond our perception of it. “In this [subjectivist ontological] way of thinking, reality is human experience and human experience is reality. This is beyond two people experiencing an external world differently; rather, their worlds are different” (Stajduhar, Balneaves, & Thorne, 2001, quoted in Levers, 2013, p. 2).

My philosophical viewpoints have shaped how I designed and engaged with this research which will be explained in the following sections.

Research design

The following sections present how this research has been designed, including methodological considerations, methods, sampling, access, contact, qualified participants, and sample size. It includes considerations of organisational nature, such as the choice of time and place, facilitating technology, language, and recording, as well as ethical considerations.

Methodological considerations

My research design is formed by my ontological and epistemological assumptions as well as by the focus of my research. Specifically, this means that I believe an appropriate research design is one that helps me best in finding potential answers to my research question. To explore the concept of love in leadership, I needed to engage with a personal side of leadership and investigate what is behind the obvious. Therefore, I have chosen a qualitative approach as a guiding framework for my research design.

In seeking to provide insights into the concept of love in leadership and how love could look like in leadership practice, I have engaged with the phenomenon and social process of leadership as well as inner motivations, attributed meanings, and the enactment of these in the process of leadership. The choice of a qualitative research approach allowed me to investigate the aspects of interest in depth while also being conscious of the subjectivity throughout the process.

This thesis can be positioned in the hermeneutic tradition, informed by the in-depth phenomenological approach proposed by Seidman (2013), and closely linked to hermeneutic phenomenology in which the aim is “to construct an animating, evocative description of human actions, behaviours, intentions, and experiences as we meet them in the lifeworld” (van Manen, 1990, p. 19). I have followed the hermeneutic spiral (see Gummesson, 2003) by reiterating my engagement with the data and the literature as my insights were emerging. In line with my pragmatic philosophical stance, in that the method should serve the research interest, I did not restrict the hermeneutic spiral as single, double, or triple. Rather, I engaged in the hermeneutic spiral as many times as I found useful to increase my understanding. The intention was not to generalise, but rather to provide insights into potential perspectives, to understand and make

sense of intrinsic aspects in regard to the research focus and to gain insights from personal narratives for which a qualitative approach is best suited.

Methods

I sought to explore participant thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in relation to the research focus in a flexible way, allowing participants to explore their actual experiences and attributed meanings. As I was seeking to gain in-depth understanding of the participant's motivation behind their action, I have chosen to conduct interviews, enriched by personal diaries.

Semi-structured interviews allowed me to explore people's experiences in depth and maintain a focus on the research topic while at the same time following the participant's train of thought which allowed aspects to arise that I had not foreseen (King et al., 2019, p. 63). In addition, it allowed me to pursue the research topic conversationally through open-ended, non-leading questions (King et al. 2019) and to ask follow-up questions (such as *why* or *how*) to explore an issue in more depth (Rapley, 2001, p. 315).

The insights from the interviews were planned to be enriched by personal diaries if the participants agreed to provide these after the interview. "In the last analysis the text is the mediation by which we understand ourselves" (Ricoeur, 1973, p. 141). I expected the use of diaries to provide in-depth insights for the research and simultaneously help the participants to understand themselves better as Ricoeur (1981) suggests. According to Alaszewski (2006), diaries in social research provide the researcher with rich information about an individual's life, activities, relationships, and their evaluation of specific events. This research aimed to cover these aspects and to expand on the *how* and *why* as mentioned above.

The choice of semi-structured interviews, enriched by diaries, formed the basis for the subsequent aspects of research design, from drafting an interview guide, to becoming familiar

with interviewing techniques relevant for this particular type of inquiry, to sampling and recruiting participants for the interview and the diary, as well as to documenting and analysing the expected data.

I was aware at the onset that inevitably, this form of inquiry would generate a large unstructured data set which would require a thorough and time-intensive documentation and analysis. Still, this form of inquiry was from my perspective best suited to explore the research question for the reasons described above.

Sampling

I made use of criterion and snowball sampling (Patton 1990; Palys, 2008) and approached those individuals who are said to or who claim themselves to be in a leading position and to reflect *agapé*, care, or people-centricity in their leadership.

This research was conducted as an emerging piece of work, in the spirit of hermeneutics. The number of participants, therefore, was informed by what was emerging from the conversations with the research participants and concluded after a perceived saturation of insights (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It was not my intention to research organisations. By interviewing individuals from different organisations and sectors, my goal was to explore how love could look like in leadership practice regardless of specific contexts.

At the end of the interviews with the initial sample, I asked participants if they could recommend further interview partners who, from their perspective, have a similar approach to leadership. Participants provided contact details of people who would fit the criteria after the interviews. As such, the initial criterion sampling has been extended by snowball sampling (see Bryman, 2016).

Access

In those cases, in which potential participants have publicly expressed the motivation behind their leadership, I expected these individuals to have an interest in participating in a research area they could relate to, which I found indeed to be the case. In other instances, individuals were aware of my research focus and already expressed interest in participating. The snowballing sampling helped me to tap into established relationships with the participants from my initial sample.

I was personally acquainted with some of the targeted participants at the early stage of this research. While I believe this facilitated the access, I was also aware of the pitfalls that can come along with easy access. The risk was that either the participant or I as the interviewer distort the interview in one way or another to not jeopardise the established relationship which I did not find to be the case (Seidman, 2013, p. 46).

I was acquainted with four participants before the data collection, another four participants were suggested to me through people from my network, and eight participants were identified as result of the snowballing effect. I perceived that prior interaction with some of the research participants was facilitating the creation of a trusted atmosphere, which is generally needed to encourage participants to share personal experiences (King et al., 2019). However, also without prior interaction, research participants generally opened up and shared their personal experiences.

Contact

After a theoretical pre-selection of potential participants based on the criteria described above (King et al., 2019), I reached out to the potential participants via phone call, voice message, or e-mail when a telephone number was not available. I briefly introduced myself and

the research, explained how I gained access to the person's contact details and proposed a meeting in person for an interview. After the initial contact, I followed up by e-mail, to thank them for agreeing to participate, to confirm the agreed-upon time and place for the interview and to share documents with details related to the study (see Appendix).

In two instances, I sought to invite individuals from large organisations who held the position of Chief Executive Officer (CEO). These organisations were recommended to me as they would underline the aspect of *agapé* in their firm's leadership approach. It was not my intention to research an organisation, but I was interested in the perspective of the leaders of these organisations. In these two cases, I would have preferred reaching out to the individuals directly or reaching out through peers rather than people above or below them in their hierarchy as Seidman (2013) suggested this procedure to be more effective. However, I was required to contact "formal gatekeepers" (Seidman, 2013, p. 47), the executive assistants of these two CEOs. Both times, my request was forwarded, yet I received a negative response after a follow up. This could be the reflection of a typically low response rate to e-mail requests which comes from a general scepticism of receiving e-mails from unknown senders and because it is easy to disregard an e-mail (Seidman, 2013, p. 51). I have found e-mail contact helpful as a means to follow-up on arrangements and for further information participants wanted to share.

Qualified participants and sample size

Data has been collected through in-person in-depth interviews with people who were said to lead with love, care, or people-centricity (based on their own or other people's view) and enhanced by brief post-interview narratives of participants who were willing to share experiences outside the interview. The data corpus of this research consisted of the interview transcripts,

diary transcripts, and notes taken during the interviews and telephone conversations with research participants.

This study did not aim for a representation of society. Rather, it qualified participants based on their relevance related to the focus of this study, and where possible, diversity in remaining aspects. The purposive (criterion) sampling, extended by snowball sampling and concluded based on perceived theoretical saturation (Bryman, 2016), led to a sample size of 16 participants. Guest et al. (2006, p. 65, quoted in Bryman p. 417) defined data saturation as “to get a reliable sense of thematic exhaustion and variability within [the] data set” and observed this to be the generally the case after twelve interviews. The authors point out however that their sample has been relatively homogeneous and that more heterogeneous samples might require more interviews to reach the point of saturation. I concur with the author’s observation. I noticed that themes seemed to be recurrent after around ten to twelve interviews which has been confirmed in the last four interviews.

Participants can be grouped as follows: Eleven participants were based in Switzerland and five participants based in Germany. Participants held either senior management or C-suite positions. Three of the participants were women. The number of employees within the company, with which the participants were associated, ranged from four employees to around 370 thousand employees. Research participants were associated with the following industry sectors of the global industry classification standard (MSCI, 2019):

- Consumer Discretionary – Automobiles & Components (two)
- Consumer Discretionary – Consumer Services – Diversified Consumer Services (two)
- Consumer Discretionary – Consumer Services – Hotels, Restaurants & Leisure (one)
- Consumer Discretionary – Retailing – Specialty Retail (one)

- Consumer Staples – Food, Beverages & Tobacco – Food Products (one)
- Financials – Insurance (one)
- Health Care – Health Care Equipment & Services (one)
- Industrials – Capital Goods – Construction & Engineering (one)
- Industrials – Capital Goods – Machinery (two)
- Industrials – Electrical Equipment (one)
- Information Technology – IT Services (three)

Germany and Switzerland were the place of research due to the geographical proximity of my place of residence at the time of the data collection, which was expected to facilitate access and in-person interviews.

I did not actively seek to differentiate gender or specific backgrounds or social categories in the selection of participants, as I was not aiming for a representation of society or specific sub-groups. In line with my ontological approach of voluntarism, I believe that the classification of people into social clusters such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, and age, is discriminative. Nonetheless, I remained conscious and attentive to the possibility of the existence of these social clusters, as I do acknowledge that social identities may have an influence on the relationship between myself as researcher and the participant, and therefore on the quality of the interview (Seidman 2013, p. 112; Bhaskar 1991). The characteristics mentioned above are a descriptive result of the applied sampling procedure as presented at the beginning of this section and stated for transparency purposes.

Time and place

Regarding the logistics of the interview, participants were invited to choose a time and place which was convenient and familiar to them, at which they would feel comfortable and at

which the interview would most likely not be disturbed (Seidman, 2013, p. 53). To allow for enough depth but at the same time avoid fatigue, I have chosen to schedule the interviews for 60 minutes (King et al., 2019) and was open to prolong the conversation to allow participants to conclude on their train of thought.

I was prepared to meet potential logistic challenges by proposing and making use of long-distance interviewing procedures, for example via telephone or video call, if this would have facilitated the participation. Long-distance interviewing was ultimately not required. All interviews were conducted in person at the time and location which the interviewee had chosen. In-person interaction was facilitated by the geographical proximity to my place of residence with a typical distance of around 500-700 km.

Technology and Instant-Messaging

Seidman (2013), referring to his colleague's experience related to interviewing students affected by current information technology, sees the tendency to instant communication as a hindering element to achieve "communicative carefulness" (p. 114), i.e. to develop an equitable relationship in face-to-face interviews. I believe that it can be quite the opposite. Some participants chose to provide their reflections post interview through instant voice messages which I believe facilitated the willingness to share further details.

I generally perceive the barrier to communicate to be much lower by sending a voice message through an instant messenger rather than calling the recipient or arranging a meeting. I consider this means of communication as mutual respect to the other person's and my own time constraints. Sending a voice message, or several, requires dedicated attention and allows the recipient to perceive the intonation and tone of what is said. Also, it allows to talk without being

interrupted. It is recorded and the recipient can refer to the audio message to make sure, for example, that they commented on all that was mentioned.

At the same time, it gives the recipient the flexibility to listen to the audio at a time that is convenient to them. In this regard, the process of sending audio messages could even be considered to establish equity between the sender and the recipient which helps to maintain the mutual respect required for successful research (see Seidman 2013).

For the purpose of interviews, however, this instant messenger-based procedure would have lacked the spontaneity of the “friendly conversation” type of interview (Spradley, 1979, quoted in Seidman 2013, p. 14) for which I was aiming. However, I found it helpful in collecting narratives (diaries) from participant’s experiences after the interview. It allowed participants to instantly reproduce and share an experience at a time and place convenient to them. Participants who agreed to provide further insights after the interview were however free to decide which medium they found most convenient to share further insights into their leadership experience.

Narratives or further additions to the interview have been shared in seven cases: in two cases through instant voice messages, in one case through instant text messages, in two cases by written e-mail, and in two cases via telephone call.

Language and Recording

Vygotsky (1987, from Seidman p. 106) suggests that language and thinking is intertwined. From my own experience of growing up bilingual, I know that some topics are easier for me to express in one language and other in the second language. Therefore, I invited the participants to choose the language with they were most comfortable, and which suited them best to express their train of thought. This was the case when participants would usually speak Swiss-German dialect. Where required, I have offered an immediate translation into high

German, the primary language of the contact between the participant and myself, for clarification purposes.

To better focus on the conversations with the research participants and maintain detailed documentation, I have recorded the conversations and transcribed them after the interview. Participants have been informed about this procedure before the appointment was scheduled, have given their consent and have been offered to receive a copy of the transcript.

As I have engaged with research participants located in Switzerland and Germany, the research has provided texts in Swiss-German and German. Transcripts have been written in high German for the entire data set. This research has been limited to those people whose language I understood and spoke fluently, as I perceived the involvement of a translator to be inhibiting to sharing personal experiences.

Ethical considerations

This research involved human participants and required attention to ethical considerations. It fully complies with the university's ethical requirements, including for example that the participants identity (corporate or personal) is kept confidential, and information presented anonymously. To reduce the risk of participation in the research and to protect participants against vulnerability during and after the data collection (Kelman, 1977), in line with the standard forms of Sheffield Hallam University, participants have received the documents by e-mail, prior to the meeting, detailing out various aspects of the research, such as, for example, the purpose of the research, why the person has been selected as potential research participant, what is expected from them if they decide to participate, what they can expect from the research (e.g. benefit from personal reflective process). It included insights into the procedure of data collection, as well as information on data privacy and a consent form which the

participants were asked to sign before the interview (see Appendix). Both researcher and participant kept a copy of those documents. I have offered participants to share any collected data that concerns them and to clarify aspects concerning their privacy (see Seidman, 2013).

Before the conversation began, I referred to these documents and went orally through the content of these documents. I used this initial review also to allow participants to decide if they were still interested to participate and to clarify any questions, if participants had any (Seidman, 2013, p. 51).

Anticipating that participants might not be able to fully understand and speak English or would be more comfortable in another language, I was ready to translate the afore-mentioned documents into a language which participants best understood. In all cases, these documents were translated and distributed in German.

Participants have not been remunerated for their participation. As a gesture of appreciation and as a concluding statement of the interviewing relationship, participants received a small gift with a note thanking for their participation in line with standard procedures (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Yow 1994).

This concludes the considerations on the research design of this research.

Data collection

Before the data collection could begin, a number of organisational aspects had to be taken into consideration. Among these was the consideration of necessary formalities, such as the participant information sheet and consent form; the introduction of the research to the participants in more depth to ensure transparency and relevance; the consideration of the setting, which includes the time and place but also my appearance as researcher; any technical arrangements such as recording equipment and backups; the preparation of an interview guide

for the interviews as well as an instruction for the diaries in case participants chose to provide these.

Interview guide

Based on the understanding of the research topic gained during the initial literature review and the focus of this research, I elaborated an interview guide. This document was intended to help me maintain a focus on the research question during the interview while allowing participants to lead the conversation to those aspects they want to bring forward.

The guide was used as a list of potential topics and questions to consider in the conversations. It listed major areas of interest to be explored during the interviews and to refer to, if by experience topics were usually named by other participants, yet not mentioned in a particular interview. I used this list as a loose reminder of topics to consider rather than a strict guide for the conversation and remained open to unexpected topics that could come up during the interview and flexible to the order in which I would inquire these topics (King et al., 2019, p. 63).

Initial topics of interest were actions, meanings given to and motivations for actions, relationships (Lofland et al., 2006), interactions, strategies, tactics, consequences of actions (Strauss, 1987), ways of expression and reflexivity (Mason, 2002). These were clustered in categories, informed by Patton (2015): What: Background, What: Leadership, How: Mindset; Why: Opinions/ Values/ Meaning/ Purpose. The interview guide used during the data collection is presented in the Appendix.

I was interested in the interviewees' perspective on leadership, examples of their leadership experience, meanings, values, purposes, and motivations they saw behind their actions. The intention was to let the participants explore how they would describe their

leadership. I was aiming to find out their perspective on leadership, if it was one-directional or multi-directional, and their thoughts on those views. I was hoping to find out what leadership meant to them, if and how the motivation behind their leadership relates to love and how they reflect their motivation in their leadership.

I was looking to understand the *why* behind the participant's actions, values, meaning, purpose as well as the role and degree of reflexivity in their lives. Although this research looks particularly at love as a concept in leadership, I did not mention love unless it was mentioned by the interviewee to reduce the interviewer's bias.

Interview process

By considering leadership as a social phenomenon and exposing it to hermeneutic research, my intention was to achieve greater understanding of the social phenomenon of leadership with a focus on relational and motivational aspects (see Saleh & Hassan, 1999). The views gathered from the participants have been a result of an open inquiry about the participant's leadership experience in relation to themselves, others, and the wider context, guided by the interviewer's questions such as *why* and *how* in response to the shared content. The intention was to focus on the motivation in the participant's leadership experience, how this motivation impacted their leadership practice, and what meaning they attributed to these experiences.

To ease participants into the interview and to invite interviewees to talk about their experience, I began each interview by asking participants to tell me something about themselves. I encouraged participants to share their background, their life history, how they arrived where they were at the time of the interview.

During the interviews, I encouraged interviewees to share their stories by asking open-ended questions which were expected to more likely to encourage narratives (Haden & Hoffman,

2013). This approach is described by Seidman (2013) as in-depth, phenomenological interviewing, combining insights from life history interviewing (see Bertaux, 1981) with those from phenomenology, thereby adapting Schuman's (1982) work (Seidman, 2013).

This kind of interviewing may be seen as almost friendly conversations according to Spradley (1979), or "conversation with a purpose" according to Berg (1989, p. 13), quoted by Roberts (2014), due to its flexible approach (Spradley, 1979). This approach aims to understand and present participants' subjective experience and acknowledges that it is never possible to fully understand another person (Schutz, 1967), yet sets the goal to come as close as possible to understanding the essence of this person's experience from their point of view (Seidman, 2013).

I encouraged participants to describe the meaning they associated with certain words, to explore how they experienced described situations, what these experiences meant to them, their reasons and motivation to engage in a certain behaviour. The indirect open questions allowed participants to talk freely about their experience and the meaning they attributed to those experiences.

To not distort how participants would respond, I avoided reinforcements (such as *m-hm*), which would normally appear naturally in daily conversations to show attention (Seidman 2013, p. 92). Instead, my intent was to show my attention by listening attentively and as the conversation continued referring to what the participant said previously.

To conclude the interviews, I thanked the participants for their time and the experiences they shared with me. I asked about how each participant experienced the process of the interview and if there was interest in sharing further insights in the form of personal narratives over the coming few weeks.

The act of attention

“In-depth interviewing, however, is not designed to test hypotheses, gather answers to questions, or corroborate opinions. Rather, it is designed to ask participants to reconstruct their experience and to explore their meaning. The questions most used in an in-depth interview follow from what the participant has said” (Seidman, 2013, p. 94).

In my role as interviewer, I guided the participant where possible “to transform [their] lived experience into a textual expression of its essence” (van Manen, 1990, p. 36). To get to the essence, to understand the meaning, people need to stand out of the stream of undifferentiated happenings and reflect upon their experience (Schutz, 1967) through the “act of attention” (Schutz, 1967, pp. 71-72). “Some participants will require more prompting than others to go forward in the reconstruction of their experience” (Seidman, 2013). I paid attention to this possibility during the interviews and supported the interviewees in their thinking by, for example, reframing or reiterating questions, or asking participants to elaborate on a point.

Due to its transitory nature, lived experience can only be studied ex-post and accessed through language (van Manen, 1990). At the same time, meaning attributed to certain elements of a lived experience cannot be understood isolated from its context (Mishler, 1979 and 1986). Therefore, I invited participants to share the context of their lives before and at the time of their experience.

“What happens in people’s personal lives often affects what happens in or provides a context for their public lives and can be useful if tactfully explored in interviewing research” (Seidman, 2013, p. 108). As Shils (1959) suggests, it might be worthwhile distinguishing between experiences related to public, private, and personal aspects of the participants’ lives.

Public relates to their actions in public, easily to observe by outsiders, e.g. their job, private to their relationships to people about which the person would normally not talk with outsiders, and personal to aspects of their subjective experience of public events and of events in their experience with family and friends.

When I noticed a public voice, I used situationally role-playing questions (see Patton 1989), asking the participant to imagine I was a person they feel comfortable talking to, for example a close friend, in order to move beyond the public voice to the inner voice (Seidman 2013) and thereby give room for reflection on motivational aspects.

Following the flow

As the participants were sharing their background, I gave participants time to elaborate their story and asked questions supported by the guide when it would fit into the conversation and when a natural break in the conversation occurred. I asked questions to, for example, explore the meaning participants attributed to certain chosen words and to specific experiences. I kept the interview guide in mind to ensure the interview provides information in accordance to the research question, yet followed the flow of the conversation to allow participants to elaborate on their experience. I gave room for the participants to explore their perspective and proceeded with the interviews as they developed. My intention was to allow the participants to explore their experience without being interrupted.

In case topics arose, which I would have liked participants to elaborate further, but on which the participants did not expand right away, I noted down the words the participant used, and “echoed” them (Richardson et al., 1965, pp. 157-163, quoted in Seidman p. 88), using them as “marker” (Weiss, 1994, pp. 77-78) to which we could return in those moments when there was a pause in the conversation, which led me to assume the participant said all what they wanted to

say. In contrast to this natural break, I have tolerated the “pregnant pause” (Gordon, 1987, pp. 423, 426, quoted in Seidman 2013 p. 95) when I identified one, to allow the participant to continue their train of thought. To avoid impediments of memory (Tagg, 1985) which might have occurred from asking participants to remember something, I asked participants to reconstruct experiences.

Establishing rapport

My goal was to create an atmosphere in which participants felt comfortable to share their personal perspectives in relation to their leadership experience. “Too much or too little rapport can lead to distortion of what the participant reconstructs in the interview” (Hyman et al., 1954, quoted in Seidman 2013, p. 99). For this reason, my goal was to establish a formal, yet friendly relationship, based on common courtesies. This required maintaining a balance between an atmosphere of a friendly conversation and a data collection situation.

Just as any record or transcript resulting from the interview is a common asset between the interviewer and the interviewee, as suggested by Yow (1994, p. 74), I also considered the interviews as a common creation of the interviewer and the research participants as the interviewees. Still, I refrained from creating a full “We” relationship (see Griffin, 1989; Reason 1994), as I was seeking to avoid the risks, such as losing the necessary distance to explore the participants’ responses or creating the expectation on the participants’ side to be involved in the analysis of the data (apart from issues related to their privacy or for clarification purposes) in the form of perceived “co-ownership” (Seidman, 2013, p. 100). This can be inherent in a casual, too familiar relationship with the participant (see Bell & Nutt, 2002; Bogdan & Taylor, 1975, Hyman et al. 1954, McCracken, 1988; Spradley, 1979).

By showing respect, consideration and genuine interest in the participants and their stories, my goal was to overcome potential barriers established by a potentially inherent social context of the interaction between myself and the participants (Seidman, 2013, p. 102).

If the recollection of events caused participants to react emotionally, I followed Brannen's (1988, p. 559-560) and Seidman's (2013, p. 109) advice to not take on false responsibility but to let the participant work out the distress without interference from my side. In one instant a participant was moved to tears as a result of the deep reflection which occurred during the interview. The participant took my hand and thanked me. In this moment, I felt my emotions echoing the emotions of the research participant. We both needed a moment to find our voice again and I waited for the participant to return to the conversation.

Diary introduction

At the end of each interview, I asked participants if they would agree to provide further insights into their leadership experience by the means of the afore-mentioned diary. The purpose and procedure had been described in the information sheet that participants received, and I reiterated the content at the end of the interview.

I explained that they would be invited to reflect on their current experiences in leadership situations and encouraged the participants to tell me stories of what they experienced. By referring to stories I aimed to elicit valuable contextual information which I might otherwise have missed if I had asked specific questions (Haden & Hoffman, 2013).

I gave the participants some guidance on what kind of information I was looking for (Hampton, 2016), i.e. the leadership situation, the participant's thoughts and feelings, how the participant intended to act or react, the way of setting his or her mind to their chosen motivation, how they acted after reflecting, which effect they believe their action had on the leadership

situation, and their learnings for future leadership situations. I had not provided a list, which I found restrictive, but rather gave examples to help participants understand what kind of information I was looking for. I explained that if I saw a need for further depth, I would reach out to the participant for further clarification.

The participants were given a two weeks' time frame to share their post-interview leadership experiences. Participants were not expected to share their experiences daily but rather when situations arise which the participants would consider relevant or insightful leadership situations. The participants were free to choose the means by which they would share their insights, be it electronically or in written or voice record. The intention was to facilitate the individual's reflections and willingness to share their stories. Voice records would represent a rather semi-naturalistic method (see Ely et al., 2000) and offer richer information for later analysis, as this method preserves what was said and how it was said (Bamberg, 2012). However, participants were free to choose.

After the interview I thanked the participants for their participation either by e-mail or text message, according to the initial means of communication. I used this opportunity to remind participants about the option to share further experiences in the next weeks, yet highlighted also that this is an optional part of the data collection.

Seven out of 16 participants provided further insights after the interview. Some participants declined immediately after the interview; others wanted to think about it and later chose not to respond to the invitation. In those cases, where further information was provided by the participants in the form of voice or text messages, by telephone or by e-mail, the content enriched the data collected during the interviews by providing additional examples and/ or further reflections of the participant.

Data Management

The research produced data in form of audio records of the interviews, transcripts of the records, and audio or written records of personal narratives after the interviews. Although video recordings seemed a valuable instrument, as these could provide insights into how nonverbal language relates to verbal language and participants generally tend to forget the fact that they are video-taped a few minutes after the conversation begins (Seidman, 2013, p. 93; King et al., 2019), I decided to not proceed with this medium for this research as bodily expressions were not a focus of the study.

This research was pursued with rigour and provides transparency to help future researchers understand and navigate through the data collection and analysis of this research. The collected data is documented in a directory structure on a secured university server. For the purpose of contact related to this research, I kept a list of my participants' information, consisting of their personal information, such as their name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address (Seidman, 2013, p. 52).

Audio records have been stored in .mp3 format. Transcripts or participants' written records have been anonymised and saved as .docx documents. File names describe the content of the data and give contextual information without identifying information. Along with the collected data and transcripts, I have added a readme.txt file in which I described how I structured the directories and the meta data. As I have used software to help in the process of data documentation and analysis, the readme.txt file also includes a brief description of how I organised and analysed the data with the help of software.

During the research process, data has been stored on my personal One-Drive provided by Sheffield Hallam University and on the Sheffield Hallam Research drive which provides a cloud-

based storage with backups every night. In addition, data has been backed up regularly on an external drive with enough capacity to store the complete data set. After completion of this research, the anonymised data will be transferred to the SHU Research Data Archive for a minimum of 10 years. This concludes the considerations related to the data collection of this research.

Analysis

This research builds on the experience of 16 participants from different business areas. Participants were selected based on a reference to those individuals by themselves or others to be in a position of authority and to have a people-centric, caring, or loving approach in their leadership. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and was enriched by personal reflections from those participants who chose to provide further insights after the interview. These reflections were not meant as a means for triangulation but rather as addition to the provided information during the interview. Participants engaged in conversations of around 60 minutes in which they were invited to share their leadership experience and thereby reflected on their life history, on who they are, what matters to them, what guides them in their interaction with themselves and others – and why.

The next step was to analyse the data set: evaluate which themes could be identified, how they were faceted, how they were interlinked, if these aspects had a connection to the concept of love, and how these aspects manifested in their leadership experience. The analysis of the collected data encompassed the entire data set with identified themes that partially specifically refer to the focus of the research and partially only peripherally. Which themes were identified and how I arrived at these will be described in depth in the next chapter.

For the purpose of analysing the data set, I chose the approach of thematic analysis, first coined by Boyatzis (1998) and developed further by Braun & Clarke (2006). The reflexive thematic analysis method proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006) allows to reflect the understanding of reality and acknowledges the influence of social contexts as well as the way individuals make sense of their experiences. The empirical data has been interpreted and conceptualised in response to the research question of how could love look like in leadership practice. The next few sections present and explain the decisions taken in relation to the analysis of the data set.

Choice of method

I was examining the concept of love in leadership with a focus on the motivational level of leadership. In this context, I was interested in identifying patterns that indicate how love could look like in leadership and which aspects could be considered as part of it.

I decided that my method needed to fit the purpose and agreed with Holloway and Todres (2003): “What is important is choosing a method that is appropriate to your research question, rather than falling victim to ‘methodolatry’, where you are committed to method rather than topic/ content or research question” (Holloway and Todres, 2003, quoted in Braun & Clark 2006. (p. 97).

I found the approach of thematic analysis, first coined by Boyatzis (1998) and developed further by Braun & Clarke (2006), to be the best fit for the purpose of analysing the data set and I will explain the decisions that have led me to this perspective.

Thematic analysis is a method that searches for patterns within data, which are organised in broader themes that reflect the data and interpret aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998). Braun & Clarke (2020) categorised thematic analysis into three types: 1. Coding reliability approaches, 2. Reflexive approaches and 3. Codebook approaches.

Coding reliability approaches have an inherent assumption to seek for an objective truth in the data and apply quasi-quantitative measures in the analysis of the data, such as the measure of frequency and inter-coder reliability (Boyatzis, 1998). The early development of themes sets a structure for the coding frame which several coders would use in reviewing the data set. Subjectivity is considered hindering and would need to be carefully managed. This contradicts my perspective on the research as co-creation of the researcher and the research participants.

Codebook approaches (e.g. King & Brooks, 2017) use a structured approach also, but one that builds on a subjectivist epistemology. Here, the codebook does not seek inter-coder reliability, but is used for pragmatic reasons of structuring the evolving analysis, e.g. to facilitate team-work and enable parallel coding of different data items of the data set. Although I appreciate the pragmatic aspect for teamwork, I see a potential for compromise of different perceptions of the coders for the sake of one agreed, perhaps overly simplistic view on the data. Despite the subjectivist grounding, I see that the process as such has positivist aspects to it as it assumes that meaning of codes and meaning as understood from the data item should be shared among the coders.

Braun & Clarke see their positioning in the reflexive thematic analysis which I found most suitable for the analysis of the data and most reflective of my philosophical positioning. The reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) is the approach, which is most qualitative in comparison, also described as Big Q (Kidder & Fine, 1987). In this approach, themes are generated at a late stage of analysis, derived from codes, and require an intensive and iterative engagement with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2020). Meaning is created through interpretation of the text and is adapted with every iteration. As such, I see hermeneutics as part of RTA.

Important to note is that, in line with Braun & Clarke (2006), I do not consider themes as *emerging*, which would assume that themes are there to be uncovered and as such would be associated with a positivist epistemology, but rather as *actively identified*, cognisant of my co-creating role as researcher.

Braun & Clarke (2020, p. 39) highlight that “themes cannot exist separately from the researcher – they are generated by the researcher through data engagement mediated by all that they bring to this process (e.g. their research values, skills, experience and training).” My perspective on the research process as co-creation and on the importance of the researcher’s self-reflection and process-reflection therefore seemed to be best represented in RTA.

RTA offered a pragmatic and helpful way to achieve the aim of my analysis: scan the collected data for recurring patterns and identify overarching major themes in relation to the research topic in an organic way, guided by my own interpretative sense-making process in contrast to a “ready-to-use” recipe such as grounded theory (GT), interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), or discourse analysis (DA) (Braun & Clarke, 2020, p. 38). Please refer to the Appendix for a detailed discussion on RTA in contrast to GT, IPA, and DA.

I considered RTA as the most flexible and most qualitative approach to analysis among the pattern-based analysis methods. It fully acknowledges the subjectivity of the process, the participants and the outcome, and allows to shape the process in accordance, guided by the emerging sense-making of insights by the researcher. It seemed a suitable approach to reflect reality while acknowledging the influence of social contexts as well as the way individuals make sense of their experiences.

Interestingly, Braun & Clarke (2006, p. 85) argue that “with an essentialist/realist approach, you can theorize motivations, experience, and meaning in a straightforward way,

because a simple, largely unidirectional relationship is assumed between meaning and experience and language (language reflects and enables us to articulate meaning and experience)” (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995). This largely reflects my perspective: I assumed that what I heard during the interviews is the representation of the experience, motivation, and meanings, as well as the sensemaking thereof by the participant.

“In contrast, from a constructionist perspective, meaning and experience are socially produced and reproduced, rather than inhering within individuals (Burr, 1995). Therefore, thematic analysis conducted within a constructionist framework cannot and does not seek to focus on motivation or individual psychologies, but instead seeks to theorize the sociocultural contexts, and structural conditions, that enable the individual account that are provided.” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 85)

Although I see myself in the constructionist area, I disagree with the latter statement for three reasons: First, I believe, meaning and experience are inherent in an individual. People experience something and have certain motivations and meanings attributed to this experience. Second, although the statement mentions the social production and reproduction of meaning and experience, this perspective lacks a consideration of a combination of various levels of interpretation which can be both, taken at face value (pseudo-neutral) and at the sense-making level (interpreted) within the wider process of understanding. Below is how I would depict the levels of face-value descriptive understanding and of reflective, post-factum understanding, as I understand them.

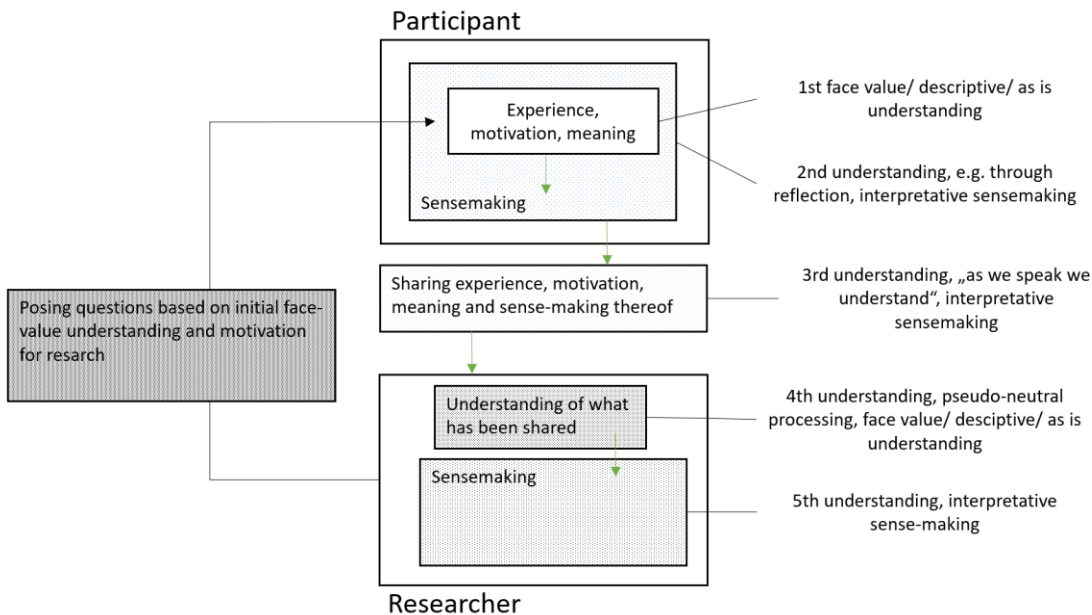


Figure 1 Levels of understanding

Third, my focus, also as interpretivist researcher, can be on motivational aspects of the individuals while remaining cognisant of the interpretative process in discussing and understanding these. Consequently, my analysis reflects descriptive and interpretative aspects.

What constitutes as a theme

I reviewed the collected data in a reiterative process. During this process, I attributed codes to different sections of the transcripts. I chose to code sections rather than words to maintain the context of what was said, which helped throughout the sense-making process. I wanted to refrain from a quasi-quantitative analysis by grouping codes into themes in dependence of their quantitative representation. Although some authors recommend identifying codes and themes based on how often one word appears, I was rather looking for a general sense, a common thread, how aspects across the texts connect. This meant to include insights, even if these were mentioned less often than other aspects. This perspective is in line with Braun &

Clarke's (2006) notion that the "keyness" (p.82) of a theme depends on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question.

Inductive vs. deductive thematic analysis

Braun & Clarke (2006) state that data can be analysed in either an inductive/ bottom-up way (Frith & Gleeson, 2004) or in a deductive way (Boyatzis, 1998; Hayes, 1997). An inductive way would be to ground the analysis in the data and as such is closely related to grounded theory. In this case, the themes "would not be driven by the researcher's theoretical interest in the area or topic" and be the result of "a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher's analytic preconceptions." (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83). The authors say that "you can either code for a quite specific research question (which maps onto the more theoretical approach) or the specific research question can evolve through the coding process (which maps onto the inductive approach)." (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84)

This is where I diverged from Braun & Clarke's either/or thematic analysis concept. I had my theoretical preconception in form of the interview guide. This was the initial analysis structure. However, in the next analysis phase the identified codes were grounded in the data. I was analysing each section for its content and not for what I was looking for specifically. Although I was exploring the application of love in leadership, I did not ask specifically for it during the data collection unless it was mentioned by the participants. Therefore, my data collection and analysis were driven by the content of the conversations and the texts. As a result, the initial thematic concept has been turned upside down and changed entirely as a consequence of what I identified as codes and themes in the data and the meta-analysis of the generated codes and themes.

But as Braun & Clarke also point out, “data are not coded in an epistemological vacuum”. I am also aware that various aspects have guided this interaction with the text, such as my epistemological positioning, my understanding prior to the data collection and throughout the data collection, as well as the pre-understanding gained during the analysis process, as I was moving from one text to the next.

The penultimate version of themes generated reflected the entire data set. It showed aspects and thematic areas common throughout all conversations, even though these were not in the focus of this research. Nonetheless, this process of being open to what I would identify in the data allowed me to generate a wider scope of insights.

In the ultimate analysis phase, I considered my research question and the penultimate version of themes and was asking myself how these themes were responding to my research question. Here, I am in agreement with Braun & Clarke (2006): “First, there is the overall research question [...] that drive the project [, then there] are the questions that participants have responded to [and then] there are the questions that guide the coding and analysis of the data.” [...] “It is often desirable that there is a disjuncture between them” (p. 85).

Thereby, I returned to the deductive analysis approach, refocussing the inductive results, to provide insights to the focus of this study. These different perspectives and approaches to the data allowed me to reach a perceived saturation of analysis.

Thematic analysis process

The steps that I have taken in the analysis of the data are informed by Braun & Clarke’s (2006) guide to thematic analysis. Braun & Clarke suggest the following process for a thematic analysis: “Familiarizing yourself with your data, Generating initial codes, Searching for themes, Reviewing themes, Defining and naming themes, Producing the report” (p. 87).

The analysis process of this study was not as linear as one might assume from their “step-by-step guide” (Braun & Clarke 2006, p. 86). The actual analysis process reflected the interpretative and iterative nature of the data analysis. In a later paper (Braun & Clarke, 2020), the authors refined the guide, underlining that this approach “involves six-recursive-phases” – paying tribute to the iterative nature of the analysis.

My approach in developing the research was intuitive. It began with pre-conceptualised themes based on my research interest, my own experiences, and the pre-understanding of literature I considered as relevant in relation to my research focus (McAuley, 2004). These initial themes have been modified and even discarded throughout the research process as I gathered insights from my participants during the data collection phase and referred to the literature to inform my understanding.

Although I began the interviews asking people to tell me about themselves, how they arrived in their position at that time, and their report usually had chronological elements, this research was not focused on the experience, or the context, or the chronology of events, but on the motivation behind this person’s actions and interactions in regard to the phenomenon of leadership. The actual context was not a focus of this analysis but an enabling aspect to investigate the meaning attributed to these situations through the lived experience. Thus, I was rather interested in patterns that arose throughout different contexts without comparing the specific contexts.

The table below briefly describes the steps taken in the reflexive thematic analysis of the data, followed by a detailed account of each analysis step.

Analysis step	Details
1. Familiarisation with the data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First thoughts about potential themes during and after the interviews (perceived saturation) - Deeper familiarisation with data during transcription of interviews
2. Engaging with the data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - initial word frequency review in NVivo - deductive initial review of data, derived from the interview guide and the research focus - iterative, intensive inductive analysis through careful review of transcripts and inductively generated creation of codes with the help of NVivo as organising tool - Relationships, matrix structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draft of relational map of codes from memory, clustering into first thematic structure - Transfer of relationship map draft to Excel, sorting list of codes extracted from NVivo into emerging two-dimensional matrix structure, bottom-up, ensuring coherence within group of codes/ sub-themes/ themes, adjusting the structure in the process, thereby repetitive cross-review of codes, returning to the data and fine-tuning meaning of codes and eliminating duplicates, fixation of set of codes, review of resulted thematic structure in Excel and checking groups of codes/ sub-themes/ themes for coherence, further fine-tuning of structure - Relationships, multi-directional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draft of multi-directional relational map between structural groups (OneNote) - Transferring codes from Excel to MindJet MindManager, reviewing, fine-tuning multi-directional organisation of codes/ groups of codes/ sub-themes/ themes. - Review of transferred and fine-tuned structure in MindManager for coherence - Review and highlighting of relationships between codes, code groups, sub-themes, and themes - Fine-tuning and reorganising, fixation of sub-themes, fixation of themes
3. Interpreting the data in relation to research focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deductive review of themes to refocus and to respond to research question - Development of story line reflecting the identified themes in relation to research focus
4. Producing the report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Detailed account of assumptions and steps taken in the analysis - Presentation of findings with relevant quotes from participants

Table 1 Thematic analysis process

Familiarisation with the data

The first familiarisation with the data was during the process of interviewing. With each additional interview I began noticing recurring themes, as if the participants were telling me something I already heard before. After 10-12 interviews, I perceived a saturation of insights. I felt that the interviews were providing valuable specific examples of the participants' leadership practice, yet I also increasingly noticed reiterations of what has been shared in previous interviews. This perception has been confirmed even more during the interviews 13-16.

The next distinct familiarisation with the data was during the transcription of the interviews and complementary personal narratives. Riessman (1993) points out that the process of transcription can be an effective way of familiarisation with the data. Bird (2005) argues that transcription in itself is an interpretative, and thus, key aspect of data analysis. I concur with these statements. I noticed that the repetitive engagement with the data during the transcription process increased my understanding of it every time that I engaged with it. For example, my attention would be drawn to details which added to the overall understanding and which in the first review I considered less important than others. Transcribing the texts also allowed me to pay attention to pauses, facial expressions, and intonations which I remembered from the interactions as I reengaged with the audio records.

I had anticipated and generated a lot of data from the interviews and the personal narratives. I chose to transcribe the material myself, although I knew it would cost me much time. The reason for this was that first, I felt that my participants had often shared quite personal insights with me. I wanted to respect this trust and openness and avoid giving this personal information, which was at times shared tearfully, to someone who was not involved in the process. Also, I remembered how things were said, if people were fighting their tears while

saying something, if they felt uncomfortable with certain questions, I remembered their gestures, their body language. In those times, where I felt this perception was relevant to what has been said, I added it in brackets after the transcribed text to better understand the information that has been conveyed.

In addition, the transcription process helped me to familiarise myself with the content in a very detailed manner. To transcribe each sentence accurately, I was often required to replay these several times. By the end of one transcript, I not only knew what was said, I almost knew the content by heart. This helped me later in the analysis, as I knew immediately which sentence or section belonged to which context.

Engaging with the data: coding

My initial engagement with the data was manual. Some researchers would print out the transcripts, cut pieces of it and sort these into clusters. I considered this approach, printed the transcripts and started coding on the paper. Although I would have liked this hands-on approach away from technology, very quickly I noticed that I was losing the overview of codes and had not enough space to code for various aspects that came through in one paragraph. I found the manual approach limiting and chose to proceed with a technology-enabled solution.

NVivo is a software to identify patterns and relationships within the data and develop a thematic network (Attride-Stirling, 2001). I found NVivo helpful as initial engagement with the data. It helped me code sections of the texts in a flexible way, allowing me to refer to sections which were coded under one code and have several codes per sections while keeping the codes organised.

NVivo offered the possibility to code automatically, i.e. to show the frequency of all words across the data set. Even though I was not aiming to make any conclusions based on the

frequency of words to avoid a quasi-quantification, in line with my interpretivist stance, I considered this approach to potentially draw my attention to aspects I might not have noticed in my first familiarisation with the data and ran a word analysis in NVivo. There is an option to use stop words to exclude in this review, words such as “but”, “and”, “that”, etc. but I noticed that even with the exclusion of these words, this report returned a list of isolated words without any context to them. This reminded me of situations in which somebody would ask me to translate a word to another language and I would ask to say the entire sentence or to provide some context, to ensure a correct translation of meaning.

Nonetheless, I found it useful to refer to the word frequency report after having completed the analysis and noticed connections between the final thematic structure and the more often mentioned words which reassured me that I did not miss any much-mentioned aspect. However, I would not have been able to arrive at the final thematic structure from the basis of the word count list, as other less often mentioned words and whole paragraphs were meaningful in the contribution to the final themes, which I otherwise would have missed.

As a next step, I have used NVivo to analyse the data in a deductive way. I scanned the texts for specific keywords, such as *love* and *why* as I was looking for the motivation behind the participant’s actions which was often triggered by the invitation during the interview to explore the experience in more depth by asking *why*. Often, this question was preceded by the participant’s description of behaviour or statement that something was important to them or a statement about themselves, which would start with *I am*. As result of my pre-understanding, I was also interested in underlying beliefs and a potential spiritual nature of those beliefs, so I scanned for *believe/ belief* (German: *glaube*) and *god* (German: *Gott*). Even though this was a

more targeted review of the data, I again noticed that I needed context around these words and read entire paragraphs to understand the meaning around these words.

Therefore, I decided to proceed with an inductive analysis of the data and chose to engage with one transcript at a time, reading and re-reading each section consequently and generating initial codes in the process. At first, I created headings based on the interview guide and began sorting the emerging codes into these pre-conceptualised groups (see below):

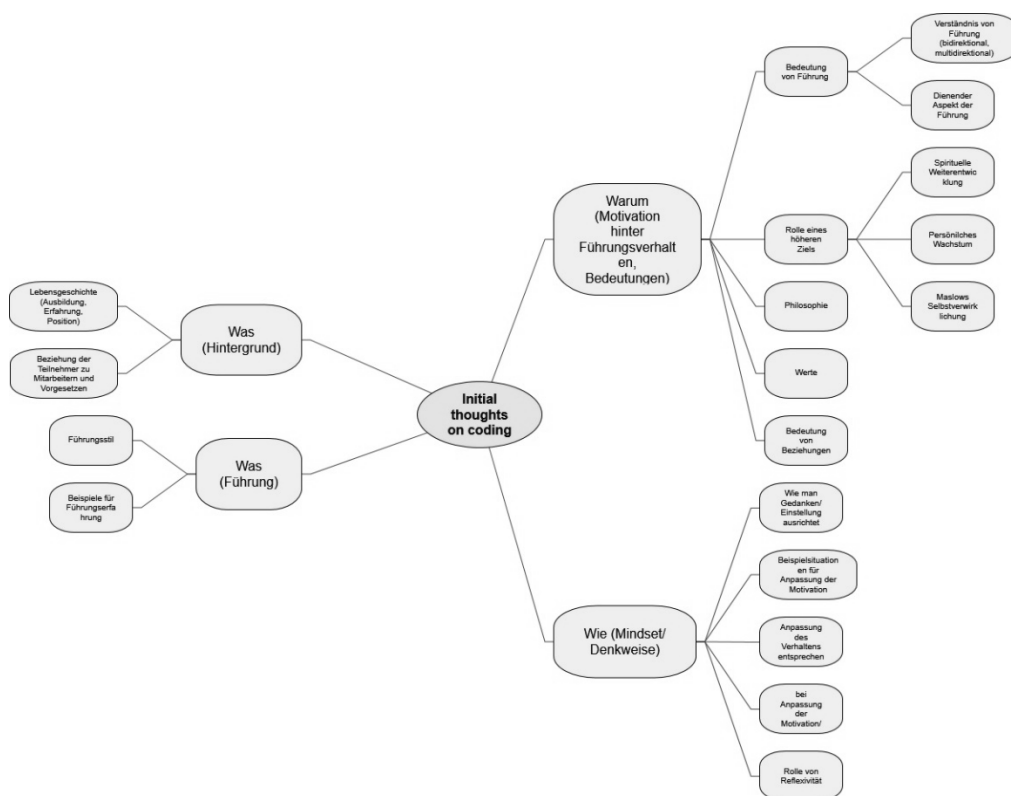


Figure 2 Initial coding groups

As the coding progressed, I have added the coding groups *Oneself and Others* and *Influencing factors and attributed meanings*, reorganised the existent codes and continued sorting the newly generated codes into the following five groups, with several sub-headings below them as I found helpful for distinction.

1. Foundation Values, Beliefs

2. Purpose, Reason, Goal
3. Oneself & others
4. Influencing factors and attributed meanings
5. How to

This procedure resulted in a large number of codes and headings. I noticed that the codes and structure of codes that formed during the coding process had redundancies, needed specifying and fine-tuning. Despite the usefulness of NVivo to organise the content during the coding process and to be able to run several analyses on the data, I found it restricting when I wanted to reorganise the codes in their structure, as moving the codes into other headline was not intuitive and rather time intensive.

Engaging with the data: relationships, bi-directional

After completing the coding, I took an empty sheet of paper and wrote down what I perceived as the main themes at that time and drew lines where I saw connections. I wrote down examples of codes below the headings of the emerging structure, resulting in a first draft of a thematic structure. This first draft clearly lacked overview, so as a next step I digitised the notes and fine-tuned the clustering, which then resulted in a cleaner version of clusters and relationships, as shown overleaf:

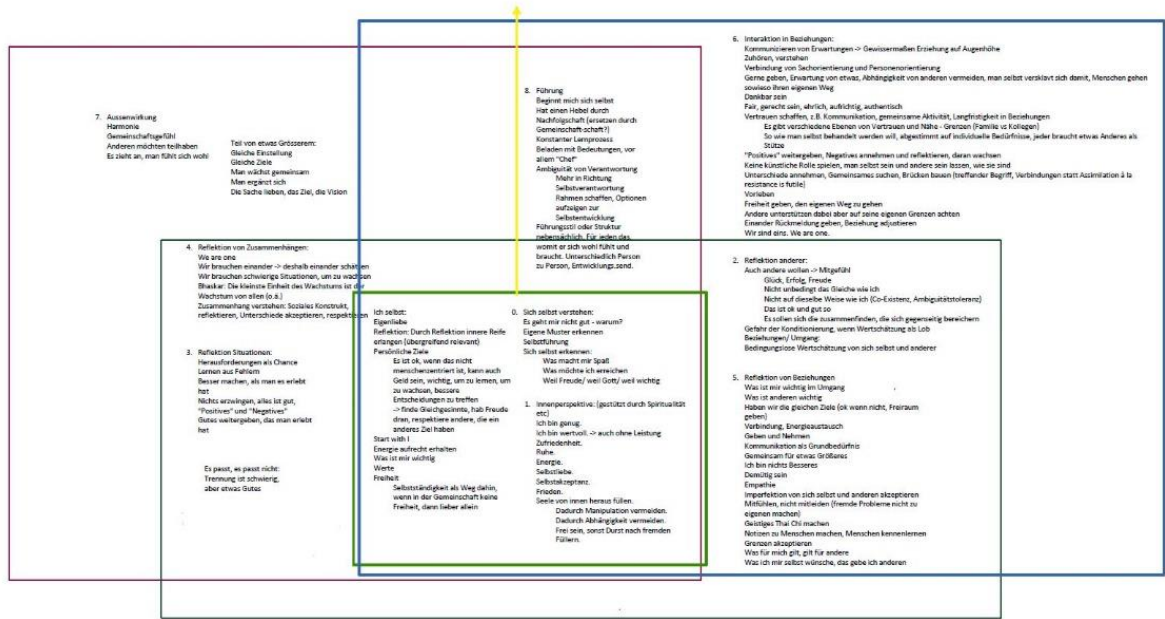


Figure 3 First thematic draft

As a next step, I was looking to simplify the relationships and make them clearer which resulted in the following draft:

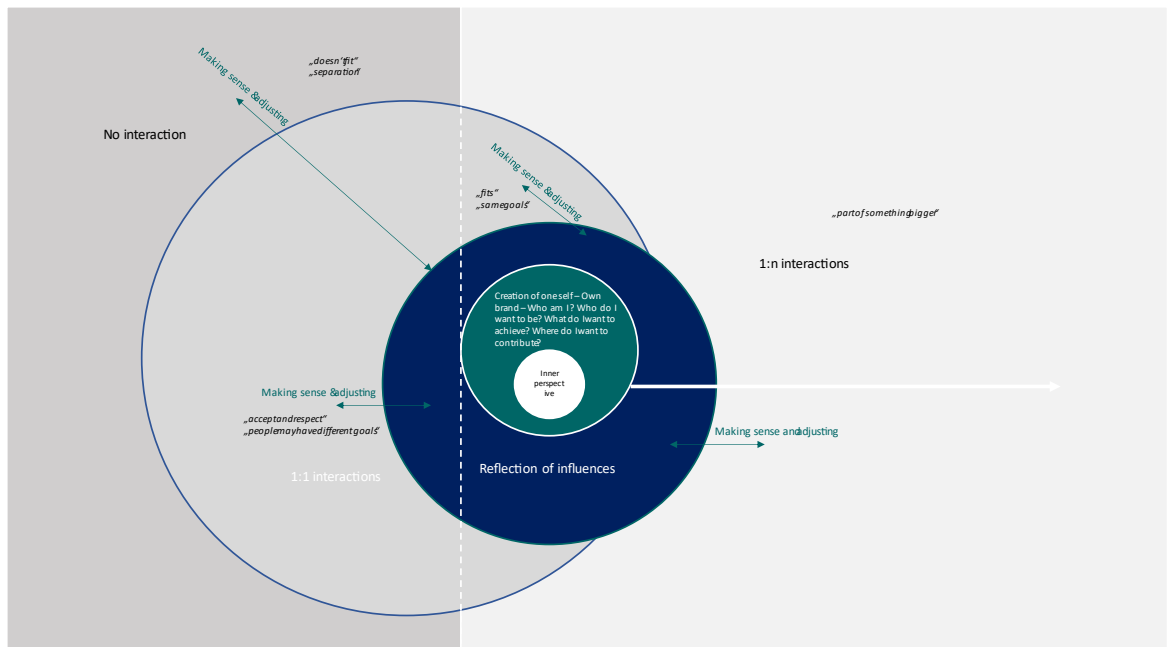


Figure 4 Relational draft of themes

All these versions helped me to test if the relationships I depicted reflected the data. At the point of analysis at this stage, this is how I perceived and interpreted the data on a general level.

To be able to move codes around and reshape the thematic structure more flexibly, I extracted the codes from NVivo into MS Excel, coloured the codes according to their initial five groups and reorganised them into new overarching groups which I perceived to better reflect the coherence within the group and distinction in comparison to other groups. The result of this process was a matrix of thematic groups with the following four overarching themes (see image below):

- energy core – what is the source and how to maintain the energy
- the created me – who am I and what do I stand for
- goals - what do I want, why and how do I achieve it
- adjustments – love it, change it, or leave it

Those four themes included codes on a spectrum of eight perspectives:

- Self-reflection and self-interaction
- Reflection of others and interaction with others
- Interaction within a team
- Reflection of “the thing” and interaction with it
- Leadership and connections

	Interaktion innerhalb / Selbstinteraktion	Interaktion mit sich selbst	Perspektive / Reflexion Anderer	Interaktion mit anderen	Interaktion im Team	Perspektive / Reflexion Situation / Sache	Interaktion mit der Sache	Führung / Verbindungen
Energiefokus - Was ist das? - Woher kommt die Energie und wie kann ich sie nutzen?	Spieltheorie / Dieses Hörenes als ich	Spieltheorie / Dieses Hörenes als ich	Spieltheorie / Dieses Hörenes als ich			Spieltheorie Zusammenhänge		
Mein innerer Kern - Quelle - Energie	Erfindende Tradition	Erfindende Tradition						
My Brand - Was ist das? - Woher kommt die Energie und wie kann ich sie nutzen?	Schmerzempfinden - Was ist das?	Wie geht es mir mit mir um?	Erkenntnis anderer - was bedeutet mir Menschen?	Wie geht es mir mit anderen um?		Erkenntnis sozialer Strukturen		
Eigene Tradition und Strukturen	Schmerzempfinden - Was ist das?	Wie geht es mir mit mir um?	Erkenntnis anderer - was bedeutet mir Menschen?	Wie geht es mir mit anderen um?		Erkenntnis sozialer Strukturen		
Persönliche Einstellung	Schmerzempfinden - Was ist das?	Wie geht es mir mit mir um?	Erkenntnis anderer - was bedeutet mir Menschen?	Wie geht es mir mit anderen um?		Erkenntnis sozialer Strukturen		
Ziele - Was ist das, was ich erreichen möchte?	Schmerzempfinden - Was ist das?	Wie geht es mir mit mir um?	Erkenntnis anderer - was bedeutet mir Menschen?	Wie geht es mir mit anderen um?		Erkenntnis sozialer Strukturen		
Vorbilder - Übernehmen, was ihnen wichtig ist	Schmerzempfinden - Was ist das?	Wie geht es mir mit mir um?	Erkenntnis anderer - was bedeutet mir Menschen?	Wie geht es mir mit anderen um?		Erkenntnis sozialer Strukturen		
Organisation - Ziele	Schmerzempfinden - Was ist das?	Wie geht es mir mit mir um?	Erkenntnis anderer - was bedeutet mir Menschen?	Wie geht es mir mit anderen um?		Erkenntnis sozialer Strukturen		
Warum mache ich das (für mich)?	Schmerzempfinden - Was ist das?	Wie geht es mir mit mir um?	Erkenntnis anderer - was bedeutet mir Menschen?	Wie geht es mir mit anderen um?		Erkenntnis sozialer Strukturen		

Figure 5 Emerging matrix of thematic groups

For some of the codes it was necessary to go back to the source to specify the code, for example “trust” can be seen from different perspectives – trust in one’s own capabilities, trust in the team members, trust in a higher force, etc. So, I specified those codes in NVivo and arranged them into the matrix and made further adjustments to the structure when I found it necessary to reflect the spectrum of what has been said. This process resulted in 922 codes sorted into groups of codes and into the overarching thematic structure. Below is an overview of the developing thematic structure with an example of extracted codes sorted into the spectrum:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120	121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	129	130	131	132	133	134	135	136	137	138	139	140	141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150	151	152	153	154	155	156	157	158	159	160	161	162	163	164	165	166	167	168	169	170	171	172	173	174	175	176	177	178	179	180	181	182	183	184	185	186	187	188	189	190	191	192	193	194	195	196	197	198	199	200	201	202	203	204	205	206	207	208	209	210	211	212	213	214	215	216	217	218	219	220	221	222	223	224	225	226	227	228	229	230	231	232	233	234	235	236	237	238	239	240	241	242	243	244	245	246	247	248	249	250	251	252	253	254	255	256	257	258	259	260	261	262	263	264	265	266	267	268	269	270	271	272	273	274	275	276	277	278	279	280	281	282	283	284	285	286	287	288	289	290	291	292	293	294	295	296	297	298	299	300	301	302	303	304	305	306	307	308	309	310	311	312	313	314	315	316	317	318	319	320	321	322	323	324	325	326	327	328	329	330	331	332	333	334	335	336	337	338	339	340	341	342	343	344	345	346	347	348	349	350	351	352	353	354	355	356	357	358	359	360	361	362	363	364	365	366	367	368	369	370	371	372	373	374	375	376	377	378	379	380	381	382	383	384	385	386	387	388	389	390	391	392	393	394	395	396	397	398	399	400	401	402	403	404	405	406	407	408	409	410	411	412	413	414	415	416	417	418	419	420	421	422	423	424	425	426	427	428	429	430	431	432	433	434	435	436	437	438	439	440	441	442	443	444	445	446	447	448	449	450	451	452	453	454	455	456	457	458	459	460	461	462	463	464	465	466	467	468	469	470	471	472	473	474	475	476	477	478	479	480	481	482	483	484	485	486	487	488	489	490	491	492	493	494	495	496	497	498	499	500	501	502	503	504	505	506	507	508	509	510	511	512	513	514	515	516	517	518	519	520	521	522	523	524	525	526	527	528	529	530	531	532	533	534	535	536	537	538	539	540	541	542	543	544	545	546	547	548	549	550	551	552	553	554	555	556	557	558	559	560	561	562	563	564	565	566	567	568	569	570	571	572	573	574	575	576	577	578	579	580	581	582	583	584	585	586	587	588	589	590	591	592	593	594	595	596	597	598	599	600	601	602	603	604	605	606	607	608	609	610	611	612	613	614	615	616	617	618	619	620	621	622	623	624	625	626	627	628	629	630	631	632	633	634	635	636	637	638	639	640	641	642	643	644	645	646	647	648	649	650	651	652	653	654	655	656	657	658	659	660	661	662	663	664	665	666	667	668	669	670	671	672	673	674	675	676	677	678	679	680	681	682	683	684	685	686	687	688	689	690	691	692	693	694	695	696	697	698	699	700	701	702	703	704	705	706	707	708	709	710	711	712	713	714	715	716	717	718	719	720	721	722	723	724	725	726	727	728	729	730	731	732	733	734	735	736	737	738	739	740	741	742	743	744	745	746	747	748	749	750	751	752	753	754	755	756	757	758	759	760	761	762	763	764	765	766	767	768	769	770	771	772	773	774	775	776	777	778	779	780	781	782	783	784	785	786	787	788	789	790	791	792	793	794	795	796	797	798	799	800	801	802	803	804	805	806	807	808	809	810	811	812	813	814	815	816	817	818	819	820	821	822	823	824	825	826	827	828	829	830	831	832	833	834	835	836	837	838	839	840	841	842	843	844	845	846	847	848	849	850	851	852	853	854	855	856	857	858	859	860	861	862	863	864	865	866	867	868	869	870	871	872	873	874	875	876	877	878	879	880	881	882	883	884	885	886	887	888	889	890	891	892	893	894	895	896	897	898	899	900	901	902	903	904	905	906	907	908	909	910	911	912	913	914	915	916	917	918	919	920	921	922	923	924	925	926	927	928	929	930	931	932	933	934	935	936	937	938	939	940	941	942	943	944	945	946	947	948	949	950	951	952	953	954	955	956	957	958	959	960	961	962	963	964	965	966	967	968	969	970	971	972	973	974	975	976	977	978	979	980	981	982	983	984	985	986	987	988	989	990	991	992	993	994	995	996	997	998	999	1000
Engelmann: Wang Low (2- erster Satz ist richtig, Rest ist falsch, ist es wahr?)	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive Ebene	Sprachliche Ebene: Affektive																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																										

Initially, I had a reference to the number of times a certain code was represented across a set and in how many texts. However, I decided to give the codes equal attention

regardless of the number of times it has been mentioned and therefore moved away from a quasi-quantification during the analysis.

Engaging with the data: relationships, multi-directional

After completing the rearrangement and fine-tuning of codes and of the thematic structure, I have realised that I found Excel too limiting to depict multidimensional relationships which I perceived but could not fully show in the matrix structure. With the new insights generated during this process, I have drawn another simplified schematic view in MS OneNote on how I understood the themes and their relationships.

I then transferred the codes from Excel to a mind map software. Although I tried open-source software, I found Mindjet MindManager to be the most intuitive software for creating a multidimensional structure in a flexible way, highlighting relationships, and allowing to add notes to the structure. The initial mind map was an evolution of the Excel matrix structure and the scheme shown before.

I transferred all codes and their thematic structure into the mind map and began sorting the codes into the new mind map structure. As before, the structure was changing and growing with every code that I sorted into it. For example, I returned to the early scheme I developed before I moved the codes to Excel and wondered if there were any insights at that earlier stage which would enhance the understanding at the time. There were several intermediate versions of the evolution of the mind map, of which a few are shown overleaf.

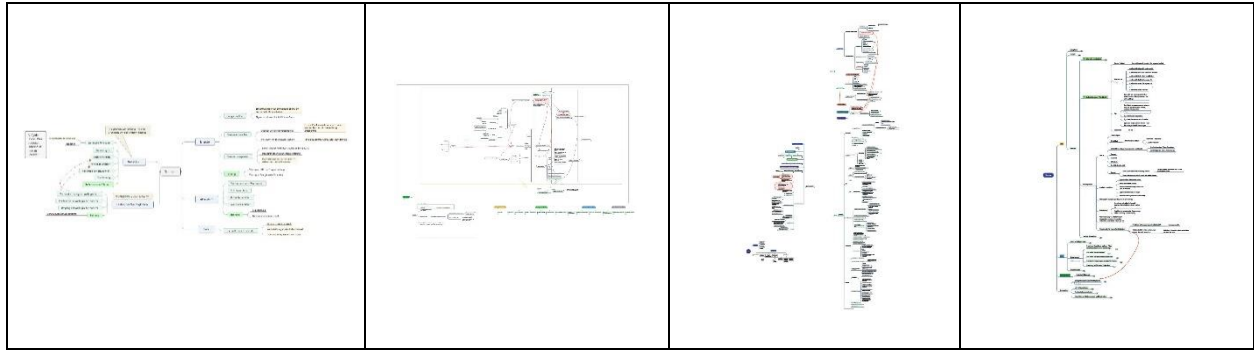


Figure 7 Evolving thematic structure

I kept fine-tuning, adjusting, rearranging the map with every code, highlighting relationships and potential redundancies. Throughout the entire process of engaging with the data, I noticed that the topics reflexivity and leadership seem to be inherent in the other perspectives. Therefore, I decided to elaborate these two topics separately:

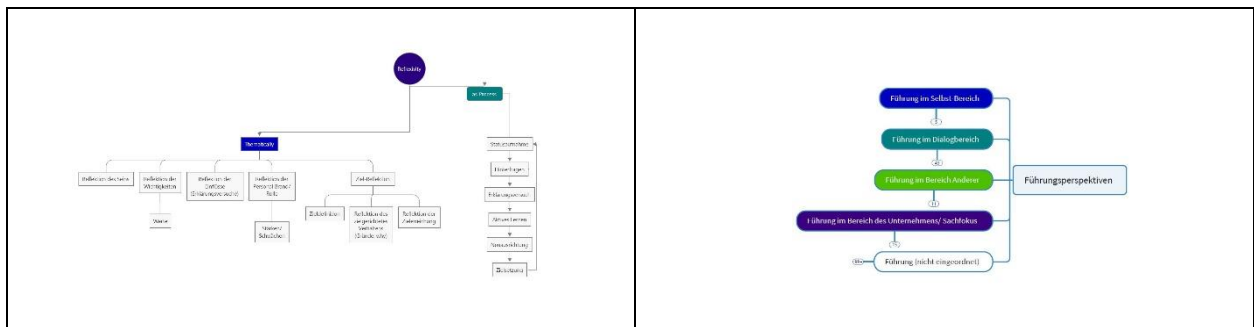


Figure 8 Evolving reflexivity and leadership perspectives

I reviewed each group of codes and checked it once more for coherence within and distinction against other groups. The thematic structure shown below concluded the inductive analysis.

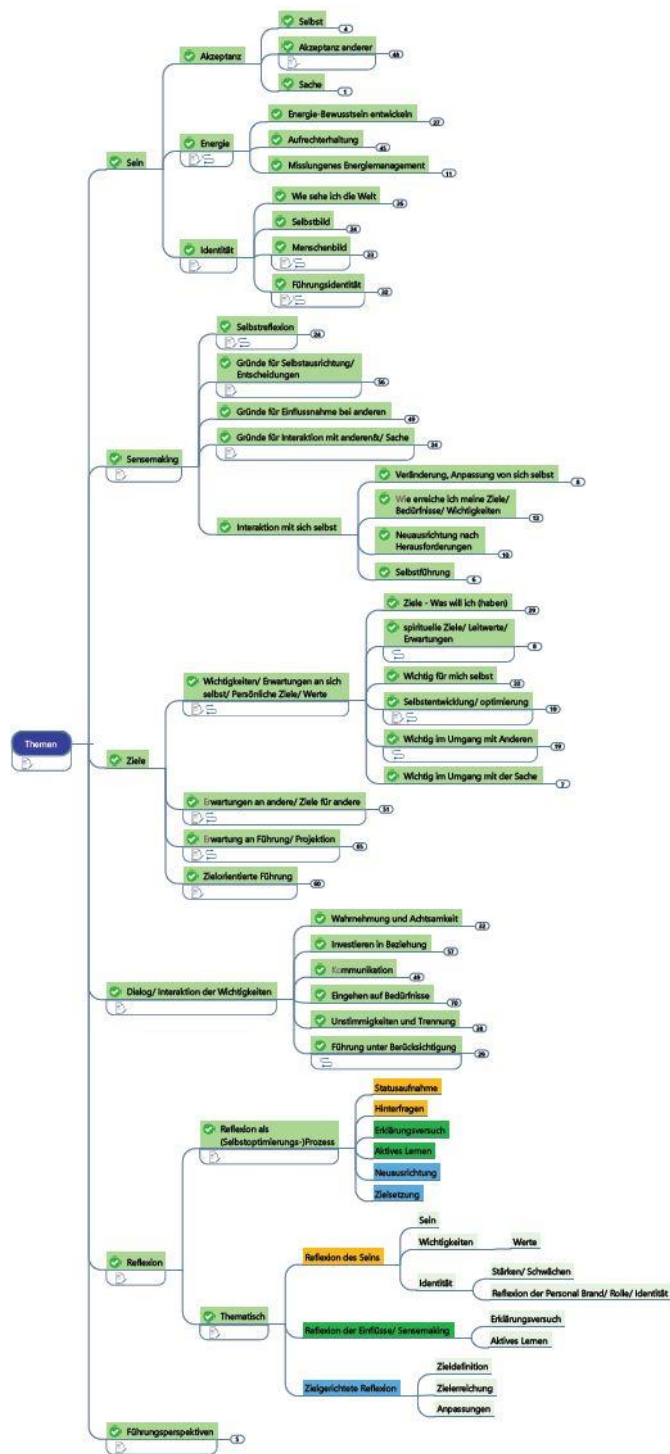


Figure 9 Thematic structure

Interpreting the data in relation to research focus

The inductive engagement with the data resulted in a thematic structure which well represented my understanding of the data. It should be noted that the analysis is not assumed to be fully inductive, as my research interest inevitably guided my decisions in the analysis process. The resulting thematic structure went beyond the research question as it offered breadth to the area of interest. Therefore, I returned to a deductive approach to the analysis to refocus and to bring together how the identified themes respond to the research question. This resulted in a brief narrative, first in notes in the mind map and then in a separate word document, summarising the overarching themes which respond to the research question, as presented in Chapter Four.

Concluding remarks

This chapter explained the role of reflexivity and philosophical assumptions guiding the understanding and decisions taken in relation to this research. It covered methodological aspects, presented the research design, and explained the reasons behind methodological decisions, including the limitations thereof. This chapter provided insights into the rationale and practicalities of the data collection process as well as of the data analysis process. The next chapter will present and explore the findings of this research.

Chapter 4: Findings

This research was set out to explore how love could look like in leadership practice. This chapter will examine the specific and related understanding of love in leadership practice by the research participants and is organised according to the main themes identified in the conversations: the conceptualisation of love in leadership, relational perspectives in leadership, perceptual perspectives in leadership, inner perspectives in leadership, and reflective perspectives in leadership. The chapter will end with concluding remarks on the findings.

Each identified aspect can be supported by a number of quotes. The quotes which have been selected are those that are considered as most illustrative of a certain aspect. To facilitate reading, participants have been given pseudonyms as listed below:

Participant	Pseudonym	Background
1	Caz	Automobiles & Components
2	Ain	Diversified Consumer Services
3	Dan	Specialty Retail
4	Jai	Electrical Equipment
5	Ray	Machinery
6	Cam	Insurance
7	Kim	Food Products
8	Lin	IT Services
9	Jil	IT Services
10	Sem	IT Services
11	Shae	Hotels, Restaurants & Leisure
12	Kei	Machinery
13	Lee	Health Care Equipment & Services
14	Til	Automobiles & Components
15	Ziv	Diversified Consumer Services
16	Fei	Construction & Engineering

Table 2 Participants' pseudonyms and backgrounds

Conceptualisation of love in leadership

Although I was looking for the concept of love and how it might look like in leadership, I refrained from using the word *love* in any communication with my interviewees to avoid

imposing my concept of love onto the participants' reflection of their experience. As described in Chapter Three and in the participant information sheet (see Appendix), participants were invited to share more broadly their leadership experience and explore their motivations, perceptions, and actions.

Six participants mentioned the word love unprompted and described the meaning they associated with it. Other participants have not mentioned the word love but described attributes similar to those who mentioned love explicitly. This will be taken up in later sections of this chapter. When love was mentioned in interviews, the participants also explained why they thought love mattered, how they understood love and gave examples of how they applied the principle of love in leadership situations they experienced. The main identified perspectives on love in the context of leadership were inner, perceptual, relational, and reflective perspectives which will be discussed in more depth in the following sections.

Some participants reflected about themselves in their leadership role and stated that for them, it entails personal growth. They learned that to be able to “live in love”, this love must start within oneself. Caz, for example, defined the whole “package of love” with respect, attentiveness, and humility, which he thought should be present in the interaction with others, and underlined that this is based on his belief that no person is worth more than another.

Caz, p. 9 Me. Without "I", without self-love and in peace in the heart...how can I live with the other... I also had to learn that [...] the most important good as a human being is love. As a good, as an activity, in general. And how do you want to deal with other people in love? And that has nothing to do with sexuality. It has to do with respect, attentiveness, humility, the whole package of love, how do you want to do that if you can't love yourself? Impossible. [...] Basically, from the system's point of view, no human being is worth more than another.

Caz and other participants, such as Lee, explained that the inner love (or self-love) is reflected in their leadership and highlighted that it is necessary to maintain this inner love:

Lee, p. 9 So you have to give yourself *inner* love, you also have to... and this is reflected, and I think only as long as you can maintain the inner [love], you can also deal with patients, with friends, partners and children.

Love in leadership was also connected to forgiveness, to being merciful with oneself – forgiveness being a release, an aspect of freedom which one is able to give to oneself, as Ziv describes it for example:

Ziv, p. 15 Receiving forgiveness is one thing, but forgiving oneself, letting oneself out of this misstep, that is, you also need mercy and love for yourself, otherwise it doesn't work.

This inner love has also been described in the context of feeling connected on the inside to a spiritual source and to others at the same time. Caz reported that love in his leadership is grounded in his spiritual belief of always being connected with everybody on a spiritual level, regardless of outer aspects and religious affiliation.

Caz, p. 20 My colleague is Inshallah. He says, we two have the same God, I just go there on Friday, and you go there. But we are always connected. And that is important.

Caz also gave examples of how love can be shown in daily interactions and underlined that love is a gift of which one cannot give too much, that it becomes visible in details and attention to other people's needs, in dialog seeking to make life easier for others, and in accepting that this is a person just as oneself. We can see here a translation of this inner love into how it shows in different ways:

Caz, p. 21 You can never give too much love. That is infinite. And that [...] shows in small details. [...] comes a co-worker, head down... you, Caz, some shit happened to me ... and then also react in love again. What can I do to make you feel better? Or maybe you get angry. But then you go back and say, I'm sorry that I got angry. What can I do for you or how... what do you expect from me? Always W W W W W W W ... What kind of attitude do you have? Why do you... ? And why don't you... ? And again and again to the love... Feel love... just say, okay, is a person like me. [...] And since I've been on my way like this.. It's a blessing. I can only say that.

Love has a positive effect on the one who focuses on love and thereby also on those around: When asked if he perceived a reciprocity in return, he answered that he does not know

but that he feels better, therefore has a different radiance and therefore is more pleasant for others.

Caz, p. 21 I: Yes. Do you then also have the feeling that it comes back in contact?

I don't know. I can't say. I just notice that I feel better. And because I feel better, I have a different aura [or: radiance]. And when I have a different aura [or: radiance], I am more pleasant for the other person.

Some participants mentioned that biblical values are central in the way they lead. When I asked Ain, which are the greatest biblical values that he believes should be represented in leadership, he responded after a few moments of thinking, that it is love. He described love similarly to Caz, i.e. as the absolute respect of a person, of a person's dignity, and that this love encompasses also those people who have a different set of values and who might even be against one, and to still respect them, to embrace and accept them as they are, without necessarily supporting their behaviour. This relates to the prior aspect of forgiveness and setting a person free from their debt, from expectations, as Ziv described it.

Ain, p. 14 I: You said that biblical values are central to leadership, of course, especially in your organisation, which is Christian. What exactly? What are *the* biblical values that should be represented in leadership?

Hm. I'll have to look that up. Wait (laughs) (thinks).

I: What comes to your mind?

So love. That might sound a bit strange now (laughs). But love for God. And love for people. And by that I don't mean romantic love or the emotional component of love, but love as the Bible understands it. The absolute respect of ... the other person, a respectful way of dealing with each other, is very, very important, [...] the dignity of the human being... and I think that is deeply anchored in the love that God gives us for each other. [...] And I believe that this is a profoundly biblical value... also in leadership to always remember that this dignity of the human being is so important, that we are worthy in the eyes of God and that we likewise [see] the other person in our eyes, whether they believe, think, function or are as we would like them to or not. I also see Jesus' statements in the Sermon on the Mount that we should love one another, but then he says... you are told to love one another, but I say to you, love even your enemies, that is like a quantum leap that he then says. Now you can really show what it means to love. Whether you remain in these values by loving your enemies. Sometimes we are miles away from that. And I don't want to accuse that, because I myself have to gain ground in that (laughs), and I have to develop myself, and I have to remind myself, even people who don't correspond to me, who are even against me, [to] try at least to respect them, at least to perceive them in their dignity, in their integrity as a personality.

When I asked those participants, who mentioned love explicitly, how they would define love, Caz, Ain and Ziv referred to a passage in the bible which defines love: 1. Corinthians, 13. To provide context to what the participants said, the passage to which they referred can be found in the Appendix.

These participants highlighted from this passage that love does not demand, but love bears everything, it accepts the other person as they are. However, this also includes a continuous inner growth: Ain gave an example in which he experienced it as very challenging to accept a person as they are and noticed that he is still growing in this area, maintaining an inner dialogue, challenging himself if he is adhering to it, particularly when he experiences challenging situations.

Ain, p. 18 I: What do you understand by love? Especially in the context of leadership, in dealing with people. What.. How would you define love?

[...] from Corinthians 13... it endures everything, it does not demand, it accepts the other person,... it takes the personality ... of the person... is absolutely protected by love, is not touched, even if the personality is just not compatible with my values. That is the great problem, the great difficulty, to really live it. That's why we came to where Jesus says to love your enemies, didn't we? It came to me quite clearly once when someone sat in my office who came to our service and ... was completely touched by it ... and sought conversation with me and then revealed that he ... that he is in semi-detention, that he was in custody, that he was in the penitentiary 20 years ago ... for fornication with young children ... or with boys. Paedophile. And then you realise already... er.... fffffffouu... do you perceive this person as a person now or do you perceive him... does he have his value.. that his punishment, his deeds... or do I perceive him as a person and try to perceive him as a person. And this is where I think love comes in. Which is far above all the emotional effects of love. But rather, can I accept this person as he is? Accept them for who they are? Without approving of what they do. And for me, love is very very... goes very strongly in that direction... the inviolability of the personality... of the human being. And that's where I locate love.

Another aspect of love in the context of leadership mentioned for example by Ain was the importance to perceive the full personality, in its integrity, and that by being able to perceive people, one can also love them. He notes that the perception of the full personality in turn helps the organisation, that there is an interdependence and mutual benefit of the organisation and the

person. He noted however that if there is no way to connect the personality with the focus of the organisation, there is no sense in forcing them together.

Ain, p. 20 But I want to say that by being able to perceive people, who are they? You can also love them, perceive their integrity. [...] And if we succeed in respecting people, at least superficially, that they are different, and we don't succeed in connecting [...] the factual orientation and the human orientation, [...] then there's no point in trying to force that. [...] The one then determines the other. If... if I can perceive the personality, then that helps me in the organisation [...] I can make the factual orientation and the person orientation compatible, so that they are interrelated and help each other.

In the conversation with Jai, love has also come up as an aspect that needs to be central in how we lead, how we relate to other people, nature, and all living beings on earth, with the main goal of love being to help others without expecting anything in return. This relates again to the aspect of forgiveness and setting others free from expectations, from any conditions and realising that, ultimately, all is one. This perspective connects to the earlier quoted understanding of being connected. In this context, Jai highlights that to be serious about love, we need to create loving relationships. That is, love is not only an inner attitude of unconditional acceptance, but needs to be acted on, to show itself for example by helping others. And just as Ain, also Jai laughed and admitted that it can be challenging at times, but that it is a learning path:

Jai, p. 6 Sanatana Dharma offers the possibility to live faith individually and to have deep experiences [...] but in the end... in my eyes the point is... [...] that's love. [...] So that means love not only towards fellow human beings, but towards nature, towards all living beings on the planet.

I: And what is love for you, in that sense?

Yes, that's a good question. Yes.. Love means... in principle to understand one's mission in such a way that, especially as a human birth, it is considered the highest birth, one really doesn't just live into the day, but ... uses the means that are available to us as human beings, i.e. primarily helps others. [...] I have my faults and all, not that that comes across wrong. But I try to get out of my comfort zone a bit and really do something for others, help others where I can, without getting paid for it every time. [...] I think it's similar to someone who goes to church and says, yes, I have no problems with God, but with people it doesn't work at all. So... that's all one thing. [...] So, if you really take love seriously, you have to make sure that you build up a loving or caring relationship with every living being somewhere. It's not easy and I often don't succeed, I have to be honest. So when you really have to deal with such assholes (laughs) sometimes, then you think to yourself, my... you could shoot him somewhere else. (laughs) Well, as I said, I'm also on my way and I'm not better than others. I still have a lot to learn. (laughs)

Many participants reported that sometimes, despite all efforts to create loving relationships, eventually, ways can part. As Ain said it, it makes no sense to force things together and similarly Jai points out:

Jai, p. 7 And that's when I realise that I've reached my limits. It's hard for me to love someone like that. I have to say that quite clearly. He really made my life hell in parts.

I: How did you solve it with him?

Yes, it then... I say that's a piece of divine grace. He took the severance pay and left.

Other facets of love that were mentioned in the context of the interviewees' leadership experience were reliability and trust, to be happy for the success and joy of others, as Jai formulated it, for example:

Jai, p. 8 Well, we were able to rely on each other. And that's still the case today. And that's what has always kept me in the company over the last few years, because you know I can call up whoever... Alfred and say, man, I've got a shitty problem, can you help me. And I know he'll help me. And those are the things where we come to love, yes, this trust in the other person, also in being happy for the other, for his job, his career, that's something great. That's fun.

Several participants noticed that conflicts at the workplace do occur, but at the same time they highlighted their loving approach to engaging in challenging conversations. Jai, for example, observed that as a result people are more open and trusting towards him:

Jai, p. 10 Well, it's not that it's always conflict-free, but the way of resolving conflicts has changed drastically compared to earlier times. And that shows me that it is possible, that it is possible in a way that you can deal with each other really well and personally... yes, as I said, also lovingly. [...] And yes... I also notice what has changed... today people actually say more things to me that they don't like, which they didn't do in the past.

Similarly, Shae mentioned love as a compass during conflict and self-reflection, one that helps achieving a better solution, and as a goal to act in the interest of humanity.

Shae, p. 19 Sometimes you come to things where you don't know a solution. You don't know how to solve the problem, how to solve this conflict. In the past you threw yourself into some extreme to solve the problem. And sometimes, most of the time, there was still an explosion in that problem. But if you add the question of love to this problem, suddenly a completely different solution comes out than these two extremes. And the solution is usually much better than anything else.

Meeting people at eye-level and communicating from the basis of equality is another aspect of love in leadership that has been described in several interviews. It is about learning to understand oneself and the other person in their life situation, to be empathetic, as Caz describes it, for example:

Caz, p. 12/13 When you are empathic on your way, you always know who is on the other side. And it is important to know who you are when you are in conversation. [...] Learning to understand the other person in their life situation so you can communicate with them on the same level. [...] In colloquial language, this is called at eye level. [...] In the adult ego. [...] And afterwards you can be on your way with people in love.

Below quote is a definition of the understanding of love in leadership given by Ziv which encompasses several of the above-mentioned aspects, such as dignity, value, positive attitude and happiness for others, no tracking of negative events, forgiveness, unconditional love, the inner source of love, and a spiritual relationship; it shows in friendliness, in loyalty, self-control, patience, love, and hope – and it has to show or else one is a hypocrite, pretending something that one is not:

Ziv, p. 12 I: Now you said love and goodness.

Mhm.

I: How has love shown itself in your leadership, or how would you say one leads when one bases it on love? What does that mean in dealing with your employees, with your colleagues?

Well, that is basically a benevolence that favours people [...] because of their dignity, their value, which they have from God. I believe him. I trust him. I'm going to assume good, always. So. I do not keep negative accounts. So. Love believes everything. For example. So, love is clearly defined in the Bible, 1 Corinthians 13, right? Reveals love. Of course, in the world concept love is something completely different or something. But the biblical concept is very clearly defined and filled and love is clearly more than a feeling... more than a feeling that you have to learn.

I: Would you say this is this worldly concept or where do you see the difference?

Basically, love is reduced to eroticism, to sex, maybe there are still a few attributes that can be collected in the philio, in the love of interest, but agapé is an unconditional love, so, that is the love of God. [...] the love of God is poured out into our heart. So. Now you have a reservoir and can draw from this love... but that presupposes a relationship, so that it flows again and again, and that happens through the Spirit. [...] And that then shows itself in kindness, in faithfulness, in self-control, in patience, in love, in hope, in other words, many attributes that will then express that or fruit, as you then say. [...] then the attributes must also realise at some point in your life

when you are on the way with God. Otherwise you are a hypocrite. And pretend something that is not.

The conversations with the participants quoted above revealed different perspectives on love in the context of their leadership experience. Love has been described as

- an inner reservoir of love, through spiritual connection, relationship to God or a higher Self, through self-care, self-acceptance, inner forgiveness and freedom, and as an inner guide, particularly in challenging situations,
- a basic attitude towards others as equally worthy human beings, as accepting others as they are and be respectful and humble, as perception of connectedness and that ultimately, all is one, as a motivation and goal in itself, as a wish to do good and to serve, to bring and to have joy,
- an unconditional gift in interaction with others, creating loving, trusted relationships, being attentive to other people's needs, engaging in dialogue and seeking to make life easier for others, as recognition of interdependence and seeking mutual advantage, joining together to support one common vision, or to part ways if no common ground can be found

The above summarises the understanding of love in the leadership experience of those participants who mentioned love specifically. Interestingly, other participants, without the specific reference to the word love, mentioned aspects which are similar or the same as those attributed specifically to love, such as acceptance, equality, respect, humility, appreciation, relationship, and others.

In the following sections, I will expand on how leadership could look like considering these attributes or facets of love as shared by the research participants and highlight differences between the conceptualisation of love and other key aspects identified from the interviews. For

this purpose, the next sections are thematically split into relational perspectives in leadership, perceptual perspectives in leadership, inner perspectives in leadership, and reflective perspectives in leadership.

Relational perspectives in leadership

One of the aspects of love mentioned in the beginning of this chapter was a loving relationship. All participants, also those who did not refer to love specifically, clearly highlighted the need for effective communication. They spoke about getting to know each other, developing trust, making use of empathy to better understand others, taking time to actively listen, be open about their own mistakes, and meet in dialogue from a basis of sincere interest in preserving the relationship, in building bridges. The following paragraphs will expand on this relational perspective.

Empathy and attention

Generally, participants expressed a genuine interest in understanding others. They do this by being empathetic on one side, by paying attention to and sensing what might be going on with a person, and then, on the other side, taking time to actively listen to the person and expressing their gratitude for the other person's openness.

Caz, for example, highlighted how seeking to understand and listen carefully helps him to help others and to create a trustful relationship.

Caz, p. 14 Because I understand what's bothering the other person, I can deal with it better. [...] I can ask a question and then I listen for fifteen minutes. Just sit, listen, listen. [...] And afterwards the person has trusted me to tell his life. And then I usually say, I say, you know what, thank you very much for having so much trust to tell me all the secrets that you said, I appreciate that very much. And I do appreciate that very much, indeed.

The aspect of listening and attentiveness is something that Ray also underlined when he spoke about empathy:

Ray, p. 5 And, yes, I think because of ... I would now claim to have made quite good progress with empathy.

I: What does empathy mean then?

Empathy... to some extent this subject of empathy... listening to others [...] being able to respond to people. To be able to question, to feel, how is the person doing now, with what you are presenting to him, what you are asking of him... and how... so communication is actually one of the very essential topics. This active listening too. Okay, do I get what's between the lines.

Likewise, Til highlighted that it is important to him to understand people – interestingly he refers here to understanding by talking with people, by initiating a conversation after he observed that an employee expressed his frustration in a meeting, for example. Here, the focus is on the willingness to understand by giving someone the platform to express it and then to find a common ground and team up – I understand you and you are not alone. As a result, the employee felt better and thanked Til for having spoken with him:

Til, p. 7 [...] tried to understand the people, the staff.

I: How do you do that?

[...] By trying to communicate a lot with people, to talk. [...] And he's really... you could feel the frustration coming out. And he got everything off his chest. And then I grabbed him again after the meeting and said, man, what's wrong with you. Where does the frustration come from? Yes, just get to the bottom of it. And just want to understand where it comes from. But also talk openly with him and say, look, I don't have a solution for this problem at the moment. [...] I understand you. I feel the same way. But I don't know any more either. [...] I really take the time to talk to people and take on their worries and needs and... issues. [...] He wrote me a WhatsApp on Friday evening and said, I'm sorry I ruined your weekend, but I just had to get the frustration off my chest, but it was good that you talked to me, and thank you [...].

Also Ziv sees a need to have a space where people can express their views. As Caz noted: by knowing their perspective, one can react to it:

Ziv, p. 10 It was always important to me that the individual can express his opinion and I wanted to hear him, that's good if you know positions, then you can at least react, but not if something is somehow so intangible in the room, that was always important to me.

So, attention, listening, giving space to speak up, seeking conversation and aiming for understanding can create trusting relationships. For some participants, gaining trust was also connected to speak with all people involved in a situation, be open about their own mistakes, to

explain the reasons for certain decisions and use these conversations to establish hope and trust that what they do is the right thing and that things will improve, as Fei described it, for example:

Fei, p. 2 [...] and then with these impressions I simply had conversations with all the people. So with all the people, including the caretaker and including the... so, there were 200 conversations or something like that, where I was able to build up a certain personal bond [...] I was able to really explain why it happened the way it did and that we really made mistakes in some places, that is also part of it, to put that on the table when it is like that. So... it doesn't harm the authority. [...] And then we worked on it piece by piece and then over the next... the next year we got the fluctuation under control and then in the following year we were perhaps able to create a bit of corresponding basic understanding with a hope among most people that what we are doing now is the right thing and that it will be better as a result.

Fei highlighted that admitting mistakes does not harm his authority. However, a hindering aspect in this communication can be the perceived disparity between the person in authority and the employee. Some participants observed that employees at times are shying away from being fully open to their leader. Fei suggests being attentive to non-verbal cues and to clearly state that openness is appreciated, on one side, but also being open and approachable themselves, on the other side – relating to the point of giving space for people to speak up and making it clear that this is desired, appreciated and it is okay to speak up:

Fei, p. 3 You are limited when it comes to looking into people's souls [...] you can only try to look a bit at the gestures, facial expressions, etc. to see if that's the case. You can appeal in the sense of openness, transparency, and also say, it's completely okay if you tell me what you think is going shitty, in plain German, and then you have to see what happens. [...] But you can't always find that out in a conversation like this, because of course with many people there is simply this basic situation: a boss, maybe even the guy with the company name, is talking to me, so I don't really tell the whole truth. So, the most you can do as a manager is to make yourself very approachable and open and, let's say, move a bit from psychology into the realm of fear-free encounters. So. Thus, it's okay if I say what's not going well for me at the moment, I'm not the loser or spoil anything for myself, but it's intentional and you can simply discuss it on the basis of facts or feelings.

These examples highlight the interest in understanding others and the beneficial effects of attention and empathy.

Dialogue and exemplification

Another aspect of a successful relationship which is grounded in care, appeared to be the clear communication of values, expectations, and goals, and to then exemplify these. Jai, for example, explains that in order for people to speak up and express criticism without fear, there needs to be a trustful relationship, and he suggests that this can be done by being open about what is important to oneself and be clear about the expectations to others.

Jai, p. 17 I: That... you also said that they now feel more and more comfortable to express criticism, in general, this communication, that it is alive. How did you manage that they felt more comfortable to do that?

Yes, you have to build trust. That's what I said at the beginning, you have to communicate openly... the people, they also have to know to some extent what makes you tick as a person... so... for me, for example, loyalty is very important, I say that also. That is, I want to have loyal employees, i.e. I tell them when something changes somewhere, but I also expect the same the other way round.

Sem, for example, likewise highlights the need for clarity – of expectations, wishes, strategies. He invested in educating himself in communication theory and installed regular opportunities to speak and evaluate where the team is in relation to the expectations. We can see that a dialogue around what matters seems to be essential in his leadership just as the governance around it – it is not left to chance, but is planned for. In addition, Sem reflects his expectations regarding his own behaviour – he is aware that people see and observe what he does.

Sem, p. 4 I: And how would you say you manage to live these values in your company that you just described to me? [...] How do you do that?

I think we simply live it. People see that. We also communicate what our expectations are. [...] And that has also helped us a bit in the company to create more clarity. To clearly formulate wishes, strategies... yes. [...] And the team leaders have a weekly meeting. A bit like counselling, I'd say. Plus, also how is, how are the goals achieved on a personal level.

In line with the above, many participants expressed a need in their leadership for repetition and clear expression of what counts in the firm, verbally, but also in written, explaining how they understand it and why, and being clear that the employees can measure

them against it, but that they also need to be able to measure themselves against it, and then to take this as a common ground for times when conflicts arise, as Fei expressed it, for example:

Fei, p. 13 There is no control system for that [...] You can only say again and again in dialogue, at conferences etc., that this is what counts. I always try to get to the point at the introductory events. [...] You can measure us by this, but you must also be able to be measured by this if a conflict arises somewhere, take a look at this, let's use this as the basis for a dialogue.

This basis for a dialogue becomes like a contract of expected behaviour. What became apparent with some participants is that the behaviour they adapted in their leadership and expected from others was sometimes coming from observing role models of leadership in their life. These participants, such as Dan, for example, described that they felt accepted, respected, and supported. He saw how his role model managed to set and be strict about boundaries, how they themselves lived up to the expectations they had towards others, which created a sense of trust and resulted in adapting this behaviour himself in his leadership:

Dan, p. 3 [...] I had two bosses who did the same. The group leaders at that time had a long impact on me and were very accepting and respected me, and my opinion was always important, and they also said sometimes when something was wrong that they would do it differently. But I had good support from them. And that's why.

Another aspect which Dan highlighted from his experience was that his role model was close to the employees, but was also able to be tough when a situation required it – and nonetheless always with great respect to the person, which has become a role model for Dan:

Dan, p. 8 That was a boss who was very close to us. But he also could be very tough... I was there once when he dismissed a trainee of mine without notice, but he treated you with great respect and he really fostered the resources in the staff. And that has been a real role model for me.

Also Sem reflects that the reason, why it is important to him to exemplify the behaviour which he expects from others in his own leadership, is shaped by the fascination with someone who demonstrated the high demands which he was expecting:

Sem, p. 6 He performed it himself and showed how we should do it. And all the other platoon leaders of the other teams, they just gave orders. Took comfort zone [...] and I saw what a difference it makes when a person who expects something from you is also willing to do it and I know I can rely on him. [...] That impressed me, and it leads me to do a lot of things myself or to demonstrate them.

And Sem felt himself which difference it made to him, that this exemplification of expected behaviour created a sense of being able to rely on this person – which inspired him to adapt this kind of behaviour himself.

Some participants also reflected about negative role models of leadership in which, as in Til's example, people in authority would highlight that people are at the centre of the firm but lived the exact opposite.

Til, p. 8 We have had a new CEO [...] who says that people are in the foreground and the employees outside [the headquarter] and back and forth. But he brought a lot of people from his old company with him, a lot of managers who live exactly the opposite.

Til then realised that this was not in tune with his own understanding of leadership, according to which one should act in congruence with what one says and expects, as the earlier quotes also indicated. So, exemplification in leadership seems to be about clearly expressing and demonstrating what one expects, but then to also living in accordance with these expectations, knowing that people see and observe one's actions, as oneself also does with others.

Ziv, p. 13 And then I tried, of course, I would say, to exemplify this leadership principle with all its contents and also to live it with this form of values, priorities and conviction, to demonstrate it and also to express verbally what I want. [...] to be able to take people with me, I have to have something that is worth giving oneself for. And it has to be meaningful, it has to be something good, not only for me, but also for the others.

It is also connected to the realisation that one cannot change people, but that one can change oneself, and thereby initiate change on the other side. And Jai highlights that being in a position of authority, we are also in a role model position and should exemplify with your leadership what we expect from others:

Jai, p. 25 Because you can't change people. You can change yourself and thereby initiate a change on the other side. And as a manager you have a role model function, you have a [...] possibility to shape things that you don't have as an employee.

As Ziv said it, leadership is also about taking people along, similarly as Kei: showing people how it could be manifested so that they can decide to join in:

Kei, p. 11 What is leadership, that is, on the one hand, to go first, in the front, for a team. Really showing where we go. Where we should go. And to do that. To really be the spearhead in a way for the people. Then to shape the philosophy of the company. To set an example, so to say. So that people can then also, yes, join in, follow along.

At the same time, dialogue and exemplification is also responsibility. Leadership is a two-way street in which people in authority can demonstrate and live their expectations and provide a space in which employees can live up to it, but then employees also need to join the effort and speak up, actively co-create what they would like to see, as Til formulated it, for example:

Til, p. 11 I say, but that's not only... I'm not your entertainer, but you also have to work on it a bit, yes. I can give you the framework, the direction. And I try to set an example for the people.

The conversations clearly highlighted a need for dialogue and exemplification of desired behaviours in relation to others in the organisation.

Ideal world congruence

The sections above underlined aspects of leadership such as being clear about wishes, strategies and expectations, and to come together in dialogue. Related to these is another aspect within the relational perspective that came up many times: It has been described as a congruence of ideal worlds, a self-motivated willingness to work together for something greater, something people feel connected to. Jil, for example, would ask applicants in interviews how their ideal world looks like. If their ideal world agrees with the firm's ideal world, she knows that it will be a good fit.

Jil, p. 10 Employees who work for us are employees who do not come to us primarily because of the salary. [...] But because they want to develop something cool. Because they want to be part of it [...] and not to make a name for themselves, but to create something together. And that is our ideal world, if the employee or the applicant (unint. 44:12) sees us like that, then I know he fits in with us.

This agreement of ideal worlds is about joining in to be part of something greater. Ain, for example, spoke about bringing vision-orientation together with people-orientation. He seeks to find ways of bringing together the personal vision people have for their life to his wider vision for the organisation. In this sense, Ain goes even further than Jil in his leadership: it is not a yes or no but a willingness to find compatibility.

Ain, p. 6 I: Yes, you said person-oriented, vision-oriented... what do these terms mean to you? What does person-oriented mean?

I want to win people over to the path I see, that's vision-oriented [...] and person-oriented for me is that I want to win people over so that they can also see that, that they can at least see the partial steps to the goal, the next step. And my aim is to address the person personally. Because their personal vision of their own life, their calling of their own life, is it possible that *their* vision of their life, *their* vision of church, congregation, of the kingdom of God, is it possible to pour this into the vision of the organisation. Can this vision be a part of this, let's say, bigger vision?

What Ain observed is, when people join a vision because they truly believe in it and want to be part of something bigger, it releases enormous power. As highlighted in the sections above, there is responsibility connected to making this happen: seeing, feeling, being, and speaking with people to then identify actions to find ways to complement and find congruence of visions:

Ain, p. 6 (continued) And if.. that can only be done by talking to people, by being with them, by feeling them, by seeing that.. where you can also guide, where you can lead them, so that their vision becomes part of a bigger vision. And when people can be part of something bigger with their personal vision, that releases enormous powers, I see. [...] That is always something enormously beautiful to notice, people are there because they want to be there, not because they have to be there.

For Jil, good heads don't need leadership, in the sense of directing, but rather a joint vision, a clear definition of their part in the larger picture and thus, rather an accompanying than a directing.

Jil, p. 13 I am of the opinion that when we recruit capable employees, they know all by themselves what they have to do [...] and I am firmly convinced that good heads do not need leadership. They need a vision, they need a goal and they need to know what their task is and then it works. [...] Someone always has to make a decision, someone has to sign off on it, and that's how it works. For our company, we have very little leadership. But we clearly accompany.

Ensuring congruence of vision connects to the aspects of dialogue described earlier. It begins by the leader making everyone, clients, and employees, aware of the basic attitude and values that matter in the firm or group. Something that Caz pointed out in this context is the need to jointly grow in one direction and that this can be achieved by reiterating the basic attitude that counts in his firm:

Caz, p. 6/7 That is something very important. With the co-workers and in the partnership, I also had to learn that you have to make sure that somehow [...] it continues together, that it grows. Otherwise, if too many people go in one direction and the others in another, it will fall apart. The team falls apart.

I: And how do you manage that it goes in the same direction?

[...] It's a basic attitude. It starts like that, quite simply, that you can basically mirror to all the people back there that although we are dealing with cars, but that everyone who comes in here is a human being. And the human being has a backpack. One has big bricks in it, the other small ones, they're just pebbles. And that we focus on the people and not on the cars.

And, as with the responsibility in dialogue, Lee highlights the need to reflect – as a person in authority but also as an employee: does the vision of the firm fit to what I consider important in my life?

Lee, p. 12 In the long term, this goal setting for oneself, does it match one's own ideas, does it fit my life [...] I think that's pretty important, that you feel really connected to the thing you're doing. And not just for the money [...] that maybe we don't necessarily get praised in the field of work, but just get an incentive to give the best.

The participants indicate that it is important to find a fit of the unique and authentic person in the larger picture, to find ways how the individual's vision can contribute to the wider vision of the firm and have a balance between the unity of the organisation and the individuality of the individual, as Ain stated it. And sometimes, the perspectives are too different and then it is

better for both, the firm and the individual, to part, which is not considered as something negative for either side, as many participants also underlined.

Ain, p. 18: You have to find the right balance. The personality of the individual. And the objective orientation, what do we want? [...] this unity of community and the individuality of the individual. And now it can happen that it doesn't fit together and then there's no point in putting something together that doesn't fit together. [...] So, it doesn't make sense to push it in. That's why it's important to be able to perceive the personality, so that you can see whether it fits together or not. Maybe you talk about it a little more profanely: the chemistry is not right in my team. Sometimes it's just that... you can do whatever you want and do all these exercises to bring a team together, but somewhere in the air you sense that it doesn't fit together... the chemistry isn't right. And then I think you have to look for another field. [...] It's not negative when things break up.

Ain described how he himself experienced that he did not seem to fit, not in one organisation, not in the next, and he received this feedback and felt rejected, but eventually, he found the place where he could be himself and contribute to the organisation in a way that worked towards achieving a common vision, and realised that it is not negative when things break up or don't fit, because there will be another place where there is a better fit.

Connected to the above is the aspect of freedom in leadership highlighted by some participants, of oneself and others. Lee, for example, described that it is also about setting employees free to continue their personal development outside the firm, if the vision cannot be shared anymore or if people feel they cannot grow anymore within the given setting. For Lee, it is more important in the long-term to agree on a common idea rather than to join in with a focus on a good income:

Lee, p. 8 I told her, if you ever see another opportunity in life that will then take you a bit further again, no matter what, I'm the last one who will inhibit her or prevent her or hold her with all my might or force a horrendous wage increase on her to make her stay. Because wage for me is not a... it's a short-term incentive but not a long-term one.

I: What would be the long-term one?

Exactly, for me the long-term one is working for something in common, not necessarily for a common goal, but for a common idea. What do you want in life? [...] The ideas have to be a bit similar, because otherwise it won't work.

As Lee, Caz also advises people that they are free to stay or to leave. At the same time, a framework should be there to allow people to grow within the organisation. And he is convinced that people appreciate it and speak about it with people outside the firm:

Caz, p. 7 They also know that I'm not whining after anyone if they want to leave here. But I have to set my work, my framework conditions right so that he can develop properly in his private life and in business. And if he notices that I'm no longer getting anywhere, that I've set a different goal. Then he should move on. And that gets around [or: and people speak about it].

Fei underlined that as a leader there is also a need to be consequential in removing people from the firm if the “famous red line” has been crossed, which can become evident in violations against the core values such as adherence to compliance matters or by consistently behaving in unacceptable ways, for example. This is also where several participants expressed that tolerance has its limits – for example, when an individual’s behaviour widely and negatively affects others in the firm. This is when Fei, for example, feels responsible in his position of authority for the lives of the others and for ensuring their wellbeing.

Fei, p. 10 People who clearly behave against [the values] have to be removed from the company. So that's very close and very tangible, in everything that has to do with compliance. Right? That's clear. [...] So then you have to say as a company that this is the red, famous red line that has been crossed. But sometimes it's also simply the case that someone has simply crossed the red line by being a pretty consistent... well, I'll say, human... well (laughs) I now want to.. not quotable, but by simply being a very categoric asshole (laughs), where you say, do I want to... is that okay? It's not about saying, oh, now I have to be tolerant and so on, there are people who treat other people nastily, who are just sneaky, who have intrigues, who just don't support this openness and are simply bad for the whole company, for their environment, for everything, fortunately that's not so often the case, but when you see that, then you also have to act (smiles). [...] and then you have to say that we don't quite fit together. [...] Some of them are also sick, but then you can't have respect for that, because if the whole environment of the employees suffers because someone doesn't tick properly, in plain language, then we can't help them here (laughs). Then I have the responsibility for the lives of others, right?

Another example is given by Ray who also expressed the need to be clear about boundaries in his leadership and to be open in the communication and action around the consequences of overstepping these:

Ray, p. 9 I have a very wide middle lane, stripes on the left and right are relatively narrow, there are no crash barriers, but the abyss is also there. So you have a lot of freedom if you don't take advantage of it and if you act, yes, you can do a lot and allow yourself a lot, but you shouldn't try to take advantage of it, point 1, and point 2, you should also look at who fits and who doesn't and then go into the conversation openly.

So, the ideal world congruence is about a clear wish to seek alignment in visions and to accept that it is not negative if there is no fit. It is a part of accepting people and things as they are, as Ziv summarises it:

Ziv, p. 15 So... that's a very important principle or so, if it doesn't work, then it just doesn't work. And then that's just the way it is.

The alignment of visions is a result of relationship and a willingness to find compatibility. It requires that both sides are aware of and are able to communicate the ideal and the non-ideal for themselves and in relationship with others. It also includes consequences of separation if the ideal worlds are found to be incompatible.

Dealing with conflicts

Sometimes, there is an incompatibility on a vision level, but sometimes there are also practical conflicts. All participants described situations, characters or behaviours that have been challenging for them. They spoke about their difficulties to always maintain their attitude of appreciation and developed ways to manage these situations: For some, the initial reaction, they said, would have been to explode and to scold, but they have learned to step out of the situation, to not react immediately, to instead, in Ain's case, for example, take a sip of cold water and speak only after the water warmed up, to give oneself the time to think before acting:

Ain, p. 5 My mentor always said, put cold water in your mouth and wait until it's warm, then swallow it, and then speak, so then decide, right? It's still wise advice, don't make a quick decision right away, but also to be quiet, withdraw, ask yourself the question *why* again and then make the decision.

Til suggested also to wait and see, to take a deep breath, to sleep on it, to speak about it with an outsider or to seek distance – and then, if everything fails and he still does not react as he

would normally like to, also to have the courage to apologise for it to the affected person and to commit to handle things differently next time:

Til, p. 14 I recently had a case where I was really ranting, which I don't like at all, not even myself. But afterwards I heard that a new colleague had said something wrong about my department. And then I would very much like to become a [furious] animal. And then it's sometimes difficult to say, "Now you're going to stay calm and relaxed and see to it that this is solved in a certain appreciative way. That also happens.

I: How do you manage when you feel these strong emotions?

Ahh, difficult. Difficult. Sometimes I've learned that you just have to sleep on it. Or just say, no, I'm not going to write a stupid e-mail in response to this e-mail, but I'll wait and see. Sometimes the frustration just has to come out or I just have to talk to someone about it and say, what's this crap, then it'll go away. It's... sometimes it helps to take a breath and get out of the situation, but it's still difficult. [...] But then still, I say, to have the courage to apologise for mistakes and to say, man, that was stupid of me, I'm sorry, I should have solved it differently. But I also do that in the company. Where I say, okay, if I've made a mistake or reacted the wrong way, I go up to the person and say, gee, I'm sorry, that was a stupid reaction. I'll do it differently next time.

Related to the courage to apologise is another word that came up in this context: humility.

According to the participants humility in leadership is about considering oneself as not more (but also not less) important than others. This permits them to not be too proud in taking a step to apologise. And for Ziv, for example, this comes from the realisation that anyone could find himself in a situation where someone did him wrong and is asking for forgiveness:

Ziv, p. 16 So, that shows humility. So I confess that my earlier rude.. or whatever it is, that was not good, and ask for forgiveness. [...] I mean, I also need forgiveness where I fail.

Another perspective that Ain brought up in the context of dealing with conflicts was to seek for ways to win the opponent over. He used the idea of Tai Chi to explain how he does it – avoid the attack and make use of the opponent's momentum – and then seek to use it for something good, seek for something in common one could build on:

Ain, p. 15 [...] when I was younger, I was much more explosive, I could be very aggressive and today I realise I don't have to be, it doesn't help at all. If I only find an approach to win over the other person, then I try to exploit it. And I try to hang in there. [...] So Tai Chi never attacks itself, but there comes an attack and then you go to the side and then give another push so that the speed is even faster (laughs). [...] And in spiritual Tai Chi... (laughs) you hang in, so you go to the side, let the momentum pass you by and see, can I use the momentum for something good.

Let's find another common ground. And it can also be that we don't find any common ground, in which case there's no point in continuing together. So we don't wear ourselves out. Some people do that. But sometimes you need distance, and that can be the case. But I think ... with experience over the years ... I'm getting better and better at it. [...] To have a certain peace within oneself... that is perhaps also a leadership value. To have the peace of God within you, to be able to remain peaceful without being aggressive.

Similarly, other participants described it as a lot of dialogue, mediation, wrestling for new solutions, as Fei for example stated it, in order to jointly find a new perspective on things:

Fei, p. 6 In the end it's always back into the dialogue, why do you think like that, could you imagine... then it's.... Looking for ways and means, how can I overlay your interests with the issues that I now actually think are right, and are there alternatives that at least, when it comes to emotional issues, that now, so to speak, alleviate your soul pain in a different way, so yes... it's just then... it always sounds so nasty.... politics. But it's a lot of mediation, a lot of conciliating, a lot of wrestling for new solutions, and that usually works. [...] that's the background and now let's see together how we can find a new perspective.

Participants described their ways of handling disagreements in respectful ways, finding ways to help themselves to calm down before reacting and seeking ways to build bridges while remaining humble and putting their pride aside.

Appreciation and reciprocity

Two other key aspects of the relational leadership context which came up in the conversations were the aspects of appreciation and reciprocity. These deserve particular attention as I identified five different perceptions of appreciation within the group of participants which I would like to explore in more depth: a) genuine care and reciprocated thankfulness, b) praise as means for achievement of targets, c) reflection of one's own wishes and needs, d) taking time, listening, and trying to understand, and e) missing appreciation and reciprocity.

Genuine care and reciprocated thankfulness

The German word for appreciation, *Wertschätzung*, can be literally translated as appreciation of value. One could assume that in this sense, appreciation is closely connected to the aspects of equity of value, and acceptance and respect, to which I will come back in later sections, yet I noticed another aspect when participants spoke about appreciation: reciprocity.

For example, Dan described that people matter first for him, even if this focus is more costly, however without losing sight of his firm's financial success, explaining that if the firm does not perform, ultimately it does not help anyone. In his leadership, he generally pays attention to how employees feel, and cares about their wellbeing, actively seeking for opportunities to meet their needs and alleviate potential discomfort:

Dan, p. 9 I actually always see the person first in the employee. Person is important to me. That is important to me. And business comes almost afterwards, rather a little bit. I look... for example [...] I notice that she is not doing so well and that something is bothering her or something. Then what happens is that it moves me much more or stays on my mind... I could even relieve her by saying, do you want to go home early or do you need a little more time or do you want to do something with a customer so that you're distracted... for me, the person is actually always important, first. But of course it also goes hand in hand with the job, with the sale... without sales we wouldn't exist if we didn't sell our products.

As Dan was elaborating on why he generally does this, he noted that, because they know that they matter to him as a person, he perceives that employees were ready and freely willing to reciprocate by performing well:

Dan, p. 9 [...] because they know that the personal level is also important to me, that it is very important to me that they are doing well... I also believe, they are ready or they can also perform well out of themselves.

However, a good or higher performance from the employees was not his driving factor, but rather the genuine care for their wellbeing. As a result, he and other participants observed this free giving, e.g. a higher willingness to support the business, like an act of thankfulness for feeling appreciated. This genuine care was described by Jai as a sense of compassion, a feeling of equality on a human level and stepping up to the responsibility of dealing with people:

Jai, p. 17/18 [...] I don't always have to talk about it, but simply to give the other person a bit of compassion. [...] And that is often such small things, it can be a smile, it can simply be a question, "How are you? And not just turn around and look away, but really in the sense that I am really interested in whether you are well or not. And if you're not well, then I also ask what we can do to make you feel better. [...] That is also something that people appreciate, not only in bosses but in people in general, when they have the feeling that yes, this is someone who takes me seriously as a person. But as I said, there has to be a limit, I can't solve everyone's problems.

That is not my job either. At the end of the day, I have a job to do as a logistics manager, but I have to deal with people and that is part of it for me. I face up to that responsibility.

Also Kim, when she spoke about the people she works with, highlights that although they might have different responsibilities and pay grades, everyone deserves equal appreciation. For her, appreciation also means to be able to talk to each other and find solutions if conflicts arise, no matter the level in the organisation.

Kim, p. 6 They're all on the same level. So logically, they don't all earn the same and they don't all have the same responsibilities. But everyone deserves the same appreciation. [...] Appreciation also means being able to talk to each other, if there's a problem, we talk together and afterwards it's fine again. [...] We are always on a first-name basis with everyone [...] others say ouh, I would never do that, but for us it works. Because I'm not better, because I'm the boss, right? Yes.

There are numerous instances in which participants saw a freely reciprocated behaviour. Kei, for example, describes the beautiful potential of being more with people and refers to a leader going the extra mile for the people, and the people likewise go the extra mile for the leader, and they will do it gladly and out of free will:

Kei, p. 6 I see how much beautiful potential there can be in being more with people, in that sense. And that showing weakness is actually not a weakness. [...] that helps the team spirit. That, let's say, as an employee you go the extra mile for the boss and the boss goes the extra mile for the people, the team, the team spirit among each other is such that the team performs better, the working atmosphere is more human and yet somehow doesn't fall into a sloppy business, but that people like to go for each other.

In a time of crisis, Til and his fellow managers voluntarily gave up a part of their salary to help the firm navigate the situation better. Two years later, when the firm stabilised again, they were paid back what they voluntarily gave up – an example of free reciprocity, which Til connected to the nature of a family business:

Til, p. 4 [...]we then rather voluntarily gave up a large part of 13% of the salary. [...] Two years later, the [company name] refunded part of the money to the managers and also the employees, who earlier waived their holiday and Christmas bonuses. They were reimbursed for everything. [...] And at that time I found that a mega advantage of a family business, because it is simply not so extremely number-driven.

Also Jai described that in his experience, when people feel that they are taken seriously, that they are appreciated as a human being that is equally worthy to others, and that they are cared to be taken along, you will get everything back:

Jai, p. 10 If they feel that their job is taken seriously, and they realise that their job has the same meaning for you as a boss as someone who has now studied and is sitting in the office as an academic and he or she is an operator and packs parcels and takes it just as seriously, then people feel that they are being taken on and taken along and then you will also get everything back.

So, appreciation as part of leadership has come up in several conversations as a matter of genuine care, of giving joyfully, out of free will, and receiving thankfully. Or as Kim and Lee stated it, it's a give and take, a free give and take:

Kim, p. 3 And... it's really... at the moment we have a very good team. And they are dying for us. So, they also come to work on Sunday when they realise we can't keep up. Voluntarily. But they also know that if they want something, we are willing to give them a treat, in the sense of free days or a longer weekend or something. It's really a give and take. And it works out great.

Lee, p. 9/10 I think it's always about weighing how far I can go so that I don't have to neglect my own things. So it's also the case that if she has to take a Friday afternoon off, for example, we find an extra Saturday somewhere that we can do. So it's always a give and take. But if I don't give anything as an employer, I won't get anything back in return... gladly or freely. I think this free give and take is also important. Without having to constantly ..."Contract says..."

Both highlight the importance of meeting each other's needs, in the described cases, the needs of the firm to meet a deadline or the need of an employee to be flexible with working hours. Within a frame which also weighs other needs, both underline the balance of giving and taking beyond what is set in a working contract.

Praise as a means for achievement of targets

A somewhat different understanding of appreciation in leadership than the one described before was a focus on praise as a means to direct people's behaviour in line with the firm's targets. In this perspective, participants observed that employees value when they feel they do something useful and well, and when they feel it is noticed. In turn, as Cam, for example, concludes, employees are motivated to do something well again. In this perspective on

appreciation, Cam states very clearly: “Appreciation ultimately has to do with better achieving the target or the plan.”

Cam, p. 11 [...] And also appreciation. I think we'll soon be at the point where we have to start every morning by stroking everyone on the head and saying, heey, did you sleep well, is everything okay? We are almost exaggerating here in Switzerland. But still (smiles). Appreciation. [...] But I think what's worth more [than wage] is when people do something meaningful and also notice or feel that someone notices that they've done something well. So I think there's probably more satisfaction, confirmation, I've done something well, I've made an effort, someone has noticed, whether it's the customer or a colleague or a boss, I think that's worth at least as much as a good salary. This motivates people to come back, to do something good again. [...] So if the appreciation comes in a watering can, so to speak, every five minutes a kilo of appreciation or a litre of appreciation comes... then it's lost, isn't it? I say... yes okay. Then it's good if it doesn't come. So I think it has to be a good balance. [...] That's why it's very important to look for and see the good and to reflect it. So you don't just see the negative, but that's sometimes a bit difficult. So, in the end, appreciation has to do with achieving the goal or the plan better. [...]

In this sense, appreciation also extends to not only praising but also criticising if something is not as expected, to clearly set expectations and ensure that people grow in this area, as Ray explained it, for example:

Ray, p. 13 For me, appreciation is not patting someone on the back every day but giving those who do the work the feeling that, when they do the work well, they do it well, but also getting feedback from me when things maybe didn't go so well. But then also in a way, let's say... in a way that moves the person forward, that they can work with it. [...] But that's exactly what appreciation is for me, that I say, okay, maybe it didn't go so well, but next time you can do it this way or that way, so to be supportive and to give the person the chance to learn from it. So for me, appreciation is not just this (head patting), but yes, open and honest feedback on the work that people do.

This kind of appreciation is connected to an expectation, hence is motivated by a desired outcome rather than a primarily genuine, unconditional care as described in the earlier sections. In Ray's case, for example, he expresses appreciation by giving others the opportunity to grow, and expects it to be reciprocated by a certain desired behaviour or improved performance:

Ray, p. 14 But if I make the effort to bring someone forward, to want to develop someone, then I would also like to know that this is appreciated.

I: And the appreciation in that case would be that the person works on it?

That's right. Exactly. And if that doesn't happen, I say to myself, then I've wasted my time.

This aspect of appreciation relates to a view on employees as resources and key for a firm's success and thus, need to be given what they need to perform at best levels, as Kim and Cam describe it, for example:

Kim, p. 12 I mean... we couldn't do anything without staff. We would be lost. So... yes (smiles). And that's why it's important to look well after them, isn't it? Of course, at the end of the day, everyone is replaceable.

Cam, p. 8 If people want to do something well with commitment, it is actually the capital. And you have to take care well of the capital. So we do quite a lot. We also do a lot in interpersonal terms. [...]

Appreciation in this view could be compared to a strategic investment into capital which needs to be well maintained in order to continue producing desired outcomes.

Reflection of one's own wishes and needs

The first perspective on appreciation was out of genuine care and free giving and receiving. The second was a conditioned input of appreciation. In a third perspective, when participants explained why they choose to show appreciation in their leadership practice, some described that they want to treat people in the way that they would like to be treated, as Sem and Til formulated it, for example:

Sem, p. 18 Because I think almost everyone wants to be treated that well. [...] It is unnatural to treat people badly and to have the claim that I want to be treated well.

Til, p. 8 Afterwards I worked it out for myself more consciously, that is exactly my style, that is how I want to be led, that is how I want to lead my employees and yes... that is simply exactly how I find it good for me.

Ray highlights in this context that he would like to spend his life doing something that is fun – and claiming this for himself, he believes he should also make sure in his leadership that others are given the basis for it:

Ray, p. 17 I would like to spend my life in such a way that I say, yep, I really like doing what I do [...] that it's fun. When you do something and it's not appreciated, where I then say, no, that's not fun and I leave a situation like that. And, what my... that is one of the mottos for me, that, what I claim for myself, yes... so I have to please make that available to the others as well. [...]

And if I want to have fun at work, yes in God's name, I have to make sure that the others are given the basis in a way (unint. 1:13:59) that they can have joy, fun at work.

Also Sem, for example, expressed that if he wants to be treated a certain way, he should also lead others this way.. At the same time, he realised that what matters to him and how he likes to do things are not necessarily the same for others:

Sem, p. 3/4 I always have this humane threshold where I can say, no, I can't rip them off now. Or I'll burden him until he collapses, and when he collapses, who gives a shit, I'll take the next one. So, the resource, the human being as a resource is not only a resource, but he is a human being. That's probably because I want to be treated like that myself, I probably have to do that myself inevitably somehow [...] it is precisely these values, one's own values, that one automatically wants to convey to the staff, to the culture. Of course, I find myself expecting the same resilience, the same reliability from the staff and then I realise, ah, shit, that's a different person. And they are not all the same. One has strengths and weaknesses here. And I have strengths and weaknesses. Yes, sometimes you have to come to terms with this divergence, to say, okay, there's nothing more to it, it's just the way it is. [...] just accept that they are individuals.

A way to deal with these differences for Sem is to accept that although he deals with human beings, they are also all individuals. We can see that there is a tendency to assume that what works for oneself will also work for others. In this case, participants are aware of what they would like to experience and create an environment in which others can likewise experience it. Important to note is that participants also realised that others might have different needs and wants and to be aware of and accept these.

Taking time, listening, and trying to understand

Connected to Sem's statement about individuality is another perspective on appreciation in leadership: taking time for people, listening, and trying to understand, as Til describes it for example:

Til, p. 6/7 For me, appreciation is talking to people openly and honestly. That you use a friendly tone. That you take people seriously. That you ask and question. But also accepting the opinion of colleagues and listening to them [...] simply take time and listen and try to understand the people and the staff.

This underlines the need to not assume needs and positions of others based on one's own understanding or needs, but to take time and be open to explore the position of another person.

This perspective on appreciation is closely intertwined with the first two mentioned relational aspects of leadership, being empathetic and attentive, and seeking dialogue.

Missing appreciation and reciprocity

Participants described situations in which a lack of appreciation and reciprocity resulted in conflict. This view is connected to the conditioned appreciation described earlier. In Shae's example, a lack of friendliness from his side, resulted in a lack of friendliness towards him and in a reduction of a sense of responsibility towards the work from the other side:

Shae, p. 11 [Being the strict employer] leads to negative effects. Because the people don't identify with the work and they don't, let's say... they don't carry the responsibility. [...] in the past it was like that, the friendly level, even if they couldn't, they somehow arranged it so that they could still do it or somehow found a substitute or looked for some way to still be there and still do something. [...] without this friendly level, their behaviour towards me is just as bad as mine with them. And so is the responsibility towards their work. They were there, they earned money and then they left again.

Shae's experience was one which mirrored his own behaviour. Other participants experienced situations in which they were giving, but it was not reciprocated by the employees. This lack of reciprocity resulted for Sem, for example, in a perception that employees are solely interested in taking the most out of the firm. Out of this disappointment, Sem noticed that more and more he perceives employees as mere resources. When this balance of giving and taking is disturbed, he would also terminate the work relationship:

Sem, p. 14 With all the experiences, also with employees, you naturally become a bit numb. In the past, for me it was just... an employee was just a person, a dear person. Today, of course, it is also more of a resource. Because I also noticed that employees only want to take advantage of you. It's not a give and take. Often it really comes down to... yes, where do you get everything out of it? I want more pay, I just want to take. Then you also have to say, no, then you can go.

Some participants, Kim for example, described that employees need a sense of appreciation to understand that they are needed and without this appreciation they believe fluctuation and sick leaves would be higher.

Kim, p. 12 And that's something again... we have... unless they really have something... rarely is anyone sick. So they still come with a scarf and almost no voice to work because they know we need them. But I'm also convinced that they're happy to do that for us too. So, if it's really not possible, they know they can stay at home (laughs). But, I think, in another place they would stay at home once more. If you also don't get the appreciation, hey, it's mega nice that you're here and it's important that you're here, then I can also stay at home, can't I? Yes.

Til described that he was in situations in which he himself lacked appreciation and how it made them rethink his loyalty to the firm:

Til, p. 8 I: And when you say that this is the way you want to be led, when you experience this appreciating, how do you experience that? What is happening inside you?

It is something positive. I then walk out satisfied. I hadn't had that for a few years, it was extremely frustrating. Yes. And then you go out and think, yeah, pff, who cares. Yeah, it's not my company. I was on the verge of quitting. Now I have a supervisor again, whom I've known since my early days. He has a similar management style to mine, we talk openly with each other because we've known each other for so long, and then I'm more satisfied again. And it's easier for me to deal with problems that arise from time to time.

I observed that appreciation and reciprocity were present in the leadership experiences of the participants, however, the focus has been slightly different: either as free giving from the leader to the employee, which is reciprocated by free giving from the employee, or as giving with a trading element to it, as Lee stated it, for example:

Lee, p. 3 I also give her the space she needs. In return, she is also willing to work with me on Saturdays.

For some, appreciation was given from the basis of what participants would wish for themselves. Other participants underlined that the openness to listen and take time to consider the employee's situation regardless of one's own point of view, can be a form of appreciation.

I noticed a difference in what the leaders were trying to achieve. Those with a free giving focus were aiming at having a good time together (fun, pleasantness), being nice to people for the sake of being nice, and thankfully observe a good result in performance, whereas those with a negotiating aspect in their giving, had a closer focus on their own or the organisation's goals and perceived employees as a means to achieve these goals. Despite the difference in expectation

from appreciation, both perspectives had in common that participants did not perceive themselves as anything better than their employees.

Perceptual perspectives in leadership

In this chapter, we looked so far at how love was conceptualised in the context of leadership experience by those participants who mentioned love specifically. These descriptions paralleled those aspects described by participants who did not mention love specifically. These parallel aspects related to relational perspectives, perceptual perspectives, inner perspectives, and reflective perspectives. In the last section, we explored the first perspective (relational) in depth. Another theme which I noticed throughout the interviews was the participants' conceptualisation and perception of themselves and others. Therefore, this section focuses on which role the perception of self and others played in the leadership experience of the participants and will be described in the next four sub-sections.

Equality of value

It has been mentioned at the relational level that participants did not consider themselves better or worse as human beings, regardless of the social status and level of authority. Some participants, Caz for example, expanded on this view and defined his value as constant, as given by God and independent of other people and their opinion of him:

Caz, p. 1 We define our values.... values (writes)... over possessions, many times over possessions, over beauty, and, and, and. At some point, all that has no value. Rather, the value for me is another. [...] My value is that, in all the situations I am in, I am a believer, I am always valuable before God. He created human beings. He sent us on earth to walk our way. Whether I am a beggar under the bridge or a millionaire living in Gstaad... the value for me as the small individual is always the same. I have come to that realisation. And all of that helps me later [...] to have my feet on the ground.

Ain, similarly, considers his value as given and that this knowledge helps him being stable, as Caz also pointed out. Ain highlights that it is a continuous experience to become aware

of that. In his view, this goes beyond awareness as it also includes to build on and stay in that value:

Ain, p. 15 To then reflect and say, okay, I don't take myself so seriously. I don't have my value in what he or she says to me now or attacks me, that shouldn't affect my value. So I don't draw my worth from the reaction of the audience or the other person, but I draw my worth from God. He has given me a value. And I want to build on and stay in that value. That is a continuous experience that you have to have in order to become stable.

The aspect of equality of value has been expanded, for example by Shae, who described that this feeling of being equal is like friendship: one is ready to find compromises, speak about private matters and consider the other person's needs and wishes:

Shae, p. 11 [...] But I am like that. I'm a soft type.

I: What does soft mean?

Soft is... yeah, what is soft. Willing to compromise. I'm more on a friendly level, even if I'm the boss, I don't see myself as the boss. I don't see myself as something better than them. It's just that I do a different job and so I bring them to my level a little bit. Or present myself as nothing special to them. Some people start calling me by my last name. I say, we don't have that here. And people talk to me about private things and I get a bit involved. That has been my way so far. And the cold way is the way where you neither talk about private things nor somehow respond to their needs, so to speak.

As a result, participants such as Shae or Ziv, for example, observed that people in their firm enjoyed being in this friendly atmosphere and tended to stay in the firm for a longer time.

Ziv, p. 9 I have always tried to lead from the basis of equality, not so hierarchically, so more... and I have to say, also as a consequence over the years, people have been happy to be here, it was rather difficult for them to leave.

Several participants underlined how their perceived equality of value with others was an integral part of how they were approaching their leadership practice.

Acceptance, respect, and authority

Closely connected to the importance of equal value was the aspect of acceptance and respect in their leadership. Participants spoke about experiences in which they themselves experienced acceptance and respect, and they likewise seek to accept and respect others in their

leadership practice. This is closely connected to the aspect of learning from role models and exemplifying desired behaviour described earlier. Dan, for example, recollected from an earlier position that although their team at the time was very diverse in terms of characters and approach to spirituality, they mutually respected, accepted, and appreciated each other.

Dan, p. 4 And what has been characteristic is that we have been totally different in the team, so from... people for whom faith was important, and also very esoteric, extremely esoteric people, but we pulled together. We were really a team. We respected the fact that we had different opinions on certain issues. And we really respected and accepted that.

And in his leadership today, he continues respecting [or: valuing; German: *achten*] people, treating them friendly and respectfully, and behaving in the interest of these people. He perceives this to be the key to success – success being to have a good atmosphere within the team, not primarily monetary success:

Dan, p. 13 [...] at work it refers to the fact that I very well respect if someone doesn't believe like that and most of my co-workers don't believe like I believe, they are not believers in the sense that it's not that important to them or they see it differently somehow. And I respect that. [...] I try to really [...] respect them, ... to be friendly towards them, to maintain a benevolent relationship, that is important to me. I think that is also a little bit the key to success, I don't mean sales, but success for me is that we have it good in the team [...].

Connected to the aspect of dealing with conflicts described earlier, there can be leadership situations in which participants, as Jai for example, reported that it can be challenging at times to respect, accept, and tolerate other people, particularly when their behaviour had a perceived negative effect on them. Nonetheless, Jai underlines that even then the key is to accept people and things as they are.

Jai, p. 17 You have to accept that people are different from you. You have to say somewhere, okay, maybe she's messed around with [or: taken advantage of] you a bit, that's just the way it is. (laughs bitterly) That's part of it. Not nice, but... as I said, waking up again and again at night for a week and not being able to sleep. That's something you basically just have to learn.

Shae suggested that negative experiences as these may create a conditioning, so that in the future, it might be more difficult to have a favourable attitude towards people with similar

traits or behaviours. To be attentive and remaining in touch with the higher Self helps him to see beyond a potential conditioning in his leadership:

Shae, p. 9 You write a stereotype of a person into your brain and from that moment on all people who are similar to that are unlikeable. [...] And that's an interesting fact that happens along the way. Basically, through our mind, we write something into the subconscious that is actually not true. Just to store some patterns. And that's... and I find that once you become more conscious and you make contact with the higher Self more and more, then you see things as they are, without this mis-storing.

Shae noticed that letting go of the conditioning, accepting people as they are, helps him being at peace with himself and in relationship with others, and to maintain his own energy levels:

Shae, p. 10 It doesn't upset me anymore... many things don't upset me anymore because of that. [...] I take people as they are. When the customers come and think they have to complain, I just smile. It doesn't grab me. In the past, you had people who came and with two words they robbed you of all your energy for the whole day. They come at 10 in the morning and by 12 you're drained. [...] They take your energy with two words. And since I've been dealing with the consciousness, dealing with these processes, and taking things as they are, it passes me by. [...] And people are sometimes very surprised about the reactions [...] That is, people react differently and even I... when I come home now after such a 14-hour day, I am not exhausted.

And according to Shae there is no need to subscribe to a specific religion, but to make pragmatic use of what helps to see things from another perspective and how it can help to live a more relaxed life and to take things as they are. And he grounds this view in his realisation that ultimately, all is one:

Shae, p. 18 [...] someone once asked me, now, are you a Hindu then? No, I am not a Hindu. (smiles) I just find the processes exciting, and it helps me to see the world differently. It helps me to live differently in the world. To live more relaxed. And to take the world as it is. There is nothing negative and nothing positive in the world. It's all one, so to speak. It's yin and yang. It's all one... it's all one energy.

Another view on acceptance in leadership which participants mentioned was to accept that not everyone will agree with one's opinion. Fei, for example, describes that seeing the world in colours and applying a tolerance for ambiguity without being arbitrary helps in this case:

Fei, p. 5 I'm someone who sees the world in its colourfulness, and I have a corresponding tolerance for ambiguity, and I know that in many areas, the more complex a company and the world become, the more you have to act here and there in the area of compromise, to show a certain tolerance without being arbitrary. So that's a much more difficult balancing act than the populist, totalitarian approach, which says, I'm neglecting many aspects of reality and proclaiming a truth that everyone can really understand. America first, right?

Along with a perception and tolerance of ambiguity, Fei suggests acting in the area of compromise which he describes as a rather challenging balancing act. This balancing act, according to Fei, includes an endurance of tension of different opinions, accepting that one cannot please everyone and that not everyone will be pleasing to oneself:

Fei, p. 5 Also just the endurance of tension of different opinions [...] You can't always please everyone. That's part of the belief that the world is colourful, that you also have to accept the people who say, no, the world is not colourful, it's black, or red or green, but please not colourful. (laughs)

As highlighted earlier in the context of dialogue, listening, and taking time as part of the relational perspective of leadership and as also exemplified in Fei's statement below, some participants experienced that at times a certain matter brought forward by others can seem meaningless for oneself, but they acknowledge that it can still have a high significance for somebody else and therefore highlight the importance to take people seriously in what matters to them. This is beyond passive tolerance, but a sincere care:

Fei, p. 5 Some of these are also cultural issues where one says, okay, if a problem does not seem to be relevant from above, especially in the European context, it can still have a high brisance internally. That is not entirely easy. Because then the person concerned is highly affected, where you say from the outside that it's only about this. (laughs) But you first have to take the person seriously with their problem. Even if it is only an emotional or cultural one.

Respect, acceptance, and valuing others are closely connected to the equality of value described as first aspect of the perspective related to perception: on a human level, we have the same value, participants such as Fei say, and therefore they decide to make it clear in their interactions that as a leader they are nothing better or higher, and also nothing worse or lower:

Fei, p. 9 In the conflict situation it is respect if I have a different opinion, to first perceive it, to leave it in the room and then simply enter into dialogue. And respect, the other thing we have just alluded to indirectly, is simply the variant that in dialogue, person to person, you first see, manager to employee, that you are equal on a human level. Yes, that he doesn't have the feeling that I am a leader and therefore somehow something better or higher or something else. I am perhaps hierarchically in a position to decide on more issues, but I first listen to someone professionally and emotionally without any narrow-mindedness (unint. 35:40), without arrogance, without the feeling of a class difference or something like that, because it is simply not there. Like that. It exists on one level, the hierarchical level, by definition, but not on the other level. And that has a lot to do with respect. And of course there are also different... the reflection of the respective, let's say, value context of the other person, so I think there is also a bit of respect when you come to other cultural circles, anyway, you hear it very strongly, so.. respect and so on... what do you mean by that, they don't know exactly either, but first of all most people say that nobody likes it when people look down on you from above. No? So. Which I can also understand, which also makes sense.

Fei underlined that this perception of equality is connected to the perception, reflection of and openness towards the value context of the other, and to being empathetic and understanding that they would want the same if they were in the other person's shoes and reflect this in their behaviour towards others. Fei suggests that in practice, in a conflict situation, this understanding of respect can appear like perceiving a different opinion, meet it in a dialogue at eye-level, regardless of his scope of decision authority, and listen to what is said professionally and emotionally. Also in Til's leadership experience, respect connects to being open to people and to treating them well:

Til, p. 11 Respect is this way of interacting with people, how do I treat them, am I open to them, do I treat people well.

Friendliness, valuing others as equally worthy human beings, their freedom and their needs are recurring ways of how many participants expressed that they choose to perceive others. At the same time, many also highlighted the need to be attentive to one's own needs and values and ensure to be true to these while accepting and respecting those of others, as Fei stated earlier, to show a certain tolerance without being arbitrary. Lee believes that this kind of respect is something that can be learned and that it requires the balance of giving freedom to others, seeing and responding to their needs, and at the same time know and ensure one's own needs:

Lee, p. 7 Respect is actually broadly defined as something like the set framework in which one is allowed to meet in friendship [...] and I think it is also very much based on personal morals and ethics. [...] Respect is something you have to learn. And I think it is respect for others, for the freedom and needs of others, without denying oneself in the process. And I think that is respect for me. That on the one hand you respond to the needs of the employee, but on the other hand you also clearly know what you have to have as a minimum fulfilment as an employer.

As also Fei stated earlier, many participants underlined in their leadership an equality on a human level, but also a disparity of authority at a hierarchical level, in terms of authority to take decisions. Some participants described it as a means of success if they managed the balancing act between being at the level of friendship, on one side, and maintaining authority of decision, if need be, on the other side, as Dan formulated it, for example:

Dan, p. 11 That's always been a sign for me that I think I'm doing the work well, in terms of quality. If I can have fun with them, but I can also say quite clearly, not like that, and they don't make fun of me or don't respect me, but that they really listen. [...] when I say something and I notice that they hear, that's respect for me.

Shae highlighted that the use of friendly language is key in respectful interactions, as an unfriendly choice of words can be perceived as a personal attack and negligence of the other person's boundaries:

Shae, p. 13 So, we can use our language to be either friendly or unkind to each other. And respect is the friendly way of interacting with each other without interfering with people's personalities. And unfriendly is exactly the opposite. You attack people personally without respecting their boundaries.

Along with other participants, Shae, for example, noted that a friendly level of interaction, one at eye-level, facilitated the ensuring of boundaries and maintaining of authority:

Shae, p. 13 Respect for me is shown in a polite way of dealing with each other. [...] There are still certain communication rules that have to apply. And transgressing these communication rules can be okay, but there are limits. [...] That is again something that was actually not present on this friendly level. If you look now, with the employees with whom I was on a friendly, not executive director-employee level from the beginning, they never allowed themselves to do something like that. It was a friendly level, but there was still respect and most of them perceived it that way. They didn't see me as a buddy, but also not as the big boss you have to fear now.

What we can see from the above is that respect had on one side a perceptual and attitudinal level in terms of accepting and taking individuals and situations as they are, and on

the other side a thoughtful linguistic, relational perspective in seeking to come together in dialogue, perceiving and meeting others at eye-level and, in a kind way, seek to find solutions that are attentive to the needs of both sides, while accepting different levels in decision authority.

Humanity

Many participants often used the term human (German: *Menschlichkeit*) when they referred to what mattered to them in the interaction with others in their leadership practice. When asked to define the term, these participants would speak about openness, transparency, honesty, and authenticity, as Lee for example defined it:

Lin, p. 8 Humanity is interacting with each other, that we are open, honest, transparent with... each other. In interacting with each other. Even in difficult situations, that you can stand up and say... even difficult decisions... you can always look each other in the eye.

Some participants also highlighted their struggle to be fully open as Kei, for example, perceived that, as a leader, one cannot show weakness, yet, at the same time, he observed that this was not very human and made him unapproachable. This relates to the topic above, of maintaining a balance between friendship and authority:

Kei, p. 4 [...] such an attitude ... actually not to show any weakness as a leader. [...] That doesn't really make you very human. And I think that is... yes... a bit of an issue that perhaps there is not enough closeness, a healthy closeness, which should be between superiors and employees, more really as... I think now, if you look at a good football coach, then he is clearly the boss, says where things are going, but nevertheless there is a very intimate closeness to the employees. [...] I think the topic of showing weakness, not showing weakness, that's actually the thing. And that also makes you unapproachable [...] so outside of work you're a buddy, at work you're the boss, that's okay.

He underlined however that the fear of losing one's leadership or being too human is a misapprehension and that everything has its place at the right time:

Kei, p. 4 That's always a bit of a fear of losing your authority somewhere, or losing your leadership, if you somehow approach others too humanly or show weaknesses or behave in an un-boss-like way, in that sense. That is a misapprehension. Everything is the right thing at the right time. If you somehow let yourself go a little bit outside of work, it doesn't mean that you lose respect in the workplace.

The aspect of openness and closeness as part of their leadership came up in many conversations and was connected to accepting others in all their aspects – as a human being with feelings, a history, humour, fears and hopes, as Fei formulated it, for example – and to take them seriously, make sure they are on board, as was mentioned by other participants, also. For Fei, humanity is connected to the perception of equality, to respect – and behind that, is the professional aspect.

Fei, p. 8 [Humanity] means first of all taking the other person seriously, right? [...] That there is someone sitting there who is completely equal as a human being, even if you may have different hierarchical positions, but there is a human being with his feelings, with his history, with his humour, with his fears, with his hopes and worries, just a human being, like that. And then, of course, behind that, there is also the whole professional aspect. [...] And there are always both worlds. There is the purely professional world, where I say, actually, it should go this way and that way, and then there is the human level, which plays on many different levels in between, and this perception, perceiving with respect that there is a human being with his background and his history and everything I just mentioned, I think that is the most important thing at first, in this humanity and combined with this openness, that one is allowed to talk about these soft dimensions when they get out of hand, that they are also perceived, even if one doesn't talk about it, then one can see whether someone is smiling or looking sceptical and so on, and that one also picks up everyone in their individual situation a little bit, is I think very, very important for leadership. [...]

Fei very clearly expressed the need to navigate and bring together both worlds in his leadership: the professional and the human level. The latter requires attention to verbal and non-verbal communication, but also to many other aspects that define a human being and the situation in which they find themselves at a moment. When Fei explored the reasons for finding the above important, he explained that it is connected to a joy that he perceives and which others probably likewise perceive, from being able to develop his firm as an entrepreneur and, at the same time, being, and giving space to others to be able to act as a human being, as friends in a company:

Fei, p. 8 And of course it is always important to see in which situation, with which prerequisites is a person and acts at the moment. [...] It] has something to do with, let's say, being taken seriously by others and, in the end, this feeling of being able to act professionally as a human being in a company. And that brings us back to these two points at the same time, on the one hand someone functions professionally and humanly. Why is that, because I then develop the

company in an entrepreneurial way and because it is more fun for me. I'll just say that for most other people it's also fun to act as a human being in a company. To have colleagues as friends. To celebrate together sometimes, etc.

Participants, such as Kei, for example, underlined in this context that being human encompasses also being able to show all facets of being a human, not only the positive ones. He explained it by giving an example of how he expresses himself among people he trusts and suggests giving space for these facets of a human being also in the workplace:

Kei, p. 9 [Humanity is] that you can show all the facets of being human. I'll just say that at home you are sometimes sad, sometimes depressed, sometimes angry, sometimes ... yes. You express everything that you can express or you... all states of mind come to the forefront within your own four walls or with your family, with your wife, with people you trust. And without having to cry all the time in the company with the employees, but nevertheless perhaps in a less pronounced amplitude as in private life, to be able to show these facets of the character or existence. And not somehow only the enthusiasm, the greatness, motivation, being in a good mood... to illuminate, to nurture and, let's say, the downward swings, the sagging, sadness or whatever, sometimes helplessness, or fears, doubts, all of these, to conceal them or to cut them off, then it's just the... let's say the upper side, the sunny side of the zero line, that you turn outwards and that... that... then the humanity is also missing, I think, and you become a bit unapproachable somewhere. I think the lower sides also make you... what I call human.

We can see that participants considered the human aspect, in all its variety as described above, as essential in their leadership experience.

Serving, doing good, and perceiving joy

As participants described their leadership practice, I noticed that for some, the underlying reasons for their attitude and behaviour were grounded in a motivation or wish to help others, and even their understanding of self was defined as “I am there to serve the other”, as in the case of Caz, for example:

Caz, p. 6: If you walk in faith... not with the pastors and so, these are people just like you and me too... if you get the attitude and get the grace, then part of it is also to serve the other person. That's also the reason why I'm talking to you now, for example. Because, my task as a human being is to pass on what I know. What this [person] does with it is then his or her own business. But I am there to serve the other.

He described that in his leadership he learned to distinguish between doing something to ultimately help oneself and doing something to truly serve somebody else, putting the focus on

making, for example, the community strong instead of using the community for one's own benefit:

Caz, p. 16: And now something very special that I also had to learn. At the beginning, where I... I have been in a leading position since 35 years... and now there is a very significant difference. And that is also something that is simply important. If I'm running a business, whatever, 3000 people or 2. Am I running the business so that I can position myself high, make my mark, or am I running the business to serve somebody else. Like a football coach. Or do I lead the team so that it can develop and I'm just the one pulling on the reins [...] And I am there for the team. [...] It is quite important that if you want to be in contentment with yourself in self-love, that you lead the team, lead [in a way] that the community can become strong. And you don't need the team so that you can position yourself highly.

Other participants explained their wish to help others as a result of understanding them as individuals who wish to be happy and to avoid suffering, as Jai sees it, for example – and therefore, he considers it as his task in life to help others. For him, this focus on helping is grounded in compassion and humility and is connected to the aspect of appreciation out of genuine care discussed earlier:

Jai, p. 18 So I see people on my path basically... basically as a gift. To be allowed to deal with people, also with different people, also with difficult characters, because it is... it is always a chance for me to learn something, compassion, humility, service... not in the sense of being submissive, it has nothing to do with that [...] but to see oneself as part of a greater whole and to perceive the responsibility behind it, i.e. to really understand people as individuals, as living beings who want to be happy, who don't want to experience suffering, and there to help a bit... that is... that is... I see it as a task in life.

Ain, for example, observed a certain success in helping other leaders and takes this success as confirmation that he took on the right task, namely one in which he can continue helping others:

Ain, p. 9 [...] I always manage to encourage people who are currently in leadership positions. And that's certainly one of the reasons why I took on this task, so that I can help others to develop in their leadership.

Interestingly, the aspect of serving others came up in those interviews in which participants highlighted their connectedness to God and to others. In line with the spiritual aspect of this motivation, these participants highlighted that by serving others, they serve God, and it

does not matter if it is in the spiritual area or in the business context, because, according to them, God is everywhere, as Ziv pointed it out, for example:

Ziv, p. 6 I want to serve this God, regardless of whether I return to theological or economic work, so that was completely free of this consideration. Uncoupled. The kingdom of God is everywhere.

Some participants, such as Jai, for example, described that they felt it as a “gift of God” when they were able to help somebody. So, although there was no reciprocity expected, the feeling which participants experienced from having been able to help was what they perceived as gift. It is a reciprocated gift, so-to-say given to them by themselves (or by God). And these participants then observed an interrelated positive impact, for the person they were able to help, for oneself (this good feeling for having been able to help), and for the organisation that benefits from content employees in the form of a better performance. Jai mentions, that he enjoys seeing how his learnings and his reflections can have a positive impact on somebody else:

Jai, p. 14 And she went out after an hour, she was almost crying, she was so happy... she was really beside herself with joy. (laughs) I'm so happy, that's so nice. And when you see that you can actually help someone else with relatively simple means, it's like a gift of God. And I see great possibilities to really change things. For me, because of course I learn and then also work on myself, on my reflection... but if you pass that on, that's worth its weight in gold... that really brings something to the person, because then he's no longer eaten up in his job or whatever... because he can organise himself better and you have a benefit for the company. In the end, it's also something for the company... a satisfied employee, a happy employee who performs better.

This interrelated positive impact is connected to an aspect mentioned earlier in the context of the conceptualisation of love: connecting people-centredness with vision-centredness. Another aspect which I noticed in the context of helping others, was the perception of a sense of responsibility as leader to be supportive of people when they are stuck or making sure they don't overload themselves without noticing it themselves, as Fei described it for example:

Fei, p. 12 Responsibility in leadership can mean saying to employees that I take responsibility for the actions of the people, i.e. on the one hand, I let the people run free, but if they have messed up and are not getting anywhere, then I see to it that I help at that point. Responsibility also means that I myself, as a manager, may recognise that someone is going into the red zone,

but perhaps they don't even notice it and I take them out of the fire, so to speak, so that they don't burn themselves out, in other words.

In an earlier section, we saw that participants described their attentiveness to other people's needs, but also to their own needs. Likewise, in the context of serving others, some participants highlighted that there need to be boundaries. Despite seeing himself as philanthropist, Jai, for example, acknowledges that he cannot help people in all areas. In these situations, he would take the time to listen and then clearly state that he is not the right person for a certain topic, but would then also point to other people who might be able to help in a particular case and offer his support to identify and take the next step:

Jai, p. 17 I see myself as a philanthropist. I want to help people in my life, that's important to me. And I like people. And of course that also means that I am open to their problems. But on the other hand... that means there has to be a clear boundary. So... what I can't do is solve marriage problems, as an example. That would be one of the points, if someone would come with it, I would of course listen to it, I would (say? unint.1:16:09), listen, I'm not the right person for that, please go there and there. If you need help, I'll support you. Let somebody help you there, in this or that place.

Many participants also spoke about a motivation to and perceived joy from giving the world something good, as Sem, for example:

Sem, p. 3 [...] and we invest a lot of our profit in the solution, in the software. Reduces our profit, our wage, but it's a pleasure to give something good to the world.

Some participants saw it as their sense in life to have contributed to the world with something good. Jai, for example, makes it clear that it is a matter of trying to do what is possible in their leadership and thereby being a good role model to others:

Jai, p. 19 I don't want to have lived and leave at the end with a bank account that is in the red. If you look at it like this... if you look at it karmically, the whole thing... I would actually like to say, okay, I have really done something meaningful on this planet. [...] I try to approach others positively, to take them seriously in their nature, in their being and try, by being a good role model, to initiate processes of change for others as well.

Doing good was in some cases connected to leaving a legacy and finding fulfilment in life, as for Sem, for example:

Sem, p. 14 I: I don't want to leave this world without leaving anything good behind. I don't want to just live and then just pass away. I was one of ten million. I want to have made a difference, even if it's just starting a business, building it up a little bit and maybe passing it on to the kids or somehow... something. A purpose. It's actually just a sense of life. To challenge oneself a little bit, maybe to say to oneself, wow, you did a cool thing, self-affirmation or how do you say it, self-fulfilment.

In relation to this wish and striving to do good, some participants described leadership as leading oneself and others to doing the right things – the right thing being the good, and the good being the right thing – by living, demonstrating, and expressing what they have set out to adhere to and to achieve, as Ziv stated it, for example:

Ziv, p. 13 Leadership for me is being guided, myself, and guiding others to do the right things. [...] And I have always tried to do that. On the one hand, through the Word of God, the Holy Scripture is such a voice, that's how I understood it, and that guided me to do what is right and what is good. Because the right thing is the good thing and the good thing is the right thing. And then I tried, of course, I would say, to live out this leadership principle with all its contents and also, on occasions when it arises, to live it with this form of values, priorities and conviction, to demonstrate it and also to express verbally what I want.

When participants explored why they take certain decisions and why they engage with people in certain ways, many described fulfilment, self-determination, and joy. In Sem's case, for example, it was grounded in a sense of creation, having created something beautiful, to have made a change, in relation to the thing itself:

Sem, p. 14 I can, I always say like a sculptor, I do something because I enjoy it and I create something, even if people don't like what I put together, but I myself have created something, I have the feeling that it is something beautiful and I can decide for myself what form it takes and what not. And ... otherwise I would simply be controlled by others.

Lee expressed it as doing something that satisfies her and that she feels absorbed by:

Lee, p. 3 And above all, for me it has always been that I want to do something that satisfies myself. I do not need this doctor[al degree], leadership not as a status symbol. I feel like it's something I'm absorbed in.

This joy has been described as a target and as result of a friendly, respectful relationship with others, of an atmosphere in which people feel accepted, in which they can act in a self-

determined way and it which it is pleasant to be. And the resulting joy is perceived by both, the team members as well as the leader, as Shae mentioned it, for example:

Shae, p. 13 But now at this short-term level with the temporary workers etc. it actually works better on the friendly level, than on the cold one. It's not fun for anyone either. Also not for me personally.

As described in an earlier section related to reciprocity, in some cases participants saw their employees as key to their own success and hence wanted to ensure that their employees have everything which they need to be successful, as Til described it, for example. At the same time, he noticed that for things to be good, it has to be enjoyable:

Til, p. 10 And if they do a successful job, then my department or my division is successful and I am successful too. I cannot be successful without my staff. I can't. And as I said... I have already ... here.. (unint. 43:27) developed a few friendships out of it and ... I also say it has to be fun. If it's not fun, then it's really not good. [...] Or having joy. From people, and with the people. Also observing how people develop and how employees develop.

Fei's perspective brings the above together: By bringing everyone in his firm on board, taking them seriously as human beings and ensuring they understand decisions taken in the firm, people are more committed and engaged, he perceives, because they feel they can make a difference. As a result, the firm is more effective, and for him, in his position of authority, it is much more fun to work like this:

Fei, p. 3 I believe that when people have the feeling that they are taken seriously as human beings and that they are in a company that, to put it bluntly, does the right things, [...] then on the one hand you create a connection between employees and the company, but on the other hand you also create more, yes, as they say, commitment, engagement. [...] And this dynamic, when I as an employee have the feeling that I ... understand the company, I feel comfortable here and I can change something, I can contribute. Then [...] a) I am more effective in the company and b) it then also... I say on an emotional level, where I can then say again from a leader's point of view, quite egocentrically, it is also much more fun for me to work like this, because people want to help shape things, not like somebody who is.... yes, I would say, working in a vegetative attitude, at worst with an inner resignation, so to speak, anyway, what they are doing up there and I am doing down here... so then the traction between the company idea and leadership and the level of many employees is missing and that is just through the conversation and the creation of understanding and also through the mutual, I would say, exchange of criticism, it just gets better.

The above sections touched on the identified perceptual perspectives in leadership: equality of value; acceptance, respect, and authority; humanity; and serving, doing good, and perceiving joy. What we saw from the statements related to these perceptual aspects of leadership, is that perceptions and attitudes were an impactful and integral part of the participants' leadership.

Inner perspectives in leadership

As described at the beginning of this chapter, the identified attributes of love matched other key insights from the conversations identified within relational, perceptual, inner, and reflective perspectives. This section explores the third aspect in more depth: the inner perspective. This facet became visible in the participants' statements around feeling accepted on the inside, being authentic with one's true self, and the need for prioritising one's own inner needs, first.

I am accepted

Feeling accepted on the inside was an aspect of leadership which came up mostly in connection to spirituality. Participants, who mentioned this inner acceptance, were referring to a realisation that they are good and enough the way they are and that they are worthy. They referred to accepting and finding peace with themselves as they are at that moment, in contrast to seeking for fulfilment of the soul from the outside. In Caz's view, for example, it was connected to the realisation that joy, peace, healing, and love can only happen from the inside. He understood his own responsibility to fill his soul, as he stated it, and summed up his realisation in four core statements:

Caz, p. 5 There it is about having the soul fulfilled and filled. [...] That is, four core statements: I am enough for myself. No soul fillers from outside. What do I want? But above all, what do I not want? No more searching for the undefined. I.e. simply being on the lookout for something new. Not to evolve, but somehow to get off on something. No matter what. People, material and

so on. And that's also been a big theme that I've worked on and worked with. No, you have to fill your soul yourself.

Ain felt this inner acceptance when he had an experience in which he saw himself in the presence of God. He, out of himself, at that time, did not consider himself as worthy, but was overwhelmed by feeling accepted by God just as he was:

Ain, p. 25 [...] I experienced it in such a way that it.. like God flowed into me ... as if blown in with compressed air, that it really filled up... it was physically perceptible, that it... something came into me and I almost exploded with enthusiasm and peace and everything that makes up God suddenly inside me. I almost freaked out. (laughs) It was like a drug flash like no other. From one moment to the next. Just before, I thought I was dying. Because. I saw that I was in God's presence. And I instinctively (unint. 1:50:38) realised, even though I didn't know God, instinctively realised, you're dying in God's presence (voice cracking) because you're not worthy at all and God comes to me and just accepts me as I am and gives Himself to me and fills that void and that has stayed to this day.

Ain experienced that he was filled on the inside with what he describes as everything that makes up God and felt an inner unconditional acceptance. This view on acceptance is a different one compared to those in the section *acceptance, respect, and authority* as part of the perceptual perspective discussed earlier. There, acceptance was described in the context of perceiving others or perceiving oneself in relation to others. Here, Caz and Ain point to an inner acceptance, by oneself and/or by God. This view on acceptance begins and revolves on the inside.

Caz, p. 3 Those are also insights that I ... that's all over the books, but I'm not a theorist, I'm a pragmatic practitioner, and I really realised that healing only happens from the inside out. Self-healing.

Related to this, Caz underlines that in his experience, self-healing can only happen from the inside out, emphasising the importance of the inner leadership.

Authenticity

Another inner aspect which I noticed was the aspect of authenticity in leadership. Some participants, such as Kei, for example, expressed that authenticity, being who one really is and not solely incorporate one's role in the organisation, is more pleasant for oneself and in the

interaction with others. And this wish to express who one really is, connects to the earlier aspect of feeling accepted, on the inside, as one is:

Kei, p. 6 Back then they got to know me much better, who I really am or am at home, that kind of thing. Really the [Kei] as who he is, rather than just the [Kei] as the head of department, I'll say now. Kind of like that. [...] It was just... it was more pleasant. [...] Somehow a healthy, human environment in the team. And less exhausting. [...] Consciously or unconsciously, one always spends part of one's energy on an appearance. Or for an image or for a behaviour. If you don't do that or have to... yes... then it's easier, it's healthier, it's... more worth living. It's more exciting. (laughs) Yes... so more real, simply put. And then you realise that you are more the way you really are, and you enjoy it. And here it's just, you are ... how you feel you have to be, so to speak.

As Kei described authenticity, it is also closely related to the aspect of humanity, of being human in all its facets, and to experience joy from it. What Kei, for example, noticed was that authenticity preserves energy and that playing a role that one feels one has to play can be exhausting and lead to burnout over time.

Self-awareness and self-care

Self-awareness and self-care or self-protection can be seen as further aspects of the inner perspective in leadership. The topic of burnout came up during a few of the interviews and in these instances but also unrelated to burnout, participants highlighted that there is a need to take care of oneself, first, before one can help anybody else and that this is something of which others can assist to become aware, but ultimately is in the responsibility of oneself – to be attentive to one's own needs and maintain one's own inner source. This is also connected to the earlier mentioned aspect of perceived equality, taking the other person and their needs not as less, but also not as more important than oneself and one's own needs.

Jai, for example, described it as a learning curve on which he finds himself, and realised that helping others at his own expense cannot be a solution:

Jai, p. 5 Yes, well, you sit somewhere in between and have to make sure that your employees don't get lost, but also that you don't get lost yourself. And I have... that's my weakness, that also came out during a coaching session, I sometimes think too much about the others. So I actually

say, now it's enough.. and that's where my learning curve is at the moment, that I simply say, okay, I can't perish myself. That is not the solution.

Also Ray highlights that paying too much attention to others in contrast to oneself is not healthy and can lead to burnout. He made an experience, in which his managing director approached him and suggested that it is time to focus on himself:

Ray, p. 6 That doesn't do me much good myself, when you pay too much attention to the other person [...] these are the topics that can lead to... I don't like the wording... burnout. [...] the managing director, who also said to me at the time, [Ray], I think we'll look at you now, that you do something for *yourself*. Because that's exactly what we're talking about... clearly, I can live unconsciously according to this uncertain life plan that was formed in some form in childhood. I can go on like this and then at some point not notice that I am in a downward spiral, where you simply disregard physical signs, disregard social feedback, where it can lead you into a spiral like burnout.

When we spoke about dialogue in an earlier part of this chapter, some participants highlighted that it is partially about listening and observing people attentively, and partially about speaking up if one has a need or something requires attention from one's perspective. In other cases it is about providing a platform or opportunity for people to meet in dialogue, and then, seeking the conversation if one observes that a person is getting into a "red zone", as Fei stated it. The example above which Ray gave is clearly one where his managing director stepped in to make him aware that he needs to pay attention to himself. So, although the responsibility was ultimately with Ray, in this case, his managing director played an important role in helping him to become aware of his situation.

Ziv stated that dealing with people involves dealing with issues and that it includes both, reaching out to help, but at the same time, making sure to not drown oneself:

Ziv, p. 20 So... when you are dealing with people, you have issues on the table and you have to make sure that on the one hand you help people, in the sense that you are an extension of Christ, but on the other hand you also have to make sure that you protect your life so that you don't burn out.

Caz shared that he experienced a burnout himself and learned that he had to take care of himself. He understood that before, he did not pay attention to setting boundaries. As quoted earlier under the section *I am accepted*, he was seeking to get something from the outside, which, as he then learned, only he could give to himself:

Caz, p. 5 I just have to look for myself... I have to become a little egoist, without that it doesn't work. Look for yourself. [...] I also became ill mainly because I didn't understand how to say no myself. I always thought I had to do more and more, that the hamster wheel was turning faster and faster so that I could be patted. That has to do with what I told you before, with peace of mind [or literally: peace of soul]. And, if I wasn't told, [Caz], you're good or you're doing well, then I fell into a hole. Because I didn't feel the self-worth.

Also Kei realised that burnout has nothing to do with the amount of work to be done, but more with oneself:

Kei, p. 3 I also noticed a bit, because I also dealt a bit with the topic of burnout and so on, and then I also saw that it doesn't only... actually has nothing to do with the workload, but more with oneself... how one... I wasn't really good at delegating, I'll say now, that was already... a bit of a noose around my neck, that there's just too much that sticks to oneself and a certain perfectionism is also such a... thing that drives you in that direction.

Lee's perspective brings together the interrelatedness of different aspects of leadership: empathy, respect and setting boundaries – being attentive and responsive to the other person's situation and needs, yet at the same time being attentive and responsive to one own needs. Balancing these, according to Lee, has an impact on oneself, on the people around, as well as on the organisation:

Lee, p. 14 It's always an interplay between demarcation [or: setting boundaries], empathy and respect. I think those are the three pillars for me, those are the three pillars. You can put yourself in the other person's shoes, but you must not neglect your own needs as an employer, because if the employer is in a bad shape, I'm in a bad shape, I'm in a bad shape, I'm in a bad shape psychologically, my assistant is in a bad shape, everybody is in a bad shape.

Here is also a connecting point to the interrelatedness of vision-centredness and people-centredness, both can be essential and complementary to each other.

What we can observe in this section of the inner perspectives in leadership is a realisation of a shift of responsibility – moving away from making solely the leader or the follower responsible for a desired outcome but realising that it begins within oneself, transcends into the perception of oneself and others, and shows in the way we choose to interact with others, which in turn is interrelated and has an effect at each level.

Reflective perspectives in leadership

Reflection and management of self can be considered as a related aspect to all the points above. It is an alternation between the experienced and the reflection thereof. Participants expressed an ongoing reflection and learning regarding the understanding or awareness of their inner energy source. For example, Caz realised that he was seeking self-worth from the outside. He then began writing down what mattered to him most, what helped preserve his inner source, his inner energy core, and started managing himself against these self-set priorities:

Caz, p. 4 You suddenly realise that you don't have as much self-worth or self-confidence in your body as people perceive. And that this is exactly what keeps setting you back. And afterwards you learn how to work on it so that it gets better, how to stay stable in your thoughts. Most of the time, everything started in such a way that I thought about it and wrote down how I was going to proceed now... and checked every day where I was now.

Notably, Caz did this on a continuous basis, he checked in with himself every day, as he stated it, and made notes about his realisations and actions through which he wanted to live in accordance with his priorities, always attentive to make necessary changes along the way:

Caz, p. 4 [...] then I wrote, for example: Pressure and burden must go. Reduce dependencies. And later there is another point. I defined it 1.5 years later. The priorities in life. What is important to me? What have I written here: First, God. Second, health, mine. Third, family. Fourth, job. Fifth, hobbies. Sixth, leisure. [...] I have learned to start looking after myself, so that I can live what I have written down for myself, so that I can do it. Always with the variations. Always like this: The goal is there. You throw it out again. Or put it back there. And that's the plan, isn't it?

Reflection also came up as a guiding question for some participants: is one capable of living in this inner source, in this peace, as Ain said, for example, asking and challenging

himself: do I love, do people feel accepted in my presence, am I leading this way? Ain highlighted the importance of self-reflection, self-management, and continuous growth and brings up a variety of considerations for himself in this context:

Ain, p. 15 To have the peace of God within oneself, to be able to remain peaceful without being aggressive. But that in turn has to do with the value of being able to live in this peace. Paul expresses it with the fruit of the Spirit.... Love, joy... is there joy in something again? ... Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control... I find these nine things very strongly again... when it comes to leading people. Is that there in me? Can I be patient? Do I express peace? Do I experience peace myself? Do I love? Do people feel accepted in my presence? Do I lead in this way? Do I have self-control? That's where self-management comes in. Can I manage myself? [...] And yes, to have self-reflection, is that present in me? Can I be a patient person? Do I have self-management? Can I deal with people in love and respect? Do I deal with them in that way? Are the things that I do, that I lead, that I demand, where I try to lead people, can I match that, does that fit in? That helps me a lot.

Several participants expressed that they themselves have the responsibility of ensuring their happiness and that they can freely decide if they want to continue following established patterns of behaviour or if they choose to act in alignment with their inner compass, or, in other words, to turn off the autopilot and take charge of one's own, conscious decisions again, as Shae expressed it, for example:

Shae, p. 7 Yes, the goals are important, I think, but much more important is the way. And not to fade out the moments in between, not to run from goal to goal, with blinkers, but simply to set the goal, yes, also from Hinduism, to operate the law of attraction, that's my goal, that's where I want to go, and automatically you implement the law of attraction and in doing so simply to live consciously, to live life. Because life is... is not these goals, not these points. It's our ego that often sets these goals for us. And we run after these goals and when we reach them, and, what now? (laughs) Next goal! Yay, that way. And the meditative story and this Hindu path helps you with that, I think. Yes. (unint. It helps? 39:11) our very fast world to just slow down. We all run around like junkies, like on autopilot and through these methods you switch off the autopilot.

Ziv described an experience in which he was raging and was about to react emotionally. In this moment, he listened to his inner voice or, the Spirit of God, which reminded him that he can freely choose how he wants to react, that it is up to him to be a free person. This is similar to when participants spoke about how they deal with conflicts in their leadership, not reacting out of emotions, but to take a step back, to observe, to take a deep breath, to reflect:

Ziv, p. 8 Well, I'll stick to being.. now it's up to me to be a free person. That is, I have freedom of choice. Before, I couldn't choose, it did with me. Today I can choose whether I live certain things or not, [...] And anger grew in me that wanted to vent itself, a kind of rage, and I would have liked to take apart the living room cupboard. [...] Suddenly the Spirit of God is there, says, [Ziv], you have all the freedom, you can now decide to do whatever you want here, that will deeply shake the trust and have a lasting effect, or you can now take these feelings under your control and victoriously deal with this situation. So. And then I said, thank you Lord, that's right. You have given me that freedom of choice. I can. Before, I couldn't have. So, I made use of that.

This connection to oneself, or to one's higher Self, has been described by Shae, for example, as helpful element to be calmer, particularly in challenging phases, to be more aware, and to be clearer about what one wants and one's own path forward.

Shae, p. 6/7 I always talk about this great river that guides me and now if you look into the sciences of Hinduism, it is the higher Self that is this river, ultimately. And the more I meditate, the more I connect with my higher Self and the more I see the path, so to speak. It's natural... at points it's becoming calmer, becoming more aware. It's simply a relaxation tool when you have stressful phases, just sit down, meditate, that's also simply an hour of quiet where you don't think about anything else and basically enjoy the process.

Being still, reflecting, learning and self-managing were aspects which several participants described as recurrent. They generally perceived experiences as a chance to learn and progress in their personal growth, as Shae explained it, for example:

Shae, p. 4 [...] and I think that for me, from a higher level, it was school, you have to go here again, please go there again, you still have to learn something. And the reflection is exactly this learning. If you don't learn from these difficulties, then you can look at it again. (laughs) Then you get the opportunity to learn from these things again. (smiles) That's how I see it. And that's why today... I'm reflecting everything. So, I... okay, why was that. How can I avoid that. Could it be avoided, not. And what do I learn from it. That is such a daily companion.

Fei brought up another perspective on reflection. He spoke about being influenced by family and society regarding the guiding values in his leadership and highlights the importance of what he called a dissonance analysis, to be critical around the established standards: do I also accept these values as good or does anything need adjustment, from my experience?

Fei, p. 10 For me personally it's simply like this, of course you get a code of values from parents and society and then you look at it in the sense of... yes... kind of a... dissonance analysis. Does it harmonise with one's own world view, with what one has experienced oneself, or are there any issues where one says there are values that I now have to adjust a little from what I have experienced, or is it simply everything that I have received, so to speak, in the sense of what I

have been told, is that good, do I also accept it as good, or is there a need for adjustment somewhere.

Shae described that reflection helps him to increase his understanding of the human nature and to take people as they are. For him, this also means to attentively observe and openly speak with people if he does not see a fit, for example – an aspect which is connected to the aspect of ideal world congruence mentioned earlier. This increased knowledge of human nature helps him to better perceive people.

Shae, p. 9 The more I walk consciously through life, the higher my knowledge of human nature is and I take people as they are and I see that I cannot adapt a person to me. And if I see that a person has something that doesn't suit me, that doesn't fit into my company, then I tell him straight away, it's not going to work out between us. In the past I always put these people on hold, no, oh, I'll get back to you (unint. 57:37). Today I can decide more quickly, well, that's not going to work. Or just think of an activity that is something for him. [...] That already helps me, the knowledge of human nature with the people. You see people more. [...] How do I see it... I don't know. You perceive it. How I perceive it, it's not intentional. It's an energy thing. I would say. You can feel it. There are just some... you pay attention to body language, you pay attention to language, you pay attention to his questions, what he asks, you are just alert and attentive.

In several conversations, participants brought up that the so-called *right* leadership for them is not a specific way of leading, but one that is grounded in reflection, one that is attentive and responsive to different needs at different places and times – closely related to the aspect of empathy and attention:

Fei, p. 4 Well, the right leaders are of course a very, very colourful bouquet of flowers. And there is no one person, so to speak, who has one style of leadership and that is now... a leader who is a different leader for maybe people on the construction site than for those sitting in planning, that is so.... so it's always a very big colourful typology and also a person will not be per se, because one is now particularly charismatic, the other is perhaps not so charismatic, but is incredibly, let's say, clever and listens well and brings the issues to the point again and again, i.e. there are of course different [...] levels of authority that a leader can radiate and, of course, different synapses in the respective staff to which they react and therefore there is no perfect leader who has this and that image. I believe that a certain basic degree of self-reflection is always part of it, according to my understanding, according to what I want. That is not to say that there are not other leadership styles that still work today. There are still dictatorial, patriarchal styles of leadership.

Also, self-reflection has been described as pre-requisite for the wrestling for solutions as mentioned earlier. A self-reflection in this sense, for Fei, for example, includes the attitude of

being ready to accept that one might be wrong and to be ready to seek for a compromise, or, even if one could impose one's position as a consequence of the position of authority, to choose not to, for the sake of seeing the other person content:

Fei, p. 7 There are always situations in which you clash. [...] There is someone who thinks differently and without this self-reflection to say, no, I'm here and this is right and this is only this opinion, there is no approach, there is no dialectic, yes, so there is no synthesis of this or of anything... (smiles) [...] There are different facets to it and sometimes it's just that you say, okay, I'm not losing my authority, just let him (unint. keep on? 26:24), if that's very important to him now, that's then a reflection, where you don't just talk about your personal opinions, but simply about your personal position. Where you say, yes, you would have the possibility to enforce this because you are somehow the boss, but you don't do it because he is then satisfied and in the sense that the wiser gives in. That is always one aspect. And the other is simply to say, wow, if there really is a dispute, to say, (sighs) am I perhaps a bit wrong or how can I express my opinion or the other way round, what are the points of attack and where are the bridges? Is he perhaps right when he says he doesn't want to do this because... Is there perhaps another alternative, the compromise just discussed, in between?

As Fei was exploring his understanding of reflection and how it shows in his leadership experience, he also highlighted that some people are more capable of being reflexive of interpersonal aspects and others are less inclined to, less capable, or just not used to doing it. He suggested that there is a lot to learn from psychology, but also that it does not need any psychological terms, but rather a basic *willingness* to reflect on how oneself interacts with others:

Fei, p. 14 There are so many naturals, people who already... they don't need psychological terms for it, it's just this feeling for people and the interpersonal, they just have that, for people who don't have it like that, it's certainly useful (laughs) to have a direct analytical look at one or two things so that they can think about it a bit, but I think this... this vein of... or this reflection of the interpersonal, what's actually happening here with that person. Yes, we have just talked about the most diverse terms around respect etc. and humanity and closeness and dialogue and dialectics etc. All of this is only possible in this debate between one person and another [...] And yes, as I said, I think that people who don't have it should deal with it more intensively, and that doesn't require psychology, but only the basic willingness to see how I relate to others in reality and how I appear. The more you are a leader, the more important the whole thing becomes. [...]

Some participants also mentioned that at times it helps to speak with an outsider about a situation or challenge. Ain, for example, shared that it helps him to have a person with whom he can reflect about his life, a close friend that helps to gain a trusted, different perspective on the events in his own life and inspire thinking about how he could handle these situations:

Ain, p. 16 I have a friend with whom I work on this. And I would recommend that to anyone... any leader, just a personal friend... we basically started this as mentors... we mentored each other... or how do you say it... and we agreed 25 years ago that we would meet once a month and spend a day together. [...] we address the things that we heard last month where we had difficulties, it's very, very personal..., where do you stand, how am I (unint. 1:12:20) ... how are you doing in the relationship? With the people? How are you doing at work? With your development? What is happening with you? What's burning? What is current? What are the themes in your life? What kind of book are you reading? And then you talk about it and through the conversations, through the friendship that we naturally have with each other, we get into the conversation very quickly and relatively bluntly into the depths... we don't have to make small talk with each other. [...] and I wouldn't want to miss that, that I have such a person where I can talk and realise through talking... not even through his answers, but through exchanging with each other a reflection takes place and I recommend this to every pastor, every leadership personality.... [...] and we can say anything to each other, we really don't have any barrier or boundary anymore, and that is something very valuable that I would never ever want to miss.

Although there is a lot of self-management involved in the reflective perspective on leadership, it can be also helpful to have someone trusted join in in the reflection process and either offer a different perspective or simply listen, which by itself helped in Ain's case to reflect on a situation.

Reflection came up at all levels of leadership identified in this chapter: at the relational level, at the level of perception and at the inner level. It included attention to others as well as to oneself and to take time to become clear about one's own assumptions, intentions, and goals, how to reach the desired and how to make adjustments on the way, for oneself and in relationship and dialogue with others. It is an ongoing process, a guiding question, an awareness of freedom of choice, attentiveness and adaption of response, humility and willingness to increase understanding and find solutions, grounded in acceptance of oneself and others, equally.

Concluding remarks

This chapter looked at leadership experiences of the research participants in the context of love. It explored how love was understood in the context of the participants' leadership experience and pointed out key aspects which were highlighted by participants without the specific mention of love. These aspects revolved around relational, perceptual, inner, and reflective perspectives and have been discussed in depth with the support of relevant quotes. The

next chapter discusses in more depth what the findings could mean in the context of the research question: How could love look like in leadership practice?

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions and Contributions

The aim of this research was to explore love in the context of leadership, guided by the research question: How could love look like in leadership practice? This chapter assesses how the findings presented in Chapter Four can help to answer the research question.

For this purpose, Chapter Five summarises and synthesises the findings identified in Chapter Four, and contrasts these against existing literature, discussing how the findings of this research relate to earlier research on leadership and to love in leadership more specifically. It contains evaluations and conclusions on how this research is positioned within existing literature and what contribution it offers to leadership theory and leadership practice. This chapter ends with concluding remarks and an outline of recommendations for future research.

Synthesis of findings

Participants have engaged in conversations about their leadership experience. The research was particularly focused on exploring motivational aspects in the participants' approaches to leadership, on investigating to which extent a potential concept of love was present in their experience and how this reflected in their leadership.

Without having been introduced to a concept of love, some participants mentioned the term love unprompted and defined how they understood the term in its different facets and how they bring their understanding of love into their leadership practice. Interestingly, these facets of love, which some participants described explicitly, and which were presented in the section on the conceptualisation of love in Chapter Four, were also mentioned by other participants, who have not specifically referred to love. What I found particularly remarkable was that this comparison of overarching themes to the identified facets of love happened at the very end of the

analysis process. That is, the specifically mentioned facets of love in the interviews did not guide or limit the inductive thematic structuring of the entire data set.

One striking difference which I noticed was the aspect of negotiated reciprocity. Even though participants generally spoke about appreciation and meeting others as equals, one part of the participants was relating to unconditional, genuine care, and others as a means of triggering favourable behaviour. Returning to the conceptualisation of love as described by the participants and the understanding of love as understood within this thesis (see Chapter One), one could deduce that the genuine, unconditional care is closer to the understanding of *agapé* than the negotiated, conditional approach.

The main identified perspectives and parallels have been described in depth in Chapter Four and are outlined in brief overleaf:

Perspectives	Key aspects
Conceptualisation of love in leadership	<p>Relational: Love as an unconditional gift in interaction with others, creating loving, trusted relationships, being attentive to other people's needs, engaging in dialogue and seeking to make life easier for others, as recognition of interdependence and seeking mutual advantage, joining together to support one common vision, or to part ways if no common ground can be found</p> <p>Perceptual: Love as a basic attitude towards others as equally worthy human beings, as accepting others as they are and be respectful and humble, as perception of connectedness and that ultimately, all is one, as a motivation and goal in itself, as a wish to do good and to serve, to bring and to have joy</p> <p>Inner: Love as coming from an inner reservoir of love, through spiritual connection, relationship to God or a higher Self, as being sustained through self-care, self-acceptance, and inner forgiveness and freedom, and as an inner guide, particularly in challenging situations</p>
Relational perspectives in leadership	Empathy and attention, dialogue and exemplification, ideal world congruence, dealing with conflicts, appreciation, and reciprocation (genuine care vs. conditional care, own wish/ need reflection, taking time, balance of give and take)
Perceptual perspectives in leadership	Equality of value, acceptance, respect, and authority, humanity, serving, doing good, and perceiving joy
Inner perspectives in leadership	Self-acceptance, authenticity, self-care
Reflective perspectives in leadership	Throughout the conceptualisation of love and the inner, perceptual, and relational levels in leadership: Self-management, continuous review against self-set goals, guiding question and framework to learn during path of growth, recognition of freedom of choice, conscious choice, opportunity to connect to higher Self, help to take people as they are, flexibility of leadership in different contexts, pre-requisite for solutions, possible with willingness (vs. talent), (outside) help to see new perspectives

Table 3 Identified themes

As can be seen in the detailed presentation of the findings in Chapter Four as well as in the table above, the specific conceptualisation of love largely parallels those aspects described without a specific mention of love. Bringing together the different perspectives, how could the research question be answered?

How could love look like in leadership practice?

With the generated insights, based on the experience of the participants, a potential concept of love in leadership could be interpreted as consisting of the inner, perceptual, relational and conscious perspectives. The table below outlines the four perspectives.

Perspectives	Key aspects
Inner love leadership as self-acceptance and sustained self-care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Starts within oneself- Grounded in unconditional acceptance of oneself- Takes care of oneself- Knows of one's own freedom of choice- Ensures a sustained internal love- Nourished by a connection to one's inner self or a spiritual connection to a higher Self, to God, or both- Knows and is authentic to one's true loving self- Is a prerequisite for giving love and freedom to others- Finds peace and contentment within oneself
Perceptual love leadership as acceptance and perception of equality beyond roles and identities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Transcends from inner love to a loving perception and attitude towards others- Perceives others from a basis of oneness and equality, from a mutually shared aspect of humanity, regardless of different levels of decision authority- Is a consciously chosen mindset- Unconditionally accepts and genuinely respects others while staying true to one's own authentic self and values- Is willing to increase understanding of who and what is around- Is motivated to help others understand their freedom of choice- Desires to help others succeed, grow and alleviate their struggles- Seeks to contribute to the world with something good- Perceives interrelatedness with others and aims for inter-effectiveness, mutual growth- Wishes to experience joy and provide a space for others to be joyful
Relational love leadership as relationship grounded in mutual care and connected purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Actions the inner and perceptual love to oneself and others in relationship- Is a mutually shared experience of people coming together- Establishes and maintains mutually caring and trusted relationships in which people feel comfortable to speak up and enter into a dialogue

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is attentive and empathetic towards others, listens and takes time to being there for others - Becomes aware of others and their wishes and needs, transcends love into behaviour that best serves the situation at hand - Tolerates mistakes of oneself and others, apologises, learns from them, shows humility - Helps each other grow, acknowledging the interrelatedness and helps others help themselves - Exemplifies loving behaviour and self-management grounded in love, inspires others to do the same - Searches for and engages in dialogue among equals on what matters (ideal worlds, immediate needs) - Seeks ways to build bridges while accepting ambiguities - Shows unconditional acts of care and appreciation and freely reciprocates benevolence, balances giving and taking - Sets and maintains boundaries - Comes together with others who follow the same vision and seeks to connect personal and organisational visions - Finds the best place for oneself and others to achieve personal goals while also contributing to a commonly shared vision of a greater good of the organisation and beyond - Accepts different ideal visions and respectfully parts ways if no mutually beneficial relationship of people and visions can be achieved
Conscious love leadership as reflexivity and reflection/ conscious attention to oneself, others, and purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enables and supports the inner, perceptual, and relational level - Is an ongoing companion, alternating between the experienced and the reflection thereof - Attentively observes and reflects oneself (one's identity, needs, experiences, authenticity), others and who and what is around, what one chooses to engage with - Tests one's own actions against an inner compass of love, particularly in times of challenge and conflict - Is a constant learning process with acceptance and room for one's own and other's growth from a basis of love?

Table 4 How love could look like in leadership

The findings of this thesis suggest that love in leadership builds on self-love, on a perceived oneness and equality with others, on an unconditional acceptance of oneself and others, and transcends into a caring interaction with oneself and others. It is accompanied by a continuous awareness and attention as well as reflection and reflexivity and aims for a mutually beneficial congruence and balance of perspectives towards oneself, others, and the interaction/joint purpose.

A pre-requisite for leading others with love is acceptance, care, and reflection of oneself. It builds on an inner reservoir of love which is sustained by self-love and a feeling of oneness with others, and a potential connection to God or a higher Self. It is about being able to be the authentic self, feeling accepted and respected, and freely reciprocate this in a genuinely caring relationship with those one chooses to engage with in a given context.

Love in leadership as presented in this thesis suggests a shift of responsibility: it is about knowing oneself and caring for oneself, and likewise encourage others to do the same, rather than a one-sided serving others with what we believe they need or handing over responsibility for oneself to somebody else (a superior in a hierarchy, for example). It is about coming together from a basis of equal strength to achieve something that both sides strive for, with potentially different levels of decision authority, but nonetheless with equality of value.

The following sections will investigate and conclude on how the findings summarised above relate to literature in the field of love in the context of leadership and how the findings can contribute to leadership theory and leadership practice.

Integration of findings and theory

In this section, I would like to discuss how the findings of this research relate to earlier research on love and leadership and to the wider literature on leadership. A summary of the key aspects within each perspective are reiterated at the beginning of each of the following sections.

Inner love leadership

Inner love leadership as self-acceptance and sustained self-care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Starts within oneself- Grounded in unconditional acceptance of oneself- Takes care of oneself- Knows of one's own freedom of choice- Ensures a sustained internal love- Nourished by a connection to one's inner self or a spiritual connection to a higher Self, to God, or both- Knows and is authentic to one's true loving self- Is a prerequisite for giving love and freedom to others- Finds peace and contentment within oneself
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Table 5 Inner love leadership

This thesis identified a perspective on love leadership that starts within oneself. The inner perspective on love leadership contains elements of self-acceptance, self-love, self-care, and authenticity. In this perspective, it opposes the established thinking around love leadership as being others-centred (e.g. Underwood, 2008). Rather than being others-centred, this thesis suggests taking a holistic perspective, one that looks at oneself *and* others and sees the need to sustain love *within* as prerequisite to share it with others.

The findings of this thesis clearly contradict perspectives of “self-sacrificing love for others” (e.g. Hunter, 1998), firstly for the others-centredness as stated, but clearly also for the self-sacrificing view on love. This thesis takes an opposite view, namely one that points out that

self-sacrifice, as the term literally suggests, will lead to an erosion of self, to a depletion of energy levels with risks of depression and burn-out. Self-sacrificing love is thus not sustainable and not supported in the context of this thesis, as it opposes the core of the findings: love leadership builds from a strong source of continuously sustained internal love.

“To love others requires that we first love ourselves – but after we love ourselves, we then put our efforts at risk by caring about another, working for their welfare, and doing so without attempting to manipulate or control another’s choices or behavior” (Fromm, 1956, pp. 14–15). Fromm recognised that love for others can only come from an inner source of love, and highlights that there is a risk, which relates to the earlier point of non-sustainable self-sacrificing love.

One could argue that the self-sacrificing aspect referred to in servant leadership (see Greenleaf, 1977) is not a self-sacrifice of oneself (one’s energy, one’s priorities, one’s inner love, for example) but the sacrifice of one’s own feeling of superiority or inferiority, one’s own ego, as the Upanishads for example suggest, “The wise forget themselves in the service of all.” (Easwaran, 2007, p. 193), the wise expand their understanding from being one to an understanding of being oneness. Taking this view on servant leadership would allow a connection between love leadership as discussed in this thesis and might be worth further exploration.

Pellicer’s perspective on caring leadership as one, which does not reflect what one does, but what one becomes (Pellicer, 2008) has apparent similarities to the findings, but cannot be entirely supported by this thesis. Rather, the findings suggest that a caring or loving leadership is a conscious choice at different levels: what one chooses to become *and* how one chooses to engage with others. In contrast to Gunn’s (2002) perspective on servant leadership, that love

leads to the act of serving in the best interest of others, which in turn frees “the leader from self-doubt, self-criticism, and self-imposed limitations” (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015, p. 123), this thesis takes the view that this described freedom is not a consequence of loving others and serving them, but a self-initiated, initially self-focused love that chooses to accept freedom for oneself, as a starting point, and helps others as a consequence of this.

Self’s (2009, p. iii) conclusion, that leaders who lead others from love “respond naturally from the internalized spirit of God” and “act from an authentic presence of incarnational love”, focuses on leading others as opposed to leading oneself (and others), as this thesis suggests. The aspect of the internal spiritual connection to one’s inner source of love, however, can be supported by the findings of this thesis.

In his book, *The Servant*, Hunter (2012, p. 41) writes “It took me nearly a lifetime to learn the great truth that all life is relational – with God, self, and others.” This perspective underlines the spiritual connection on one side, and on the other side the finding that continuous conscious awareness of oneself, others, what is around us, and what we choose to engage with is key to leadership in the context of love. It supports the idea of interrelatedness which is a key aspect of the conceptualisation of love and of perceptual love leadership.

The key aspects of love leadership within the inner perspective are: Self-acceptance and self-love, self-care, and authenticity. One of these aspects, the aspect of authenticity, has been mentioned in the literature review of the wider leadership theories: Harter (2002), for example, sees authenticity as knowing one’s true self and acting in accordance with it. The aspect of acting in accordance with the true self fits the concept of love leadership as presented in this thesis. However, the findings point at the need that this acting in accordance with the true self is grounded in love and that actions are tested against the inner compass of love. This is in line with

Ferch & Mitchell's (2001) view that to lead with love includes the premise of challenging any behaviour that is inconsistent with love. Considering the insights from the findings, I suggest expanding Harter's view in that I would add to the perspective of knowing one's true self the aspect of *paying conscious attention to oneself* and of *accepting oneself*, unconditionally.

Osborn, Hunt & Jauch (2002) highlighted that leadership is something that changes with the context. I supported Osland & Bird's (2000) critique of Hofstede's (1980) work, which the authors considered "sophisticated stereotyping", and extended the critique to the GLOBE study (House et al., 2002). In line with this critique, the findings suggest that love leadership moves beyond stereotypes and instead builds on constant conscious attention and awareness of oneself and others, and tests behaviours against the inner compass of love to transcend this love in a behaviour which best serves the experienced context. It, thus, does not follow fixed patterns or types but aims to re-evaluate every situation from an unbiased perspective.

Perceptual love leadership

Perceptual love leadership as acceptance and perception of equality beyond roles and identities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transcends from inner love to a loving perception and attitude towards others - Perceives others from a basis of oneness and equality, from a mutually shared aspect of humanity, regardless of different levels of decision authority - Is a consciously chosen mindset - Unconditionally accepts and genuinely respects others while staying true to one's own authentic self and values - Is willing to increase understanding of who and what is around - Is motivated to help others understand their freedom of choice - Desires to help others succeed, grow and alleviate their struggles - Seeks to contribute to the world with something good - Perceives interrelatedness with others and aims for inter-effectiveness, mutual growth - Wishes to experience joy and provide a space for others to be joyful
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Table 6 Perceptual love leadership

The perceptual love leadership perspective identified aspects around equality of value; acceptance, respect, and authority; humanity; and the wish to serve, do good, and perceive and enable joy. The findings support a view of oneness and equality beyond roles and identities which is connected to an unconditional acceptance and respect towards others (as towards oneself, see inner love leadership) and the wish to help others. In this perspective, the findings are closer to the field of servant leadership, but rather in the wish to serve from the basis of oneness, than in its fundamental understanding of being others-centred (e.g. Greenleaf (1977)).

The findings match Ferris' (1988, p. 42) perspective on love as "a consciously chosen mind-set that allows us to see others differently – a deep respect based upon a sense of oneness with others" and it does so in various aspects: First, the consciously chosen mind-set: It is about being attentive and aware of oneself and others and making an active, conscious choice for love

at each level (inner, perceptual, relational, conscious). Second, the shift of perspective from “others” to “oneness with others” which the findings likewise support and suggest that love leadership is one that focuses on the mutually shared aspect of humanity. Third, the deep respect: Respect has been described as a fundamental, unconditional acceptance of others as they are and of what matters to them while staying true to one’s own authentic self and values. What Ferris did not mention, but to what all three aspects point is the need for conscious attention to oneself, others and what is around us, as a prerequisite, as identified within this thesis.

Caldwell and Dixon see love in leadership “when leaders care, commit to the welfare and happiness of people within their organization, and thereby change their focus on employees’ worth and potential, instead of seeing them as a means to reach organizational goals [...] [which] helps an organization to be based on trust instead of on control” (Caldwell & Dixon (2009) quoted in van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015, p. 122). Also here, the perception of others is specifically mentioned. It is a mindful shift of seeing others differently, seeing their worth and potential, unconditionally, which is in line with the findings.

Within the perceptual love leadership perspective, the findings are largely in agreement with Sprecher & Fehr’s (2005, p. 630) definition of compassionate love as “an attitude toward other(s), either close others or strangers or all of humanity; containing feelings, cognitions, and behaviors that are focused on caring, concern, tenderness, and an orientation toward supporting, helping, and understanding the other(s), particularly when the other(s) is (are) perceived to be suffering or in need.” Their definition contains not only the actioned compassionate love, but also the attitudinal view which this thesis likewise underlines. However, also Sprecher and Fehr’s view is primarily others-centred, whereas the findings of this thesis point at a perception of oneness and a support regardless of suffering and need.

The aspect of the findings around equality of value of oneself and others is closer to Self's (2009, p. iii) perspective on leaders who lead with love: They “demonstrate equal regard for self and others” which is clearly supported by the findings. Also van Dierendonck & Patterson (2015, p. 121, referring to Winston, 2002) touch on the aspects of equality and full acceptance when they say it is “about seeing followers as hired hearts versus hired hands. It is shown by leaders who consider each person as a total person – one with needs, wants, and desires”. In contrast to the findings, these authors remain in the leader-follower distinction which this thesis suggests replacing by the notion of oneness and leadership as a mutual experience.

Something that has been suggested in the initial literature review was that an underlying motivation will eventually shine through in people's leadership behaviour, as supported for example by van Dierendonck and Patterson (2015, p. 124): “compassionate love will encourage moral emotions and strengthen virtuous attitudes [...] [which] in turn are expected to lead to servant leadership behaviour”. This perception fits to this thesis' finding that love leadership begins within oneself, transcends into the perception of self and others and into an attitude towards others and finally into the relationship with others, supported by an ongoing conscious awareness at each level.

The initial literature review considered a potential connection of love leadership to spiritual leadership. Authors within the space of spiritual leadership (e.g. Hicks 2002) support the perspective on an inner motivation as guiding principle in one's behaviour, as this thesis also suggests. This mechanism is generally supported, for example in Taylor's work on compassion (2020) who identified that compassion is connected to an intention to help and that “attitude is at the heart of compassionate display” (p. 308).

Hicks (2002) identified characteristics of leadership with a spiritual connotation which can be considered close to this thesis' findings: The author speaks among other aspects about self-awareness, authenticity, transcendence, and interconnectedness. This is very much in tune with the findings around the inner source and perception of self and others. It supports the aspects of conscious attention, of authenticity and seeing oneself and others ultimately as one interconnected whole.

Within the wider lens of what I summarised under the frame of *The purpose theory* (see Chapter Two), the findings support perspectives of shared leadership (see e.g. Bligh, 2011) as stated for example by Hock (1999, p. 72): “in the deepest sense, the distinction between leaders and followers is meaningless. In every moment of life, we are simultaneously leading and following”. This aspect has been evident when participants highlighted that they are nothing better or worse than those people they work with. What distinguishes them is (merely) the degree of decision authority.

Relational love leadership

<p>Relational love leadership as relationship grounded in mutual care and connected purpose</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Actions the inner and perceptual love to oneself and others in relationship - Is a mutually shared experience of people coming together - Establishes and maintains mutually caring and trusted relationships in which people feel comfortable to speak up and enter into a dialogue - Is attentive and empathetic towards others, listens and takes time to being there for others - Becomes aware of others and their wishes and needs, transcends love into behaviour that best serves the situation at hand - Tolerates mistakes of oneself and others, apologises, learns from them, shows humility - Helps each other grow, acknowledging the interrelatedness and helps others help themselves - Exemplifies loving behaviour and self-management grounded in love, inspires others to do the same - Searches for and engages in dialogue among equals on what matters (ideal worlds, immediate needs) - Seeks ways to build bridges while accepting ambiguities - Shows unconditional acts of care and appreciation and freely reciprocates benevolence, balances giving and taking - Sets and maintains boundaries - Comes together with others who follow the same vision and seeks to connect personal and organisational visions - Finds the best place for oneself and others to achieve personal goals while also contributing to a commonly shared vision of a greater good of the organisation and beyond - Accepts different ideal visions and respectfully parts ways if no mutually beneficial relationship of people and visions can be achieved
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Table 7 Relational love leadership

The relational perspective on love leadership points at the need for love leadership to go beyond an inner attitude towards oneself and others, and to be implemented and realised in

interaction. It consists of aspects of attention, listening, of dialogue, of exemplification, of appreciation, of coming together for one mutually shared purpose, and of building this interaction on the basis of free reciprocity. This perspective is one with many facets which are examples of how leadership *behaviour* building on love could look like.

Although Underwood (2008) sees compassionate love as others-centred, which is not in line with this thesis' findings, the author highlights that it includes attitudes, actions, and expressions. The findings of this thesis also suggest that love needs to be lived to be truly authentic and that it needs both, an attitude *and* a visible and tangible experience.

Winston's (2002) view that compassionate love encourages a leader to do something good for the follower because it is the right thing to do, agrees with the findings related to the wish to do good. However, this thesis opposes the follower-leader distinction which would indicate an imbalance in the relationship and as such cannot be supported by the findings which point to equality beyond roles and identities.

Doing good was a recurring aspect in the findings. It was not only the act of doing good, but the combination of the act with the inner mindset that doing good is the ultimate goal, for example when participants said, they are here (on earth) to serve others, or when they said they want to give the world something good before they leave.

The relational perspective has aspects of doing something good for others, unconditionally, for example through the act of showing appreciation, which parallels Winston's perspective. And although the findings within this perspective have aspects of doing good by helping others, this help is not limited to people in obvious need, as Sprecher & Fehr (2005) suggested, but help also in the sense of supporting them in their personal growth and being

happy for their success. This aspect relates to Oman's (2011) point that compassionate love is not limited to those who suffer.

When Caldwell & Dixon (2009) speak about love, alongside forgiveness and trust, as critical values of organisational leaders, they highlight a commitment of those leaders to maximise value for organisations while helping organisational members to flourish. This perspective supports the aspect of mutual growth, which is part of the ideal world congruence identified in the relational perspective of the findings, as well as the perception of oneness and interrelatedness within perceptual love leadership.

When participants spoke about love and appreciation, they described that the relationship of the firm and its members is symbiotic, one depends on the other. As such, sustainable success can only be achieved when all stakeholders mutually profit from the interaction, which is also supported by Messick's (2005) view within the social exchange theory that leadership is a mutually beneficial relationship between leaders and followers.

The aspect of ideal world congruence within the relational perspective is supported by Hunter (2012, p. 28) when the author says that leadership is "The skill of influencing people to work enthusiastically towards goals identified as being for the common good." However, Hunter's perspective does not clearly state who identified the goals. This thesis takes the standpoint that goal congruence is something resulting from each individual's self-motivation and a dialogue, but that also, clearly, an established firm most often already has a vision and expects that people joining the organisation support this vision as something they themselves, out of free will, want to achieve and contribute to, and looks for ways how to integrate both.

This also relates to another statement of Hunter (2012, p. xxii), responding to the question of how to change the "crazy, command-and-control, Gestapo-like supervisors [...]: The

key is to get people practicing the new behaviours even if they have to fake it to make it.” This is clearly not supported by the findings of this thesis. On the contrary, the findings suggest that such discrepancy in ideal worlds will result in a parting of ways at some point. Instead, the thesis suggests that in these cases an open dialogue about what the firm, as embodiment of those that came together for one commonly shared purpose, considers as ideal world. To be clear about what the firm wants to achieve and how the firm wants to work together with everyone involved, could help clarify if the ideal world of the firm can be brought together with the ideal world of, for example, the “crazy, command-and-control, Gestapo-like supervisors”. If, after relentless wrestling for solutions and attempts to build bridges, nothing succeeds to find a mutually beneficial ground on which to build the relationship, the findings suggest to then respectfully part ways.

This also relates to another identified aspect of congruence and balance of reciprocity: When Daft (2002) spoke about the antidote to love leadership, leading by fear, van Dierendonck and Patterson (2015, p. 123, referring to Daft, 2002) described the consequences as “loss of the best people along with the knowledge they take with them, the lack of allowing employees to perform at optimal levels, and the dreaded avoidance that will occur as employees feel disconnected”.

I would like to highlight that feeling disconnected as a consequence of fear in contrast to love is not necessarily the same disconnection as a consequence of a different ideal world. The latter, as described earlier, is not sustainable and would eventually result in parting ways. The first, leading by fear, however, is one that lacks acceptance, dialogue, and relationship as explored within the relational perspective of the findings. The findings of this thesis support the

view that people will indeed leave a firm if they lack appreciation and that their perceived energy level is lower if they don't feel they can be authentic at the workplace.

Leading by love, according to Daft (2002, quoted in van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015, p. 123), will support the feeling of being alive, connected and energized and encourages “acts of helping, cooperation, sharing, and understanding”. This is clearly in line with the findings of this thesis: Being able to be the authentic self, feeling accepted and respected, and reciprocate this in a genuinely caring relationship with those one engages with, is a key aspect of the findings of this thesis.

Ferch & Mitchell (2001) point out that to lead with love is to be emotionally, physically, and spiritually present for the follower and that this relationship is reciprocal. The findings likewise identified reciprocity as a key aspect in love leadership as well as the aspect of being there for others and of creating trusted relationships, however with the clear distinction of expressing love in leadership without expecting anything in return. The focus is on the unconditional aspect in contrast to a conditional relationship.

When Autry (1991, p. 17, cited in Caldwell & Dixon, 2009) refers to love, the author makes clear that “proper management involves caring for people, not manipulating them”. Similarly, Russel (2011) and Russel & Stone (2002) highlight that love in servant leaders is about genuine appreciation for followers and caring for their people.

The findings showed two different viewpoints on care and reciprocity: one, which is unconditional, and the other as a means of achieving one's own goals. The understanding of *agapé* within this thesis is closer to the unconditional act of appreciation than the (covert) conditional one and therefore supports these author's views that manipulation is not how love looks like in leadership.

The aspect of reciprocity is something that Greenleaf (1977) also referred to: while leaders should strive to become “servant leaders”, followers will in turn provide those leaders with positive resonance. Connected to this, several authors highlight beneficial effects if leaders love those with whom they work, for example in terms of favourable behaviour from followers, such as “higher commitment, greater synergy, increased creativity, and improved quality” (Caldwell & Dixon, 2009). It is not entirely clear if these effects are freely reciprocated as a free act of genuine thankfulness for the experienced unconditional love, or a result of manipulation, or of, say, conditional care, and might be worth further exploration. As Caldwell & Dixon (2009) generally refer to acts of *unconditional* love, one could deduce that the findings are in line with their statement relating to (freely) reciprocated benevolence.

Boyatzis, Smith and Blaize (2006) found a positive effect from coaching others with compassion for the leaders themselves in terms of elevated psychophysiological wellbeing. The findings of this thesis show that the act of doing good and being able to help others, for example in the form of a formal or informal coaching, is “pay enough” which seems to agree with the authors’ view. It is connected to the aspect of reciprocity, yet one that is not dependent on others, but rather one which comes from an intrinsic feeling of gratification derived from one’s own act of kindness.

Similarly, Gillet, Cartwright and Van Vugt (2011) found out that people would choose to be a leader for the social good even if it can be costly for themselves. However, one could argue that the invisible, intrinsic “pay” of doing good, that has become apparent in the findings of this thesis, could be perceived to supersede certain cost and is therefore considered worth the engagement.

Ciulla (2005, p. 230) highlights that an ethical leader is one “who does the right thing, the right way, and for the right reasons.” What is right could be a matter of philosophy or it could be, as one of the participants of this research pointed out: the right is the good and the good is the right. Ciulla’s perspective highlights that ethics are closely linked to a match of purpose and motivation and are also reflected in the way of reaching the purpose. If the purpose is right (or good) and the motivation also, we can assume that the way of interacting with oneself, others, and the wider context, need to reflect this righteousness or goodness. From this perspective, the findings agree with Ciulla’s perspective on ethical leadership.

The relational dimensions of love leadership identified within this thesis are also supported by Self (2009, p. iii), e.g. leaders who lead others from love (*agapé*), “create connections with followers”, “engender mutuality and community”, “authentically exemplify integrity of self”, and “are inviting and accessible to all”.

The aspect of genuine appreciation, which has been identified within the relational perspective of the findings, is something that has been referred to for example by Covey (2004, p. 98): “leadership is communicating to people their worth and potential so clearly that they come to see it themselves.” What I would like to underline here is the self-realisation of worth. It is an appreciation of others for the sake of primarily doing something good for them, and not for oneself. It is also connected to the first perspective that love leadership begins within oneself. There is a connection between the enactment of love leadership, e.g. through the act of genuine appreciation, and the inner responsibility of appreciating oneself. In this way, love leadership is a means to give others likewise the opportunity, or to inspire them, to lead themselves from a basis of love, for example by being a role model to others, by sharing their experience.

One aspect of love leadership within the relational perspective is also to tolerate errors, of oneself and others, and to apologise for mistakes and to learn from them. This fits to Daft's (2002) finding that leading by fear, as antidote to leading by love, leaves little room for learning, growing or risk taking. Love leadership, according to this thesis' findings, however, goes along with a constant reflection and learning process and provides room for one's own and others' personal growth.

The findings also provide a connection to the Leader-Member Exchange Theory (LMX) in which Graen & Uhl-Bien (1995) make the argument that leader-follower relationships evolve through the stranger phase, the acquaintance phase, and the mature phase. According to the findings, love leadership aims at creating trustful connections and as such could help transitioning through these phases, albeit regardless of the leader-follower distinction.

Caldwell & Dixon (2009, p. 93) describe love as “the unconditional acts of respect, caring and kindness that communicate the worth of others and that promote their welfare, growth, and wholeness. Great leaders recognize that investing in others, by demonstrating a commitment to their best interests, not only strengthens relationships and enriches lives, but improves organizations along the way.” They conclude that “a leadership model that is personal and authentic enables leaders to touch the hearts of those with whom they work – encouraging colleagues to become their best and to achieve the excellence required to excel in a global marketplace.” (Caldwell & Dixon, 2009, p. 98).

Their perspective supports the findings around relational aspects, i.e. the enactment of motivation, attitude and goals, such as unconditional appreciation and care, as well as those findings relating to equality of value. The authors refer to “the hearts of those with whom they work” and to “colleagues” as opposed to a demarcation of leaders vs. followers which would

need to be rejected from the perspective of equal value on which the authors build and which this thesis likewise points to. Although the authors refer to the “acts of respect [...] that communicate the worth of others”, they do not go into the depth of the underlying motivation on which this thesis, in contrast, expanded within each of the perspectives.

The authors describe the “greatness of a culture that embraces love” to be an enduring environment which “inspires individuals to self-discovery and builds relationships that extend beyond the context of work alone to help people in all the facets of their lives” (Caldwell & Dixon, 2009, p. 98). The findings of this thesis take a similar viewpoint around the aspects of empathy and attention, open dialogue about what matters to others, exemplification of what matters to oneself, striving for an ideal world congruence, and being there for others. This is in line with the earlier described perspective on helping others to help themselves, for example by exemplifying love leadership and inspire others to do the same. And from this basis, seek to find congruence and benefit the wider good of the organisation and beyond.

It seems that Hunter (2012, p. xviii) takes a rather hierarchical perspective when he refers to his understanding of servant leadership: “Being the servant is simply the business of identifying and meeting the legitimate needs of the people entrusted to your care.” With this, the author suggests taking responsibility for the wellbeing of those entrusted to a leader’s care. Although the findings as well as other literature suggest that with a higher level of decision authority, one also potentially has a higher impact on others or as Jackson & Perry (2011) suggests: leaders “are held to account for a higher level of ethical and moral standards than followers” (p. 114) because their actions have an impact on many people. However, according to the findings of this thesis, the first person entrusted to one’s care, is foremost oneself and therefore offers a different viewpoint on servant leadership. Also, the findings point at the need

to accept and give freedom to people to make their own choices rather than taking the responsibility for making a choice for them, or, in other words, meeting their presumed needs instead of helping them to help themselves.

This becomes particularly apparent in Hunter’s statement “what they need may not be what they want” (2012, p. xviii) which ultimately not only takes responsibility for others, but also takes it away from others, which is not supported by the findings of this thesis. Instead, the findings suggest a shift of responsibility: that it is about knowing and caring for oneself, and likewise encourage others to do the same. From this basis of equal strength, one comes together to achieve something that both sides strive for, with potentially different levels of decision authority, but nonetheless with equality in value.

Conscious love leadership

Conscious love leadership as reflexivity and reflection/ conscious attention to oneself, others, and purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enables and supports the inner, perceptual, and relational level - Is an ongoing companion, alternating between the experienced and the reflection thereof - Attentively observes and reflects oneself (one’s identity, needs, experiences, authenticity), others and who and what is around, what one chooses to engage with - Tests one’s own actions against an inner compass of love, particularly in times of challenge and conflict - Is a constant learning process with acceptance and room for one’s own and other’s growth from a basis of love?
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Table 8 Conscious love leadership

As has become apparent in the review of the inner, perceptual, and relational perspectives, reflexivity is part of and enables each of these. It is a means by which one alternates between the experienced and a pondering thereof. Conscious love leadership is about

awareness and attention towards oneself and towards the experience of the self. It is connected to a willingness to grow and to learn from a basis of acceptance and love of oneself, others, and experiences.

In Chapter Three of this thesis, I contextualised the understanding of reflexivity in relation to the methodology of this thesis:

Lynch (2000, p. 29) points out different meanings of reflexivity. In line with this perspective, reflexivity within this research is understood as philosophical self-reflection and methodological self-consciousness. The first “involves an inward-looking, sometimes confessional and self-critical examination of one’s own beliefs and assumptions”. The second “takes into account one’s relationships with those whom one studies”. I would add to the methodological self-consciousness the consciousness regarding decisions taken throughout the design, data collection and analysis as Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest should be an integral part of a thematic analysis.

Reflexivity has been considered as part of the methodology of this thesis, but it has not been included in the initial literature review in the context of leadership discussed in Chapter Two. As reflexivity has been identified as a major theme of the findings from this research, the following sections will expand on how reflexivity is understood in literature to provide context to the findings complementary to the initial literature review, before I relate and contrast this understanding to the findings of this thesis.

Defining and contextualising the term

Reflexivity and reflection are often used interchangeably. Some authors, however, point at an important difference between the two. For example, Cunliffe and Jun (2005, p. 225) state that these terms “carry different ontological and epistemological assumptions and consequently generate different intellectual and social practice”. Pässilä et al. (2015, p. 70) add that in Cunliffe’s and Jun’s “paradigm reflection is based on a realist view of the world, while reflexivity is grounded in constructionist and deconstructionist view of the world”.

The latter suggests an acknowledgement of one's own part in the creation of an experience. Pässilä et al. (2015) underline that despite the different philosophical grounding, “both reflection and reflexivity provide opportunities for critical thinking” while reflexivity goes beyond reflection in that it challenges established assumptions (Cunliffe, 2009a; Cunliffe and Easterby-Smith, 2004). Even though these authors argue for a dichotomic understanding of the terms, there is no consistent clarity in literature. The following paragraphs will outline and critically compare and contrast the key aspects of reflection and reflexivity as described in the context of leadership literature.

There is a tendency in leadership literature to connect reflection with learning from experience, whereas the understanding of reflexivity, which is for example also described as critical reflection (e.g. Reardon et al. 2019), intensive reflection (e.g. Matsuo, 2016), practical reflexivity (e.g. Cunliffe, 2002; Reynolds, 2011, Trehan and Rigg, 2007, Vince, 2002; referred to in Pässilä et al. 2015), or philosopher leader (e.g. Cunliffe, 2009a), is not as distinct.

My observation of the literature is that there is an acknowledgement of a differing *level of thought*: the one takes assumptions for granted and seeks to learn and grow within the given parameters (reflection/ specific), and the other seeks to learn and grow by challenging assumptions (reflexivity/ expansive) (e.g. Cunliffe, 2009c) and by unsettling conventional practices (e.g. Cunliffe and Easterby-Smith, 2004, p. 2).

I also observed a *time aspect* as, for example, in the distinction between reflection-on-action (ex-post) and reflection-in-action (in-process) which Schön (1983) suggests. Another differentiation I noticed is between an individual level vs. a team level, *micro* vs. *meso*. Reynolds and Vince (2004) for example, suggest that reflection is a collective process rather than a primarily individual one and that critical reflection can only arise from practical reflexivity,

which, according to Cunliffe and Easterby-Smith is a “dialogic and relational activity” (2004, p. 2).

In the context of the dimensions identified above (*level of thought, level of time, micro vs. meso*), I would describe reflexivity as an attitude, as striving for a consciousness of the self and a consciousness of the experience of the self, an expansive state and flexibility of the mind, and reflection as an examination of a specific matter or experience. Both these levels of thought can happen at any time and at both, micro and meso level. And all these dimensions have merit as they offer complementary insights.

Here I agree with Bolton (2010, p. 10): “Effective reflective practice and reflexivity meet the paradoxical need both to tell and retell our stories in order for us to feel secure enough, and yet critically examine our actions, and those of others, in order to increase our understanding of ourselves and our practice, and develop dynamically.”. Reflexivity alone could result in a feeling of insecurity – experiencing everything as in flux and changing can be uncomfortable, at the extreme even nihilist. Conscious attention (reflection *and* reflexivity) therefore can meet both needs of feeling secure and critically exploring our experience.

What can be said is that in leadership literature, both terms are often used in one way or another among the dimensions identified above (*level of thought, time, micro vs. meso*), sometimes interchangeably, or in rather confusing comparisons.

For example, I disagree with statements such as that reflection is learning by reflecting on experience and reflexivity is learning in experience (Pässilä et al., 2015), distinguishing what Schön (1983) considers both as reflection. I also disagree with the view of Matsuo (2016) that reflection is about “pondering the meaning of experiences”, whereas reflexivity is “the extent to which an individual overtly reflects on his or her experiences” as I believe the author compares

two semantically different levels, one being at an individual level and the other at a group level – whereas both levels offer potential for reflexivity and reflection. Likewise, Pässilä et al. (2015) suggest that reflection is related to what one already knows and practical reflexivity to questioning for-granted assumptions. I disagree to the part of already knowing since both reflection and reflexivity are intended to seek insights that are not known.

As Bolton (2010) mentions, reflexivity and reflection are both intended to increase understanding. “But for our experiences to develop us – socially, psychologically, spiritually – our world [external and internal] must be made to appear strange.” (Bolton, 2010, p. 9). Related to this aspect of understanding and development, I observed a differing *focus of inquiry* which I would subsume into the following: as part of and for the purpose of 1) exploration of the self, 2) exploration of experiences of the self, and 3) organisational exploration. The model below depicts the relations between the dimensions identified above.

Model of conscious attention

focus of inquiry	dimension of attention	thought		time		micro/ meso	
		specific	expansive	in process	ex post	micro	meso
self							
experiences of the self							
organisation							

Figure 10 Model of conscious attention

The word conscious came up in several pieces of leadership literature in the context of reflection and reflexivity, such as for example as “conscious awareness of behaviours, situations and consequences” (Castelli, 2016, p. 217), “conscious activity of purposeful reflection”

(Castelli, 2016, p. 219), “conscious exclusion of other elements of life, apart from that which is being attended to” (Bolton, 2010, p. 15), or “conscious of thoughts and feelings” (Looman, 2003, p. 220). For the purpose of this thesis, I am using the term *conscious attention* to encompass both, reflexivity and reflection, as, from my perspective, it better considers the entire spectrum of dimensions as shown above. As reflexivity relates to reflection, so does awareness relate to attention in the context of this thesis. While the former is more expansive, the latter is more specific in its focus. Both conscious attention and conscious awareness are used interchangeably within this thesis.

The next sections will briefly expand on different foci of inquiry to better relate the findings of this thesis to the wider spectrum of conscious attention, as identified above.

Exploration of self

A focus of inquiry can be directed on the self with different intentions, for example for self-illumination and exploration (Bolton, 2010), understanding of one’s own values (e.g. Gardner et al., 2005) or one’s created identity (e.g. Bolton, 2010). A way of inquiring this, could be through what Bolton (2010, p. 4) calls “through-the-mirror-writing”. I believe it does not need a specific way of writing, but the act of writing as such could be an option to engage in dialogue with oneself, like a conversation with a trusted other. Conscious attention directed at the self can help promote “clarity with respect to one’s values, identity, emotions, motives, and goals (Gardner et al., 2005) and leads to improved thinking, information collection, goal setting and visualisation of success (McDaniel and DiBella-McCarthy, 2012).

Engaging with oneself in dialogue, is an opportunity to “recognizing authority over and responsibility for personal and professional identity, values, action, feelings” (Bolton, 2010, p. 7) which requires a “willingness to stay with uncertainty, unpredictability, doubt, questioning”

(Bolton, 2010, p. 7). This internal dialogue is about actively and critically observing and taking responsibility for the status quo as well as about taking ownership for change, which is the opposite of being reactive to circumstances (Cunliffe 2009b). This exploration of self can help become aware of how we are involved in creating our own identity and the social and professional structures we experience, and see if our experience is in line or counter to our own values (Bolton, 2010). It is the exploration of experience, knowledge, values, identity that matters, rather than any attempt to arrive at a 'true' account (Doyle 2004).

Gatling et al. (2013, quoted in Castelli, 2016, p. 219) identified ways of how to increase this awareness of self, or, self-awareness: "first, understanding psychological strengths and emotional triggers; second, recognizing how dark side personality traits (such as gregariousness, need for approval, tendency to be judgemental, need for perfection and control) adversely affect relationships; third, knowing how family-of-origin, race, class, religion and gender issues shape attitudes; and fourth, identifying feelings and emotions (e.g. frustration, vulnerability, elation) and the role these play in both easy and difficult interactions." Looman (2003) also recognises that reflective leadership goes beyond self-knowledge and includes an awareness of situations and how oneself and others came to be in this situation. The author connects reflective leadership also to integrity, "a state of being whole and unimpaired" which "does not mean to be perfect but to accept the whole self – the good, the bad, and the ugly" (Looman, 2003, p. 219).

Mindfulness is a term which is related to awareness and conscious attention: "mindfulness is based on self-awareness and full presence of the sort that includes not just the mind, but also the emotions, creativity, soulfulness and spirit" (Waddock, 2007, p. 554, quoted in Castelli, 2016, p. 219). As part of reflective practice, mindfulness is expected to generate benefits

of effective emotion regulation strategies, improved intrapersonal well-being and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of empathy (Davis and Hayes, 2011).

Bolton (2010, p. 15) sees a need in professional practice for conscious thought and attention: “[In our age, t]here is little reflective, reflexive, or simply mentally absent space allowed: ‘A poor life this if, full of care, / We have no time to stand and stare (William Henry Davies). [...] It is loss of professional agency and responsibility, because we are unaware of things of which we so need to be aware.”

A way of inquiry is through self-dialogue, be it in written, thought, meditation, or other ways, and through flexing perspectives, i.e. considering the perception of others by taking their view (Bolton, 2010). Understanding can also be achieved through “open discussions with peers”, “with colleagues from outside practitioners’ own milieu” which requires a “supportive, confidential, carefully facilitated environment” (Bolton, 2010, p.12). Likewise, a trusted other can serve to illuminate and encourage developmental learning by sharing their experiences (Bolton, 2010).

In summary, according to the literature, an exploration of self can be in the form of self-dialogue or facilitated dialogue with a trusted other, with the intent of self-exploration which includes aspects of understanding for example emotions, values, identities, needs, but also unconditional self-acceptance.

Exploration of experiences of the self

Just as one can examine oneself from the I-perspective as well as with the help of a trusted other, so is the exploration of experiences open to different perspectives. Castelli (2016, p. 220), for example, sees personal wisdom as one component of reflection and argues that this entails the “capacity to perceive events from multiple perspectives” which is expected to increase

empathy. Bolton (2010, p. 14) suggests aiming for “an awareness of the way I am experienced and perceived by others” and “how others perceive things as well as how I do, and flexibility to consider changing deeply held ways of being”.

Some authors make the argument to consider the “interconnectedness of all things and to release limitations that prevent growth for ourselves and others” (Looman, 2003, p. 220). Bolton (2010, p. 10) likewise recognises these limitations which she describes as “unhelpful modernist duality: this as opposed to that, in and out, here and there. An ancient Zen Buddhist text tells us: You must first forsake the dualities of: self and others [...]” and highlights the need to consider “our wholeness, not just within ourselves, but also within our environment and community”.

The focused inquiry of oneself in relationship with others (people, situations, organisations, etc.) is about understanding “at an intuitive, empathic level that each of us and all groups are a part of a unity in which no one wins unless we all do” (Looman, 2003, p. 218-219). The author calls this a “metacognitive perspective” through which “reflective leaders create an environment of integrative power (May, 1961) or power with other people. It is the kind of power that invites criticism and feedback because ideas develop best when they are debated.” (Looman, 2003, p. 218).

In dialogue with others and with a readiness to flex perspectives, dynamic insights can be generated and allow practitioners to react quickly with new approaches and solutions (Castelli, 2016). It provides an opportunity to “make sense of uncertain, unique or conflicted situations (Dea Roglio and Light, 2009, quoted in Castelli, 2016, p. 217). Similarly, Looman (2003, p. 218) underlines the notion of metacognition in that it “allows the reflective leader to step back and contemplate on the level of significance an event or idea has rather than immediately reacting to any given stimuli”.

In summary, there is a tendency in literature to suggest that conscious attention (or its many alternative denominations) is about empathy, seeing connections, integration, and interconnectedness with what is outside of oneself. This in turn helps develop ideas and solutions which would otherwise might have been restricted by rather rigid or narrow perceptions of oneself and others and by established patterns of thought and behaviour.

Organisational development

Conscious attention in the context of organisational growth is, from my experience, more commonly visible in leadership practice than the level of self and experiences of the self as described above. At the organisational level, conscious attention is about organisational learning, about learning as a team, about establishing a culture and environment of self-actualisation in tune with organisational self-actualisation (for example, Looman, 2003) or sometimes without any regard to oneself or others, but with a clear priority on organisational performance (e.g. Egleston, 2017).

While the challenging of assumptions happens in the first two areas of focus on an individual level or at a relational/ empathic level, it happens here on the level of roles, processes and tasks or as the sum of growing individuals in this organisation. Simply put, “organizations learn when employees reflect on past experiences, and apply the lessons learned from those experiences to respond more effectively to similar problems that arise in the future” (Schön, 1983, quoted in Egleston et al., 2017, p. 886) and there are numerous insights on how this could be applied in detail (see for example Dominick et al. 1997; Carmeli et al., 2013).

Within the organisational growth perspective, there are two views, essentially: one which is concerned with growing as an organisation as a result of the sum of growing individuals coming together in an organisation, and the other which is concerned with ensuring processes,

structures, activities, dialogue and feedback culture etc. are optimised for success in line with the organisational goals (see, for example Egleston et al. 2017).

There is a clear difference in the perception of a human being in both views: the first considers an intrinsic willingness for growth and development, the second perceives the human being as means, as an instrument which needs to be optimised to better achieve organisational goals – regardless of if these are in tune with the individual’s goals or not. Related literature on this view on reflective leadership such as from Egleston et al. (2017) tend to take what I consider an outdated view on leadership, speaking about leaders motivating followers, encouraging followers, challenging the assumptions of employees, etc. without considering the inner perspective of individuals, regardless of follower-leader distinctions.

Related to this, I join the perspective of authors who highlight that the “focus of leadership is on external characteristics such as knowledge, experience and intelligence without any regard to the internal processes that are equally vital for success” (Castelli, 2016, p. 218) and that “[...] reflective leaders [...] are needed to build cultures that expand [and integrate] human potential” (Looman 2003, p. 216).

Workspace reflection is a result of critically reflective practitioners who are expected to exhibit “increased morale, commitment to clients, openness to multiple perspectives and creative non-dichotomous solutions, and clearer boundaries (Fook 2002, quoted in Bolton, 2010, p. 5)”. Aiming for integrative workplace reflection, however, is not without challenges. As described in the first two areas of focus, there is a need for confidentiality and trust to be able to pursue conscious (dialogic) thought with the aim of “deep understandings” (Bolton, 2010, p. 17). This is easier done in dialogue with oneself, more of a balancing act in discussion with one or more trusted others, yet quite a challenge to establish at an organisational level.

A lack of trust and perceived confidentiality may result in self-protectiveness rather than an exploration of sensitive issues (Bolton, 2010) and perplexed situations (Pässilä et al., 2015) with the effect of essentially uncritical “cover stories” (Sharkey 2004, quoted in Bolton, 2006, p. 204), instead of the targeted deep understanding and learning. Pässilä et al. (2015, p. 68) point out that “reflection is not only about helping employees and managers collectively to learn and change but also highlights a paradox – that people’s attempts to reflect collectively on an organisation tend to mobilise power relations that in practice resist reflection, learning and change.”

In agreement with this, Bolton (2010, p. 5) highlights: “Current expectations of constant activity and busyness make reflection a luxury; this, paradoxically makes it more important to point out the value of reflection (Hedberg, 2009). Reflection and reflexivity can be seen as threats to position or status in organisations, where such practices are often impeded by prescriptive meetings with a low level of engagement, high role based demarcated and political dimension, high degree of threat and task orientation (Heel et al. 2006). Reflective practice leading to change and development only happens in learning organisations (Gould 2004), with supportive mechanisms of coach, mentor or facilitator (Gray 2007), and not when top-down, organisational visions are imposed leading to compliance (Senge 1992).”

Although I agree with the first part of Bolton’s perspective, I do not agree to the latter statement relating to top-down compliance as I perceive it as too restrictive. The potential of conscious attention lies in its adaptability to different contextual needs. A top-down approach may be an unnegotiable requirement for topics such as compliance, ethics, etc. In other instances, it might indeed unnecessarily limit creative thought and hence learning and development of the organisation. Nonetheless, I agree on the need to challenge established hierarchical, potentially

antiquated structures and ways of coming together in the workplace which might be hindering organisational growth from what I refer to as a child-phase of the organisation to a mature phase of the organisation, leaning on the development stages from Goetz et al. (2010) (see Chapter Two, reciprocal serving).

Another important aspect to consider in the context of integrative workplace reflection is to allow time and room for change: “Instructional how-to and information-giving can seem to give instant ‘results’ making reflective practice seem ‘soft and unquantifiable’” (Regan 2008, p. 219). “Instruction resulting in neatly ticked competencies is tidier, less demanding than challenging [...] practitioners to question the very roots of their practice, themselves as practitioners, and significantly critique their organisations” (Bolton, 2010, p. 6).

In summary, conscious attention as part of organisational exploration can be concerned with the growth of the organisation as a result of the growth of individuals and how they come together in a group, or more traditionally, with the development of an organisation as result of optimising performance regardless of intrinsic and relational aspects. The first could be called integrative workplace reflection and needs careful facilitation and a trusting environment to ensure true growth at each level.

Concluding remarks

There appears to be no complete clarity in literature on the terms of reflexivity and reflection in relation to leadership. There are tendencies however which the review above considered and brought together in a model of conscious attention in leadership, considering six different dimensions: thought, time, micro/ meso; and self, experience of self, organisation.

Conscious attention and love leadership

Considering the literature on reflexivity and reflection in leadership and the suggested model of conscious attention, how do the findings of the thesis relate to the above?

During the analysis of the findings, I noticed two major views on reflection and/ or reflexivity: 1) as process, mainly in the context of self-optimisation, and 2) thematically as reflection of being, of outer influences, and as target-oriented reflection, as shown in the graphic below.

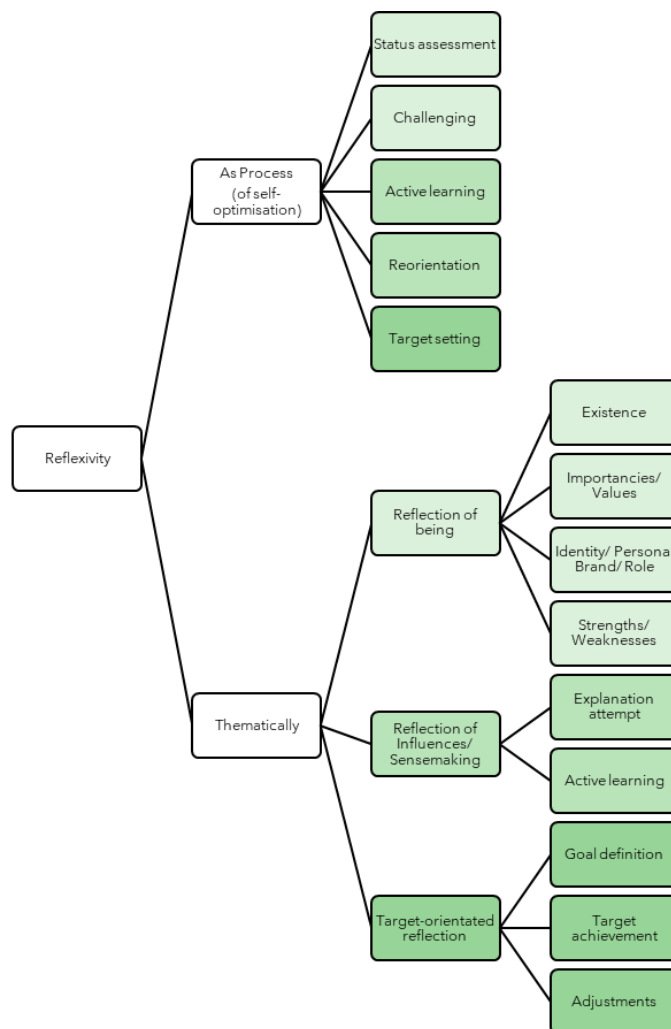


Figure 11 Reflexivity: as a process and thematical split

Within the context of the findings of this thesis, reflexivity (or conscious attention) as a process has aspects of cyclicity. It is an attention to the status quo, challenging it and looking for deeper understanding. Once this is achieved to a satisfactory degree, the next step is to reorientate, recalibrate and become clear on the next aspect/ target to be aimed for.

The findings suggest that reflection of being is concerned with the reflection on existence, on importances or values, on one's own identity, personal brand, the role one chose to incorporate, and one's perceived strengths and weaknesses. Reflection of influences is related to a sense-making and learning from what is experienced. Target-oriented reflection is about defining goals, how these goals can be achieved and to foresee and ensure adjustments as needed to achieve the goal.

Bringing together the findings and the theory as established and as suggested, one can see that the terms of reflexivity and reflection are likewise not as distinctly used by the research participants as is also the case in the reviewed literature on reflective and reflexive leadership. Suggesting conscious attention as a result of the literature review on reflexivity and reflection in the context of leadership and revising the findings afterwards once more, I noticed that the terms "conscious" and "attention" were indeed represented in the wording of the participants, supporting the suggestion to use this term, see for example:

Til, p. 8 Afterwards I worked it out for myself more consciously [...].

Kei, p. 6 Consciously or unconsciously, one always spends part of one's energy on an appearance.

Ray, p. 6 Clearly, I can live unconsciously [...] where you simply disregard physical signs, disregard social feedback, where it can lead you into a spiral like burnout.

Shae, p. 9 The more I walk consciously through life, the higher my knowledge of human nature is and I take people as they are and I see that I cannot adapt a person to me. [...] You pay attention to body language, you pay attention to language, you pay attention to his questions, what he asks, you are just attentive and mindful.

Caz, p. 9 It has to do with respect, attentiveness, humility, the whole package of love [...]

Comparing the findings to the proposed six dimensions of conscious attention (*level of thought, time, micro/ meso; inquiry of self, inquiry of experience of self, inquiry of the organisation*), the aspect of challenging the status quo (within the process view) fits the understanding of an expansive dimension of level of thought in that both challenge established ways and assumptions.

In-process and ex-post dimensions have been present in the findings, for example when Ain spoke about the advice of taking a sip of cold water and wait for it to warm up before speaking. Likewise, he underlined the importance for him to be able to speak with a trusted other to reflect on his experiences over the last month. Ziv described his rage in a challenging situation and how, while he was experiencing his emotions very strongly, he at the same time stepped back from them and chose to decide how he wants to react rather than to continue in his rage.

The findings did not specifically differentiate between conscious thought at individual or group level (micro/ meso), however there is a connection on the level of creating a certain environment. The findings highlighted, for example, that by changing how individuals direct themselves, guided by a compass of love, individuals have an impact on others and hence contribute to creating a jointly shared culture. The findings support the micro-level of conscious attention, with regards to self-dialogue and dialogue with a trusted other. Journaling und through-the-mirror writing is similar to speaking with a trusted other. One of the participants said that it was helpful just to have someone listen – and through this rather mono- than dialogue, ultimately, he achieved understanding. “You are right” -But I did not say anything! -Yes, but I realise now...”

Participants spoke about challenging their own established thinking and having an attitude to be ready to accept that one might be wrong. Reflection at a group level has not been discussed by the participants.

Literature supports the thematic view derived from the findings on reflection of being (see above focus of inquiry: self), as well as the reflection of influences/ sensemaking (focus of inquiry: personal experiences of self) and also the target-oriented reflection (focus of inquiry: organisation).

The findings suggest that conscious attention is a cyclical, ongoing process which the reviewed literature does not mention. Growth within some of the literature is about learning and minimising errors without an attitudinal/ intrinsic level, while the findings point at growth from a basis of self-acceptance, inner freedom of choice and love as a guiding compass in all conscious attention dimensions.

While some of the current literature support organisational learning as a means to improve performance at individual or organisational level, the findings suggest a consciousness of one's own and others' needs. This includes considering aspects of interrelatedness and aiming for compatibility of personal and organisational goals, rather than optimising personal performance to fit to organisational goals.

While established views in literature seek an optimisation of one's identity and personal brand, the findings suggest becoming aware of one's own identity and personal brand as an active creator of it and focus adjustments on sustaining the inner source of energy. While literature challenges processes in organisations and at individual or group level established ways of thinking and assumptions, the findings suggest this challenging to go beyond these and

include a challenge of oneself to stay in love, asking oneself, for example: do I love, do people continue to feel accepted in my presence, is this reflected in how I lead?

As also in the wider leadership literature, there is still an underlying assumption that a leader, mostly referring to a person with wider decision authority affecting many others, knows what is best, and hence they are the ones to challenge processes and reflect on improvements and lead, i.e. direct, the team to make adjustments to achieve better performance. The findings are contrasting to this view, as mentioned in relation to the notion of equality of value, but in terms of conscious thought also in the realisation that it is the responsibility of oneself, one's own choice to remain or not in established patterns, or to act in alignment with the inner compass of love, taking charge of one's own decisions. Reflection in literature generally has a focus of inquiry with a purpose of improvement which the findings support, for example by suggesting that conscious attention fosters an increased understanding and therefore facilitates unconditional acceptance of human nature. The findings add however to this view that conscious attention is also a joy in itself, regardless of any improvement aims. And while literature on reflective and reflexive leadership, just as the wider leadership literature, is expanding on processes and behaviours, the findings underline that what is key is a willingness to understand and explore, out of which the right processes and behaviours will follow.

As part of challenging assumptions, authors described complexities related to established hierarchies and power relations. The findings do not question power imbalances in the context of scope of decision authority. However, they point at a need for a perceived equality of value, regardless of hierarchies. As such, they likewise challenge imbalances related to the perception of human beings as superior or inferior depending on their role or rank in the organisation.

This thesis proposes a holistic approach to leadership in the context of love: It looks at inner, perceptual, and relational perspectives with equal consideration. Likewise, the concepts of reflexivity and reflection can have equal consideration in the context of this thesis, as both offer valuable insights to the practitioner from different perspectives as outlined in the model of conscious attention. Conscious attention in the context of love leadership is one that takes love consciously as the basis throughout all dimensions, as guiding compass, as goal in itself, as a way of perceiving and interacting with oneself and others. As love is part of each perspective, so is conscious awareness and “When we cultivate the quality of awareness, we also cultivate love.” (Puddicombe, 2020).

What can be observed from relating the synthesised findings to the literature along the perspectives of inner, perceptual, relational, and conscious love leadership, is that prior research looks at different aspects of leadership in a rather narrow way. This thesis suggests an interrelatedness of perspectives and integration of separate views on love in leadership. This means, there is not only the inner view, not only the perceptual, not only the relational, not only the conscious perspective – each of these can be explored in depth and at the same time is part of one. As such, this thesis offers a holistic and flexible approach to leadership. This concludes the review, integration and contrasting of findings in relation to the literature in the respective context.

Contribution to leadership theory

The above sections have confirmed and countered established literature on the basis of the findings of this research. To highlight the clearest contrast between the inner, perceptual, relational, and conscious perspectives and previous literature, as reviewed and presented in earlier sections of this thesis, the Appendix includes an overview of major shifts this thesis

proposes in relation to existent theory. The overview aims to highlight key differentiating points of this thesis in comparison to reviewed literature in the context of main leadership theories, reflective leadership theories, and love leadership theories.

Literature on leadership in general, but even within the specific scope of love leadership, is dominated by demarcation – oneself vs. others, leading others, serving in their interest, etc. Love leadership as suggested in this thesis goes beyond demarcation, but focuses on a connectedness, interrelatedness or even oneness. The acknowledgment of this leads to the understanding that lasting change can only begin from the inside, with a self-sustained love and acceptance, before it can be shared with others.

Roles and identities become increasingly obsolete, as there are no expectations to be fulfilled when room is given to unconditional acceptance. Disparity of levels, such as leader and follower, or identities, such as types of people and characters, are not needed as the focus shifts to the mutually shared aspects of humanity and people come together in equal strength and value.

Behaviours are not a goal in itself, but a flexible result coming from the intrinsic determination to display and act out of love. Doing good for others is not used as a means to achieve a desired outcome or behaviour from the other person but comes from an unconditional benevolence which goes beyond helping those in need and towards helping people flourish as their authentic selves. Leaders are not seen as the ones to identify goals and take decisions for others, taking on responsibility for others, but rather as the ones who create opportunities for dialogue and identify compatibility potentials, who accept and give freedom to people to make their own choices, exemplifying self-love and thereby inspire others to do the same.

Checklists of how to behave as an ideal leader make room for conscious attention to oneself, others and the purpose for which one comes together. Reflection in the sense of pure learning from mistakes and performance improvement is expanding into reflexivity and into conscious attention, learning in and from specific experiences, but also being willing to gain a deep understanding of oneself, the experiences of the self, and the way people come together and grow in and as an organisation. Conscious attention permeates inner, perceptual, and relational perspectives as it provides a platform for critical observation and continuous and flexible readjustment following the compass of love.

The below model is a simplification of the findings which shall help to highlight the interrelatedness of the different perspectives. At the core is the inner love which needs to be sustained within oneself. Oneself is connected to others in terms of the perception of equality and the commonly shared aspect of humanity. From the inner love comes the enacted love towards others, who freely reciprocate love. Both sides come together for a shared purpose and seek to find congruence. All is encompassed by a continued conscious attention at every level.

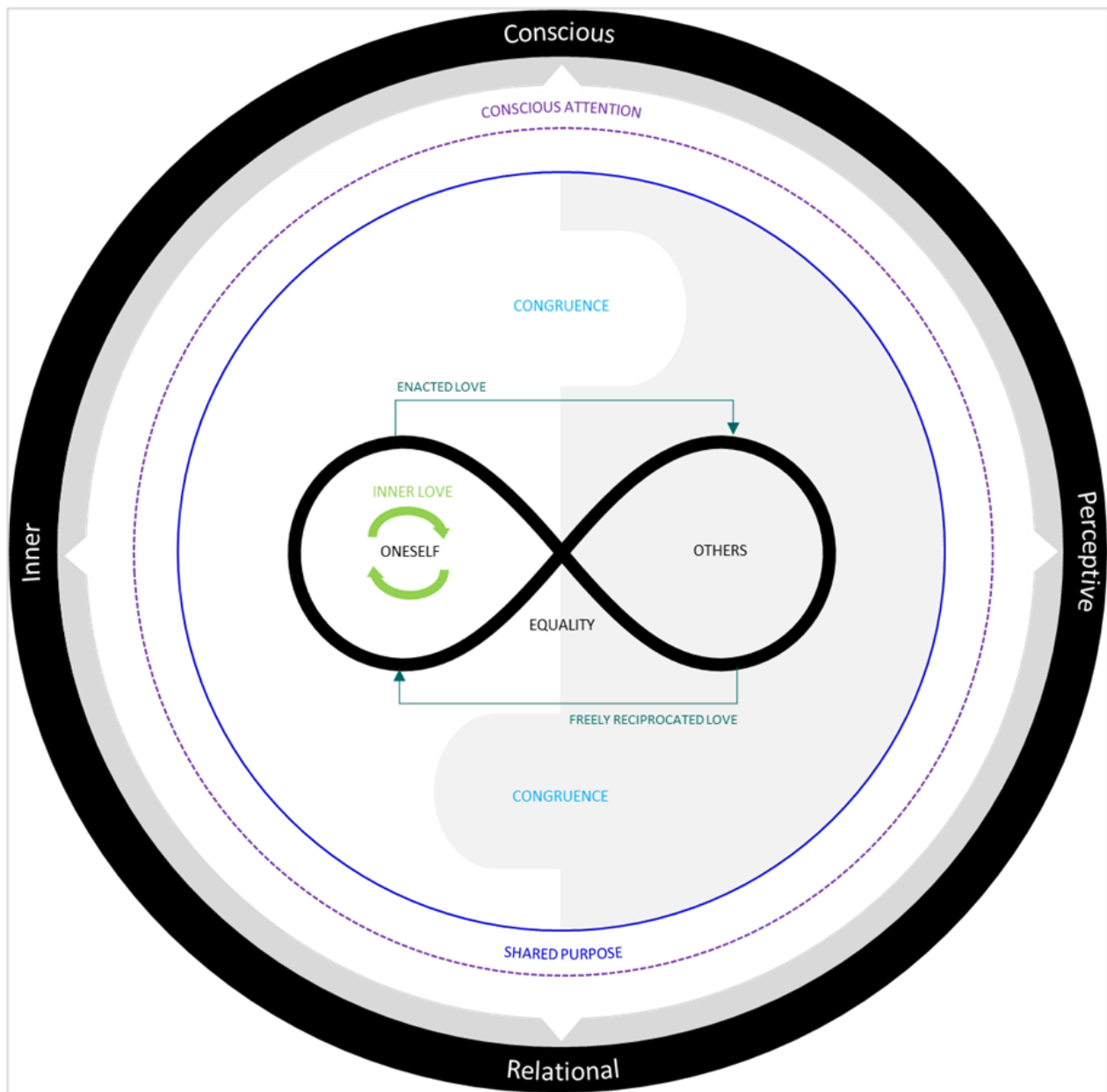


Figure 12 Compass of love in leadership

The findings of this thesis enhance the existing understanding of love in leadership as presented in the literature review and discussed in this chapter. The initial literature review pointed at the need for empirical research with regards to purpose and its relationship with leadership as well as to the motives of leadership (Jackson & Parry, 2011). The findings of this thesis clearly contribute to these areas of leadership theory as they directly touch on the question of “leadership for what?” (Kempster et al., 2011) by suggesting to becoming aware of one’s own purpose and teaming up with people who seek the same. The research need in regard to motives has been likewise explored as described particularly in the findings relating to intrinsic perspectives (inner, perceptual, conscious) and which became evident in the relational perspective.

The literature review around the identity theory pointed also at the need to move past behaviours, which can be perceived as transformational or well-intended at the surface, but ultimately “what is in their heart might not be as honourable as they might want their followers to believe.” (Parry et al., p. 8, referring to Gustafson & Ritzer, 1995, Babiak, 1996). This thesis provided insights into what is going on below the surface by, for example, contrasting genuine appreciation against appreciation as a means for manipulation, which has been the earlier described critique on charismatic leadership.

Although the reviewed literature partially points at key aspects within the findings, it does not fully reflect the findings. This thesis suggests enhancing the understanding of love in leadership by the integration of the four perspectives described above. Love in leadership builds on self-love, on a perceived oneness and equality with others, on an unconditional acceptance of oneself and others, and transcends into the perception of and interaction with oneself and others.

It is accompanied by a continuous conscious attention and aims for a mutually beneficial congruence and balance of the perspectives towards oneself, others, and the interaction.

This thesis aimed to and addressed the need for insights into motivational aspects of leadership and for empirical research on love in leadership. In addition to the enhancement of understanding of love in leadership, this thesis provides examples on how a love-based leadership could look like in practice and thereby also contributes to the body of empirical research in this field. It provides new insights into how practitioners could implement a love-based leadership in their business practice which will be further explored in the next section.

Contribution to leadership practice

This thesis aimed to explore the concept of love and motivational aspects in leadership practice. The findings underline the interconnectedness of the inner, perceptual, relational, and conscious perspectives on love in leadership practice and suggest considering love in leadership in practice as a holistic approach. Behaviours alone will not fully grasp the potential of love in leadership, just as a willingness alone without an enactment will not bear much fruit in practice. As the sections above outlined, there are numerous considerations practitioners could ponder and even more are yet to be explored by individuals within themselves, their experiences, and contexts.

The strength of love in leadership as identified in this thesis lies in its flexibility to adapt to different contexts while remaining firm in terms of its underlying essence being love. Practical implications begin with a conscious attention and result in derived actions in relation to each of the perspectives. To support practitioners in their love leadership approach, the Appendix contains a list of considerations per perspective to help practitioners map out where they see themselves in regard to the love leadership compass, which can act as a tool to enhance self-

awareness and outer awareness. These considerations could encourage further thought and development of practical adaptations to current leadership development and practice.

The insights of this thesis could be used to elaborate new or elevate existent leadership and personal development tools and trainings to facilitate the integration of love leadership into leadership practice. These could be aimed at the holistic view of love leadership and in depth on the inner, perceptual, relational, and conscious perspectives. Formal and informal coaching structures could be established or enhanced on the basis of the findings of this thesis, providing opportunities for conscious awareness in a facilitated, trusted environment.

As organisations increasingly move away from hierarchies and rigid structures towards more purpose-oriented, self-organised, and self-empowered teams (see for example Ore et. al., 2021), individuals will need to learn to take more responsibility for themselves, their own purpose, and be increasingly aware of others. Love leadership could help enable those transformations and serve as building block in organisations which seek to contribute to the wellbeing of the organisation, everyone involved with the organisation, and to the greater good within and beyond the firm.

The suggested perspectives of love leadership can transcend the individual level and are likewise suited to encompass respective considerations at meso and macro level in which the aspect of equitable dialogue gains particular relevance to ensure a shared group awareness of inner, perceptual, relational, and conscious aspects as well as an enactment grounded in a shared basis.

Love leadership is a continuous journey which we explore through conscious awareness and shape through conscious choices guided by the compass of love. It requires personal agency, commitment, humility, and curiosity towards life and the experience of life.

Recommendations for future research

The topic of love in leadership provides a multitude of opportunities for further exploration. As this research was limited in its geographical scope and number of participants due to practicability and time constraints, an exploration of a wider scope, with participants across different geographical and cultural contexts could generate useful additional insights.

Following up on the results from this thesis from a different perspective in another research could help explore the field of love leadership further. An interesting exploration, for example, yet one that was beyond the scope of this piece of research, would be to generate insights from conversations with those people who are *recipients* of the research participants' leadership. This could complement the findings of this research by evaluating which aspects of leadership are *perceived* as being motivated by love, relating to the challenge in communication according to which the intended message is not always the perceived message (Gurmankin, 2004), and thereby potentially help in the transition of love into impactful leadership practice. Another potential exploration could be an in-depth research related to each of the presented perspectives to enhance the scope of potential considerations for practitioners.

This research selected participants based on their position of authority and a human-centric approach in their leadership. Future research could target participants who explicitly commit to love in their leadership and explore the facets of love in their leadership practice in more depth. Other research could also be concerned with the practicability of implementing love leadership in practice, for example by a research accompanying practitioners and exploring their experience in incorporating love leadership as presented in this thesis.

Concluding remarks

The aim of this research was to contribute to theory and practice related to motivational aspects of leadership and to explore love in the context of leadership, guided by the research question: How could love look like in leadership practice?

This thesis presented a critical review of established literature in the field of leadership and love in the context of leadership. It identified key approaches to leadership theory and positioned the theory on love in leadership in the wider leadership literature. Philosophical assumptions and methodological considerations, decisions and limitations of the research design have been presented as well as the rationale and practicalities underpinning the data collection and data analysis process.

This thesis presented key findings along the main identified themes supported by representative quotes from the conversations with research participants. The findings have been synthesised and contrasted and integrated in relation to existent literature. Contributions to leadership theory and practice have been explored and recommendations for future research have been outlined.

This research aimed to contribute to the advancement of theory and practice with regard to love and leadership and was designed to generate impactful outcomes. I followed the principles of trustworthiness and authenticity throughout every stage of this research. I hope the insights shared in this thesis can inspire and be of practical relevance for today's and future researchers and practitioners.

Chapter 6: Reflections

The doctoral research was my journey to discover, cultivate, and represent love. On reflection, it was a humbling experience. I am immensely grateful for having had the opportunity to engage in this research. The topic was close to my heart when I embarked on the journey and is even closer today. The interaction with my research participants, the analysis of the data and interpretation of the findings was a rewarding experience. I learned a lot about the theory of leadership and specific leadership experiences, which strengthened my belief in the power leadership can have when built on love. I learned to become more conscious of myself as a person, in my professional and private spheres.

According to my colleagues, there is potential to apply the findings in the workplace. I intend to pursue this opportunity. I have started adapting the learnings of this research to my leadership – of myself and others. With a raised level of conscious awareness, I better understand my own needs and I am more attentive to other's needs in the workplace. I exercise self-care. Guided by my inner compass of love, I adjust my thoughts and focus more frequently. In critically assessing my biases, I aim to practice love in leadership.

Academic research offers a rich, challenging, and inspiring journey. Like any journey, the path can be tortuous, but is ultimately very rewarding. Pausing the journey enabled deep conscious attention and a focused gaze. My sincere thanks and endless gratitude to everyone I encountered on this journey who helped me to come closer to what it means to lead with love.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant consent form

German (as distributed to participants)

EINVERSTÄNDNISERKLÄRUNG

Schwerpunkt der Forschungsarbeit: Führungserfahrungen

Bitte beantworten Sie die folgenden Fragen, indem Sie die zutreffende Antwort ankreuzen.

- | | JA | NEIN |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Ich habe das Informationsblatt zu dieser Forschung gelesen und mir Details der Studie erklären lassen. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Meine Fragen zur Studie wurden zu meiner Zufriedenheit beantwortet und ich verstehe, dass ich jederzeit weitere Fragen stellen kann. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Ich verstehe, dass es mir freisteht, innerhalb der im Informationsblatt genannten Fristen von der Studie zurückzutreten, ohne einen Grund für meinen Austritt anzugeben, oder die Beantwortung bestimmter Fragen in der Studie abzulehnen. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Ich bin damit einverstanden, dem Forscher Informationen unter den im Informationsblatt festgelegten Vertraulichkeitsbedingungen zur Verfügung zu stellen. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Ich möchte an der Studie unter den im Informationsblatt genannten Bedingungen teilnehmen. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Ich bin damit einverstanden, dass die für die Zwecke dieser Forschungsstudie gesammelten Informationen, sobald sie anonymisiert sind (sodass ich nicht identifiziert werden kann), für andere Forschungszwecke verwendet werden. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name des Teilnehmers: _____
Kontaktdaten: _____
Datum und Unterschrift des Teilnehmers: _____

Name des Forschers: Helena Klipan
Kontaktdaten: _____

Datum und Unterschrift des Forschers: _____

Bitte bewahren Sie eine Kopie der Einwilligungserklärung und des Informationsblattes zusammen auf.

(English original)

Participant Consent Form

FOCUS OF RESEARCH STUDY: Leadership Experiences

Please answer the following questions by ticking the response that applies

- | | YES | NO |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I have read the Information Sheet for this study and have had details of the study explained to me. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any point. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study within the time limits outlined in the Information Sheet, without giving a reason for my withdrawal or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study without any consequences to my future treatment by the researcher. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out in the Information Sheet. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I wish to participate in the study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I consent to the information collected for the purposes of this research study, once anonymised (so that I cannot be identified), to be used for any other research purposes. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Participant's Name:

Contact details:

Date and Participant's Signature:

Researcher's Name:

Researcher's contact details:

Helena Klipan

Date and Researcher's Signature:

Please keep your copy of the consent form and the information sheet together.

Appendix B: Participant information sheet

German (as distributed to participants)

INFORMATIONSBLATT FÜR TEILNEHMER

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,

Sie sind hiermit eingeladen, an einer Forschungsstudie zum Thema Führung teilzunehmen. Die Forschung wird von Helena Klipan, Doktorandin an der Sheffield Hallam University und der Munich Business School, durchgeführt. Die Studie zielt darauf ab, Erfahrungen im Zusammenhang mit Führung zu untersuchen. Sie werden angesprochen aufgrund der Aussage Ihrer oder anderer Personen über Ihren Führungsstil.

Die Forschung wird in Form eines Gesprächs zwischen Ihnen und dem Forscher durchgeführt. Das Gespräch lädt Sie ein, über Ihre Lebensgeschichte zu sprechen, über Details Ihrer Erfahrung in Bezug auf Führung, Ihre Motivation und die Bedeutung, die Sie diesen Erfahrungen beimessen. Der Forscher wird Sie persönlich zu einem für Sie geeigneten Zeitpunkt und Ort treffen. Das Gespräch ist für die Dauer von ca. 60 Minuten geplant und wird per Audioaufzeichnung festgehalten.

Im Anschluss an das Gespräch werden Sie eingeladen, Ihre Führungserfahrungen mitzuteilen, die Sie nach dem Gespräch erlebt haben. Der Forscher wird sich für Führungssituationen interessieren, denen Sie begegnen und wie Sie diese Situationen erlebt haben. Das Mitteilen Ihrer Erfahrung kann in Form einer kurzen Audioaufzeichnung erfolgen, z.B. über die WhatsApp®-Audio-Nachricht an den Forscher, oder in jeder für Sie bequemen Textform.

Der Forscher kann Sie zu Klärungszwecken im Zusammenhang mit dem Inhalt des Gesprächs und Ihrer nachfolgenden Mitteilungen kontaktieren. Diese Studie wird mit Zustimmung der Sheffield Hallam University, Großbritannien, und der Munich Business School, Deutschland, durchgeführt und wird für die Dissertation des Forschers verwendet.

Risiken: Der Prozess des Gesprächs und der persönlichen Reflektion kann manchmal emotional herausfordernd sein. Der Forscher wird sich bemühen, solche Auswirkungen zu minimieren. Sie können sich jederzeit ohne Angabe von Gründen für einen Widerruf Ihrer Teilnahme entscheiden, oder Sie können sich entscheiden, eine bestimmte Frage nicht zu beantworten.

Möglicher Nutzen: Die Forschung bietet Ihnen die Möglichkeit, über Ihre eigene Führungserfahrung nachzudenken und bewusster werden in Führungssituationen. Mit der Teilnahme an dieser Studie leisten Sie einen wichtigen Beitrag zur Generierung neuer Erkenntnisse in der Führungstheorie und -praxis.

Maßnahmen zur Wahrung Ihrer Anonymität: Ihre Identität und Kontaktdaten werden vom Forscher während der gesamten Forschungszeit zu Kommunikationszwecken gespeichert. Bevor Daten an Dritte weitergegeben werden, werden alle Daten durch die Verwendung von Pseudonymen für alle Namen und identifizierbaren Angaben anonymisiert. Die Gesprächsprotokolle werden vom Forscher selbst oder einem angesehenen Transkribenten verschriftlicht. Im Falle einer Transkription durch einen Dritten werden Namen oder identifizierende Aspekte aus der Aufzeichnung gelöscht, bevor sie zur Transkription übergeben

werden. Digitale Daten werden in einem passwortgeschützten Ordner auf dem Universitätsserver gespeichert. Audioaufzeichnungen, Verschriftlichungen und Einverständniserklärungen bleiben im physischen Besitz des Forschers und werden an einem sicheren Ort aufbewahrt.

Umfang der Nutzung: Der Forscher kann sich entscheiden, entweder kurze Zitate oder lange Auszüge aus dem Gesprächsprotokoll oder den Erfahrungsmitteilungen zu verwenden.

Vergütung: Die Teilnahme ist freiwillig und der Teilnehmer verpflichtet sich, keine finanziellen Ansprüche gegen den Interviewer geltend zu machen.

Verbreitung: Die anonymisierten Daten werden für die Analyse in dieser oder nachfolgenden Forschung verwendet. Mit der Unterzeichnung dieses Formulars ermächtigt der Teilnehmer den Forscher, die schriftlich oder per Tonband zur Verfügung gestellten Informationen für den in diesem Formular beschriebenen Zweck zu verwenden. Ihre anonymisierten Daten können an die Betreuer des Doktoranden, der diese Forschung durchführt, weitergegeben werden. Die Studie wird voraussichtlich bis Dezember 2019 abgeschlossen sein. Nach Fertigstellung werden die Daten für mindestens 10 Jahre im SHU Research Data Archive gespeichert. Der Teilnehmer wird nach Veröffentlichung der Dissertation informiert und erhält auf Wunsch ein Exemplar.

Sie erhalten eine Kopie der hier zur Verfügung gestellten Informationen und werden gebeten diese aufzubewahren, zusammen mit der Einverständniserklärung, wenn Sie sich für die Teilnahme entscheiden. Sie können sich jederzeit an den Forscher wenden, um Ihre Teilnahme zu besprechen oder Ihre Fragen zu klären:

Helena Klipan



Bei Fragen bezüglich der Art und Weise, wie die Forschung durchgeführt wurde oder wie Sie behandelt wurden, wenden Sie sich bitte an die Leiterin der Forschungsethik ([redacted]) unter [redacted].

Wenn Sie Fragen zur Verwendung Ihrer Daten durch die Universität haben, oder wenn Sie eine Datenschutzverletzung melden möchten (z.B. wenn Sie der Meinung sind, dass Ihre personenbezogenen Daten verloren gegangen sind oder unangemessen weitergegeben wurden), oder wenn Sie sich darüber beschweren möchten, wie die Universität Ihre personenbezogenen Daten verwendet hat, wenden Sie sich bitte an die Datenschutzbehörde unter DPO@shu.ac.uk. Die Postanschrift der Universität lautet: Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street, Sheffield S1 1WBT Telefon: 0114 0225 555

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Dear Sir or Madam,

you are hereby invited to consider your participation in a research study related to leadership. The research is conducted by Helena Klipan, doctoral candidate at Sheffield Hallam University and Munich Business School. The study aims to explore experiences related to leadership. You are being approached based on your or other people's statement about your leadership style.

The research will be conducted in the form of a discussion between you and the researcher. You will be invited to talk about your life history, details of your experience in relation to leadership, your motivation and the meaning you attribute to those experiences. The researcher will meet you in person at a time and place convenient to you. The discussion will be scheduled for the duration of 60 minutes and will be audio-taped.

Following the discussion, you will be invited to share leadership situations which you experience after the discussion. The researcher will be interested in leadership situations you encounter and how you experienced those situations. You can share your experiences in the form of a short audio recording, e.g. via WhatsApp® audio message to the researcher, or in any textual form that you find convenient.

The researcher may contact you for clarification purposes related to the discussion's and journal's content. This study is performed with the consent of Sheffield Hallam University, United Kingdom, and Munich Business School, Germany, and will be used for the researcher's dissertation.

Risks:

The process of the discussion and the personal journaling may at times cause emotional discomfort. The researcher will work to minimize such impact. You can decide to withdraw at any time without giving a reason, or you can decide not to answer a particular question.

Possible benefits:

The research provides you with the opportunity to reflect on your own experience in leadership and to become more mindful of leadership situations. By participating in this study, you provide an important contribution to the generation of new insights in leadership theory and practice.

Steps taken to ensure your anonymity:

Your identity and contact details will be stored by the researcher for communication purposes throughout the research. Before any data is shared with a third party, all data will be anonymised through the use of pseudonyms for all names and identifiable particulars. Discussion transcripts will be completed by the researcher or a reputable transcriber. In the event of a transcription by a third party, names or identifying aspects will be erased from the record before handed over for transcription. Digital data will be kept in a password-protected folder on the university server. Audio records, transcripts and consent forms will remain in physical possession of the researcher and stored in a secure place.

Extent of use:

The researcher might decide to use either short quotations or lengthy excerpts from the discussion transcript or the journal.

Remuneration:

The participation is voluntary and the participant agrees to not make any financial claim upon the researcher.

Dissemination:

The anonymised data will be used for analysis in this or subsequent research. By signing this form, the participant is giving permission to the researcher to use the information provided in written or by audio-tape for the purpose described in this form. Your anonymised data may be shared with the supervisors of the doctoral candidate performing this research. The study is expected to be completed by December 2019. After completion, the data will be stored in the SHU Research Data Archive for a minimum of 10 years. The participant will be informed once the dissertation is published and will receive a copy upon request.

A copy of the information provided here is yours to keep, along with the consent form if you decide to take part. You are welcome to contact the researcher at any time to discuss your participation or to clarify any questions you might have:

Helena Klipan



In case of any concerns related to how the research was undertaken or how you were treated, please contact the Head of Research Ethics ([redacted]) [redacted].

You should contact the Data Protection Office at DPO@shu.ac.uk if you have a query about how your data is used by the University, or if you would like to report a data security breach (e.g. if you think your personal data has been lost or disclosed inappropriately), or if you would like to complain about how the University has used your personal data. The University's postal address is: Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street, Sheffield S1 1WBT Telephone: 0114 0225 555

Appendix C: Privacy notice for research participants

German (as distributed to participants)

DATENSCHUTZERKLÄRUNG

Einführung

Ab dem 25. Mai 2018 ersetzt die Allgemeine Datenschutzverordnung (GDPR) das Datenschutzgesetz und regelt die Art und Weise, wie Unternehmen personenbezogene Daten verwenden. Personenbezogene Daten sind Informationen über eine identifizierbare lebende Person. Transparenz ist ein Schlüsselement des GDPR und diese Datenschutzerklärung soll Sie informieren:

- wie und warum die Universität Ihre personenbezogenen Daten für die Forschung verwendet,
- was Ihre Rechte unter GDPR sind, und,
- wie Sie uns kontaktieren können, wenn Sie Fragen oder Bedenken hinsichtlich der Verwendung Ihrer personenbezogenen Daten haben.

Ihre Rechte unter Datenschutz

Eines der Ziele der Allgemeinen Datenschutzverordnung (GDPR) ist es, Einzelpersonen zu befähigen und ihnen die Kontrolle über ihre personenbezogenen Daten zu geben.

Die GDPR gibt Ihnen die folgenden Rechte:

- Das Recht auf Information
- Das Zugangsrecht
- Das Recht auf Nachbesserung
- Das Recht auf Löschung
- Das Recht, die Verarbeitung einzuschränken
- Das Recht auf Datenübertragbarkeit
- Das Widerspruchsrecht
- Rechte in Bezug auf automatisierte Entscheidungsfindung und Profilerstellung

Bitte beachten Sie, dass viele dieser Rechte bei der Verwendung der Daten für Forschungszwecke nicht gelten, aber wir werden immer versuchen, auf Ihre Bedenken oder Fragen zu antworten. Weitere Informationen zu diesen Rechten finden Sie unter <https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-this-website/privacy-policy/data-subject-rights>.

Warum verarbeiten wir Ihre personenbezogenen Daten?

Die Universität forscht im Rahmen ihrer Funktion für die Gemeinschaft im Rahmen ihrer Rechtsform. Die Datenschutzgesetze erlauben es uns, personenbezogene Daten für die Forschung mit angemessenen Schutzvorkehrungen zu verwenden, die auf Basis der Rechtsgrundlage für öffentliche Aufgaben, die im öffentlichen Interesse liegen, bestehen.

Informationen über die Rechtsstellung, die Verfassung und die öffentlichen Aufgaben der Universität finden Sie unter: <https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-us/governance-and-strategy/governance/legal-status-and-constitution>.

Wir werden Sie immer darüber informieren, welche Informationen wir von Ihnen sammeln möchten und wie wir sie verwenden werden. Für die Erhebung und Verwendung Ihrer Daten in bestimmten Forschungsprojekten werden wir Ihre Zustimmung einholen. Für Kinder, Jugendliche und andere schutzbedürftige Gruppen wird sich die Forschungsethik-Kommission auf ein geeignetes Zustimmungsverfahren einigen, um den Schutz der Teilnehmerrechte zu gewährleisten. Ausführliche Informationen erhalten Sie in einem Informationsblatt.

Die Forschung an der Universität unterliegt Richtlinien und Verfahren, und jede Forschung wird einer ethischen Prüfung unterzogen, um sicherzustellen, dass sie so durchgeführt wird, dass sie Ihre Interessen schützt und auf einem hohen Niveau stattfindet. <https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/ethics-integrity-and-practice>

Erhebung und Nutzung personenbezogener Daten

Alle Forschungsprojekte sind unterschiedlich und die Informationen, die wir sammeln, variieren. Die Forscher werden jedoch nur Informationen sammeln, die für den Zweck der Forschung unerlässlich sind. Forschungsdaten werden in der Regel so schnell wie möglich nach der Datenerhebung anonymisiert, so dass Personen nicht erkannt werden können und Ihre Privatsphäre geschützt ist. Nach diesem Zeitpunkt können Sie Ihre Daten nicht mehr widerrufen. Einige Daten, wie z.B. Umfragedaten, werden häufig anonym erhoben, so dass sie nicht mehr zurückgezogen werden können, wenn Sie die Erlaubnis zur Nutzung erteilt haben. Wenn Sie in einer Forschungspublication (z.B. durch ein zurechenbares Zitat oder ein Foto) identifizierbar sind, werden wir Ihre ausdrückliche Zustimmung einholen.

An wen geben wir Ihre Daten weiter?

Um unsere Forschung der Öffentlichkeit und der akademischen Gemeinschaft zu vermitteln, ist es möglich, dass Ihre anonymisierten Daten Teil einer Forschungspublication, einer Konferenzpräsentation oder eines öffentlichen Vortrags werden. Wenn Forscher Informationen verwenden möchten, die Sie identifizieren, wird eine besondere Zustimmung eingeholt.

Der Schutz Ihrer personenbezogenen Daten ist von größter Bedeutung. Ihre Daten werden nur dann weitergegeben, wenn ein berechtigter Zweck erfüllt ist. Die Universität verkauft niemals personenbezogene Daten an Dritte.

Ihre Daten können an folgende Dritte weitergegeben werden:

- Direktes Projektteam, das berechtigt ist, an dem Projekt zu arbeiten und auf die Informationen zuzugreifen. Dies kann Mitarbeiter der Sheffield Hallam University oder Mitarbeiter anderer Organisationen umfassen, die zur Bearbeitung des Projekts berechtigt sind und wird in Ihrem Informationsblatt deutlich gekennzeichnet.
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<https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/>

Das Büro des Informationskommissars betreibt eine Telefon-Hotline, eine Live-Chat-Funktion und einen E-Mail-Auskunftsdienst. Sie können Bedenken auch online melden. Für weitere Informationen besuchen Sie bitte die Seite Contact Us auf ihrer Website:

<https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/>

Privacy Notice for Research Participants

Introduction

From 25 May 2018 the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will replace the Data Protection Act and govern the way that organisations use personal data. Personal data is information relating to an identifiable living individual.

Transparency is a key element of the GDPR and this Privacy Notice is designed to inform you:

- how and why the University uses your personal data for research,
- what your rights are under GDPR, and,
- how to contact us if you have questions or concerns about the use of your personal data.

Your Rights Under Data Protection

One of the aims of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is to empower individuals and give them control over their personal data.

The GDPR gives you the following rights:

- The right to be **informed**
- The right of **access**
- The right to **rectification**
- The right to **erase**
- The right to **restrict** processing
- The right to **data portability**
- The right to **object**
- Rights in relation to **automated decision making and profiling**

Please note that many of these rights do not apply when the data is being used for research purposes, but we will always try to respond to concerns or queries that you may have. For more information about these rights please see <https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-this-website/privacy-policy/data-subject-rights>

Why are we processing your personal data?

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We will always tell you about the information we wish to collect from you and how we will use it.

We will seek your consent for the collection and use of your data in specific research projects. For children, young people and other vulnerable groups the research ethics committee will agree an appropriate consent procedure to ensure participant rights are protected. Full details will be given to you in an information sheet.

Research in the University is governed by policies and procedures and all research undergoes ethical scrutiny to ensure that it is conducted in such a way as to protect your interests and is of a high standard. <https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/ethics-integrity-and-practice>

Collecting and Using Personal Data

All research projects are different and the information we collect will vary. However, researchers will only collect information that is essential for the purpose of the research. Research data is normally anonymised as quickly as possible after data collection so that individuals cannot be recognised and your privacy is protected. You will not be able to withdraw your data after this point. Some data e.g. survey data is frequently collected anonymously so cannot be withdrawn once you have given permission for it to be used. Where you may be identifiable in a research publication (e.g. an attributable quote or a photograph), we will seek your explicit consent.

Who do we share your data with?

To communicate our research to the public and the academic community your anonymised data is likely to form part of a research publication or conference presentation or public talk. Where researchers wish to use any information that would identify you, specific consent will be sought. The privacy of your personal data is paramount and will not be disclosed unless there is a justified purpose for doing so. **The University NEVER sells personal data to third parties.**

Your data may be shared with:

- Immediate project team who are authorised to work on the project and access the information. This may include staff at Sheffield Hallam University or collaborators at other organisations authorised to work on the project. This will be clearly identified in your information sheet.
- Where a student is undertaking the research the data will be shared with their supervisors
- Our research may be audited and access to the data may be required. The University puts in place safeguards to ensure that audits are conducted in a secure and confidential manner.
- In the case of complaints about a research project the Head of Research Ethics may require access to the data as part of our Research Misconduct Procedure.

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Your information will not be kept for longer than is necessary and is usually kept in an anonymised format. The length of time for which we keep your data will depend on a number of factors including the importance of the data, the funding requirements, the nature of the study, and the requirements of the publisher. Details will be given in the information sheet for each project.

After anonymisation your data may be stored in the University research data archive where it may be accessed by other researchers with permission from the University.

Contact Us

You should contact the Data Protection Officer DPO@shu.ac.uk

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- you would like to report a **data security breach** (e.g. if you think your personal data has been lost or disclosed inappropriately)
- you would like to **complain** about how the University has used your personal data

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Our telephone number is: 0114 225 5555

You should contact the Head of Research Ethics ([REDACTED]) [REDACTED] if:

- you have concerns with how the research was undertaken or how you were treated

Appendix D: Interview guide

Interview Guide

- What: Background (easing into interview)
 - Life story that brought participant to being in this position (education, experience, description of current position)
 - The participants relationship to his or her subordinates or superiors, with co-workers
- What: Leadership
 - Understanding of leadership (not personal meaning, rather if one-directional or multi-directional)
 - How participant would describe his or her leadership style
 - Detailed examples of experience of leadership in current position (or any other position before)
- How: Mindset
 - How to set your mind and keep it set when difficult/ challenging situations occur
 - Situations in which participant chose to set his/her motivation on the described one
 - Example situation in which he/she purposefully adjusted the behaviour to the motivation
 - What was it like to be in this situation, what is going on inside when perceiving the need to adjust the motivation
 - Role and degree of reflexivity
- Why: Opinions/ values/ meaning/ purpose
 - Motivation to lead in chosen way (Why do you choose to lead this way? Why this motivation?)

- Meaning of leadership to the participant
- Role of “higher purpose”, spirituality, personal growth, Maslow’s self-actualization, intrinsic motivation towards spiritual progression
- Servant aspect of leadership
- How participants see themselves in terms of being able to make a difference
- Philosophical perspective
- Values guiding actions
- Meaning of relationships
- Easing out of interview
 - Experience of reflecting in the process of the interview
 - Interest in participation in journaling over two weeks

Appendix E: Thematic analysis in contrast to other qualitative research methods

In their paper from 2020, Braun and Clarke effectively contrast thematic analysis against other pattern-based qualitative analytic approaches. As qualitative methods are rarely completely distinct from others, there is a degree of confusion about methods that should be used for a given research focus (Braun & Clarke, 2020). Willig (2013) underlines that the important part of choosing a method is that it fits the purpose of project, and that there is coherence between the researcher's theoretical assumptions, research question and chosen method, to which I agree. I would like to explain why I found reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) to be the best fit over adjacent methods of pattern-based analysis for the purpose of this research.

In line with Braun & Clarke's perspective, I identified qualitative content analysis, interpretative phenomenological analysis, grounded theory, and thematic discourse analysis as particularly close to reflexive thematic analysis. In addition, I will also touch on how narrative analysis relates to RTA. Below table shows how I would structure these adjacent methods:

Flexible in choice of theoretical framework	Fixed theoretical framework	Philosophy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grounded Theory (GT)	positivist
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA)• Narrative Analysis (NA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)• Thematic Discourse Analysis (TDA)	subjectivist

IPA, GT, and TDA are methodologies and as such come with a predefined theoretical framework and techniques. QCA, RTA, and NA on the other hand can be used with different theoretical positionings, whereby the theoretical framing becomes visible during the application of the method and needs to be made explicit by the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2020).

IPA, GT, and TDA are close to RTA's focus of analysis as they also analyse patterns of meaning across the data. Narrative analysis (NA) and thematic discourse analysis (close to classic DA) however are methods that focus on details of linguistics and interactional aspects of language which has not been the focus of this study.

Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA)

QCA is closest to type 1 and 3 of thematic analysis (1. coding reliability approaches, 2. reflexive approaches and 3. codebook approaches, see Braun & Clarke, 2020). Even though it has an atheoretical claim, it often makes positivist assumptions to analysis and approaches analysis with quantified measures (Wilkinson, 2000), such as ensuring inter-coder reliability and extracting themes from the content, assuming the "truth is out there". Per definition, content analysis has a focus on the content and as such considers content as something static and existent (e.g. Braun & Clarke, 2016), whereas the reflexive thematic analysis per definition incorporates subjectivist, interpretivist aspects to the method.

However, QCA allows also to look at the data from both perspectives, deductive and inductive (e.g. Cho & Lee, 2014; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This is one of the aspects in which I deviate from the RTA perspective of Braun and Clarke (2006). I started my analysis from a pre-informed set of potential themes or areas of interest, based in the initial literature review and focus of research, which could be considered deductive, and then proceeded with an inductive analysis, allowing the insights from the inductive analysis to shape and fully change the initial deductively generated structure, before I returned to a deductive approach in order to refocus the outcomes of the analysis.

Grounded Theory (GT)

Grounded Theory is close to RTA in that it is also concerned with a research question related to social processes and the factors that influence, underpin and shape particular phenomena (Charmaz, 2014). As such, GT (as well as RTA) can be considered part of the phenomenological sub-paradigm of subjectivism/ interpretivism.

GT is interested in the identification of patterns in data and the interpretation of these (Braun & Clarke, 2020, p. 43). The difference in comparison to RTA is that GT is aiming for a generalisation by the fact that the outcome is a theory aiming to represent evidence in the data. As IPA and TDA, GT comes with a set theoretical framework and analytic methods.

Grounded Theory does not start with a literature review but conducts the analysis in a purely inductive way with the aim to derive a theory from the evidence in the data (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020).

The term evidence has again a positivist epistemological connotation to it and as such does not reflect my epistemological positioning. Also, my analysis was informed by an initial theoretical pre-understanding, combining the deductive approach with a sub-sequent inductive approach and therefore differs from GT: I had a preconception of the topic, of rough areas in which I was interested (such as the motivational aspects of leadership, exploring the concept of love, if it was mentioned).

The goal of grounded theory to “generate a plausible – and useful – theory of the phenomena that is grounded in the data” (McLeod 2001, quoted in Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81) partially applies in the case of this research: the identified patterns were aimed to be a reflection of the understanding of the data in relation to the phenomenon, yet do not claim to fully explain a phenomenon, but rather provide a potential understanding of it.

The seeming commonality yet also clear difference between RTA and GT is also evident in the aspect of theoretical saturation. In GT, this would generally be achieved when “the properties of categories and the relationships between categories were fully explained so that a grounded theory could arise” (Morse, 2015, quoted in Braun & Clarke, 2020, p. 43), whereas in RTA, a theoretical saturation is based on the researcher’s impression that no new insights emerge (Braun & Clarke, 2019b, 2020, p. 43) and RTA does not seek to explain, but to inform and provide insights of potential understanding.

I believe, even though the outcome of both could be insights and relationships grounded in the data, GT would claim *absolute truth as evidenced* by the analysed data, whereas RTA would depict *one version of perceived truth*, as shown in the identified relationships and co-created understanding based on the experience and sense-making of the participants and the researcher.

Another differing aspect of GT in comparison to RTA is the concurrent data collection and analysis within GT (Braun & Clarke, 2020, Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020) in which sampling is informed by the ongoing analysis process. This is not the case for RTA.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

IPA has also similarities with RTA. Both are grounded in the phenomenological epistemology (which can be considered a subset of interpretivism-constructivism (Morrow 2007, p. 213) and are both interested in the sense making of experiences of individuals (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Willig 2013).

Where classic IPA however, in addition to the identification of themes across data items, has a focus on each individual’s experience (Thorpe & Holt, 2007), unique features of each narrative, and the context of these experiences, RTA’s focus is to seek for patterns *across* the

experiences of individuals and for essential aspects that all interviews have in common with no special attention to the details of each individual's context.

However, there is not one way of doing IPA (Braun & Clarke 2020, p. 41) and “in qualitative research a method can never be a recipe. There is always a demand for creativity and reflexivity” (see Malterud 2002; Stige, Malterud & Midgarden, 2009, quoted in Davidsen, 2013, p. 333). This reflexivity and creativity, as well as the overall research focus, guided and shaped my specific approach to RTA, as explained as part of the thematic analysis process section.

IPA is attached to a phenomenological epistemology "which gives experience primacy and is about understanding people's everyday experience of reality, in great detail, in order to gain an understanding of the phenomenon in question" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 80). In contrast, I did not analyse the data with particular reference to the details of the participant's political, social, economic, or cultural context and their potential impact on the phenomenon. Rather, the analysis was focused on the perception of reality and sense-making through the eyes of the participant in the “wider socio-cultural context” (Braun & Clarke, 2020, p. 42).

Sequencing and scope are further important differentiation aspects to consider. While IPA first fully analyses one data item, with theme generation at the stage of each interview, before moving on to the next, RTA generates codes throughout the entire data set and identifies themes from the basis of the codes reflecting the entire data set (Braun & Clarke, 2020). In addition to the sequence, IPA generally chooses a smaller sample (<10) to allow an in-depth contextual and thematic cross-case study. The sample of this research was a consequence of a perceived saturation and resulted in a sample size of 16.

IPA is typically limited to interviews as data source. Although most of the data of this research stems from interviews, the data corpus was enriched by post-interview reflections from

some participants in form of e-mail, text messages, audio messages, or phone calls. RTA offered more flexibility in this regard.

Also, as this research was focused on both, theoretical implications and practical implications, and as such sought to generate “actionable outcomes” [...] “with clear implications for business practice”, final themes have been organised into “thematic statements” (Sandelowski & Leeman, 2012, quoted in Braun & Clarke 2020, p. 42) which is not a clearly stated intention of IPA according to the authors.

Sandelowski & Leeman (2012) point out that identified themes alone lack an actionable story and Braun & Clarke (2006) suggest that phase six, producing the report, is about telling “the complicated story of your data in a way which convinces the reader of the merit and validity of your analysis.” (p. 93). Given my practical perspective on this study, I agree with the authors. This is visible in the last interpretative step of the thematic analysis process, in which I made thematic statements as concluding findings from the analysis in response to the research question.

Thematic Discourse Analysis (TDA)

Thematic discourse analysis is another pattern-based method. TDA has a particular focus on "language as constitutive of meaning and meaning as social" (Braun & Clarke 2006, p. 81) and on effects of language, such as social positions (Braun & Clarke 2020, p. 44). Although the focus is again on cross-case patterns and in that regard could be considered close to RTA, discourse analysis is primarily interested in specifics of language, on linguistics as signifying practices from which meaning is socially constructed (Braun & Clarke 2020, p. 44).

I agree with the perspective that language is used to convey meaning and that meaning is a social construct. And, although the stories, the discourse, as well as the understanding of the

data items were indeed enabled, conveyed and accessed by language, the particular aspects of the choice of expression and selected words in regards to their underlying social constructivism, have not been the focus of this study and not examined in detail. Instead, I focused on the perceived meaning as I understood it, which is inevitably shaped by what constitutes me as a researcher in this social process of the research and my interpretation. This interpretative understanding loop has been illustrated in Chapter Three (choice of method).

Narrative Analysis (NA)

The collected data items were narratives and one might wonder if a narrative analysis might be an adequate choice for analysis, given the obvious term and again a focus on identifying patterns in the data. Gadamer (1985) suggests that researchers should consider both, the text's reflection of the author's inner life as well as the context of the text. Per Nelson and Fivush (2004), stories or personal narratives offer an effective approach to obtain the context of a person's experience and help evaluate the how and the why of particular events.

Although I was looking for the participants' stories of their leadership experience and was interested in the how and why, narrative analysis (and the according data collection) is focused on the creation of and interaction with data *in relation* to the context of stories, with chronological elements and the consideration and attention to the context of experiences (e.g. Allen, 2017). For this reason, I consider narrative analysis, similar to IPA, as method which is interested in a *particular* narrative, in specifics of the context of this narrative and in looking for patterns within that one interview and at a later stage, compare this experience with the specific experiences of others. In contrast to this, although I have collected and interacted with narratives, I have coded all interviews and looked for patterns across all interviews. The elicited stories were

a means to ease the participant into the conversation and to allow participants to make sense of their experience through examples of their experience.

Appendix F: 1. Corinthians, 13

1. Corinthians, 13 (AMP)

The Excellence of Love

13 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not [a]love [for others growing out of God's love for me], then I have become only a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal [just an annoying distraction]. 2 And if I have the gift of prophecy [and speak a new message from God to the people], and understand all mysteries, and [possess] all knowledge; and if I have all [sufficient] faith so that I can remove mountains, but do not have love [reaching out to others], I am nothing. 3 If I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body [b]to be burned, but do not have love, it does me no good at all.

4 Love endures with patience and serenity, love is kind and thoughtful, and is not jealous or envious; love does not brag and is not proud or arrogant. 5 It is not rude; it is not self-seeking, it is not provoked [nor overly sensitive and easily angered]; it does not take into account a wrong endured. 6 It does not rejoice at injustice, but rejoices with the truth [when right and truth prevail]. 7 Love bears all things [regardless of what comes], believes all things [looking for the best in each one], hopes all things [remaining steadfast during difficult times], endures all things [without weakening].

8 Love never fails [it never fades nor ends]. But as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for the gift of special knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part [for our knowledge is fragmentary and incomplete]. 10 But when that which is complete and perfect comes, that which is incomplete and partial will pass away. 11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. 12 For now [in this time of imperfection] we see in a mirror dimly [a blurred reflection, a riddle, an enigma], but then [when the time of perfection comes we will see reality] face to face. Now I know in part [just in fragments], but then I will know fully, just as I have been fully known [by God]. 13 And now there remain: faith [abiding trust in God and His promises], hope [confident expectation of eternal salvation], love [unselfish love for others growing out of God's love for me], these three [the choicest graces]; but the greatest of these is love.

Footnotes

1 Corinthians 13:1 I.e. a profound thoughtfulness and unselfish concern for other believers regardless of their circumstances or station in life.

1 Corinthians 13:3 Early mss read so that I may boast, i.e. as a martyr.

Quote retrieved from: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+13&version=AMP>

Appendix G: Theoretical refinements

Literature	Findings: Inner perspectives
Others-centred	Internal love, first
Others-centredness of servant leadership	Serving from a basis of oneness/ connectedness/ interrelatedness
Self-sacrificing	Self-sustained, caring for oneself, first
Oneself vs. others	Oneself and others, interrelatedness
Serving in their interest	Find congruence, out of self-love and love for others
Leading others	Leading oneself, others, and a cause
Leading others	Mutual experience of coming together
Demarcation of beliefs and values	(Spiritual) connection on common basis of humanity
What I do	What I think, do, and become
Be authentic	Become aware of authentic self
Almighty status of leader	Acceptance and love of oneself as one is

Table 9 Inner perspectives: differentiating aspects between literature and findings

Literature	Findings: Perceptual perspectives
Disparity of level	Equality beyond roles and identities
Chosen behaviour	Chosen loving, caring mindset and align behaviour to it
Others	Oneness with others
Types of people and characters	Mutually shared aspect of humanity
Do	Conscious awareness of oneself and others
People are a means to achieve one's own goals	Consciously see people in their individuality, with their history, needs, wishes, potential, and accept them as they are, unconditionally. Come together to achieve a commonly shared goal.
Help avoid suffering, fulfil their needs	Enter a dialogue about what matters and help regardless of suffering and need, to reach goals, achieve potential, grow, for example

Table 10 Perceptual perspectives: differentiating aspects between literature and findings

Literature	Findings: Relational perspectives
Targeted behaviours	Linking intrinsic aspects (attitude, perception) with tangible experience
Leader-follower distinction	Enacted equality beyond roles and identities
Negotiated reciprocity/ conditional relationship	Doing good for others, unconditionally/ unconditional relationship
Helping others in need/ who suffer	Help others beyond needs, help grow, be happy for their success
Leader identifies goals	Seeking goal congruence through dialogue and each individual's goals
Fake it to make it	Open dialogue of ideal worlds and compatibility potential
Help people perform better	Help oneself and others flourish beyond performance, only
Serve others	Help others help themselves, exemplify self-love and inspire others
Meet the needs of people entrusted to one's care	Help others take charge of their own development and wellbeing
What they need might not be what they want	Accept and give freedom to people to make own choices
Disparity of responsibility (leader over follower)	Coming together from basis of equal strength and value

Table 11 Relational perspectives: differentiating aspects between literature and findings

Literature	Findings: Conscious perspectives
Growth, learning with focus on organisational success	Growing from basis of acceptance and freedom of choice
Value-agnostic (reflective leadership)	Love as a guiding principle and compass in all conscious attention dimensions
Organisational learning to improve performance	Conscious of other's needs and reflection of interrelatedness, compatibility
Adjust to optimise identity/ personal brand	Make adjustments to sustain inner source of energy
Challenging processes and established ways of thinking	Challenging oneself in staying in love - do I love, do people continue to feel accepted in my presence, am I leading this way?
The leader knows what is best, challenges processes, reflects on needed improvements and directs the team	Realisation that responsibility for happiness and success lies within oneself, own choice to remain in established patterns or act in alignment with inner source of love, take charge of own decisions
Reflect for a purpose	Reflect for a purpose and experience conscious attention as purpose in itself
Reflect to improve people's performance	Attentively observe to understand and accept human nature
Processes and behaviours	Willingness to understand as starting point

Table 12 Conscious perspectives: differentiating aspects between literature and findings

Appendix H: Considerations for practitioners

In tune with the spirit of this thesis, I am not prescribing required behaviours, traits, or attitudes, but would like to invite practitioners to contemplate potential considerations within each of the perspectives of love leadership. The questions are derived from the findings and contextual literature presented in this thesis and are just a glimpse on what potential considerations of a practitioner could be who embarks on this exploration.

Most of the listed questions are focused on the individual aiming to base their leadership on love. These questions can likewise be extrapolated, further explored, and deepened with a focus on the self, others, the group, the organisation, the ecosystem, industry, society, and so on. The listed questions do not attempt to provide a full view on aspects to consider when aiming to implement love leadership in practice, as the understanding of love leadership in this thesis is one that can be flexible in its form depending on the needs of individuals, organisations, and situations, while remaining conscious and firm in its direction-giving basis of love.

Inner love leadership

A conscious attention to inner love leadership could bring up questions such as:

How do I see myself as a person? How do I see myself in different aspects of my life? Is my self-perspective grounded in love? Do I accept myself, unconditionally? Do I love myself? Which is my authentic self? Who am I? Which expectations do I have of myself? Are my expectations to myself in line with what truly matters to me or set up to meet external expectations?

Who do I want to be? Where am I in the process of self-actualisation? Am I developing from an unconditional basis of self-acceptance? What would help me to be where I want to be, spiritually, emotionally, as a human being, as a professional, in relationship with other people?

Do I take care of my own needs? Which are my needs? Do I pay attention to my own energy level? Do I know how to manage and sustain my energy level? Do I know what I need to recharge? Do I know how to set boundaries to ensure my own wellbeing? Do I ensure an inner source of continuously sustained internal love? Am I giving/ pleasing others in an unbalanced way, at the expense of my own wellbeing/ energy levels? Do I know which and where my limits are? Do I ensure a sustained energy core before attempting to help others?

Which are my dreams and visions? Where do I want to make a difference? What is it that I care for? Have I signed up to a foreign cause which is not in line with what matters to me? Am I connected to a cause driven by others and feel as integral part of it, in congruence with the whole? Am I clear on where I want to invest my life/ my time, what I want to achieve or contribute to? Am I conscious on the steps I need to take to enact my vision? Am I aware of my goals and visions related to different aspects of my life, such as spiritual, personal, professional?

Do I take time to be in dialogue with myself? Do I take time to just observe and enjoy my life? Do I enjoy what I do? Am I dedicating time for self-exploration and development? Am I aware of and do I use existent tools aimed to help me achieve a deeper understanding of myself? Do I understand the reasons behind my thoughts, emotions, and actions? Do I know why I think, react, behave in certain ways? Do I consciously choose my mindset, or do I allow my thoughts to unfold without control? Do I choose my mindset to be tuned to love? Am I conscious of my freedom of choice with respect to my thoughts and actions?

How do I lead? Is it in line with what matters to me? Do I love? Do I accept? Am I leading myself? Am I leading myself in the same way in which I attempt to lead others or wish to be led by others? Do I see an equal importance of leading myself and leading others and causes? Do I know how I want to express love in my leadership and how I want to be perceived by

others? Do I see leadership as something which transcends others and includes leading myself, others, and a cause? Do I see leadership as a mutually shared experience? Do I see leadership as a phenomenon of people coming together with aligned purposes? Do I see leadership holistically, considering my thoughts, behaviours, own development, mind, emotions, way of being?

Perceptual love leadership

A conscious attention to perceptual love leadership could bring up questions such as:

How do I perceive others? Do I meet people as human beings equal in value or do I perceive imbalances of value? Do I understand why I perceive people in a certain way? Am I aware of the interplay between my perception and my behaviour? Do I understand what shapes my perceptions? Do I perceive joy and create space for others to experience joy?

Do I accept others unconditionally? Do I accept the entirety of others while staying true to my own authentic self, importances, values? Which is my attitude to others? Do I perceive others in their entirety, with their needs, emotions, history, visions, or merely as a resource to meet organisational/ my own needs? Do I see myself and others simultaneously as leaders and followers? Am I aware of my expectations towards myself and others? Am I aware of what matters to others? What is important for me in interacting with others? Is it me against the others or are we interrelated or even a connected one? Do I focus on demarcation, or I am opening up to see connectedness, interrelatedness, or even oneness?

Do I know if, why and to which extent I want to influence others? Am I interested to help others understanding and taking charge of their own perceptions? Do I want to help others succeed and grow to their full potential? Do I want to help others in need? Do I want to contribute to the world with something good? Do I aim for mutual growth, inter-effectiveness? Do I focus on building trusting relationships working for a common cause rather than seeing

employees as a means for achieving my own goals? Am I intending to seek congruence when coming together with others?

Relational love leadership

A conscious attention to relational love leadership could bring up questions such as:

Does my behaviour reflect my inner attitude, grounded in love, toward myself and others? Does it need adjustments to better reflect love? Do I exemplify what I expect from myself and others? Am I authentic in my behaviour, in relationship with others? Do I consider my behaviour an expression of love? Do I exemplify self-love and encourage others to do the same?

Do I seek and create opportunities for dialogue? Am I stepping up and seeking dialogue for what matters to me? Do I speak up or look for dialogue when I observe someone is not well or could use help? Do I create space for debate in which everyone can openly raise their concerns and bring up ideas? Am I open, approachable, inviting and accessible to all? Do I facilitate organisational exchange, dialogue and self/ organisational discovery and leadership in a trusted environment, with people to whom employees do not feel inhibited to be fully open? Do I contribute to a loving culture and provide opportunities for everyone to speak up?

Do I pay close attention to others? Am I present for others and when I interact with others? Do I pay attention to non-verbal cues? Do I pay attention to the feelings and way of being of others? Do I adjust my behaviour to the needs of the person/ situation, in line with my values and respectful of my limits? Do I take time to listen (not necessarily active listening, but by just listening), paying conscious attention and responding with what might be helpful? Do I consider asking people about their needs, or do I make my own assumptions, e.g. based on what I would like to receive from others?

Do I come together with others for one mutually shared purpose? Do I seek ways to connect the individual purpose of others to my/ my organisation's purpose? Do my actions contribute to something good for others (e.g. meeting their needs, be supportive, take time, be happy for their success)? Do I help the development of myself, my organisation, all involved in the organisation as well as outside the organisation by proving opportunities for mutual and sustainable growth of all simultaneously, beyond demarcation? Do I seek for a congruence of ideal worlds when I hire people? Do I have clarity on the purpose of the organisation? Do I know how the ideal world of the organisation can be brought together with the ideal world of involved individuals? Do I relentlessly seek for jointly beneficial solutions before parting ways (with individuals/ organisations)? Do I know when it is time to part ways, where my/ my organisational limits are?

Do I show appreciation to others as they are and to their contribution? Do I give unconditionally? Do I give unconditionally and freely reciprocate benevolence to others? Do I thankfully receive benevolence given to me by others? Do I find ways to express thankfulness and appreciation to and among everyone I/ the group/ firm interact with?

Do I seek for ways to cooperate, to share? Do I look for opportunities to enhance the perceived equality of value in the organisation? Do I help others realising their self-worth? Do I encourage others and give freedom to take their own decisions in line with their own ideal world? Do I have or suggest trainings to help people along the perspectives of love leadership? Do I share and offer access to existent tools for exploration of self, others and organisations? Do I give room and time to upskill with existent techniques for (self-) development? Do I allow time for deep understanding and activation of the different perspectives of love leadership? Do I

tolerate mistakes? Am I open to receive critique? Do I provide room for growth, for myself, others, the organisation, the ecosystem?

Conscious love leadership

A conscious attention applied to conscious love leadership could bring up questions such as:

Do I have a (regular) conscious awareness practice? Am I challenging my own conscious awareness practice? Are there areas that I have not considered in my conscious attentiveness? Am I paying conscious attention to my experiences while I experience them? Do I take time to pay conscious attention in retrospect to what has happened?

How would another person look at these aspects on which I have been focusing my attention? Do I have a trusted other who could help me in my conscious attention practice? Do I have or create opportunities for others for formal or informal coaching, for dialogue with trusted others?

Am I flexible in how I approach experiences and potential challenges? Am I aware of my own biases and consciously move beyond these while I pay conscious attention to something and before I decide? Am I stepping back from emotion-led reactions to purposefully ponder my options? Am I open to be challenged when it comes to my values, understandings, perceptions, identities? Do I have a willingness to explore truth/ deep understanding even if it challenges the status quo? Am I willing to challenge established patterns, structures, and behaviours (to e.g. ensure a perceived equality of value within the firm)?

Am I setting an example with my conscious attention practice to others? Am I aware how I influence the culture and environment around me? Am I consciously choosing my thoughts and

behaviours to thereby consciously shape the culture/ environment? Am I grounding my conscious attention leadership practice on unconditional love towards myself and others?

Do people with whom I interact have enough opportunities to collectively pay conscious attention to aspects that matter to us as a group, as an organisation? Do I create space and opportunities, and do I encourage the employees of the firm/ individuals with whom we come together, to pursue personal growth and conduct conscious attention as individuals?