

**Understanding and Responding to Destructive Leadership
in School-Related Contexts: An Autopoietic Perspective**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, or substantial proportions of material that have been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at this or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by others, with whom I have worked at this university or elsewhere, is explicitly acknowledged in the thesis. I also declare that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work, except to the extent that assistance from others in the project's design and conception in style, presentation and linguistic expression is acknowledged.

Pamela M Ryan

Date: 2nd February 2018

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

This is to certify that:

- I. This thesis comprises only my original work towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.
- II. Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used.
- III. This thesis does not exceed the word length for this degree.
- IV. No part of this work has been used for the award of another degree.
- V. This thesis meets the *University of Sydney's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) requirements for the conduct of this research.*

Pamela M. Ryan

Date: 2nd February 2018

DEDICATION

For my late husband, Graeme McGuinness, and our much-loved daughter, Ann.

The void of heart and mind that opens after the loss of a partner is indescribable. While my studies were not able to heal the heart, they did help to occupy my mind with thoughts other than those of grief and loss. And if the outcome serves a further purpose of challenging wrong perpetrated and perpetuated under the guise of leadership, then I think Graeme would approve—which does speak to heart.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

If any man can convince me and bring home to me that I do not think or act aright, gladly will I change, for I seek after truth, by which man never yet was harmed. But he is harmed who abideth on still in his deception and ignorance.

Marcus Aurelius

As the quotation from Marcus Aurelius suggests, this study has been undertaken in a spirit of confronting harm and in the belief that change may be realised through learning. The intent of research into dysfunction is to contribute to knowledge in the hope that the ‘sins of the past’ may be acknowledged and addressed for the future.

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ABSTRACT

Leadership is integral to the health and wellbeing of individuals and organisations. Relevant literature typically assumes a conception of leadership as ethical influence for good purpose, yet it is not always so. When exercised destructively, leadership has the potential to cause personal distress, group dysfunction and cultural fracture. Although some theoretical literature discusses such leadership, there are few empirical studies. This study applies autopoietic theory to explore the existence and impact of destructive leadership in school-related contexts and suggest possible prevention and intervention strategies.

The research methodology used is phenomenography, which seeks to understand a phenomenon by defining variation in collective experience. Fifteen interviews were undertaken with leaders in school-related settings who identified with having past experience of leadership practices they defined as destructive. The purposive sample population was cross-sectoral and cross-school phase. The study is framed by three research questions which aim to identify the qualitatively different ways by which the phenomenon can be understood.

The findings suggest that destructive leadership causes significant, lasting and pervasive harm to individuals and organisations; that it is exercised as power and control without adequate checks and balances; derives from personality dispositions, professional inadequacy or aberrant values; and impacts in personal, interpersonal or intrapersonal cycles, mediated or mitigated through individual or social conditions.

Five contributions emerge: a phenomenographically-derived framework to analyse a dysfunctional social system; an autopoietically-derived interpretation of individual, organisation and ethical impact; reinforcing vicious and virtuous circles of

control and trust; a theory of 'dysergy', whereby the sum of the parts of a dysfunctional system constitute a diminished whole; and a whole system approach to intervention. The theoretical implication of the study is of the potential for personal and organisational learning, while the practical implication is for the application of a whole system model of leadership.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This research documents the ‘dark side’ of leadership, attending to the stories of those with firsthand encounters with destructive leadership. The narratives come from middle and senior leaders in school-related settings who have direct personal experience of the deleterious effects of the phenomenon, who perceive themselves as survivors of that experience and whose lives have consequently been influenced by it. The purpose of this study is to draw on their stories to shine a light on the nature and outcomes of destructive leadership in an education context, thereby acknowledging its existence and understanding the phenomenon, including the process at work and its impact at the individual and organisational levels. Additionally, this thesis builds on this platform to identify ways in which the participants have shown resilience through their survival and to explore whether there are lessons to be learned at the personal, professional or organisational level. While much of the contemporary research and literature focuses on positive constructions of ethical and effective leadership, to ignore negative manifestations is to allow such practice to continue unchallenged. There is greater potential to address the phenomenon if it can be known and better understood. While a singular problem focus could narrow the learning to negative outcomes only, the ultimate goal of this exploratory study is to tap learning potential and influence positive social change.

1.1 RESEARCH FIELD, SETTING AND CONTEXT

This study is set in the field of school education leadership. Schools and school leaders from different sectors provided the broad context for the research, with educational environments in which leadership was exercised with destructive

consequences providing the specific context. In an exploratory and small-scale study, the experiences of 15 Australian school leaders, who perceived they had previously encountered destructive leadership, provided personal context from which collective meaning was derived. The theoretical context of the study is autopoietic theory, originating from the work of Maturana and Varela (1992) and the methodological context is provided by phenomenography, stemming from the work of Marton (1986, 1988) and Marton and Wenestam (1978).

1.2 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Destructive leadership has significant detrimental effects on the performance and wellbeing of subordinates in work environments (Aasland, Skogstad, Notelaers, Nielsen, & Einarsen, 2010; Einarsen, Aasland, & Skogstad, 2007; Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Tepper, 2007), however, there is little direct evidence of how destructive leadership specifically affects subordinates and how they seek to manage its impact, show resilience (Maidaniuc-Chirila, 2015; van Heugten, 2012; Wieland & Beitz, 2015) or how and what they learn from the experience (Jackson, Firtko, & Edenborough, 2007). While this lack of evidence applies generally, education is a specific industry that remains unexplored in this regard (Blase & Blase, 2002; Fahie, 2014; Woestman, 2014). However, educational institutions are characteristically hierarchically structured, with hierarchies nested within further hierarchies (Hatcher, 2005). Power is typically asymmetrical, residing in the educational leaders and, thus, presents potential for the abuse of power through the exercise of destructive leadership. Subjective accounts of leaders provide a means of documenting the phenomenon of destructive leadership and understanding differentiated responses to it, and may prove instructive in developing ameliorative strategies at the individual and organisational level. This study, therefore, is designed to make explicit the practices of destructive

educational leadership and their consequences, not only to highlight its existence, but to understand the process and how it can be managed.

The literature informing this study is organised into primary and secondary discourse and moves from an initial descriptive approach—what destructive leadership is—to an explanatory one—how it is—and, finally, to a consequential, interpretive and instructive approach—what may be learned. The secondary discourse, treated first, revolves around the three domains of leaders, subordinates and organisations. To elaborate the construct of leadership as manifested destructively, the secondary discourse is used to draw on literature from the disciplines of philosophy, psychology and sociology, relevant literature in the field of education and studies related to the concept of resilience. Given the emphasis of the study on subordinates' perspectives, the types of destructive leadership behaviours included in the research are those perceived as having a direct adverse effect including abusive, tyrannical, isolating, divisive or bullying behaviour. Included in the secondary literature is the discourse on resilience, on the basis that it may provide a counter to the effects of the experience.

The literature of autopoietic theory comprises the primary discourse of the study and provides the conceptual framework that shapes the research. Originating from the work of biologists Maturana and Varela (1992) and subsequently adapted to sociology (Luhmann, 1995), autopoiesis seeks to explain the nature of living things. In a study centring on how to make sense of a destructive leadership environment and how to maintain a sense of self within that environment, autopoietic theory provides the language, informs the methodology and gives meaning to the findings.

The theoretical perspective and the ontology, epistemology and axiology of the study give rise to its qualitative methodology, phenomenography and the instrumentation and analysis consistent with that methodology. Table 1 summarises

the elements of the study, its theory, ontology, epistemology, axiology, methodology, instrumentation and approach to analysis.

Table 1

Elements of the Study

Theory	Autopoietic theory, critical social systems theory
Ontology	Subjectivist, constitutive ontologies
Epistemology	Constructivist, interpretivist
Axiology	Ethical, moral
Methodology	Qualitative, phenomenographic, inductive
Instrumentation	Semi-structured interview, expert panels
Analysis	Conceptions, categories of description, outcome space

Through an autopoietic focus, the question of reality is approached from the subjective constitutive ontologies of the observer. The way of understanding the phenomenon is epistemologically constructivist and interpretive (Maturana & Varela, 1992) and axiologically ethical and moral (Maturana & Verden-Zöller, 2008). These ontological, epistemological, axiological and theoretical positions provide the framework for the research questions posed in this study.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The central hypothesis of this study is that there may be learning through negative experience (Cray, 2007; Stang & Wong, 2014; Shepherd, Patzelt, & Wolfe, 2011), an instructive negative, so, despite its damaging impact, destructive leadership may prove instructive in the creation and maintenance of individual and organisational health and wellbeing. The study is designed to explore three questions deriving from this hypothesis. Informed by autopoietic theory the questions investigate the interaction between an individual and other individuals, such as leaders and

subordinates, within a wider educational environment. Both the questions and the methods used to collect data are designed to capture cognitive, linguistic and emotional dimensions of the experience:

1. What is the phenomenon of destructive leadership, as experienced and retrospectively described by school leaders who have survived the experience?
2. How do survivors of destructive leadership understand and accommodate the phenomenon?
3. What is the outcome for survivors of the experience of destructive leadership in terms of impact and potential for learning?

The first (ontological) question aims to reveal the phenomenon of destructive leadership, as perceived by those who have experienced it, as a process of ‘observing from within’ (Michailakis, 1995, p. 324). The second (epistemic) question, explores subordinates’ understanding and their sense-making of the phenomenon (Sice, Koya, & Mansi, 2013). The third (axiological and theoretical) question is designed to interpret the process of how destructive leadership works, for example, through its impact on identity, the emergence of alternative valence and individual adaptive changes (Parboteeah & Jackson, 2007), the emergence of resilience, the wider potential for learning (Jackson et al., 2007) and the implicit ethical imperative and moral purpose of leadership (Ciulla, 1998; Ciulla, Price, & Murphy, 2005). The responses to the three questions not only enhance our understanding of the phenomenon itself, but provide the basis for a framework which serves to surface key features of the phenomenon and indicate significant opportunities for learning in terms of response, prevention and intervention.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

As will be shown in later chapters, leadership in school-related contexts is integral to the health and wellbeing of individuals and school organisations, and such influence can be exercised with destructive intent and/or consequences—a phenomenon warranting exploration, understanding and response. Yet, little theoretical and even less empirical research exists on the subject, with the existing literature relating to fields other than school education such as health and social work. Therefore, this research aims to address the gap in the literature by conducting an empirical study of the nature and impact of leadership when exercised destructively in school-related settings. In addressing this gap, the study makes a number of contributions, theoretical, contextual, methodological and practical.

1.4.1 CONTRIBUTION TO THEORY

It is well established in the literature that leadership has an influence on outcomes at the individual and organisational level, affecting organisational climate, business costs and subordinate performance and is, therefore, an important area for research (Bennis, 2007; Brown & Treviño, 2006; Eisenbeiss, van Knippenberg, & Fahrbach, 2014; Muchiri, Cooksey, & Walumbwa, 2012; Neubert, Wu, & Roberts, 2013; Orphanos & Orr, 2013; Schaubroeck, Walumbwa, Ganster, & Kepes, 2007). However, while theoretical studies exist, there is presently limited social scientific and/or empirical research on the experience of leadership and its outcomes (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Klaussner, 2014; May, Wesche, Heinitz, & Kerschreiter, 2014). Destructive leadership is even further neglected, as the majority of the literature has traditionally assumed or actively promotes an ethical and effective conception of leadership (Covey, 2004; Gardner, 1993; Kanter, 1983; Maxwell, 1999; Peters & Waterman, 1982) signifying a dearth of material on destructive manifestations

(Einarsen et al., 2007; Kellerman, 2004; Maccoby, 2007; Tepper, 2007). Given its destructive consequences, whether for the individual—including the prevalence and nature of the negative experience leaving a powerful and lasting impact on some individuals (Aasland et al., 2010; Clarke, 2005; Griffin & O’Leary-Kelly, 2004; Schyns & Schilling, 2013)—or the organisation, the phenomenon presents important areas for research.

To give shape to multiple relevant disciplines and domains and provide a means by which to understand destructive leadership, an autopoietic approach (Maturana & Varela, 1992) focusing on the internal and external impact of interactions between an individual and the environment, provides the theoretical framework for this study. Adopting this approach constitutes a theoretical basis for the significance of this study as it provides an alternative lens through which educational phenomena may be viewed. There are few studies on the application of autopoietic theory to educational leadership (Sice et al., 2013) and even fewer on its application to negative educational leadership. As will be shown in this study, autopoietic theory bridges the gap between psychological (micro) and sociological (macro) dimensions of the individual subordinate’s experience within a broader philosophical (universal) dimension. A theoretical contribution of this study lies in its synthesis of current understandings of leadership as it impacts destructively on subordinates and a proposed autopoietic conception of the one-to-one relationship between the leader and the led. This conception has four components which explain how the destructive interaction works and the impact it has on an individual and the wider environment.

The outcomes of the empirical research ultimately give rise to an original theory of dysergy which proposes that the consequence of destructive leadership is a

diminished whole in which individuals and organisations fail to flourish unless they are able to find healthy and integrative ways to counter or cope with the experience.

1.4.2 CONTEXTUAL CONTRIBUTION

The school-related environment, another area of contribution and basis for the significance of the research, is a largely unexplored industry for evidence of destructive leadership (Blase & Blase, 2002, 2006; Riley, Duncan, & Edwards, 2011; Fahie, 2014; Woestman, 2014). It is, however, a distinctive context where destructive behaviour would be expected to be antithetical to the norms of a child-related setting and the central tenets of learning and enlightenment. Given the wealth of literature on educational leadership theory, the fact that this area remains largely underexplored empirically in relation to its destructive manifestations represents a serious omission. The widespread adoption of hierarchical leadership models in educational institutions (Hatcher, 2005) render them ideal settings for potential abuses of power and, thus, for this study.

1.4.3 METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION

Another basis for the significance of this study lies in its methodology of tapping into the lived negative experience of survivor subordinates as a way to give meaning. There is a leaning towards ‘positive bias’ in research, in that negative findings tend not to be published, resulting in ‘file drawer’ resolutions. Such sanitisation, however, may well represent an abrogation of responsibility (Lee, 1993). Albeit derived from a small sample of specific survivors, the point of focusing on their negative experience is that the findings may prove instructive (Cray, 2007; Stang & Wong, 2014; Shepherd et al., 2011) in addressing poor manifestations of leadership in the education sector by informing future practice and policy (Chi & Liang, 2013). An analogy may be drawn from medical research, whereby pathology is studied to

improve health outcomes and promote wellness. A methodological argument, therefore, provides one of the bases of significance (Pasieczny & Glinka, 2016; Samuel, 2010). While dealing with negative experience, the salutary intent is to offer positive outcomes—a rare conception in the literature (van Heugten, 2010, 2012; Maidaniuc-Chirila, 2015; Wieland & Beitz, 2015).

A further methodological contribution lies in the combining of autopoietic theory with phenomenographic methodology. In Chapter 3, it is argued that, as a relational, experiential, content-oriented and qualitative approach (Marton, 1988; 1995; 2000; Marton, & Pong, 2005; 2008), phenomenography is congruent with the ontology, epistemology and axiology of autopoietic theory and with the specific social phenomenon of destructive leadership as a subjectively experienced phenomenon.

1.4.4 PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTION

An insight from this study is the learning potential of the leadership dynamic in that it may have positive or negative instructive consequences (Cray, 2007; Stang & Wong, 2014; Shepherd et al., 2011), such as triggering resilience or modelling good or poor practice. Learning as defined through this study is multidimensional, constitutive of learning about the phenomenon, learning through it, learning from it and learning to act and to change (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). These conceptions imply a significant obligation on the part of leaders to appreciate the consequences of their leadership as it impacts on individuals, groups and the wider organisation and, therefore, signal the implicit responsibilities and accountabilities of the role.

Using the literature and lessons drawn from the stories of the survivors in terms of their emerging strength and the resilience strategies they employed to maintain their sense of self, a further contribution is the identification of a range of intervention and prevention strategies at both the individual and organisational level. These strategies

underpin a whole systems model of leadership, presented in Chapter 7, by which the health and wellbeing of individuals and organisations may be analysed and through attention to which that health may be maintained.

In summary, the research seeks to address a gap in the leadership literature, specifically in relation to studies recording the existence and effects of destructive leadership in school-related settings. The significance of the research lies in its contribution to the development of theory and the application of an autopoietic perspective; the importance of the subject of leadership and its organisational and individual influence; the current lack of empirical evidence, particularly in educational environments; its ‘instructive negative’ methodology which runs counter to the convention of exploring positive experience (Cray, 2007; Stang & Wong, 2014; Shepherd et al., 2011); and the potential for identifying theoretical and practical prevention and intervention strategies to address destructive leadership and/or recover from the experience. Presenting only sanitised views of exemplary practice disguises the reality of destructive leadership, obstructing opportunities to confront a harmful practice and learn from that experience.

1.5 METHODOLOGY

The research explores the social phenomenon of destructive leadership and the subjective experience of that phenomenon by leaders who, as subordinates, encountered destructive practice. The qualitative methodology of the study logically derives from its congruence with the subjectivist, constitutive ontology and interpretivist epistemology characteristic of autopoietic theory. As a relational, experiential, content-oriented and qualitative approach (Marton & Wenestam, 1978; Marton, 1986, 1988) that aims to explore the ‘qualitatively different ways in which people understand a particular phenomenon’ (Marton & Pong, 2005, p. 335),

phenomenography offers a relevant methodology. It provides a means of exploring people's experiences and conceptions of the world and with characterising variations in those experiences (Richardson, 1999) through categories of description (Marton & Pong, 2005).

This approach was deemed appropriate for current study, given the study's aim to explore subordinates' lived experience and encounters with particular behaviours and practices, that is, with destructive leadership. A subjectivist approach was considered fit for this purpose. It was hypothesised that different people would have different experiences of destructive leadership and, thus, the emphasis on variation was particularly pertinent in exploring the broader phenomenon through subjective accounts. The fact that phenomenography originated in education and that the purpose of the research was to be instructive gave the approach additional relevance.

Consistent with the phenomenography, the qualitative instrumentation of the study involved semi-structured interviews. The interview intent is to enable the phenomenon to be seen through the eyes of the interviewees as they verbalise their experiences, thus, providing insights into how they perceive and construct their world (Meissner & Sprenger, 2010). In analysing the data in a phenomenographic study, a 'conception' is the basic unit of description and refers to how participants in the study 'see' the phenomenon. Conceptions are subsequently organised into categories of description, which are units of analyses showing similarities and differences or distinctions (Rapp, 2010). This was the process adopted with the data from the transcribed semi-structured interviews.

Once the interview data had been analysed according to a seven-step process and preliminary findings determined, a second and third phase of research were conducted. First, this entailed verification by five of the participants that the

trajectories of their stories were reflected in the outcome space. Next, a novel series of three modified, real-time Delphi focus groups were conducted in a form of inter-judge communicability (Cope, 2004). The use of the technique was to facilitate expert consensus in a time-efficient way, making use of group interaction for theory building. It is a technique that can be used in conjunction with other empirical data, which, in this case, was the interview data. The method does not claim generalisability and utilises a purposive sample population with the relevant expertise (Brady, 2015). The first expert group consisted of informed academics conversant with education and with the complexity sciences, the second comprised a group of experienced middle and senior school leaders and the third a group from a retired school principals association. Through their discussion, each expert group added value to the synthesis of the findings and informed the development of the theory of this thesis, elaborated on in Chapter 7. There was a process of exploring the data and outcome space for its coherence and alignment.

1.6 DELIMITATIONS OF SCOPE AND KEY ASSUMPTIONS

The methodology of this study is designed to ensure its quality and rigour (Bowden & Walsh, 2000; Sin, 2010) and to make explicit what claims it does and does not make. Conventional measures such as validity, reliability and generalisability present some challenges for qualitative studies and, specifically, for phenomenography, where perceptions, behaviours, emotions or personalities are integral to the research (Sandbergh, 1997; Wheeldon & Åhlberg, 2012). Particular challenges are presented by notions of external validity and of reliability in the sense of replicability. Phenomenography, however, is not measured by positivist ‘truths’, which may be considered as absolutes (Sandbergh, 1997), but through other signals of quality (Sin, 2010) (detailed in Chapter 3).

As previously indicated, this a subjective and interpretive study. Although the research is industry-specific and based on a relatively small and non-random sample, thus, yielding non-generalisable results, its design is intended to pass the trustworthiness test in that it is credible, dependable and transferable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and its findings significant in understanding constructs of leadership. The elaboration of a seven-step process of analysis, for example, is one means of giving credibility to the research (Collier-Reed, Ingerman, & Berglund, 2009) and the population of the model with participants' direct utterances is a further means. The outcomes space matrix, which serves as an analytical framework, has the potential to be tested in other circumstances and is, thus, of relevance to transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004).

Wheeldon and Åhlberg (2012) argued that limitations may be associated at multiple points in the research process, for example, in relation to method, sample and/or bias. In this study, the use of semi-structured interviews may be considered a limitation in that there is no objective verifiable account of events, since participants were necessarily presenting their subjective recounts and interpretations. However, the research has been deliberately designed to capitalise on subjective experience to inform an understanding of the consequences of destructive leadership at the individual level to gain a collective understanding. While there is the possibility of reverse causality, whereby the subordinates are complicit in the destructive events they are describing as suggested by the concept of the toxic triangle (Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007), the intent of this study is not to ascribe motivation or verify perceptions, but to discern categories of description and their variation (Marton, 1986) and so arrive at a collective understanding of the phenomenon. Ultimately, the methodology aims to satisfy the criteria of quality and rigour within the context of a phenomenographic

study (Bowden & Walsh, 2000; Sin, 2010) and relevant quality criteria such as validity, reliability, trustworthiness, credibility and transferability are analysed and their application to the current phenomenographic study discussed in Chapter 3.

1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS AND KEY CONCEPTS

Key terms and concepts of this study are listed below.

1. Autopoiesis refers to the property of living cellular and multi-cellular systems to maintain and renew themselves so they are self-producing, self-regulating, discrete and autonomous entities (Goldspink & Kay, 2003; Maturana & Varela, 1992). Living organisms such as humans produce their own life, rather than import life from their environment.
2. Structural coupling in autopoietic theory refers to the engagement of an entity with its environment or another entity (Parboteeah & Jackson, 2007) resulting in ongoing mutual co-adaptation. Any adaptive changes as a result of that engagement occur within the entity, which in the case of this study is a person.
3. Subordinates refers to the participants constituting the population sample for study, who are or have been leaders themselves and who answered to another leader at the time of their negative experience. They are, in autopoietic terms, observers perceiving the world through living it (Parboteeah & Jackson, 2007). The use of the word 'subordinate' is intentionally indicative of relative hierarchical status at the time of the experience.
4. In the context of the study, 'survivors' refers to the sample of subordinates who participated in the study based on their resilience in coping with

destructive leadership and moving on in their personal and/or professional lives.

5. Destructive leadership refers to the voluntary actions of a person in a position of authority which cause harm to an individual and/or organisation (Thoroughgood, Padilla, Hunter, & Tate, 2012).
6. Toxic triangle is a term used to signal the interplay among leaders, followers and the environment in circumstances where that interplay is destructive (Padilla et al., 2007).
7. Transformational leadership is a constructive conception of visionary change where the leader motivates others, harnessing their capacity to affect the vision (Muchiri et al., 2012).
8. Phenomenography is a qualitative research approach that investigates people's subjective conceptions of their world (Marton, 1986; Rapp, 2010).
9. Integrative responses refer to the ways participants are able to respond to experiences positively, integrating them holistically into their worldview or sense of self and, as a consequence, learning and becoming stronger. In contrast, disintegrative responses relate to challenges to worldview and the breakdown of identity and/or self-confidence.
10. Dysergy is an antonym of synergy, appropriated to convey the idea that, in contrast to synergistic situations, in times of dysfunction a whole can be less than the sum of its parts.

1.8 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The study to investigate the three research questions related to a central hypothesis was undertaken with a sample of 15 participants, all of whom were working or had worked in leadership roles in government or non-government schools in one

Australian state. The sample size was determined in accordance with phenomenographic methodology and the point at which saturation of the data was reached and the categories stable, that is, when there was sufficient data to ensure the research questions could be answered (Brod, Tesler & Christensen, 2009). The ongoing, iterative nature of the data collection and analysis was important in this process of recognising saturation. Important too in reaching saturation is the discerning variation rather than meeting quantity (Morse, 1995), a notion consistent with phenomenography. The participants were invited to tell their stories of destructive leadership through semi-structured interview and, in doing so, to explore their memories, feelings and understandings of the phenomenon and their lessons from it. The transcriptions of these interviews provided the data from which conceptions and categories of description were discerned. These categories gave rise to a complex of the relationships among the categories, termed an outcome space (Marton, 1995), ultimately leading to an interpretation of the nature of destructive leadership. The analysis of the data generated by the interview transcripts was analysed according to a seven-step iterative process—immersion, preliminary interrogation, applying a preliminary framework, making meaning, identifying variations, defining the outcome space and applying the outcome space (detailed in Chapter 4)—in which the data was interrogated both holistically and granularly.

As a consequence of applying this seven-step process, a 3 x 3 x 3 outcome space matrix, consisting of research questions, categories of description and dimensions of variation, was devised to demonstrate the logical relationships as revealed through the data. The interrelationships of the outcome space resulted in six definitional outcome statements which describe the qualitatively different and relatively finite ways (Richardson, 1999) in which the phenomenon of destructive

leadership may be understood, addressing the research questions. The implications of the six outcome statements are considered in light of the literature review and theoretical paradigm, as a means of synthesising the empirical and theoretical elements of the study. Ultimately, the interpretation of destructive leadership offered through the study is as a ‘dysergistic’ and systemic phenomenon which requires a whole of system response to restore health and wellbeing at the individual and organisational levels.

1.9 THESIS STRUCTURE

The subsequent chapters elaborate on the overview provided in this introductory chapter. Chapter 2 summarises and synthesises the relevant literature across multiple disciplines and from the perspective of autopoietic theory. It investigates the research object as defined through the literature and as manifested in various ways and different contexts, particularly within the field of education. Chapter 3 presents a description of and justification for the qualitative methodology, phenomenography and the consequent instrumentation and analysis pertinent to the study. Further, the chapter explores issues related to ethical considerations and trustworthiness. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 analyse the data generated from 15 interview transcripts according to a seven-step process. Chapter 5 is dedicated to the seventh step of the process where key results are presented in an outcomes space matrix, describing the logical relationships among categories, together with six definitional outcome statements that address the hypothesis via the three research questions. Chapters 6 and 7 discuss and interpret the findings of this study in relation to the literature and theoretical and conceptual models are offered as a means of encapsulating the learning from this study. Chapter 8 concludes this study, including a discussion of its internal coherence and its relation to the broader research context.

1.10 CONCLUSION

As has been signalled and as will be expanded on in succeeding chapters, this study represents an addition to the leadership discourse, presenting an exploration of the dark side of leadership in school-related contexts and its immediate and longer-term impact on subordinates. In doing so, this study presents fresh insights into leadership, proposing:

- an analytical framework by which destructive leadership may be understood
- six outcome statements that define the phenomenon and an autopoietically-derived model that interprets destructive leadership as influence at four levels
- a visual interpretation of the ‘vicious’ and ‘virtuous’ factors which may either mediate or mitigate impact
- a theory of ‘dysergy’ which explains that the consequence of destructive leadership for both individuals and organisations is a diminished whole
- a series of potential interventions in response to different features of the system presented as a whole systems leadership model for the healthy functioning of an ethical system.

Overall, the findings from this study provide a means of better understanding and responding to destructive leadership in school-related environments.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 CHAPTER STRUCTURE

Chapter 1 introduced the elements of this study. This chapter focuses on the specific ontological, epistemological, axiological and theoretical elements of this study, as highlighted in Table 2.

Table 2

Elements of the Study Relevant to Chapter 2

Theory	Autopoietic theory, critical social systems theory
Ontology	Subjectivist, constitutive ontologies
Epistemology	Constructivist, interpretivist
Axiology	Ethical, moral
Methodology	Qualitative, phenomenographic, inductive
Instrumentation	Semi-structured interview, expert panels
Analysis	Conceptions, categories of description, outcome space

The question of reality is approached from the subjective constitutive ontologies of the observer. The way of understanding the phenomenon is epistemologically constructivist and interpretive, following the theory ‘All knowing is doing and all doing is knowing’ (Maturana & Varela, 1992, p. 26).

These ontological and epistemic positions are then examined through the theory of autopoiesis (Maturana & Varela, 1992; Maturana & Verden-Zöllner, 2008; Mingers, 2006) and critical social systems theory and their application to the phenomenon of destructive leadership. The ontology, epistemology, axiology and

interpretive theory of destructive leadership which emerge from the literature provide the framework for testing the research hypothesis through the three research questions of the study (elaborated on in Chapter 3).

The first part of the literature review (Section 2.3) begins with a definition of leadership, initially considering the construct as it is broadly represented in the literature (Dowding, 2011; Scovetta & Ellis, 2015; Yuki, 2010) before narrowing the focus to definitions of ‘destructive leadership’ (Aasland et al., 2010; Einarsen et al., 2007; Goldman, 2009; Padilla et al., 2007) and further refining the meaning of ‘destructive’ in the context of the current study. The second part (Section 2.4) examines literature related to the three domains of leaders, subordinates and organisations as represented through multiple disciplines and the relationship among the three domains when manifested destructively (Padilla et al., 2007; Thoroughgood et al., 2012). The third part (Section 2.5) focuses on literature from the educational field related to evidence of destructive leadership practices (Blase & Blase, 2002; Fahie, 2014; Riley et al., 2011). The fourth part (Section 2.6) deals with resilience literature (van Heugten, 2012) and self-actualisation (Wieland & Beitz, 2015) as a potential outcome of destructive experience. While these aforementioned literatures are integral to this study, they provide a secondary descriptive-level discourse. Therefore, the fourth section (Section 2.7) explores the primary discourse related to the study, emanating from the concept of autopoiesis (Fuchs & Hofkirchner, 2009; Maturana & Varela, 1992; Maturana & Verden-Zöller, 2008; Mingers, 2006) and proposes its applicability as an explanatory and ethical theoretical frame for an exploration of destructive leadership (Sice et al., 2013). Section 2.8 synthesises the descriptive and explanatory literatures into an interpretive theory of destructive leadership and resilience (van Heugten, 2010, 2012; Maidaniuc-Chirila, 2015;

Wieland & Beitz, 2015) which takes effect at both the micro, meso and macro levels. This prefaces the discussion of the methodology of this study undertaken in Chapter 3, including the selection of phenomenography as best suited to the research.

2.2 CHAPTER LOGIC

The literature related to destructive leadership reveals a number of key points about the research object. First, the literature highlights the elusive nature of leadership and its lack of a fixed objectified meaning (Bass, 1990; Bennis, 2007; Hackman & Wageman, 2007; Vroom & Jago, 2007). Definitional challenges notwithstanding, the literature also exposes the existence of destructive manifestations of leadership and their personal and social consequences. Second, it demonstrates the multiple ways in which the phenomenon of destructive leadership is described and its origins explained and understood (Chi & Liang, 2013; Kellerman, 2004; Lin, Huang, Chen, & Huang, 2017; Mackey, Ellen, Hochwarter, & Ferris, 2013; Mathieu, Neumann, Hare, & Babiak, 2014; Schuh, Zhang, & Tian, 2013; Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Tepper, 2000; 2007; Thoroughgood et al., 2012). In the field of education, while the scarcity of current literature or empirical research is identified, the existing studies are consistent with those from other fields, indicating disturbing patterns of behaviour and their harmful consequences (Blase & Blase, 2002; Fahie, 2014; Riley et al., 2011). Finally, the literature reveals the relevance of applying an approach consistent with the complexity sciences, including autopoietic theory (Maturana & Varela, 1992; Maturana & Verden-Zöllner, 2008), as a means of framing the research. By doing so, it is possible to explore the phenomenon itself, give meaning to the actual process of destructive leadership and what is happening and understand how it impacts.

Consequently, the focus moves from the existence of destructive leadership, its motivations and detrimental consequences to how it exists, is understood, what

meaning may be ascribed to it and how alternative valence may emerge, such that different individuals experience the same phenomenon differently. The secondary discourse of the review describes what destructive leadership is—abuse, bullying, mistreatment, authoritarianism and tyranny—and explains what it does—divides humiliates, debilitates, destroys and demotivates. The primary discourse interprets the process of destructive leadership as viewed autopoietically, examining how destructive leadership affects these outcomes. Together the various literatures provide the ontological, epistemic, axiological and theoretical underpinnings of this study and, through their synthesis, provide the basis for an interpretive model of destructive leadership.

2.3 CLARIFYING THE RESEARCH OBJECT

2.3.1 DEFINING LEADERSHIP

While popular and scholarly writing on the importance of leadership is extensive, understandings of what leadership is vary widely (Blakesley, 2011; Hackman & Wageman, 2007; Northouse, 2010; Scovetta & Ellis, 2015). Definitions can be implicit rather than explicit and, yet, determine the assumptions on which theory is based. It is often the behaviours and outcomes of leadership which are described and finding accepted definitions is problematic (Bass, 1990; Bennis, 2007; Vroom & Jago, 2007; Rowe, 2006; Yuki, 2010). As an abstract non-scientific term (Vroom & Jago, 2007; Scovetta & Ellis, 2015), ‘leadership’ is open to interpretation and subjective construction. One means of resolving the definitional dilemma is to adopt an approach that describes leadership not as a formal static entity, but as a function (Avolio, 2007) or a process (Rowe, 2006), where leadership is the function of the leader and those led, within a given context. The advantage of such an approach is a dynamic conception of leadership (Lord, Brown, Harvey, & Hall,

2001), allowing for an interplay among the three domains of leader, follower and context.

Vroom and Jago (2007) noted that the concept of ‘influence’ is typically included in definitions of the term. Similarly, Bush and Glover (2003) defined leadership in an education environment, for example, as a means by which certain desired purposes are achieved through influence. Thus, leadership may be defined as a process of dynamic interplay among leaders, followers and context, whereby influence is exercised (Dowding, 2011; Scovetta & Ellis, 2015; Yuki, 2010) for a particular purpose(s). Further questions arise as to the nature of that influence and its purpose and the nature of the interplay among the three elements.

The most common approach in the literature is the assumption of positive influence directed for good purpose. Over 2,400 years ago, Aristotle held that leadership required professional competence and spirited personal integrity (*aretê*), intelligent good sense and practical wisdom (*phronêsis*) and good will and respect for the troops (*eúnoiâ*) (Shay, 2000). Contemporary literature on the subject draws strongly from Burns’ (1978) conception of transformational and transactional leadership and from others in the 1980s, such as Kanter (1983), Peters and Waterman (1982) and Gardner (1993). These writings focused on the positive attributes and behaviours that leaders demonstrate. Over the subsequent two decades, a number of mainstream ‘troubadour’ (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005) writers such as Covey (2004) and Maxwell (1999) popularised an approach of self-help guides to leadership, also based on an affirming view of the leader.

Contemporary writings often classify leadership influence according to particular approaches that present with specific features and implicit desired and desirable outcomes. Thus, ‘transformational’, ‘transactional’, ‘authentic’, ‘servant’,

'participative' or 'values-based' are labels ascribed to leadership approaches, each conveying expectations about behaviours and outcomes. Transformational leadership is focused on a vision for the future of the organisation and building the motivation and capacity of others to realise that vision (Abu-tineh, Khasawneh, & Omary, 2009; Bass & Avolio, 1995; Khoo & Burch, 2008; Muchiri et al., 2012). A managerial structured approach, transactional leadership is characterised as results-focused and performance-driven transactions between manager and employee (Spahr, 2015). The central tenets of authentic leadership are knowing and being true to oneself, being open and transparent with others and objective balance in decision-making (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Emuwa, 2013; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005; Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). Servant leadership holds people and relationships as central and requires leaders to be caring, humble, empathetic and attentive to others and the needs of the organisation (Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010; Sendjaya, Sarros, & Santora, 2008; Spears, 2010). Participative leadership is a democratic ideal of distributed power and authority where decisions are reached collaboratively (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2011). A further conception is adaptable emphasis leadership in which leadership style may vary according to the situation and so may change in emphasis from servant to transformational to transactional leadership as required (Northouse, 2010; Staats, 2015). Values-based leadership (Frost, 2014; Kraemer, 2015; Warwas, 2015) starts with the leader and takes an ethical position with regard to the ways leaders interact with others and exercise their roles. According to Kraemer (2015), values-based leadership is founded on the four principles of self-reflection, balance, true self-confidence and genuine humility. Values have multiple bases including cognitive, affective, moral (Busch & Wennes, 2012) and socio-cultural dimensions (Warwas,

2015). Common to all these conceptions is leadership defined as influence that is intrinsically moral, the purpose of which is to bring about change for the better. A values-based conception (Kraemer, 2015) contends that such influence is exercised through authentic and ethical relationships (Northouse, 2010) predicated on self-awareness and self-reflection (Frost, 2014). A further common feature, therefore, is of the centrality of the leader and his or her values, self-concepts and dispositions.

Developments in neuroscientific research have resulted in another conception, spawning the recent field of neuroleadership (Rock, 2011). Brain-computer interface neuroscience is the monitoring of brain activity through multiple technologies using real-time feedback to modulate that activity (Massaro, 2015). Neuroleadership proposes that brain-related threat and reward responses are linked to leadership practices. The field is still young and cautionary voices warn about neuro-myths, pseudoscience and ethical considerations (Massaro, 2015).

In the field of education, influential writers such as Fullan (2001, 2005, 2014), Hargreaves (1994) and Hargreaves, Boyle and Harris (2014) assumed a positive interpretation of leadership on which they developed their theories and models of effective practice. Other writers on the subject similarly defined the positive dimensions they regarded as implicit in the term. Values and belief systems are central to the exercise of leadership (Davies, 2011; Day, 2000; Kraemer, 2015; MacBeath, 1997). Leaders hold a vision for the future of the school or system and strategic capacity (Davies, 2011); work with moral purpose (Day, 2000; Duignan, 2006; Fullan, 2001; Holloman, Rouse, & Farrington, 2007; Isaacson, 2013; Sergiovanni, 1992, 2007; Starratt, 2004) for the greater public good; demonstrate personal virtues such as respect, generosity and trustworthiness (Schumaker & Sommers, 2001); recognise the work of others (Bush & Middlewood, 2005); and are humble in their demeanour and

in how they view their achievements (Collins, 2001; Kraemer, 2015). Above all, leaders behave ethically (Duignan, 2006; Isaacson, 2013) in the pursuit of excellence and for the academic and social benefit of their students (Caldwell, 2006). According to such conceptions, leadership is by definition constructive (Schaubroeck et al., 2007). Table 3 summaries some of these conceptions of leadership.

Table 3

Conceptions of Leadership

APPROACH	CHARACTERISTICS
Transformational	Focussed on a vision for the future of the organisation; building motivation and capacity of others
Transactional	Results-focussed, performance-driven transactions between manager and staff
Servant	People and relationships central; requires leaders to be caring, humble, empathetic and attentive
Participative	Democratic ideal of distributed power and authority; decisions reached collaboratively
Values-driven	Influence exercised through authentic and ethical relationships, based on self-awareness and self-reflection.
Adaptable emphasis	Varies according to the situation; may change in emphasis from servant to transformational to transactional leadership
Authoritarian	Control and command; leader decides directions and actions
Neuro	Application of neuroscience to practice; threat and reward: status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness and fairness (SCARF)
Laissez-faire	Hands-off approach allowing others to set directions and actions
Generative	Changing dynamic of interactions, involving multiple people and situations; generating new solutions
Complexity	The interactive dynamics of complex systems with leadership as socially constructed and deeply contextual.

In Section 2.8.1, following an examination of the primary discourse of autopoietic theory, a further conception of leadership will be discussed—Leadership Complexity Theory (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009; Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007).

2.3.2 DEFINING DESTRUCTIVE LEADERSHIP

Although the aforementioned value-laden constructions of leadership define it as intrinsically ‘good’, there are noteworthy historical, political and recent corporate examples of leaders who have exercised significant influence and to clear purpose, but whose leadership could not be described as ‘good’ (Kellerman, 2004; Lipman-Blumen, 2005). Adolf Hitler, Pol Pot and Idi Amin are examples of powerful political leaders exerting strong influence over multiple followers, drawing from and shaping the wider context, yet extreme in their deviation from good purpose. They serve to illustrate the point that leadership as a construct is values-neutral and so can be qualified positively or negatively. Whether leadership is perceived as good derives from how it is manifested; how influence is exercised; the means, outcomes and impact it has on followers and on the wider environment; and the ends. Kellerman (2004) argued that leadership may be considered bad in relation to either the means or the ends, differentiating between ineffective leadership, where the ends are poorly met, and unethical leadership, where the means adopted constitute a failure to distinguish right from wrong. Presumably, a leader can be both ineffective and unethical. Essentially, it is the intentions of the leader which are crucial, as argued in the literature on pseudo-transformational leadership (Schuh et al., 2013). While the conventional notion of transformational leadership has at its core altruistic motivations in pursuit of change for good purpose, pseudo-transformational conceptions emphasise self-interested ends pursued through manipulative means (Lin et al., 2017).

Sometimes referred to as ‘the dark side’ (Conger, 1990; Griffin & O’Leary-Kelly, 2004; Mathieu et al., 2014), the antithesis of good leadership is variously described in the literature using adjectives such as bad (Kellerman, 2004; Schyns & Schilling, 2013), unethical (Craig & Gustafson, 1998), abusive (Chi & Liang, 2013; Mackey et al., 2013; Tepper, 2000; 2007), narcissistic (Maccoby, 2007; Schaubroeck et al., 2007), pseudo-transformational (Lin et al., 2017; Schuh et al., 2013), toxic (Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Pelletier, 2010; Thoroughgood et al., 2012; Whicker, 1996), destructive (Aasland et al., 2010; Einarsen et al., 2007; Goldman, 2009; Padilla et al., 2007) or tyrannical (Ashforth, 1994; Ma, Karri, & Chittipeddi, 2004; Pelletier, 2010; Tepper, 2000). Some of these terms are reflective of the discipline in which the study is grounded; for example, narcissistic representations draw primarily from psychology or unethical representations from philosophy. While all of these literatures have some relevance to this study, the focus of the research on action, response and impact requires a descriptor that signals these elements. Adopting the term ‘destructive’ leadership not only highlights the contrast with a constructive view, but implies significant consequences; enables the incorporation of the three domains of leader, subordinate and context; and is inclusive of many of the other descriptors (unethical, abusive, tyrannical, etc.). Destructive leadership connotes more than the absence of effective and/or ethical leadership (Einarsen et al., 2007). The metaphor of the dark side is apposite, ‘side’ signifying that rather than being extremes on the one constructive–destructive continuum, destructive leadership represents a different dimension or another face of leadership. Such a conception allows that, although opposites, constructive and destructive behaviours are not mutually exclusive—leadership can be at once constructive and destructive (Einarsen et al., 2007).

A range of behaviours may constitute destructive leadership, such as those that are negative, unethical, incompetent, manipulative, fraudulent, abusive, tyrannical, deviant or illegal. Laissez faire leadership may also have destructive consequences for an individual and/or for the organisation (Skogstad, Einarsen, Torsheim, Aasland, & Hetland, 2007). For the purposes of this study, the types of destructive leadership initially considered were those with direct impact on individual subordinates and perceived to be targeted at that level (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Accordingly, fraudulent, illegal, deviant or laissez faire behaviours were not originally the key focus, while abusive, bullying, tyrannical, isolating or intimidating types of destructive leadership were central (recognising that any such behaviours may coexist). Although not restricted to management, a Queensland Government (2011) landscape scan of workplace bullying in the Australian context found the phenomenon was generally defined as unreasonable or inappropriate behaviour that is repeated and occurs over a period of time, escalates in intensity or negative effect and represents a real or perceived imbalance of power. Central to the concept of destructive leadership is its capacity to cause harm, to destroy someone(s) or something(s). Therefore, destructive leadership refers to those verbal, non-verbal or physical behaviours that, in the subordinate's perception, cause harm (Blase, Blase, & Du, 2008).

In summary, leadership is defined as a dynamic process among leaders, subordinates and the environment where influence may be exercised for particular purpose(s). As an interaction between players, of itself leadership is a values-neutral construct and may be exercised in different ways and to different ends, including constructively or destructively. Where it is exercised in inappropriate and unreasonable ways which cause perceived physiological, psychological or organisational harm, this constitutes destructive leadership. In Section 2.8.1,

subsequent to and in light of applying the lens of autopoietic theory (Maturana & Varela, 1992), this definition will be developed further and in accordance with a conception of Leadership Complexity Theory (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007).

2.4 SECONDARY DISCOURSE

In the context of this study, the following discussion makes the distinction between primary and secondary discourse, relevant both to an understanding of destructive leadership and the structure of the research. The secondary transdisciplinary discourse, treated first, comprises those literatures that inform the research conceptually, suggesting ideas, concepts or perspectives from different disciplines and fields. The primary discourse is then considered and comprises the literature that informs the research theoretically, deriving in this case from autopoietic theory (Maturana & Varela, 1992) and the complexity sciences. Synthesised in a schema, illustrated in Figure 1 and elaborated on in Section 2.9, the primary and secondary discourse together frame the empirical and analytical stages of the research.

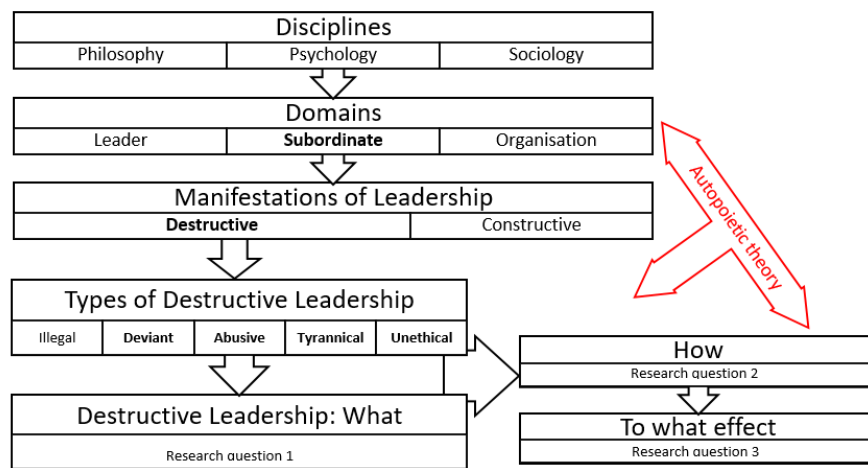


Figure 1. A Schema of the Literature Review by Discipline, Domain and Theory.

2.4.1 THREE DOMAINS: LEADER, SUBORDINATE AND ORGANISATION

Three domains of leader, subordinate and organisation are selected in this study as a means by which to review the literature on destructive leadership. Each domain provides insights into the nature and impact of destructive leadership, as do the interactions among the three domains. Leader-focused literature constitutes the greater proportion of available literature, while that on subordinates is less extensive. Leader-related literature explores the attributes of leaders (Woodruff, 2005), personality traits exhibited by leaders and leader behaviours. Subordinate-focused literature deals primarily with the psychological, physical and work-related impact of destructive leadership on the individual (Chi & Liang, 2013; Hobman, Restubog, Bordia, & Tang, 2009; Tepper, 2000). In some studies, the personality of the subordinate is a consideration in the interaction (Thoroughgood et al., 2012). For the purpose of this study, a sub-group of subordinates, the ‘survivors’, are the focus. The organisational literature deals with the proximal and distal milieu in which destructive leadership takes place (Avolio, 2007) and explores such phenomena as social contagion (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012). Typologies posited by theorists offer an additional means by which to describe and understand destructive leadership (Pelletier, 2010). Finally, the way in which the three domains interact is also the subject of some of the literature, with such conceptual models as the ‘toxic triangle’ (Padilla et al., 2007; Thoroughgood et al., 2012). Looking across these studies and adopting a three-domain approach helps inform the current study.

The research draws from several disciplines to gain perspectives on destructive leadership (Hackman & Wageman, 2007) across the three domains, referencing literature from the fields of philosophy, psychology and sociology (Bennis, 2007;

Brown & Treviño, 2006). Philosophy provides insights into the ethical and moral implications of destructive leadership (Ciulla et al., 2005; Duignan, 2006; Eisenbeiss et al., 2014; Solomon, 2005; Woodruff, 2005); psychology informs the thoughts, feelings and behaviours associated with such leadership (Conger, 1990, 2005; Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985; Maccoby, 2007; Schaubroeck et al., 2007); and sociology provides insights into organisational and contextual elements relevant to the research (Bowie, 2005; Price, 2005). The approach adopted by Ciulla et al. (2005), integrating heart (philosophy), mind (psychology) and body (sociology) is pertinent in evoking a holistic representation of leadership.

2.4.2 LEADERS

According to the ancient philosophers, leaders must be people of virtue whose conduct is guided by the primary virtue of reverence. The concept of reverence entails acting with respect for and in the best interests of others. The ‘great man’ tradition draws on this conception (Carlyle & Gray, 1906; Scovetta & Ellis, 2015). Hubris is the opposite of reverence and refers not only to arrogance, its usual contemporary interpretation, but to any actions against the weak (Woodruff, 2005; Dowding, 2011). In the current context, hubris would be a feature of destructive leadership. Normative ethics provides guidance as to how leaders ought to behave (Ciulla, 1998). The conception of leadership is one of appropriate conduct exhibited through actions and relationships (Brown & Treviño, 2006) which requires self-monitoring and self-regulation. Leaders are expected to show moral character, attending to their responsibilities and moral obligations. Contemporary thinking on emotional intelligence (Goleman, Boyatzis, & Mckee, 2009) is relevant in this regard, indicating attention to one’s own emotions and the emotions of others. Solomon (2005) strengthened the notion of emotional intelligence, emphasising its ethical dimension

with his conception of emotional integrity signalling how the facility should be used, that is, ethically and wisely.

Leadership exercised ethically can be recognised through particular attributes (Eisenbeiss et al., 2014). In a cross-cultural study, Den Hartog et al. (1999) identified universally positively endorsed attributes of leaders and undesirable attributes. The positive attributes relating most directly to subordinates—thus, most relevant to the current study—included honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, encouragement and acting justly. Hogan, Curphy and Hogan (1994) found integrity to be primary in subordinates' assessment of leadership effectiveness—the fundamental attribute in Craig and Gustafson's (1998) Perceived Leader Integrity Scale. Solomon (2005) argues that trust is central to the leader–follower relationship. Den Hartog et al. (1999) also identified negative and undesirable attributes that hold cross-culturally, which, in relation specifically to subordinates, depict leaders as ruthless, asocial, dictatorial and malevolent. Whicker (1996) associated these negative characteristics with toxic, as opposed to trustworthy, leaders who present to their subordinates as malcontent, maladjusted, malevolent and/or malicious. Any of these attributes could prove destructive at an individual, group or organisational level.

Further light is shed on the subject of destructive leadership through focusing on the minds of leaders and their thoughts, feelings and behaviours. From a psychological perspective, the personality traits of both leaders and subordinates could be considered relevant, with much of the literature focused on the personality of the leader. Hogan and Kaiser (2005) suggested personality determines leadership style and impacts on subordinates, teams and the organisation. Although trait theories of leadership in Carlyle and Gray's (1906) 'great man' tradition are considered limited and outmoded, developments in the study of personality traits in psychology have

gained momentum since the late twentieth century (Matthews, Deary, & Whiteman, 2009) and have led to interest in their application in understanding both constructive and destructive leadership. Costa and McCrae's (1992) five-factor model of personality traits provided the basis for many such applications. This model posits personality traits clustered on five dimensions—Neuroticism, Extraversion; Openness; Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness—with each dimension characterised by different facets (see Table 4). Through a meta-analysis of 222 correlations from 73 samples, Judge, Bono, Ilies and Gerhardt (2002) examined the relationship between personality traits and leadership using the five-factor model and found a multiple correlation of 0.48, 'indicating strong support for the leader trait perspective when traits are organised according to the five factor model' (Judge et al., 2002, p. 765).

Table 4

Personality Trait Facets in Costa and McCrae's (1992) Five-Factor Model

Domains	Trait Facets
Neuroticism (N)	Anxiety, anger, hostility, depression, self-consciousness, impulsiveness, vulnerability
Extraversion (E)	Warmth, gregariousness, assertiveness, activity, excitement seeking, positive emotions
Openness (O)	Fantasy, aesthetics, feelings, actions, ideas, values
Agreeableness (A)	Trust, straightforwardness, altruism, compliance, modesty, tender-mindedness
Conscientiousness (C)	Competence, order, dutifulness, achievement, striving, self-discipline, deliberation

Source: Matthews et al. (2009, p. 25).

The application of the five-factor model typically focuses on the traits associated with a definition of constructive leadership. Findings from Judge et al.'s (2002) meta-analysis indicated that Extraversion is the most consistent correlate of leadership, followed by Conscientiousness and Openness to Experience. Neuroticism is the highest negative correlate, indicating that leaders displaying the associated negative emotionality would be more likely to manifest destructive leadership. Such leaders may exhibit behaviours that are callous, antagonistic, intimidating, hostile, distant, controlling, blaming and/or contemptuous (Schaubroeck et al., 2007). The affective potential of these behaviours on individuals and on wider environment is significant in terms of subordinate and organisational distress (George & Brief, 1992).

Another psychological perspective offered on destructive leadership comes from the concept of the Dark Triad, coined by Paulhus and Williams (2002), indicating the three personality traits of psychopathy, narcissism and Machiavellianism (Mathieu et al., 2014). Psychopathy is characterised by egocentricity, thrill seeking and impulsivity, deceptiveness, lack of responsibility, low levels of empathy and disregard for social norms (Hare & Neumann, 2008; Mathieu et al., 2014). Major characteristics of narcissism are grandiosity, entitlement, dominance, vanity and superiority (Corry, Merritt, Mrug, & Pamp, 2008; Goldman, 2009; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Machiavellianism exhibits as manipulative, cynical and unprincipled (Jones & Paulhus, 2009). With the more recent addition of sadism and its characteristic of an enjoyment of cruelty, some of the literature now refers to a Dark Tetrad (Paulhus, 2014). According to Paulhus (2014), callousness is a feature common to all four traits.

In their exploration of psychopathy, Mathieu et al. (2014) referred to psychopathy as the most destructive of the personalities that make up the Dark Triad, stating 'psychopathic traits are a potent underlying factor for many of the deviant

interpersonal behaviours displayed by dysfunctional leaders' (Mathieu et al., 2014, p. 83). It is also a cause of significant psychological stress in employees. Using the instrument B-Scan 360, Mathieu, Hare, Jones, Babiak and Neumann (2013) suggested psychopathy impacts on subordinates' psychological wellbeing, work–family conflict and job satisfaction and so may be important in explaining destructive leadership.

Deriving from Greek mythology and the pool-gazing youth Narcissus, the psychoanalytical theory of narcissism was first introduced by Freud (Fonagy, Person, & Sandler, 2012). Some current theorists remind us that a degree of narcissism can be healthy, where it presents as confidence, assertiveness or creativity (Kets de Vries, 2006) or where it is productively focused and directed towards creating a better future (Maccoby, 2007). Unlike psychopathy, it can have positive presentations, 'The difference...is that psychopaths, unlike some productive narcissists, always operate at the lowest level of moral reasoning with no concern for the common good, much less remorse or guilt for self-serving actions that harm other people'. (Maccoby, 2007, p. xvii). In its negative representations, however, narcissism may be overt, presenting as self-importance and exhibitionism, or covert, presenting as hypersensitivity and inhibition (Corry et al., 2008). Where leaders are self-absorbed, domineering and lacking in empathy, narcissism can have significantly harmful effects (Goldman, 2009).

Taking its name from the writings of the Renaissance philosopher, Niccolò Machiavelli, Machiavellianism involves manipulative conduct for personal gain (Wilson, Near, & Miller, 1996). Its duplicitous nature means that Machiavellian leaders may ostensibly behave ethically where they perceive such behaviours are in their own interests, employing both prosocial and coercive strategies as they deem necessary. In their study of Machiavellianism in the ethical behaviour process, Den

Hartog and Belschak (2012) found the suppression of positive effects of ethical leadership when leaders are highly Machiavellian. While it may be difficult for subordinates to recognise leaders' intentions (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002), Den Hartog and Belschak (2012) found that subordinates seem able to make the distinction between authentic and inauthentic ethical leadership and that their positive work behaviours (such as dedication, motivation, absorption and engagement) are consequently reduced for highly Machiavellian leaders. In two studies undertaken in Australia and the Philippines, Kiazad, Restubog, Zagenczyk, Kiewitz and Tang (2010) found a positive association between supervisor Machiavellianism and perceptions of abusive supervision, that subordinate perceptions of authoritarianism mediated the relationship between Machiavellianism and abusive supervision, and that organisation-based self-esteem on the part of the subordinate moderated the relationship between authoritarian leadership and abusive supervision.

Whether viewed through the five-factor model or the Dark Tetrad, the psychology of personality provides a frame through which destructive leadership may be explored, highlighting the different types of behaviours and attitudes which leaders may display and signalling the potential impact of such conduct on subordinates. Further, several studies noted the reliability of subordinates' assessment of the personality traits and behaviours of their leaders (Judge et al., 2002; Mathieu et al., 2014; Ostroff, Atwater, & Feinberg, 2004), suggesting the pertinence of subordinates' views to empirical research.

A further means of elaborating such leadership is through the use of multidimensional and conceptual typologies or empirically observable and measurable taxonomies. In her typology of toxic leader behaviours and rhetoric, Pelletier (2010) proposed eight dimensions, illustrated with behavioural characteristics and

organisational examples—attack on followers’ self-esteem, lack of integrity, abusiveness; social exclusion, divisiveness, promoting inequity, threat to followers’ security and laissez faire. Whicker (1996) proposed three types of leaders, trustworthy, transitional and toxic, and, in elaborating the latter, further classified the absentee, busybody, controller, enforcer, streetfighter and bullying leader. Paulhus (2014) identified the key features of the Dark Tetrad as callousness, impulsivity, manipulation, criminality, grandiosity and enjoyment of cruelty. Hogan and Kaiser (2005) suggested 11 dimensions of managerial incompetence—excitable, cautious, sceptical, reserved, leisurely, bold, mischievous, colourful, imaginative, diligent and dutiful—which they associated with personality disorders and to which they ascribe definitions and short-term strengths and long-term weaknesses.

In defining destructive leadership, Einarsen et al. (2007) argued that leadership behaviour takes place on two dimensions, that directed towards organisational goals and that directed towards subordinates, and, therefore, the constructive and destructive aspects are not necessarily mutually exclusive—leaders may act both constructively and destructively on either dimension. Padilla et al. (2007, p. 179) made a similar point, stating that ‘leadership is seldom absolutely or entirely destructive: most leadership results in both desirable and undesirable outcomes’. Whicker (1996) also observed that leaders experience both good and bad periods. These observations point to the complexity of the issue of destructive leadership, where the manifestation is not necessarily clear-cut, but one of situation, of interpretation or of the dispositions of those involved.

2.4.3 SUBORDINATES

Different terms are used in the literature in reference to the relationship between the leader and the led in a work situation, such as ‘employee’, ‘follower’

(Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Padilla et al., 2007; Thoroughgood et al., 2012) and ‘subordinate’ (Chi & Liang, 2013; Mackey et al., 2013; Schaubroeck et al., 2007). For the purposes of this research, ‘subordinate’ is used in the literature review to denote the power relationship and the lower hierarchical status. ‘Follower’ suggests a degree of compliance or agreement, whereas the position may not necessarily be a choice. Similarly, in an education context, while ‘employee’ may be a relatively values-neutral term, the individual may not be a direct employee of the leader, but of the system and so this term is not entirely accurate. In this study, the subordinate group is of a particular type in that these particular survivor subordinates have been able to demonstrate resilience through their experience.

The literature dealing specifically with subordinates and their perspective on the destructive dyad derives from the different disciplines and deals variously with their assessment of the leadership; its consequences as they perceive them, either at a personal or organisational level; and/or their role in and contribution to the toxic environment. Although the assessment of destructive leadership is necessarily a subjective one on the part of the subordinate (Mackey et al., 2013), there is evidence to suggest that its impact is experienced in significant and different ways. Some of the consequences and responses may be professional and work-related as in job withdrawal (Chi & Liang, 2013) and job satisfaction (Tepper, 2000; Woestman, 2014). Other reactions may occur at the personal level, presenting as anxiety (Tepper, 2007), threatened psychological wellbeing (Hobman et al., 2009), physical ill-health (Bowling & Michel, 2011) or emotional exhaustion (Chi & Liang, 2013; Yagil, 2006). Further, at a broad level, subordinates may become enmeshed in a form of social contagion where leaders’ values affect the self-concept and beliefs of their subordinates (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012). The literature on pseudo-

transformational leadership suggests that subordinates in such circumstances may present variously as dependent, unconditionally loyal or fearful (Lin et al., 2017), thus, interfering with positive organisational or personal outcomes (Schuh et al., 2013). The subordinates' perceptions of supervisors' manipulative intention affect their performance and their sense of organisational belonging (Lin et al., 2017).

There is a body of research which shows that people automatically accord negative information greater attention than positive information (Smith et al., 2006). When receiving positive or negative feedback, for example, the tendency is for a person to listen to the negative and retain that information longer. Indeed, Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer and Vohs (2001, p. 362) found bad overriding good in 'a disappointingly relentless pattern'. The relevance of this information to the current study lies in our understanding of the reinforcing and self-perpetuating nature of negativity, such that a subordinate enmeshed in an environment of destructive leadership could not only be attuned to it, but affected in significant and lasting ways. Woestman (2014) argued that recognising this negative impact in education settings is a neglected area of research.

While the focus of much of the literature is the causal role of the leader, there are also studies that apportion responsibility to the subordinate. Padilla et al. (2007) identify the susceptibility of followers, whom they classify as colluders or compliers, as a factor in the destructive interaction. Drawing on this work, Thoroughgood et al. (2012) proposed a taxonomy of susceptible followers they categorised as lost souls, bystanders, opportunists, acolytes and authoritarians. Both studies make the point that subordinates play their part in enabling the existence of destructive leadership. Further, in the same way that different individuals may play different roles, not all subordinates are affected in the same way. Faced with the same circumstances, people may react

differently, depending on their own personality dispositions and personal circumstances. Individual differences can mitigate the impact of negative practice (Mackey et al., 2013; Tepper, 2007).

Using victim precipitation theory, Wang, Harms and Mackey (2015) studied the role of the subordinate in the formulation of and reaction to perceptions of abusive supervision. The focus of the research was subordinates' personality traits and their self-reporting of task performance as antecedents of those perceptions. In particular, the researchers concentrated on the traits of neuroticism and conscientiousness and the mediating role of task performance in the relationship. They further explored interpersonal and organisational deviance as the means by which subordinates may respond, such that they engage in negative social behaviours because of the perceived abusive supervision. The study found that subordinates may differ in their perceptions of and reactions to abusive supervision based on their personality traits.

A different slant on the subordinate role in the perception of and response to destructive leadership is suggested in light of psychological empowerment (Mackey, Frieder, Perrewé, Gallagher & Brymer, 2014). Although conventionally regarded as a positive and motivating construct, Mackey et al. (2014) explored the dysfunctional effects of empowerment in relation to perceived abusive supervision and subordinate deviance. The researchers found that subordinates with higher feelings of empowerment are more likely to respond to interpersonal mistreatment and potentially to do so in deviant ways directed either at co-workers or at the supervisor so that there is an abuse trickle-over effect as the subordinates seek to affirm their empowered position. The findings are pertinent in indicating both the individualised and subject experience of the phenomenon and differentiated nature of responses based on subordinates' self-perceptions.

A further perspective in relation to a subordinate's role in a destructive dynamic is offered by O'Moore and Crowley's (2011) study which used a sample of 100 psychological assessments conducted by psychologists at an anti-bullying and resource centre in Ireland. Through the use of psychometric inventories and self-reporting measures, the study aimed to assess the moderating effect of individual factors, such as personality traits, on the severity of the clinical physical and psychological ill-effects resulting from workplace bullying. Overall, the participants showed poor levels of physical and psychological wellbeing with up to 57% reporting suicidal thoughts. The researchers found no stereotypical personality was predisposed to greater or lesser clinical effect, concluding that any personality type could experience a severe clinical effect. Therefore, they argued against the temptation to use personality profiles in validating the actual experience of bullying. Their recommendation was to focus attention on intervention at the organisational level. Such a recommendation is useful in formulating the responses to destructive leadership (as will be described in Chapter 7) as derived from the experiences of the survivor subgroup of subordinates.

2.4.4 ORGANISATIONS

The exercise of leadership takes place within a social context. The nature of organisations (Allan, 2013; Eldridge & Crombie, 1974), particularly educational institutions (Busher, 2008); existing hierarchies (Hatcher, 2005); the approach to leadership; the exercise of authority (Maner & Mead, 2010); prevailing power relations (Price, 2005), notably those between leader and subordinate (Van Vugt et al., 2008; Hogan & Kaiser, 2005); and specific situational variables (Schaubroeck et al., 2007) are social factors which may play their part in the emergence and exercise of

destructive leadership. There is an integral and reciprocal relationship between the development of organisational culture and negative workplace dynamics.

Organisations are social systems which have both internal and external characteristics and are designed to achieve particular purposes (Eldridge & Crombie, 1974). They are comprised of interdependent social relationships (Allan, 2013) and exhibit a collective identity representative of common interests or group goals (Eldridge & Crombie, 1974). Common goals accord legitimacy to the structure of the organisation, its hierarchies and to those with authority. The authority vested in individuals as leaders bestows status and power on those individuals and, thus, the potential for dominance. Power relations in organisations are asymmetrical (Van Vugt et al., 2008), with the leader having greater control over the systems and resources of the organisation (Maner & Mead, 2010). Leadership becomes a social contract between the leader and the led, where the latter places their trust in leaders to make decisions that represent and progress the common goals of the organisation. Van Vugt et al. (2008) argued that this asymmetry produces a fundamental ambivalence in the relationship and gives rise to the potential for abuse in the way power is used (Maner & Mead, 2010). Leaders have the power to act on their beliefs, even if those beliefs are mistaken (Price, 2005) or mischievous or the intention is to prioritise their personal goals over those of the group.

Leaders seeking to assert their organisational dominance may have different motivations in their desire to maintain or increase the power discrepancy in their favour, although common factors are the leader's fear of an unstable hierarchy and the consequent threat of changes in the power relation (Maner & Mead, 2010). Maner and Mead (2010) distinguished between motivations of power and of prestige, in that achieving the former is likely to see power exercised coercively or prohibitively, while

in garnering prestige the leader may display constructive attributes to achieve those ends. The latter may seem attractive to subordinates, however, the intent is to subjugate them and is intrinsically unethical.

The nature of leadership may impact on the wider environment so that others become involved in a destructive group dynamic. Leymann (1996) wrote of 'mobbing', which takes the form of attitudinal, behavioural and emotional attacks on an individual. Mobbing becomes environmental and can be regarded as a source of major stress in the workplace (Qureshi et al., 2013). Leymann (1996) argued that mobbing has five major consequences for the victims:

- communication: they are silenced, no longer have a voice and/or are verbally attacked
- isolation: they are socially or physically isolated and may be 'sent to Coventry'
- reputation: their reputation is affected and they are spoken about as a subject of workplace gossip in a challenge to their identity (Sfard & Prusak, 2005)
- occupation: they suffer professionally and their work is rendered meaningless
- health: they suffer physical health consequences.

The environment becomes symptomatic, with others taking on the behaviours and characteristics of the leader and acting in ways that reinforce a negative culture. Druzhilov (2012) referred to the way in which the vertical mobbing of 'bossing' involves enlisting social support where the collective becomes stratified and the result is a form of gang activity.

In the educational realm, while there has been widespread and strong encouragement of distributed leadership characterised by collaboration and shared decision-making (Fullan, 2001; Harris et al., 2003), the reality in most instances is that ‘officially sanctioned “distributed leadership” is always delegated, licensed, exercised on behalf of and revocable by authority—the headteacher’ (Hatcher, 2005, p. 256).

Further, the external educational organisation may entail additional hierarchies of reporting lines and accountability processes. Despite what may be encouragements to the contrary, therefore, the risk of steep hierarchies, where power is concentrated in few hands, is very real in school environments. With such a concentration of power comes the potential for abuse. As organisational hierarchies typified by asymmetrical power relations, schools and education institutions provide conditions conducive to destructive leadership. Where school leaders are motivated by the need to maintain dominance in the power relationship, and in the absence of checks on their behaviour, they may feel emboldened to act in their own self-interest, coercively or prohibitively, and with negative consequences for individuals or the organisation.

Organisations, educational or otherwise, are distinctive environments. The distal context comprises the broader organisational culture and characteristics, while the proximal the embedded work situation and climate (Avolio, 2007). In school education, there may be the overarching systemic organisation and then multiple layers at the school organisational level, such as class, year group, department and school. Each of these layers will be influenced by the nature of the distal and proximal culture. Brown and Treviño (2006) argued that culture can moderate between an individual’s moral reasoning and ethical behaviour, such that an ethical environment supports ethical conduct. Leymann’s (1996) mobbing represents the opposite environment. Depending on their position in the hierarchy, leaders may play a significant role in

creating the milieu at all levels. However, while leaders can influence a situation, the reverse is also possible as situational variables may influence leadership behaviours. Vroom and Jago (2007, p. 22) argued that ‘much of the variance in behaviour can be understood in terms of the dispositions that are situationally specific rather than general’.

Concerns at the organisational level are reflected in the literature related to both the prevalence and the cost of destructive leadership (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). A Norwegian study by Aasland et al. (2010) found that up to a third of employees reported recent experiences of destructive leadership, while in reference to the United States, Tepper (2007) put the percentage at 13% for American business, with the financial cost in excess of \$23 billion. While not specifically targeting leadership, a 2007 report into workplace bullying commissioned by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment of Ireland found that, in that country, 7.9% of the population sample had experienced bullying in the past six months. Notably, the education sector reported the second highest incidence rate at 14%, with 1 in 5 respondent organisations reporting bullying as a moderate to major problem (O’Connell, Calvert, & Watson, 2007). According to national data (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2010) in the Australian context and again not restricted to leadership, the incidence of workplace bullying in 2009 to 2010 was reported as constituting 13.5% of serious mental stress claims, up from 9.8% in 2007 to 2008 and 11.5% in 2008 to 2009. The average costs of these mental stress claims, in both financial terms and work time lost, was reported as much higher than the average for all other types of workers’ compensation claims. Given that leadership is likely to be a factor in at least some of such cases across the different national jurisdictions, the incidence and cost of destructive leadership practices cannot be ignored. Furthermore, given the challenges

of definitional and methodological consistency in quantitative studies into workplace bullying (Fahie & McGillicuddy, 2018), it is difficult to ascertain an accurate picture.

2.4.5 DOMAIN INTERPLAY

The three domains of leader, subordinate and organisation do not exist in isolation but in relation to each other (Bennis, 2007). The dispositions and behaviours of both leader and subordinate are apposite, as is the organisational context in which they interact. Where that interaction is negative, Padilla et al. (2007, p. 179) referred to a toxic triangle, arguing that, ‘Destructive organisational outcomes are not exclusively the result of destructive leaders, but are also products of susceptible followers and conducive environments’. Building on this analogy, Thoroughgood et al. (2012) developed the concept of the circle of susceptible followers. Figure 2 represents the interplay among the three domains and their toxic triangular intersection. A further consideration is the way in which the three variables interact, which may be in different directions. An example of this is provided by Schaubroeck et al. (2007), who studied the way in which situational factors, such as job scope and satisfaction, may serve as moderating factors for the subordinate.

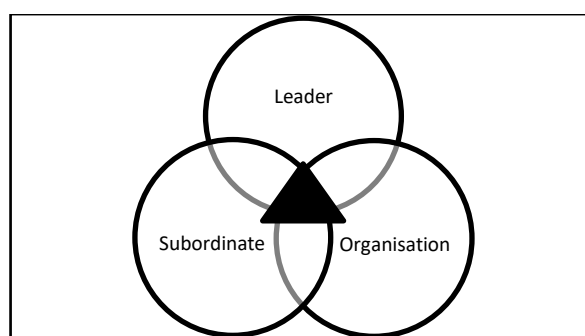


Figure 2. The Potentially Toxic Triangle of Leader, Subordinate and Organisation.

Focusing on the supervisor–subordinate dyadic and the process involved, Klaussner (2014) proposed the emergence of abusive supervision deriving from a process of interactions, with the subordinate’s perceptions of supervisor injustice and

the supervisor's perceptions of inadequate subordinate behaviour leading to an escalating negative spiral. Asymmetrical power relations may inhibit reconciliation or resolution. According to Klaussner's framework, responses may be classified as functional passive, functional active, dysfunctional passive or dysfunctional active, with such responses moderated by power asymmetry. In this conception, both supervisor and subordinate contribute to what evolves into intentional abuse on the part of the supervisor. Klaussner's model is relevant in its emphasis on the relational, reciprocal and temporal dimensions of the phenomenon and in its potential for empirical application.

In another theoretical study, May et al. (2014) concentrated on the interaction process between leaders and followers in destructive contexts. Their specific analysis was of subordinates coping in the presence of destructive leadership, and the ways in which subordinates' coping behaviours and the degree of perceived 'confrontativeness' may trigger or curb the destructive behaviour of the leader. May et al. (2014) proposed a theoretical model of interaction that encompasses follower coping, leaders' perceptions of that coping and the consequent behaviour of the leader. They posit that leaders perceive subordinates' coping strategies as submissive, constructive or aggressive/retaliatory and respond accordingly in terms of their behaviours. As the emphasis of the current empirical study is the subordinate side of the dyad, elements of the model are pertinent in informing the research, specifically in framing follower coping strategies as either approach or avoidance, both of which may be problem-focused or emotion-focused. May et al. (2014) gave examples of approach problem-focused strategies such as problem-solving or upward appeals to superordinate authorities. Examples of avoidance problem-focused coping strategies are avoiding contact with the leader or absence from the workplace. Examples of

approach emotion-focused coping are cognitive restructuring, or embarrassing/ridiculing the supervisor. Examples of avoidance emotion-focused coping are wishful thinking or substance abuse.

2.4.6 OVERVIEW OF FACTORS GERMANE TO DESTRUCTIVE LEADERSHIP

The review of the literature so far reveals those factors which make destructive leadership possible in educational organisations, summarised as:

1. the hierarchical organisation of schools and the prevailing power relations in favour of those in authority
2. the negative personality dispositions of some leaders, exhibiting characteristics associated with traits such as narcissism, psychopathy or Machiavellianism
3. the nature of the specific leader–subordinate relationship and the sociological and psychological susceptibility of some subordinates to the behaviours and actions of the leader
4. the personality dispositions of some subordinates as factors contributing to the phenomenon
5. the contagion of the phenomenon as expressed through mobbing behaviours as other people become involved in an environmental dynamic or conversely remain silent and, thus, tacitly acquiesce
6. the relational, reciprocal and temporal nature of the phenomenon
7. the problem-centred or emotion-focused coping strategies adopted by subordinates
8. the stronger, self-perpetuating and more lasting impact of negative experience in comparison to positive experience

9. the differentiated effects on subordinates experiencing the same environment
10. the deficiency of a moral code and associated social norms which ought to direct behaviour.

Figure 3 depicts the relationship of the 10 relevant factors, highlighting the relevance of the dispositions of the leader; the interplay between leader, subordinate and the environment; and the wider ethical milieu.

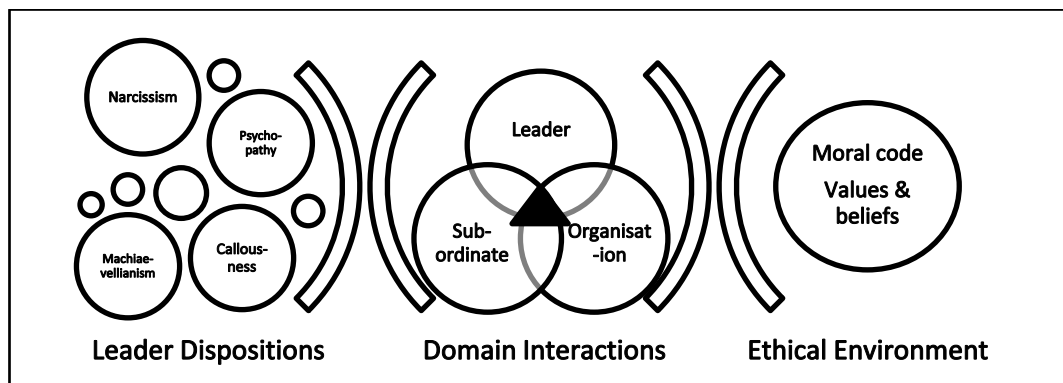


Figure 3. Factors Germane to the Exercise of Destructive Leadership.

In summary, the literature may be synthesised across a number of disciplines and in the context of the three domains of leader, subordinate and organisation as represented in Figure 3, suggesting key concepts relevant to developing an understanding of the phenomenon of destructive leadership. Table 5 presents this synthesis and indicates the interrelationship of concepts. These concepts and the literature from which they are drawn inform the language and processes of the empirical phase of the research.

Table 5

Synthesis of Concepts from the Disciplinary Literature

Disciplines			
Domains	Philosophy	Psychology	Sociology
Leader	Moral code Moral judgement Professionalism Ethical/unethical conduct Attributes	Personality traits (narcissism, psychopathy, Machiavellianism, sadism) Characteristics (callousness, dominance, authoritarianism)	Authority Status Power relations Dominance Internal and external threats
Subordinate	Shared values Clash of belief systems	Personality traits and dispositions Susceptibility Approach or avoidance strategies Problem- or emotion-centred coping Overriding and lasting impact of negativity Subjective assessments of leaders Reliability of perceptions	Dyadic relationship Status and hierarchical position Asymmetrical power relations Differentiated responses and impact
Organisation	Common goals Moral purpose Ethical and rational systems	Influence of the personality of the leader Social contagion and mobbing or silence	Proximal context of wider educational organisation policy and practices Distal context of culture of group or institution Social norms

The philosophical, psychological and sociological literatures are valuable in understanding why destructive leadership behaviours may emerge and what their consequences may be. They reveal why it occurs, that is, because of personality dispositions and interplays and asymmetrical power relations within an ethically

deficient setting. They reveal what destructive leadership is—abuse, bullying, malevolence, malice, callousness, manipulation, deceit, domination and so on. They reveal what it does—alienates, divides, humiliates, jeopardises wellbeing, harms, destroys, debilitates and so on. These literatures are broadly descriptive, however, revealing less about how it does these things. They do not explain the nature of destructive leadership in the sense of how the process of the phenomenon operates. In terms of the research, they provide a useful but initial layer of discursive analysis. Following an examination of the education field and the literature on resilience, this question of explaining the process of destructive leadership will be explored in light of the primary discourse, autopoietic theory.

2.5 THE EDUCATION FIELD

Literature in the field of education on the subject of destructive leadership is limited (Blase & Blase, 2002; Fahie, 2014; Riley et al., 2011). Existing studies focusing principally on abusive supervision and/or workplace bullying tend to be quantitatively designed and confirm the previously discussed findings, such as the existence of destructive leadership and its impact on motivation, job satisfaction, health and wellbeing. The findings from the available literature, its scarcity and the prevalence of quantitative approaches support the case for further qualitative research on the phenomenon in the education context. The importance of the issue is highlighted by Blase and Blase's (2002) study of teachers' perspectives of principals, where they argued that the education profession has to date 'failed to address the destructive problem of principal mistreatment of teachers' (Blase & Blase, 2002, p. 714) and as a consequence such conduct goes unchallenged. Fahie's (2014, p. 435) study in an Irish context referred to the findings as 'a voice for a hitherto silent minority'.

Recent studies into different forms of destructive educational leadership have cited the limited research undertaken to date, indicating its relatively recent history (Cemaloğlu, 2011; Riley et al., 2011; Fahie, 2014). Blase and Blase (2002) made the point that their study of American teachers' perceptions of treatment by principals was the first empirical study of its kind, contrasting with the prevailing 'bright side' studies of exemplary leaders: 'In stark contrast, no empirical studies have systematically examined the "dark side" of school leadership, in particular principal mistreatment/abuse of teachers, and the extremely harmful consequences such forms of leadership have on life in schools' (Blase & Blase, 2002, p. 672).

The Australian context presents a similar picture, with the Australian Government Productivity Commission (2010) noting that no national surveys of workplace bullying had yet been conducted in the country. The first national online survey of workplace bullying in schools was undertaken by Riley et al. (2011), which found widespread incidence of workplace bullying in Australian schools, often perpetrated by members of the school executive. While it might be anticipated that self-selected respondents to a survey on bullying would report high incidence rates, as was indeed the case with 99.6% of respondents doing so, the fact that the survey elicited 800 responses gives strength to the findings. In terms of the latter, the four main forms of bullying identified were through personal confrontation, diminished professional standing, workload and work conditions and environment. Importantly, for a quarter of respondents the negative effect of bullying related to diminished physical and/or mental wellbeing Riley et al. (2011).

In Ireland, following the Irish national study into workplace bullying (O'Connell et al., 2007), a 2007 Millward Brown IMS survey commissioned by the Irish Association of Secondary Teachers found significantly higher percentages of

staff compared to the general population had experienced bullying in the past six months. In relation to management, 26% of females and 38% of males reported being bullied by a principal, and 14% of females and 7% of males by a deputy principal (Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland, 2008). Again in the Irish context and in this instance in a qualitative study, Fahie (2014) explored the lived experience of 24 school teachers and principals who responded to a call via a teachers' union magazine on the basis they were prepared to share experiences of adult bullying. The study explored the way in which power and authority are exercised in the school work environment and highlighted the significant impact on professional practice and the implications for leadership in framing professional relationships. A New South Wales Teachers' Federation report (Lemaire, 2009) drew on the Irish experience in recommending stronger systemic guidelines, training and action in that state jurisdiction.

In a quantitative study of 500 primary school teachers in Turkey, Cemaloğlu (2011) investigated exposure to workplace bullying and its relationship to the transformative or transactional leadership style of the principal and organisational health. The study was of the environment created by the leadership style rather than perpetrations by the leader. Cemaloğlu (2011) found there was a positive relationship between transformational leadership and organisational health and a negative relationship between transformational leadership and workplace bullying, concluding that leadership style influences the occurrence of workplace bullying.

The studies of education environments cited here confirm the existence of destructive leadership practices in those contexts and identify how many of these practices are exhibited. They point to some of the power dynamics at play and to the consequences for the health and wellbeing of individuals and schools as organisations.

The research of most relevance to the present research is that by Blase and Blase (2002; 2006) and Blase et al. (2008), which highlighted the significant psychological, physiological and relational effects of destructive leadership behaviours and offer useful methodological advice, as will be covered in detail in Chapter 3. The key findings of Blase and Blase's (2002) study were consistent with those from the business world and other industries (discussed earlier in this chapter), showing similar types and patterns of destructive behaviour. Consistent with a definition of emotional abuse (Keashly, 1997), Blase and Blase (2002) found that subordinates define a superior's behaviour as abusive where there are patterns of verbal or non-verbal abuse, unwanted and/or unwarranted behaviours, violations of the norms of conduct or individual rights, behaviours that target individuals and intend to or result in harm, and where there are power imbalances between the abuser and the target of abuse (Blase & Blase, 2002). The consequences of abusive treatment showed initial reactions of shock and disorientation and feelings of humiliation and loneliness, with evidence of longer-term and significant damage to in-school relationships and decision-making. Further, there were damaging psychological consequences, 'including chronic fear, anxiety, anger, and depression' (Blase & Blase, 2002, p. 715). Because of the nature of schools and school employment, a distinctive outcome for teachers was a sense of being trapped, without any real means of either redressing or escaping the situation.

In a subsequent study via an online questionnaire of 219 items, Blase et al. (2008) focused on teachers' perceptions of specific sources and intensity of harm caused by perceived principal mistreatment, coping strategies, broader effects and perceived contributing factors. The findings showed evidence of serious harmful effects on physiological/physical, psychological/emotional and work-related wellbeing and on family. The most intense harm was reportedly caused by

intimidation, failure to recognise or praise achievements, lack of support in difficult situations, unwarranted reprimands and unreasonable demands. Teachers reported methods of coping with the mistreatment tended to emphasis avoidance, withdrawal and detachment, rather than problem-coping or resolution techniques. Perceived causes of mistreatment are suggested as resulting from perpetrator envy and victim likability, such that subordinates believed they were feared by the principal to have superior abilities, to be more highly regarded, to be seen as a threat, to be innovative and/or to disagree with policies and practices.

That studies on destructive leadership practices in the education environment echo those from other environments is cause for serious concern. It is singularly disturbing that one of the so-called ‘caring’ professions should yield findings so at odds with the anti-bullying philosophies and practices it seeks to instil in the young. Further, to ignore such a reality for a sanitised view of exemplary educational leadership would be irresponsible, signifying the relevance of studies such as this into destructive leadership.

2.6 RESILIENCE

The current research is seeking to explore not only the nature of destructive leadership, but alternative valence and the responses of those who have experienced the phenomenon such that they maintain or continue their leadership trajectory and learn from the experience. Their personal and professional survival in the face of their experiences suggests a degree of strength and resilience. However, the existence of such literature in relation to negative leadership is limited (van Heugten, 2010, 2012; Maidaniuc-Chirila, 2015; Wieland & Beitz, 2015) and derives from the contexts of nursing and social work, rather than education. In their study of experiences of bullying in a nursing faculty, Wieland and Beitz (2015, p. 292) referred to social

bullying, inclusive of that by managers, as a health hazard and as unbefitting of ‘a caring profession or a community of scholars’. A school might be similarly described and the incidence similarly decried.

Jackson et al. (2007) defined resilience as the ability to cope or recover from stress and the capacity to learn from the experience. Maidaniuc-Chirila (2015) made a noteworthy addition in defining such recovery as being from a situation where the victim’s integrity was affected. A dynamic process, resilience can motivate people so that recovering from the situation may contribute to their self-actualisation (Wieland & Beitz, 2015). Wieland and Beitz (2015) described resilience as drawing on adaptability, strong self-esteem, use of humour and the ability to use internal and external resources. Resilience maintains balance between stressors and the achievement of one’s personal goals (Pipe et al., 2011). According to Richardson (2002, p. 315), resilience ‘drives a person from survival to self-actualisation’. Wagnild (2009) identified five features of resilience—a meaningful life, perseverance, equanimity, self-reliance and existential aloneness. Existential aloneness refers to each person’s uniqueness and the freedom to sit with oneself, without feeling the need to conform to external norms or pressures (Wagnild & Collins, 2009; Wagnild, 2011).

Wieland and Beitz’s (2015) nursing faculty study found significant chronological stages of response to bullying—during bullying; the decisional stage, when the victims formed some sort of resolve; and after the experience. Of note is that many of the participants had chosen to exit the toxic environment via a change of career. They perceived that they had developed resilience marked by a determination to model positive behaviours themselves, to promote input, to be a public face and to support creativity of others. The support of family and friends and empathetic colleagues was significant as was self-care. Avoidance of the workplace and/or the

perpetrator(s) was common, but critical to all was the rebuilding of their professional identity or persona.

Van Heugten's (2012) New Zealand study of 17 social workers identified many similar themes and at similar stages of the experience, noting that when participants became aware of the extent of negative impacts on them they were prompted to find a better balance and, thus, take action. This action took both proactive and reactive forms such as speaking out, seeking support, documenting events, naming and analysing causes, taking leave, avoidance or yielding. In common with Wieland and Beitz's (2015) findings, the common final stage was to exit the situation. After the event, although for some there were ongoing damaging consequences such as anxiety and depression, the aftermath was also a time of renewed strength and meaning. Participants had found opportunities to contribute in their new surroundings, to develop professionally and, tellingly, had determined to act on lessons learned and not to see such situations arise for others. Subsequently, in Chapter 7 such coping will be referred to as 'integrative', whereby participants in the empirical phase of the research were able to integrate the experience and consolidate or build their worldview and sense of self. The opposite 'disintegrative' response represents the breaking down of the sense of self and/or of belief systems.

Despite the significance of resilience in surviving during and after the event, this is not to blame the victim and propose that resolutions lie with or within the power of the subordinate. The findings of O'Moore and Crowley (2011) into the clinical effects of workplace bullying suggested that the severity of impact may not be a factor of personality and that the stigma attached to reporting workplace bullying behaviour needs to be removed. They concluded that the main intervention to prevent bullying needs to arise at the organisational level. Thus, while resilience may be regarded as

beneficial in individual coping and recovery, it is not sufficient in prevention and intervention.

2.7 PRIMARY DISCOURSE

2.7.1 APPLYING A PARADIGMATIC LENS

So far the review of the literature has revealed the prevailing discourse on destructive leadership and a synthesis of some of the key concepts has been presented. This has been referred to as the secondary descriptive discourse pertinent to the research. In making sense of destructive leadership, rather than selecting a particular disciplinary perspective as a basis for empirical study, an alternative is to allow a holistic worldview as the primary lens through which the phenomenon is viewed. Examined through a paradigmatic focus, destructive leadership may demonstrate a range of presentations and permutations across a range of backdrops and perspectives, and be interpreted in multiple ways. In this sense, it is not tested within particular disciplines, but revealed in and of itself with those findings then informed by the relevant disciplinary perspectives. In answering what an actual experience of destructive leadership is, what such an experience tells us about the different actors and how people manage the experience, the leadership dynamic in all its variety lies at the heart of the research.

For the purposes of the study, one of the theories consistent with the complexity sciences, autopoietic theory, provides the lens through which to explore and explain destructive leadership. Complexity theory has become an interdisciplinary subject (McKelvey, 1999) arising from a scientific paradigm concerned with the relationship between order and disorder (Schermer, 2012) that ‘accepts and builds on random idiosyncratic non-linear behaviour’ (McKelvey, 1999, p. 282). Autopoietic theory, in its conception of reality as ‘complex, dynamic and networked’ (Fuchs & Hofkirchner,

2009, p. 111), has applicability for a number of reasons: 1) it may be applied at both the individual (micro) and the social system (macro) level, encompassing both self and others (Sice et al., 2013); 2) it enables the exploration of relationships and the couplings between entities (Goldspink & Kay, 2003); 3) it has application to social subsystems and normative environments, such as the law (Michailakis, 1995) and, as in this case, education; 4) it allows for the integration of the philosophical, psychological and sociological concepts derived from the review of these literatures; 5) it posits an inherent ethical dimension (Maturana & Varela, 1992); 6) key autopoietic concepts relate to cognition, language and communication (Luhmann, 1995), all of which may be expected to have relevance to the study; 7) it is consistent with a methodology which taps into narrated experience (Besio & Pronzini, 2010); and 8) it enables the ontological, epistemological, axiological and theoretical framing of the three research questions. Thus, an autopoietic approach provides the theoretical lens through which the destructive leadership dynamic may be understood and constitutes the primary discourse of the study. The application in the context of the study represents a metaphorical appropriation rather than a direct scientific application of the theory in terms of its original biological meaning.

2.7.2 AUTOPOIESIS

First posited in the 1970s by the biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, autopoiesis was originally conceived to address biological and physical phenomena and to convey the essence of living things. Although not used in its strict biological sense in this study, the theory offers rich wider insights. The term Maturana and Varela coined is derived from the Greek *auto* (self) and *poiesis* (to produce) and signals the key tenet of autopoiesis which is self-production, where the primary production of an autopoietic system is itself (Goldspink & Kay, 2003). Autopoietic

systems are commonly referred to as autonomous entities or unities, which consist of complex networks, constantly interacting, transforming, and continually regenerating. These autonomous entities are determined by their internal structure and are distinct from the external environment, although existing within it. The concept of structure in autopoietic terms has a particular meaning, distinct from its common usage. The structure of an entity is formed by its physical components and by the space it occupies. Similarly, organisation, as distinct from common parlance, and from its use earlier in this literature review, refers to the relationships that exist between the structural components of an entity. For example, a square has an identifiable organisation of four equal sides connected at right angles (Mingers, 2006). All squares exhibit these relations. Any particular square will maintain these relations, but structurally may represent in different sizes, colours and so on. A change in structure (e.g., size) would not compromise the shape as a square, however, a change in organisation (an unequal side) would lead to a disintegration of the shape as a square. A further note relates to the use of environment, which has a more customary meaning. In autopoietic theory, whereas structure and organisation are internal to an entity or system, the environment refers to external, surrounding conditions.

In autopoietic terms, people are autopoietic, that is, self-producing and self-regulating entities distinct from the environment, although able to be influenced by other entities and by the environment. Maturana and Varela (1992, p. 75) referred to the interactions that take place between unities and the environment as structural coupling, which represents ‘the history of recurrent interactions leading to the structural congruence between two or more systems’.

Because they are autonomous, autopoietic unities are ‘closed’ systems, so that it is the internal structure of a human being that determines changes that may occur to

that being. The environment, including other entities, may present disturbances and, in a process of reciprocity, one entity may disturb another or the environment. While organisationally autonomous closed systems, humans remain structurally open to the environment, thus, being organisationally closed and operationally open (Mingers, 2006). Structural change may only occur in two ways, as triggered by the environment through perturbations (Maturana & Varela, 1992) or through internal dynamics, but, in either case any change is determined by the structure, that is, the components that make up the system itself (Kay, 2001). As human beings we are able to respond to the distinctions we are able to make and what is important to us (Sice et al., 2013). Figure 4 illustrates the interactions taking place within an autonomous self ('a'), as interactions with another entity ('c'); within the wider medium ('d') and the other represented as ('b'). The realisation of humanness takes place in the relational space between entities ('c') and humanness through the recursive co-modulation with the broader medium ('d' and 'e').

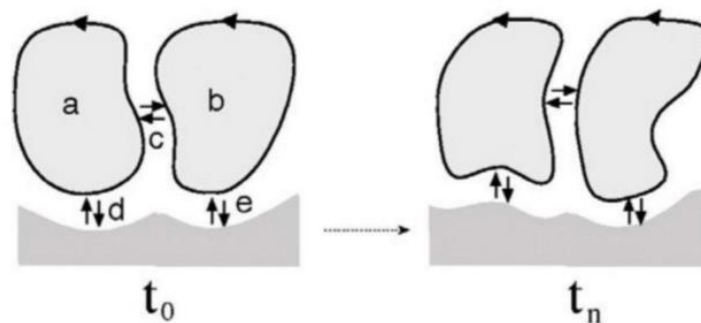


Figure 4. Relationships between Humans as Biological Entities. Reproduced from Maturana and Verden-Zöllner (2008) with permission from the publisher (see Appendix A).

The consequence of being at once closed systems yet open to the environment means not only that there are ongoing changes and states of stability and instability,

compliance and chaos, but that people may react differently to external environmental influences:

What will trigger a change in one autopoietic entity will not necessarily trigger a change in another, or if it does, that change will not be the same, due to the triggering agencies within the structure of each individual nervous system. (Goldspink & Kay, 2003, p. 461)

Further, even the same unity or system may respond differently at different times because of its individual structural nature.

In specifying the structure of unities and explaining how through structural coupling that structure may undergo change, Maturana and Varela (1992) distinguished four domains, including making reference to destructive changes—changes of state, that is, all changes which do not change the organisation of a unity or its identity; destructive changes, that is, those changes which involve loss of organisation or identity; perturbations, that is, interactions that trigger changes of state but not of organisation or identity; and destructive interactions, that is, perturbations that result in destructive change. The two theorists illustrated the point with the example of a vehicle crashing into a tree, whereby, because of their respective structures, a car would undergo a destructive interaction with the environment whereas a tank would merely experience a perturbation. A conception of destructive interaction has significant implications for the research at hand, both in its recognition of destructive change and in its proposition that people may be differentially affected by the same phenomenon. What may constitute a perturbation to one person may constitute a destructive interaction resulting in destructive change for another. For the latter person, the consequence may entail a significant impact on identity or on the prevailing order of his or her life.

The construct of identity is one highlighted through autopoietic theory and is of significance to the research since this is an essential property of self that may be compromised by destructive interactions. Sfarid and Prusak (2005) defined identity as a set of stories about the person that are significant, reifying and endorsable. These narratives emanate from multiple sources: first-person stories from the identified individual, second person from stories told to the individual and third-person stories told about the identified person by others to others. Their model distinguished actual from designated identity, where the former represents the present state of affairs for a person and the latter the expected state of affairs. In an environment of destructive leadership, there is the potential for narratives told by, to and about the identified person to impact on both the actual and designated identities, thus, affecting present and future and with repercussions at the individual and social levels.

In reference to social phenomena, Maturana and Varela (1992, p. 199) argued: Coherence and harmony in relations and interactions between members of a human social system are due to the coherence and harmony of their growth in it, in an ongoing social learning which their own social (linguistic) operation defines and which is possible thanks to the genetic and ontogenetic processes that permit structural plasticity.

Plasticity refers to the way in which human beings are modified by every experience, even if those modifications are not visible (Goldspink & Kay, 2003). Destructive leadership represents both a challenge to coherence and harmony and a means by which people can be modified.

The question of ethics is significant in autopoietic theory as indicated through the ongoing work of Maturana (1988, 1990; Maturana & Verden-Zöllner, 2008). Gash (2011) saw ethical implications of Maturana's work arising in the epistemological,

interpersonal and societal domains. In autopoietic epistemology, reality is the result of individual cognition rather than an objective ‘truth’, so that differences may arise in the way people interpret and live their realities. The legitimacy one accords the ‘other’ and the question of known and shared societal values affect the nature of relationships. Maturana (1990, p. 34) considered the greatest spiritual danger for an individual is,

to believe that he or she is the owner of the truth, or the legitimate defender of some principle...because he or she immediately becomes blind to his or her circumstance, and enters into the closed alley of fanaticism.

Such beliefs may lead to aggression, whereby another person is denied as a legitimate other in coexistence with the self (Maturana & Verden-Zöllner, 2008). Maturana explained the biological nature of humanness and human conflict in terms of the ‘biology of love’, arguing that humans at all stages of life are love-dependent and become physically and psychologically ill when deprived of love and required to live a life centred in mistrust and a manipulation of relations (Maturana & Verden-Zöllner, 2008).

Consistent with this biological theory, Maturana illustrated relational behaviour through the contrasting examples of love and power relations, whereby love is unidirectional and power bidirectional. In love, the loved one is regarded as a legitimate other, irrespective of whether that other is an active participant in the relationship. Power, conversely, is a relation of domination and submission, entailing self-negation on both sides. The dominating one negates the autonomous self by acting as if superiority were intrinsic, while the submissive one negates self through the act of submission. Relations of power entail the negation of others and those who live in relations of power live continuously in the creation and recreation of domination over

others. A consequent 'slide into tyranny' conserves the relations of domination and submission (Maturana & Verden-Zöllner, 2008).

Since Maturana and Varela's first formulation, the application of the autopoietic theory has broadened beyond human individuals as living, biological, autopoietic systems to encompass social systems. The prolific writing of the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann, although not without its critics and more popular in European and Eastern than in English-speaking countries (Guzzini, 2001), has been influential in systems theory. Luhmann (1995) applied autopoietic theory sociologically, arguing that social systems are self-referential with their own boundaries distinct from the external environment and continually reproducing themselves. Nation-states would be examples of social systems and families another (Kihlstrom, 2011). By extension, education and educational institutions constitute social systems.

The means by which social systems reproduce themselves is through communication. An act of communication results in another act of communication and, thus, the system is cyclically maintained and reproduced (Fuchs & Hofkirchner, 2009). Communication is by its nature reciprocal, requiring two entities or systems to give and/or receive and make meaning and consists of a synthesis of three selections, what (information), how (utterances) and which reaction (understandings and misunderstandings) (Luhmann, 1990). The complexity of the modern world means that systems have formed functionally differentiated subsystems, such as the law, education, health, the economy and religion: 'Law is one such self-reproductive system which organises and conceptualises influences and demands from the environment in terms of its norms legal/illegal' (Michailakis, 1995, p. 323). As in this case with law, and similarly with education, subsystems have their characterising self-

referential communication. Given that communication represents the coexistence of different understandings (Sice et al., 2013), it becomes fundamental to a study of destructive leadership.

Two short pieces by Luhmann are of particular interest to the current research, *Trust* and *Power*, published together in a 1979 English translation. In *Trust*, Luhmann explored the origins and purposes of trust, seeing it as a means of complexity reduction, whereby humans have certain expectations of themselves, of others or of systems and base decisions on those expectations. Luhmann gave the example of driving a car and the fact that, despite putting themselves at some risk, people do so trusting that firstly there are road rules, or norms, designed to simplify multiple diverse options and give certainty and, secondly, that others will similarly observe those rules. At the personal individual level, trust is integral to an individual's internal structure, as Luhmann holds that it is about maintaining self-respect and social justification so that a person does not look foolish. Where there is a weakening of trust there may be significant implications for self-confidence, 'leading to extensive changes in internal dispositions' (Luhmann, 1979, p. 27). How the individual responds to a weakening of trust is also internally determined, such that where there is high self-confidence, 'the failure of the object of trust can only inflict partial and isolated damage on a more strongly differentiated internal system' (Luhmann, 1979, p. 27).

This discussion has relevance for the research linking to the key concept of trust which emerged in the first section of the literature review (Whicker, 1996; Solomon, 2005) and explaining how alternative valence emerges (Goldspink & Kay, 2003). Different systems react in different ways. In closing his treatise on trust, Luhmann (1979, p. 75) hypothesised that,

a social system which requires, or cannot avoid, distrusting behaviour among its members for certain functions needs at the same time mechanisms which prevent distrust from gaining the upper hand, and, from being reciprocated by a process of reciprocal escalation, turned into a destructive force.

In reference to organisational governance, Calton and Lad (1995, p. 274) argued that in the absence of safeguards against malfeasance, 'Trust is the essential and lubricant for long-term, value-creating organizational interactions'.

In *Power* (Luhmann, 1979), the companion piece to *Trust*, Luhmann pondered the nature and function of power and argued that the latter property lies in its regulation of contingency (p. 114), a means of coping with societal complexity. Power is a medium of communication, communicating an asymmetrical relationship between alter and ego. However, while Luhmann may caution that the reach of power should not be exaggerated, 'As systems are autopoietically organized, one system cannot interfere in another system's internal operations' (Borch, 2005, p. 164). Such a contention should be viewed in the context of a destructive asymmetrical relationship, where the destructive interaction causes change (Maturana & Varela, 1992).

A limitation of Luhmann's application of autopoiesis to social systems theory is suggested in his famed debate with Habermas (Habermas & Luhmann, 1971), where Habermas argued that Luhmann was interested in describing society rather than addressing social problems. Luhmann actively argued, for example, against protest movements because they react against the functional differentiation of society. Fuchs and Hofkirchner (2009) took up Habermas' point to offer an alternative view that introduces critical social theory into the debate, arguing that what is missing from Luhmann's application is human-centredness. In Luhmann's model, it is communication that communicates rather than individuals, thus, excluding 'the life

world in which ethical and moral arguments balance the outcome' (Kihlstrom, 2011, p. 294). In contrast, critical social systems theory applied to autopoietic theory holds,

What is permanently created in society is the fundamental quality of humans, their sociality. Society reproduces and produces man as a social being, and man reproduces and produces society by socially coordinating human actions. Man is creator of, and created by society; society and humans produce each other mutually (Fuchs & Hofkirchner, 2009, p. 18).

It is hardly surprising that differing interpretations and controversies about autopoietic theory exist, as they do in regard to most theories. Indeed, the very essence of a theory is that it posits suppositions designed to invite debate and experimentation. While references to some of the differences in the application of autopoietic theory are presented here, the central point is that autopoiesis offers an overarching theory, important key concepts and a promising approach, all of which serve to inform the research design, analysis of data and resulting propositions of the research. Further, contrary to Luhmann's view of individual agency dissolved into systems communications (Guzzini, 2001) and by reference to the critical social systems theory advocated by Fuchs and Hofkirchner (2009), the requirement to act, to create and to recreate with individual and societal moral and social responsibility is maintained. Such a worldview guides this study.

2.7.3 OTHER KEY AUTOPOIETIC CONCEPTS

As well as the term 'autopoiesis', a number of autopoietic concepts have been introduced including structures and organisation, structural coupling, perturbations, plasticity, self-referencing, reciprocity, autonomy and closed and open entities, identity, destructive change, social systems, communication and ethical and moral

responsibility. There remain three further and related concepts central to the formulation and conduct of this study.

2.7.3.1 COGNITION

In their explication of autopoietic theory, Maturana and Varela (1992) continually incorporated the importance of cognition as structural coupling and the means by which we make sense of and act in a context. Cognition is the management of interactions between an entity and its environment (Bourgine & Stewart, 2004). As we seek to make sense of our world and act in that environment, autopoietic theory sees cognition not as, ‘a representation of the world “out there”, but rather as an ongoing bringing forth of a world through the process of living itself’ (Maturana & Varela, 1992, p. 11).

The view is an enactive one (Sice et al., 2013), where cognitive ability is a continuous process of becoming, of learning to ‘see’ clearly and make appropriate choices. In an embodied view of cognition, mind and body are inextricably linked in cognition and action (Mingers, 2006). The process of enaction is one whereby ‘the subject of a perception creatively matches its actions to the requirements of the situation’ (Protevi, 2005, pp. 169–170), shaping the environment through action and decision-making. Thus, this theory of knowledge is subjectivist and interpretivist. It speaks to the way in which the emergence of a phenomenon such as destructive leadership may be co-constructed by those within the environment, suggesting that people are not, and need not necessarily see themselves as, passive recipients in the experience. The latter view implies the potential for agency and an individual’s capacity to act in a given situation.

2.7.3.2 LANGUAGE

Structural coupling (Maturana & Varela, 1992) takes place through behavioural interactions, but also arises through linguistic exchanges. In autopoietic theory, language is more than a tool we use, rather it is a ‘venue for action, coupling the cognitive domains of two or more agents’ (Sice et al., 2013, p. 98) and the defining human characteristic (Mingers, 2006). The use of the participle ‘linguaging’ signals language as an active, dynamic means by which we interact with our environment. Our discourse is not only integral to our own existence, but becomes part of our environment. Language is not denotational and representative, but rather connotative and consensual (Mingers, 2006). Humans are linguistic beings with thoughts and experiences mediated through language. Through our language we coordinate action and shape our world and through the quality of conversations we may improve our understandings and assumptions about others. The key dynamic occurring in the space between entities that are structurally coupled Maturana termed ‘conversation’, which is the interplay and interlinking between linguaging (what is said and done) and emotioning (the flow of emotions) (Brocklesby, 2007). Language is crucial to the interplay that is structural coupling, however, it may be used either to encourage or to stifle creativity, depending on how organisations and leaders see their individual and collective roles. ‘If language is used to promote the status-quo or, one way or other, reinforce a specific world-view, then it can lead to pathological organisational life, where the individual members are “enslaved” to support and act in organisational processes that they have no access to change’ (Sice et al., 2013, p. 99).

2.7.3.3 OBSERVERS

There is no such concept as absolute objectivity in autopoietic theory, rather, explanations and descriptions are made by observers. Observers ‘see’ the world as

perceived through the process of living (Parboteeah & Jackson, 2007). For the purpose of this study, the observer is a participant situated in a hierarchically subordinate position to a leader. In terms of the study, there is a second observer, the researcher, who, in studying the observers, is also an observer and in becoming so may exert an influence:

any agent that becomes a part of the system being observed has the potential to influence that system...In other words the effect of the entry of a new observing agent is to change the system boundary to include the agent.
(Goldspink & Kay, 2003, p. 15)

This view has implications both for the conduct of the data-gathering semi-structured interviews and for the analysis of data in regard to how the researcher positions and is positioned through those processes. These questions are taken up in the next chapter.

2.8 A SYNTHESIS OF DISCOURSES

What follows is a synthesis of the primary and secondary discourse as the underpinning of the empirical study. This synthesis takes two forms, first presenting what part of the picture of destructive leadership the different discourses illuminate and, second, offering an explanation of how they become interdependent. In combination they offer an explanation of the phenomenon of destructive leadership as established from the literature.

At the first level of synthesis, the secondary descriptive discourse—incorporating the disciplines of philosophy, psychology and sociology; the intertwined domains of leaders, subordinates and organisations; the field of education; and the literature on resilience—illuminates what destructive leadership is—abuse, bullying, manipulation, mistreatment, callousness and so on—and also what it does—divides, debilitates, demotivates, destroys, depresses and so on, and, in some cases, strengthens.

The primary explanatory discourse of autopoietic theory suggests how it does so and the process happening through the experience—the triggering of destructive change to the individual’s sense of self and personal and wider social and professional identity. Thus, by considering the primary and secondary discourse together, the first level of synthesis offers an understanding of what destructive leadership is, what it does and how it has an effect.

The second layer of synthesis, emanating from the particular ‘value’ that autopoietic theory adds, consists of an explanation of the phenomenon at the micro, meso and macro levels of destructive leadership, with autopoietic theory bridging the gap between physiological and psychological and sociological and philosophical dimensions of the individual subordinate’s experience. Destructive leadership creates an environment of perturbations which trigger changes of state in individuals, whereby, in some instances and for some individuals, the result is destructive change at the micro level, such as loss of identity, sense of self, ill-health and the like. Simultaneously, destructive leadership triggers perturbations in the wider environment, inclusive of other individuals, such that the subordinate is affected at the meso level, experiencing social isolation, alienation or humiliation at the hands of others caught up in the destructive dynamic. Autopoietic theory helps explain that the destructive process takes effect at multiple levels, impacting on individuals in their social environment (meso level), internally (micro level) and within a broader universal and ethical realm (macro).

The potential of autopoietic theory is that it provides a means of explaining destructive leadership that may then be tested empirically. By adapting Maturana and Verden-Zöllner’s (2008) graphic (Figure 4), destructive leadership may be understood as influence operating at four levels, as shown in Figure 5.

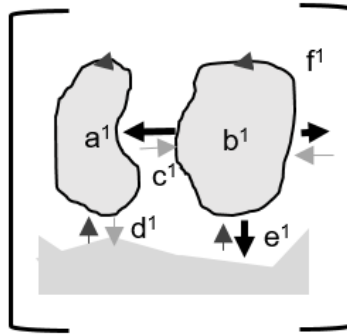


Figure 5. An Autopoietic Conception of Destructive Leadership as represented by a^1 to f^1 . Adapted from Maturana and Varela's (1992) conception of human interaction.

Although possible, not all levels need necessarily be affected or evident in every case.

1. At the individual level, where the internal structure of the subordinate person (a^1) is disturbed, physiologically and/or psychologically, by the experience.
2. At the level of structural coupling (c^1) in the space in-between the leader and the subordinate (a^1) and the leader (b^1), where the destructive dynamic actually takes place, in circumstances where the influence of the leader (\leftarrow) is exercised as asymmetrical power.
3. At the wider environment level (e.g., other people, the institution) in the space in-between the subordinate (a^1) and the environment (d^1) and the leader and the environment (e^1), such that the subordinate's identity and position in the setting may be disturbed and the subordinate marginalised as the leader exercises greater power in and over that environment.
4. At the universal level where the ethical milieu (f^1) is compromised by the existence of the phenomenon and its individual and environmental consequences.

As discussed previously, overlaying the conception of identity as stories (Sfard & Prusak, 2005) suggests that identity could be influenced at multiple points. For example, through the first-person narratives occurring within the person a^1 ; second-person narratives possible at both c^1 and d^1 , where the identified person has identity-shaping stories told directly to them; and third-person narratives at e^1 , where identity-shaping stories are told about the identified person by the leader b^1 or others in the environment e^1 . Further, the model suggests implications in the wider ethical realm, with possible impact on cultural identity represented at f^1 . At each point there is the potential for immediate effect on actual identity and future impact on designated identity, mediated through alternative valence and the individual adaptive capacity of those involved (Parboteeah & Jackson, 2007). In terms of the latter, the potential exists for individuals impacted by the experience to strengthen as a consequence. One adaptation may be to develop in resilience, to learn from the experience and to move to a state of self-actualisation (Richardson, 2002; Wieland & Beitz, 2015).

The wider implication of this conception is that, in disturbing individual equilibrium, destructive leadership is disturbing the broader social ecosystem and, thus, the health and sustainability of that ecosystem. The ripple effect is analogous, whereby the immediate point of impact has widening repercussions such that particular actions and enactions create emergent sets of interactions elsewhere and for other people, ultimately developing into a pervasive culture (see Figure 6). The destructive action may affect the immediate parties, in this case the subordinate experiencing threatened wellbeing or identity and the leader gaining enhanced power. It may also have an effect beyond this interaction, as others may become influenced by and/or aligned with one party or are impacted by its consequences, such as through changes

to policies or processes, thus, in an accretive process, building the broader culture. In simple terms, though worse for some than others, bad leadership is bad for everyone.

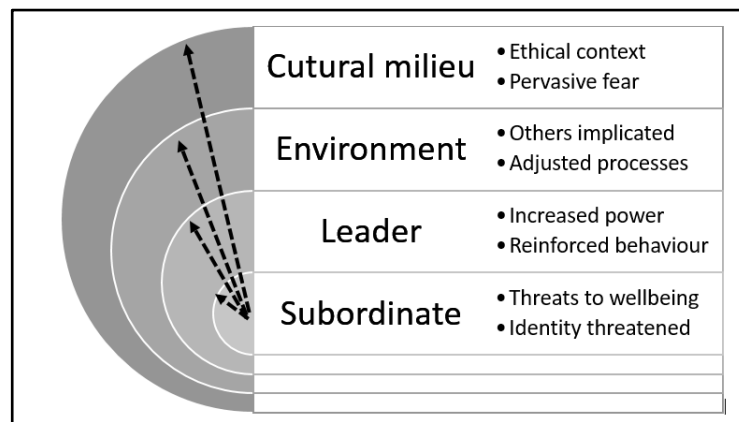


Figure 6. The Ripple Effect of Destructive Leadership from immediate impact to widening repercussions.

However, this is not necessarily the final picture in that, in the same way the destructive ripple spreads, so too does the potential for a positive widening impact from the leader who has gained in resilience and in resolve to create an alternative internal or external environment, free from the behaviours to which they had been subjected and from the relationships in which they had been enmeshed. The counter milieu would be one of trusting relationships, participative practice, personal and professional wellbeing and a healthy and sustainable ecosystem. The creation of such an antithetical environment represents an expression of individual or organisational agency.

2.8.1 RETURNING TO DEFINITIONS

Before turning to a schema that summarises the major elements of the study drawn from the literature review, it is appropriate to return to the definitions of leadership with which the chapter began (Section 2.3.1) and to consider additional understandings deriving from systems theory. Earlier in this chapter, it was argued that leadership is a values-neutral abstraction which can manifest in multiple ways

including destructively. From a systems theory perspective, leadership is an influence process which arises through interactions across an organisation, forming a web of positive and negative interactions and relationships (Goldstein, Hazy, & Lichtenstein, 2010) in the form of structural couplings. It is a complex systems approach, not in the sense of being difficult and complicated, but, rather, in being interrelated, interactive, interdependent and emergent (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009). Leadership constitutes one of the means by which complexity is reduced, with trust invested in leadership for the purpose of sense-making and decision handling (Luhmann, 1979). Because leadership is about interactions it is not about the leader as a person, but as an objective thing that is 'the leader'. In a complexity construction, leadership 'happens in "the space between" people as they interact' (Goldstein et al., 2010, p.), as illustrated in Figure 5 (point 'c'). Rather than classifications such as 'transformational', 'transactional', 'servant' or 'authentic', a complexity theory of leadership may be termed generative (Surie & Hazy, 2006). The implication for the current study is of the research object as a moving, changing dynamic of interactions, involving multiple people and situations and distinct from the leader as individual authority. As stated by Hazy and Uhl-Bien (2013, p. 80), leadership is not about individuals, but 'recognizable patterns of social and relational organizing among autonomous heterogeneous individuals as they form into a system of action'.

The idea of complex adaptive systems is of nonlinear interconnected networks in which agents, those autonomous heterogeneous individuals, are bonded collectively and dynamically working in response to shared needs. Thus, complexity leadership theory frames leadership as a study of the interactive dynamics of complex systems which necessarily sees leadership as socially constructed and deeply contextual (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Complexity leadership theory introduces the idea of 'managed

chaos' into leadership research and discourse 'by offering a theory grounded in complexity science—a science based in concepts of tension, chaos, and change' (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007, p. 646).

The notion proposed previously in this chapter, that the construct of leadership is values-neutral, is not to suggest that how it is exercised is values-neutral. As noted previously, Maturana and Varela (1992) made explicit the ethical basis of autopoietic theory. The very notion that there is a reciprocal relationship between us and our environment, that there are biological and social interdependencies, signals the far-reaching implications of our actions and, therefore, introduces the question of agency over and responsibility for those actions. Both leader and led are accountable for their actions and interactions as they exercise the mutual influence characteristic of generative leadership. In the field of education, Sice et al. (2013, p. 95) considered leadership capability from an autopoietic perspective:

Autopoiesis suggests that the quality of human experience, is determined by the interplay between the internal dynamics (biological processes) and the environment (social and other) of an active situated human agent, and, thus, offers an alternative perspective to interpreting and developing leadership capability.

2.9 THE STUDY SCHEMA

By adopting an autopoietic approach, it is possible to make observations about the social phenomenon of destructive leadership rather than, for example, to make assessments of personality types or of organisational constructs or to attempt to determine causation. It allows that the experience itself may be explored to be understood. Further, while situated in a biological and social structural worldview, autopoietic theory holds an intrinsically ethical position, 'an ethics that springs from

human reflection and puts human reflection right at the core as a constitutive social phenomenon' (Maturana & Varela, 1992, p. 245).

Autopoietic theory is a relevant medium through which to investigate destructive leadership as a threat to the coherence and harmony of ethical social systems and individuals in those systems. This medium was adopted in the study, integrated with the interdisciplinary concepts and terminology previously synthesised in Table 4. (A schema illustrating the underlying logic from the literature review and the relationship between its key elements was previously illustrated in Figure 1 in Section 2.4.)

2.10 CONCLUSION

Descriptions of leadership approaches, as transformational, transactional, servant, authentic or adaptable emphasis, present a common view of leadership as intrinsically constructive and ethical and of negative manifestations as aberrant. Nevertheless, such negative manifestations exist generally and also specifically in the field of education. A review of the literature related to the subject of destructive leadership has necessarily encompassed the literatures from the disciplines of philosophy, psychology and sociology, the field of education and on the subject of resilience. Examined individually, they provide useful conceptual and semantic ways to describe destructive leadership and its associated behaviours and effects. The personality traits of the different actors in the leadership dynamic; the toxic interplay between leaders and subordinates within their environment; power relations and the exercise of dominance; the operation of organisational hierarchies; societal norms and the normative environment of education; notions of trust and conduct; debilitating psychological, physiological and relational consequences; and the capacity of victims

to rebound and gain strength are all concepts identified in the discourse on destructive leadership.

In contrast to the generally accepted implicitly constructive conception of leadership, this thesis argues that leadership is a values-neutral abstraction that may be manifested in either positive or negative ways. While the concepts gleaned from these disciplinary literatures inform an understanding of the phenomenon to a point, such as what disposition may dispose a leader to behave negatively or why hierarchies may produce power imbalances that lead to negative impact, they do not explain the process of the phenomenon. By considering destructive leadership through an autopoietic lens, as an existential and generative (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007) phenomenon consisting of actions, interactions and enactions, it is possible to adopt a more nuanced approach which is able to encompass not only what and why the phenomenon is, but how it is—how it is experienced, how it comes about, how it produces differentiated responses and, potentially, how it may be responded to. Further, autopoietic theory (Maturana & Verden-Zöllner, 2008) suggests that the destructive process takes effect at macro, meso and micro levels, impacting on individuals internally (micro level), in their group or social environment (meso level) and in the wider ethical milieu (macro level). An original contribution of this study so far is the synthesis of current understandings of destructive leadership into a four-level conception which proposes that 1) the phenomenon takes place in the space in-between leader and subordinate and that its consequences are felt at 2) the individual, 3) environmental and 4) universal levels.

As introduced in Chapter 1 and explained through the literature review, an overview presents the study as ontologically subjectivist, epistemically constructivist and interpretive and axiologically ethical as viewed through the lens of autopoietic theory. The foci of this chapter have been the ontological, epistemic, axiological and

theoretical elements of the research paradigm (as detailed in Table 2). The methodological, instrumental and analytical elements will be explored in Chapter 3.

A review of the literature confirms why such research is warranted and its potential significance. While literature on exemplary leaders may inspire good practice, it may also serve to disguise the existence of less exemplary and even harmful and morally wrong practices. If means of addressing destructive practice are to be found, the reality must first be acknowledged and then understood in terms of what it is and how it works—what is the phenomenon and how might it be described, what responses does it elicit, what impact does it have, what processes are involved and how might it be explained, and, importantly, how might lessons be learned at the individual and the organisational levels so that the phenomenon may be interpreted for its instructive insights? The methodology chapter that follows frames a qualitative exploration of such questions using a phenomenographic approach.

CHAPTER 3:

PHENOMENOGRAPHIC DESIGN AND PROCESS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review of Chapter 2 revealed a scarcity of research dealing with the dark side of leadership in education, particularly a lack of empirical studies. Conventional wisdom defines leadership positively, potentially disguising the existence and consequences of leadership manifested destructively, yet the existing studies of destructive leadership highlight its deleterious and lasting individual and social effects. An emergent area is of the strength that may derive from being enmeshed in such situations, as suggested through studies of resilience. Thus, the literature review not only provides the language and the logic for the empirical element of the present study, but the reasons why the study is warranted. The empirical framework for the study is the subject of this chapter.

3.2 CHAPTER STRUCTURE

This chapter begins with a rationale for the use of the chosen methodology, phenomenography, explaining how this approach is consistent with the conceptual findings from the literature review and with the theoretical lens through which the phenomenon is studied, autopoietic theory. The data collection approach is outlined, with the major instrument consisting of semi-structured interviews with leaders who were subjected to destructive leadership. Sample population selection and procedures are outlined and their relevance explained, as are the methods used for the collection of data and its analysis. Questions of quality criteria such as validity, reliability and generalisability in phenomenography are considered, particularly in relation to

trustworthiness and its finer presentations such as credibility, transferability and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Collier-Reed et al., 2009) and authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Ethical considerations, including the sensitivity of the subject matter and its implications for the conduct of the study are discussed, in particular the work of Ference Marton (1986, 1988; Marton & Pong, 2005), practical guidelines for the phenomenographic research by Ashworth and Lucas (2000) and a qualitative study in the field of education by Blase and Blase (2002).

The foci of this chapter are the elements that, sitting within the ontology, epistemology, axiology and theoretical bases of the study, relate specifically to its principally qualitative, inductive methodology and to the instrumentation and analysis compatible with that methodology (see Table 6).

Table 6

Elements of the Study Relevant to Chapter 3

Theory	Autopoietic theory, critical social systems theory
Ontology	Subjectivist, constitutive ontologies
Epistemology	Constructivist, interpretivist
Axiology	Ethical, moral
Methodology	Qualitative, phenomenographic, inductive
Instrumentation	Semi-structured interview, expert panels
Analysis	Conceptions, categories of description, outcome space

As will be detailed in the chapter, this research addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the phenomenon of destructive leadership, as experienced and retrospectively described by school leaders who have survived the experience?

2. How do survivors of destructive leadership understand and accommodate the phenomenon?
3. What is the outcome for survivors of the experience of destructive leadership in terms of impact and potential for learning?

3.3 PARADIGM JUSTIFICATION AND METHODOLOGY

Deciding to use phenomenography as the methodological approach for the study was based on its ontological, epistemological and axiological congruence, that is, its consistency with autopoietic theory, the specific social phenomenon of destructive leadership and a subjective experience of that phenomenon. As a relational, experiential, content-oriented and qualitative approach (Marton & Wenestam, 1978; Marton, 1986, 1988) that aims to explore the ‘qualitatively different ways in which people understand a particular phenomenon’ (Marton & Pong, 2005, p. 335), phenomenography was well-suited to the intent of the study. In essence, phenomenography is distinguished by four key features (Wright, Murray, & Geale, 2007): 1) it is focused on variation in the ways phenomena are experienced; 2) it concentrates on the experience of an experience rather than individuals themselves, as distinct from the older phenomenology; 3) conceptions of reality as expressed by subjects are captured under categories of description; and 4) the logical relationships and underlying meaning are uncovered as the outcome space (Marton, 1995).

Offering an interpretive perspective (Wright et al., 2007), phenomenography is concerned with people’s experiences and conceptions of the world and with characterising variations in those experiences (Richardson, 1999) through categories of description (Marton & Pong, 2005). Grounded in individual lived experience and with the intent of coming to collective meaning (Barnard, McCosker, & Gerber, 1999), the approach is appropriate in the context of a study which aims to explore

subordinates' encounters with particular behaviours and practices, that is, destructive leadership and their responses to and lessons from those encounters. Although it has a commonality with phenomenology that the research object is human experience explored qualitatively, phenomenography differs in that its purpose is not to find singular essence, but both similarity and variation in the world (Sjöström & Dahlgren, 2002). It could be conceived as more akin to a three-dimensional model, the purpose of which is to understand the experience of a phenomenon.

Interest in phenomenography has gained momentum since the 1970s, particularly in the field of education in which it emerged (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000) from the research of Ference Marton (1986, 1988) into the outcomes and processes of student learning at the University of Göteborg in Sweden. The approach continues to be most commonly applied to the exploration of learning-related experiences and has greatest currency in the field of education (Yates, Partridge, & Bruce, 2012). An empirically-based approach (because phenomenography seeks to identify the qualitatively different ways in which individuals experience, perceive, understand and conceptualise different phenomena) (Richardson, 1999), its concern as a methodology is with things as they appear to and are experienced by people (Marton & Pang, 1999). The view is a 'from-the-inside' perspective that seeks to describe the world as the individual experiences it (Marton & Wenestam, 1978). Unlike contemporary ethnographers, phenomenographic researchers accept interviewees' statements at face value (Bligh, 1993), but they do more than simply recount stories. While there may be one level of consciousness evident through a narrative, there is also the implicit knowledge to which the researcher attends and which informs knowledge of the social phenomenon being studied (Giddens, 1979).

Phenomenography tries to describe relations between individuals and their world, regardless of whether those relationships manifest as experience, thought or behaviour (Marton, 1986). In phenomenography, there is no objective reality or intrinsic essence to be revealed, rather, there are conceptions of particular phenomena dependent on the observer's perspective. The non-dualistic approach means that the research object and subject are inseparably interrelated (Yates et al., 2012) and meaning derives from an exploration of the phenomenon as experienced.

It is the conceptions, and the relatively finite ways in which they may be determined to be qualitatively different, to which the phenomenographer attends to characterise the variations in experience and the architecture of this variation (Richardson, 1999). The fundamental results of a phenomenographic study are a set of categories of description by which the phenomenographer tries to describe how phenomena are experienced (Marton, 1986). The categories are not individual perceptions but, rather, descriptions at the collective level (Collier-Reed et al., 2009). Discerning the relatively limited number of qualitatively different conceptions and describing the architecture of the variations is the phenomenographer's goal.

Marton and Booth (1997) proposed an 'anatomy of experience' to explain how it is comprised and may be studied. They argued that human awareness is made up of two key features—meaning and structure—and that these two features bear a simultaneous and dialectical relationship. Meaning is termed the referential aspect, relating to the labelling ascribed to an experience to define its existence. In terms of the current study, this represents the ontological first question. The structural aspect relates to the features of an experience discerned by and focused on by the person. There are two elements that make up the structural aspect, the internal horizon and the external horizon. The internal horizon is what is in focus for the person, the figure in

the foreground, while the external horizon forms the background or perceptual boundary. Marton and Booth (1997) gave the analogy of a bird. To distinguish the bird you see it from its surrounds, that is, the external horizon. The bird as a creature, the internal horizon, is seen in its parts, for example, body, beak and plumage, and as a whole. Therefore, the structural aspect entails ‘discernment of the whole from the context on the one hand and discernment of the parts and their relationships within the whole on the other’ (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 87). In terms of the current study, the structural aspect represents the epistemic frame by which a phenomenon is understood. Figure 7 illustrates the anatomy of experience based on Marton and Booth (1997).

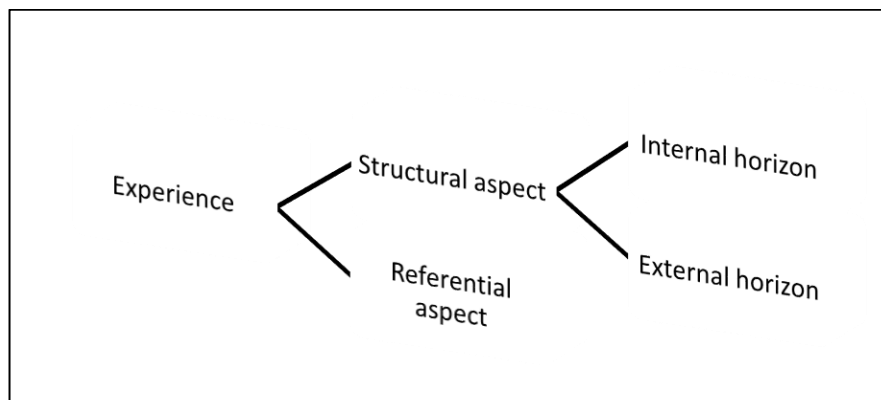


Figure 7. The Anatomy of Experience. Redrawn from Marton and Booth (1997, p. 88).

The referential/structural framework derives from Gurwitsch’s (1964) theory of awareness, whereby human consciousness is distinguished in three domains, theme, thematic field and margin. Marton (2000) argued that our consciousness or awareness has a structure to it, with some things in the foreground and others receding to the ground of the thematic field and margin. The theme refers to the object held in focus; the thematic field forms the background to the theme, out of which it emerges, while the margin coexists with the theme without being integral to its meaning (Gurwitsch, 1964). The theme constitutes the internal horizon, while the thematic field and margin together constitute the external horizon, as shown in Figure 8.

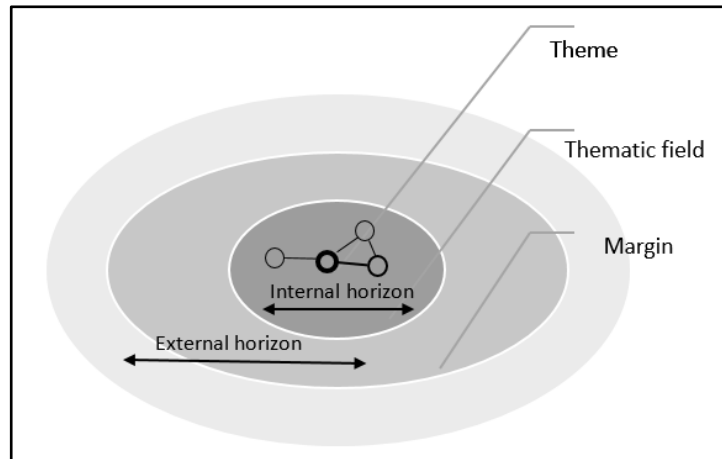


Figure 8. Gurwitsch's (1964) Theory of Awareness. Redrawn from Cope (2004, p. 9).

Offering an adapted framework, in a hypothetical interview designed to explain phenomenography, Trigwell (2000) used the terms what—that is, ‘the thing’—and how—that is, the action of doing so—as a means to simplify the notion with respect to what is focused on. He equates these to the referential and structural aspects respectively. As illustrated in Figure 9, Marton and Booth (1997) also used the what/how aspects, though in a more intricate way so that there were two layers, such that each of the referential and structural aspects could be further defined in terms of what and how.

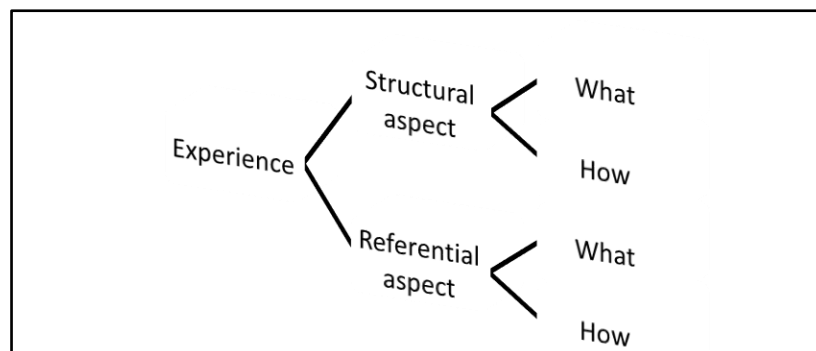


Figure 9. A Two-level Anatomy of Experience (Marton & Booth, 1997).

Both the what/how and the referential/structural frameworks are in popular use in phenomenographic studies (Harris, 2011), sometimes concurrently (Cope, 2004). However, in a meta-analysis of 56 phenomenographic studies employing either or both

frameworks, Harris (2011) highlighted a number of flaws in the frameworks and their use such as the lack of clear theoretical bases, the imprecise nature of the terminology of the frameworks and their inconsistent application across studies. Harris (2011) concluded that the frameworks are of value when they are regarded more as thinking tools applied to interrogate the data and their meanings, but, bearing in mind their limitations, there is also merit in each case:

The what/how framework encourages researchers to analyse data in light of not just what is being understood, but to also consider the process, actions and motives behind this understanding. The referential/structural framework encourages researchers to contextualise people's conceptions and examine parts that comprise them. (Harris, 2011, p. 118)

For the purposes of the current study, the referential/structural framework has been applied within a theory of awareness on the basis that it is the contextualisation that best yields collective meaning of the phenomenon and that the referential aspect implies what, which is the intention of the first research question, and the structural aspect implies how, the intention of the second research question. Further, the theory of awareness has particular relevance to a study of people's encounters with destructive leadership because it attracts attention to what is in focus for them through that experience, the internal horizon, what is happening in the wider environment, its impact at the personal and environmental levels, the external horizon and, ultimately, its learning outcome. Such concerns become the structural what and are the subject of the third research question.

In adopting a phenomenographic methodology for this study, the prime concern was to study the different ways destructive leadership is experienced and understood by school leaders who perceive they have directly encountered the

phenomenon. The further intention was to determine the relationships between those different ways to arrive at a coherent and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon. The purpose of the latter intention was to surface the learning potential of a negative object. Mapped to a theory of awareness, the framework adopted to serve these purposes was Marton and Booth's (1997) referential and structural framework, informed by the delineation of internal and external horizons.

Ashworth and Lucas (2000, p. 300) offered practical guidelines for the conduct of phenomenographic research, outlined below in italics with each guideline elaborated in relation to its application to the conduct of this study. Reference was made to these guidelines in the design stage and regularly throughout the study.

1. The researcher should tentatively identify the broad objectives of the research study, the phenomenon under investigation, recognising that the meaning of this area may be quite different for the research participant. As suggested by the review of the literature, it was anticipated that participants could have very different experiences of the phenomenon of destructive leadership, through the players' different dispositions, varied manifestations of the phenomenon and the potential for alternative valence. Thus, the interview questions were intentionally open-ended and designed to take meaning from the participants' world rather than to apply predefined meaning to their world. Such an approach was integral to eliciting the variation embedded in the data.

2. The selection of participants should avoid presuppositions about the nature of the phenomenon or the nature of conceptions held by particular 'types' of individual while observing common-sense precautions about maintaining 'variety' of experience. The invitation to participate in the study was open and participants included based on their belief that they had exposure to destructive leadership and their own the meaning

of that term. Participants were not selected with particular stories and learnings in mind. They were, however, selected to maximise variation in the data and, thus, participants were sought from both government and non-government sectors, from primary and secondary phases, from rural and metropolitan areas and among male and female leaders at varying organisational levels.

3. The most appropriate means of obtaining an account should be identified, allowing maximum freedom for the research participant to describe their experience.

Interviewing is the primary method for gathering phenomenographic data (Marton, 1986) and was adopted in the study. Semi-structured open-ended interview questions were framed in such a way as to enable subjects to provide their own definitions and choose their own dimensions of the questions to explore. In phenomenography, these choices are revealing of themselves in terms of an individual's relevance structure (Marton, 1986).

4. In obtaining experiential accounts the participant should be given the maximum opportunity to reflect, and the questions posed should not be based on researcher presumptions about the phenomenon or the participant, but should emerge out of the interest to make clear their experience. The intention of the semi-structured interview in phenomenographic studies is to allow interviewees to have the flexibility to describe their experiences in their own way. Thus, the approach was one of open-ended questions, with clarifications and probes deriving from the comments of the individual interviewee (Trigwell, 2000). Based on Bowden and Walsh (2000), many questions related to eliciting further information, elaborating meaning or adding further to what had been said so far in the interview. Heed was paid to Prosser's (2000) cautionary note to draw out not only descriptions of phenomena, but intentions and conceptions of phenomena. A further opportunity to reflect was provided through

participant checking and feedback on transcripts, at which time several participants made additional reflective comments.

5. The researcher's interviewing skills should be subject to an ongoing review and changes made to interview practice if necessary. For example, stylistic traits which tend to foreclose description should be minimised. The interviews were transcribed progressively, not only to capture the participant's experience but to analyse and monitor the role and language of the researcher in the interview. Care was taken to listen attentively and actively and to reflect back ideas for clarification or elaboration. Through the course of the interview process the researcher paid increased attention to having the interviewees clarify and deepen definitions and clarify meanings.

6. The transcription of the interview should be aimed at accurately reflecting the emotions and emphases of the participant. Each interview was transcribed verbatim and with the attention paid to verbal and non-verbal signals that may not have been conveyed by the actual words of the interviewee, for example, crying, strength of expression or emphatic repetition.

7. The analysis should continue to be aware of the importation of presuppositions, and be carried out with the maximum exercise of empathic understanding. Initial analysis was undertaken at a higher level before attempting to ascribe codes and classifications to the data. The first analysis was for understanding and to be sensitised to the ideas and language emerging from the interviews. The writing of ongoing researcher memos helped reflect on and retain a sense of this higher-level understanding once the more granulated disaggregation of the data commenced. Following the initial thematic coding, each transcript was reviewed holistically and tabulated to capture its internal integrity and its connection to the wider

corpus. This process helped maintain the maximum empathetic understanding advocated by Ashworth and Lucas (2000).

8. Analysis should avoid premature closure for the sake of producing logically and hierarchically-related categories of description. Care was taken firstly to consider each interview on its merits and to allow new concepts to emerge before looking for commonalities and allocating categories of description. An approach of allowing the data to surprise and generating fresh concepts was adopted. In addition to the initial coding, a tabulation of all transcripts was undertaken after which a series of meaning statements were generated and grouped and regrouped, finally evolving into the categories of description (this process is detailed in Chapter 4).

9. The process of analysis should be sufficiently clearly described to allow the reader to evaluate the attempt to achieve bracketing and empathy and trace the process by which findings have emerged. The approach to analysis is described in Section 3.10 as a seven-step process and is applied in Chapter 4 to show how the researcher arrived at the ultimate outcome space and outcome statements. Every effort was made to stay faithful to the purpose of the research, to the lived experience of the participants and to phenomenographic design principles of the study. In doing so, the appropriateness of phenomenography to an autopoietic study has been argued, detailed accounts of the interviews and emerging themes have been provided and the role of the researcher in the process monitored and acknowledged.

3.4 RESEARCH STRATEGY AND DESIGN

The primary purpose of the study was to investigate the phenomenon of destructive leadership as experienced in the past by school leader survivors to understand the process of the phenomenon and lessons it may teach. The central research hypothesis was of the instructive negative (Cray, 2007; Stang & Wong, 2014;

Shepherd et al., 2011), that is, that destructive leadership can prove instructive at multiple individual, group and macro levels in the creation and maintenance of personal and organisational health and wellbeing. The study was based on three questions designed to explore the hypothesis. Informed by autopoietic theory, the questions investigated elements of ‘structural coupling’ (Maturana & Varela, 1992) and the interaction between the person and other unities, such as leaders and fellow subordinates, within the wider environment. Both the questions and the methods used to collect data were designed to capture the cognitive, linguistic and emotional dimensions of the experience. The first question is an ontological one, aiming to reveal what the phenomenon of destructive leadership is as perceived by subordinates through exploring their perceptions of the external world, but as a process of ‘observing from within’ (Michailakis, 1995, p. 324). The second question, an epistemic one, is designed to explore subordinates’ understanding and their sense-making of the phenomenon and the internal dynamics at play (Sice et al., 2013) in the presence of an external destructive environment. The third question is axiological and theoretically based in that it is designed to interpret the process and how destructive leadership works, for example, in terms of impact or in the emergence of alternative valence, such that different individuals may experience the same phenomenon differently and learn different lessons. The first definitional and descriptive question relates to how the observer perceived the other (that is, the leader, the environment and/or the phenomenon); the second explanatory question relates to how they understand themselves and recognise the phenomenon through the situation; and the third interpretive question relates to how observers process the phenomenon, through contextualising the experience, making individual adaptive changes (Parboteeah &

Jackson, 2007), learning from it (Wieland & Beitz, 2015) and clarifying ethical imperatives and moral purpose (Ciulla et al. 2005).

To test the hypothesis that destructive leadership can prove instructive at individual, group and macro levels in the creation and maintenance of individual and organisational health and wellbeing, the research addressed the following specific questions:

1. What is the phenomenon of destructive leadership, as experienced and retrospectively described by school leaders who have survived the experience?
2. How do survivors of destructive leadership understand and accommodate the phenomenon?
3. What is the outcome for survivors of the experience of destructive leadership in terms of impact and potential for learning?

The phenomenographic methodology used in the collection and analysis of data complements the autopoietic ontology and epistemology embedded in the research questions. As outlined in Section 3.3, in phenomenography, the ontological assumptions relate to reality as non-dualistic, whereby the world and the person exist through their interrelationship (Marton, 2000). Since exploring the relationship between people and their world is the central point of phenomenography (Yates et al., 2012), there follows the first ontological research question as to the phenomenon of destructive leadership as experienced and perceived by the participants. The epistemic interests of phenomenography lie in developing understanding through revealing the variations in human experience (Yates et al., 2012). In phenomenology, knowledge is understood in terms of the meaning ascribed to similarities and variations in the phenomenon of interest (Svensson, 1997), conceptualised as human world

relationships (Marton & Pang, 2008). Terminology such as ‘conceptions’ and ‘categories of description’ signal the emphasis on ways of seeing and understanding, as the second epistemically-oriented research question seeks to elicit. In phenomenographic terms, the third research question captures the notion of alternative valence through the identification of variation and the qualitatively different ways of understanding and responding. The ultimate aim is to understand the logical relationships existing across the data as expressed through the outcome space, that is, the complex of experiences that comprise the phenomenon (Yates et al., 2012), in this case, the phenomenon of destructive leadership. Bowden and Walsh (2000) argued that once the categories of description are defined, the phenomenographic research process is complete and the interpretation of the outcomes is then subject to the field of application, which in this study is an autopoietic understanding of educational leadership.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION AND AUTHENTICATION

A three-pronged data collection and authentication process was used. Consistent with its phenomenographic methodology, the first major element of the study involved the conduct and analysis of semi-structured interviews, described in more detail in Section 3.9. Fifteen interviews constituted the principal method of the study designed to answer the three research questions and from which the categories of description and the architecture of variation were derived and formulated into a phenomenographic outcome space.

The second phase of data collection consisted of an authentication process (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) undertaken by exposing a number of the interviewees to the outcome space and capturing their reactions. There were a number of reasons for conducting this second phase. First, the checking of the outcome space represented an

additional form of validation, whereby participants were asked whether their experience was represented by and could be recognised in the outcome space. Second, the interrogation of the outcome space was to assist in identifying potential archetypes for which there had been some evidence in the first tranche. The interrogation was undertaken by asking selected participants to choose the categories and variations in the outcome space that most closely approximated their particular experience, thereby mapping their experience through the model. Of the 15 original interviewees, five were selected for this second phase collection on the basis of their responses in initial interviews indicating they were representative of the variation identified in the outcome space and on the basis of their further availability (discussed in Section 3.7).

The third phase was also conducted after the initial analysis was completed and the outcome space defined. The intention was to incorporate inter-judge communicability (Cope, 2004) through exposure to the outcome space and/or transcripts and to deepen the research through identifying potential archetypes and pathways to build a theory of destructive leadership. The purpose of such a theory would be to help in suggesting pertinent and timely interventions. To assist in this process, a series of expert panels were constituted according to a real-time modified Delphi discussion group. In the first instance, a group of four experienced academics each examined one or more interview transcripts. The members of the research group were selected for their expertise in the complexity sciences and their knowledge of education. They volunteered their time on the basis of their interest in the topic. The members of the group were provided the analytical framework (elaborated on in Chapter 5) and were tasked with reading the anonymised scripts, identifying one or more trigger points and tracing the subsequent flow of events. A second panel consisted of four experienced school leaders who were provided the outcome space

analytical framework and the flow of events derived from the first Delphi group. The third expert group was drawn from an association of retired secondary school principals and comprised 20 former principals who were provided with the analytical framework, the flow of events and the theoretical model posed in Chapter 7. The full inter-judge communicability process and its outcomes are explained in Chapter 7.

3.6 CONTEXT AND SETTINGS

The broad context of the study is the field of school education leadership. The potentially sensitive nature of the research meant it was not appropriate for it to be site-, system- or location-specific as this would automatically entail identification. Using a justification from Blase and Blase (2002), it was further assumed that institutions or systems would be unlikely to grant permission to conduct interviews about long-standing destructive behaviour (to do so would presumably imply identifying both perpetrators and victims and survivors would be unlikely to participate if they felt an element of risk). Thus, the context was provided by the participants themselves and their identifying firstly as school leaders and secondly as people who had directly experienced destructive leadership when in a previous and less senior position. In this sense, the participants were neither representative of particular institutions or groups nor able to be randomly selected. The phenomenographic approach called for maximising variation in the data and, thus, as explained below, participants were purposively sought from a variety of contexts.

3.7 PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLE

In phenomenographic research, it is common for a sample size to range from 10 to 20 participants and up to 30 (Trigwell, 1994). Although a smaller sample size is potentially a point of weakness in the study, Marton and Booth (1997) argued that the size of the sample needs to extend only as far as will elicit sufficiently rich variations

in experience and that broadening the base will not add to the structure of variations. Size, therefore, is determined by two key factors—sufficiency of variations and manageability of the data. The latter is a point of particular relevance in that one of the common techniques of data analysis is to view data, such as interview transcripts, holistically and iteratively (Bowden & Walsh, 2000). Attention to the most suitable sample size for the given context assists in manageability.

The first task in deciding the population for the study under discussion was to establish criteria for the selection of participants, followed by determining the means by which participants meeting those criteria would be recruited. In consideration of the potentially sensitive nature of the topic, the first criteria was to find participants who, while they had direct experience of destructive practice, were possibly no longer in that relationship, had been able to survive the experience and had progressed in their careers and/or their lives. Consequently, the sample sought was not a random one but based on pre-established criteria designed to protect the participants. The intention was to find subjects who had shown resilience and, therefore, might be less vulnerable or prone to exposure as a consequence of their participation in the research. Therefore, the target population in the first instance consisted of current or recently retired school leaders such as principals and deputy principals who may have held a junior position when the situation occurred. These criteria, together with the non-representative nature of the study, called for non-randomised personalised purposive sampling, based on the typicality of the respondents (Robson, 2002), that is, their common characteristic of being school leader survivors of a firsthand experience with destructive leadership.

In addition to their common experience, however, the essence of phenomenographic research is that it is framed around the qualitatively different ways in which a phenomenon may be experienced and so, to maximise the potential for

variation in the data (Manasatchakun, Chotiga, Roxberg, & Asp, 2016; Wolf, Meissner, Nolan, Lemon, John, Baralou & Seemann, 2010), participants were sought from a variety of backgrounds—government and non-government school sectors, primary and secondary phases, rural and metropolitan areas, male and female gender, current and retired employment status, and different levels of leadership. Irrespective of the criteria and consistent with the evidence from literature that the experience of destructive leadership is not uncommon (Aasland et al., 2010; O’Connell et al., 2007; Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Tepper, 2007), recruiting participants did not prove difficult.

Recruitment was conducted through direct representation to an executive member of each state’s Secondary Principals’ Council, Australian Independent Schools Association, and Secondary Retired Principals’ Group who were requested to circulate an open invitation (see Appendix B) through their preferred distribution channels. Because of the potential sensitivity of the topic and consequent issue that a discrete population may not be immediately identifiable (Lee, 1993), there was a greater place for purposive sampling (Robson, 2002) so that a variety of settings could be represented to generate a larger number of categories that described the phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Following from Blase and Blase (2002), leaders were contacted through the organisational channels described above (groups and associations) with the invitation made either to participate in the study or to refer others who would meet the criteria of direct experience of destructive leadership, survival and subsequent career progression. Interest was followed up either via email or telephone contact and a detailed explanation of the purpose and methodology of the study and the background of the researcher provided via the Participant Information Statement (see Appendix C). Initial questions and concerns were also addressed at that

time. Through this process, no individuals directly declined to be involved in the study, however, five were omitted on the basis that they were unable to reply to the invitation within the timeframe of the study and/or their geographical location lay outside the state chosen for the study. Only those who perceived they had experienced direct and sustained destructive leadership, the effects of which they found to be significantly harmful and who had survived the experience to take on further leadership roles or to move on in their lives, made up the study population. On this basis, 15 participants completed the Participant Consent Form (see Appendix D) and took part in the empirical phase of the research.

In accordance with appropriate phenomenographic samples (Marton & Booth, 1997), the sample size was dependent on the point at which saturation was apparent, that is, when the conceptions were defined (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) and the variations identified. Both the anticipated and final sample sizes were 15 (elaborated on in Chapter 4).

For the second deepening phase of data authentication, five of the 15 original subjects were selected. They were chosen on the basis that their appearance in the initial interviews seemed representative of the variation identified by the final outcome space. Some, for example, had encountered physical expressions of the phenomenon and others a more aloof and callous expression. Some felt deep and personal reactions while others maintained a more detached perspective. Their task was to use the outcome space as a means to map their personal experience, the research intention of which was to assist in identifying possible archetypes and/or pathways in the data from which to build a theoretical model and framework for intervention.

The original NVivo codes and the patterns evident through the meaning statements (see Section 3.10) provided the rationale for the selection of participant

reviewers of the outcome space. Interviews that had coded strongly for a particular experience or perspective were contrasted with ones that showed different emphases and patterns. Convenience also played a part; the five chosen were readily accessible to the researcher and willing to engage with the outcome space model and provide their feedback.

3.8 OBSERVERS AND THE RESEARCHER

As argued in Chapter 2, in autopoietic theory there is no concept of an absolute objective reality, but, rather, explanations and descriptions made by observers about their perceptions as they live their experience. Through living the world, observers perceive the world (Parboteeah & Jackson, 2007). This concept has important methodological implications for the study. Firstly, it speaks to how the research participants may be seen as observers of their experience of destructive leadership. They are in a world, but also observing that world and making sense of it. Accordingly, better understanding the phenomenon of destructive leadership can be achieved through drawing on such observations and sense-making. The perceptions of participant observers are fundamental to the research.

A further methodological implication lies in the approach to be taken in eliciting the participants' perceptions. As lived experiences, they are best understood through hearing the language and thinking of those experiences. While quantitative research and responses to questionnaires and taxonomies may help build knowledge of destructive leadership, narrated experience provides rich and elaborated insights into the phenomenon and the process at play.

The participants are not, however, the only observers in and of the process. According to autopoietic theory, the researcher is also an observer, that is, an observer of the observers and, in the act of doing so, becomes a part of the system being

observed. It further follows that, by entering within the boundary of a participant's world, the researcher may exercise an influence (Goldspink & Kay, 2009). The background and presence of the researcher take on new significance, such that potential influence is recognised and managed. In this context, pertinent to the study is the researcher's long-term background in school education, in leadership roles and with exposure to examples of destructive practice. There follow implications both for the conduct of the data-gathering interviews and for the analysis of data in regard to how the researcher positioned and was positioned through those processes. While the researcher's position and background enabled access and heightened empathy, it also held implications in terms of impartiality in the collection and analysis of the data. These questions are taken up in Chapter 5, Section 5.8.

Consistent with this autopoietic conception, in phenomenography the research perspective is termed 'second order', whereby phenomena are researched through the participant's experiences rather than the researcher's. The insider perspective of phenomenography contrasts with an outsider perspective, the intention of which is to understand the research object as it is rather than as it is conceived (Marton & Booth, 1997). The perspective follows logically from the phenomenographic assumption of the interrelationship between humans and their world (Yates et al., 2012).

At this point it is appropriate to consider the issue of 'bracketing' in phenomenographic research and the requirement of the researcher to set aside personal assumptions and expectations (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000). Although the researcher was familiar with the environment being described, the research undertaking was to look for the similarities and differences within and between participants' responses, rather than how those responses may have matched the researchers' own perceptions. Throughout the empirical phase of the study it was important, therefore, to attend to

the experiences of the participants, not the expectations of the researcher. Corbin and Strauss (2008) held that as it is impossible to suspend one's own experiences and biases these should be acknowledged and used constructively.

Therefore, in addition to being wary of presuppositions, the further complementary strategy was to establish empathy with the participants by suspending the researcher's own world to enter that of the participants. Empathy implies a focus on the experience of the other and a level of detachment, while at the same time having shared understanding and feeling. The researcher's background in school education and experience in leadership positions helped establish a degree of empathy, further enhanced through attentive listening and a concentration on and interest in the individual narrative of each participant. In light of the sensitivity of the subject, empathy was fundamental to the relationship between the researcher and the participants.

3.9 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

In terms of the major methodology, phenomenography typically poses open-ended questions and may employ different forms of methodological discourse, such as individual or group semi-structured interviews, observations, drawings, written responses, and documentation (Marton, 1986, 1994). For this study, the main method was semi-structured interview, seeking to look through the eyes of interviewees as they verbalised experiences, thus, providing insights into how they saw and constructed their world (Meissner & Sprenger, 2010). Phenomenographic data collection aims to capture the utterances of the participants (Cope, 2004), thus, data was collected in semi-structured interviews where participants were asked to describe their experience of destructive leadership, to explain and expand upon events as they remembered them. The participants were guided through the interview to explore not

only events, but also their responses and the impact on them (see Appendix E). The final objective of the interview was to understand their post-experience survival, resilience strategies and lessons learned for themselves or more generally. Overall, the interviews were designed to elicit data for the analysis of linguistic, cognitive and emotional content in relation to the experience of destructive leadership. In accordance with Barnard et al. (1999), the design intent of the interviews was that they were descriptive, focused on the phenomenon, clear, conducted sensitively, presumption-free, personalised and a positive experience.

As suggested by Ashworth and Lucas (2000), the recommendation in phenomenographic interviewing is to limit the number of prepared questions so that the shape of each interview is determined by the interviewee through his or her exploration of the phenomenon. The initial question was, therefore, designed to allow the participants an open-ended opportunity to consider the phenomenon: ‘As someone participating in this study you’ve indicated you’ve had direct personal experience of destructive leadership. Could you talk to me about what destructive leadership means from your point of view?’

Once their understanding of the research object had been established, the second question asked participants to recount those personal experiences. The nature of the interaction between the phenomenographic interviewer and interviewee is conversational (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005) and so, after the introductory questions, most of the additional questions were ones such as, ‘Could you elaborate?’; ‘Are you able to give me some examples?’ or ‘Why do you think that?’

For the second phase of data collection and authentication, the mapping of the outcome space of a dysfunctional social system (see Section 6) was provided to five participants as a reflective tool and as a stimulus. For reflective purposes, the same

matrix was used both to validate the findings as revealed through the data and to reflect on its accuracy in capturing their experience. The matrix of the outcome space was further used to stimulate thinking in terms of points of intervention. As described in Section 3.4, the analytical matrix was also used as a stimulus for three expert real-time Delphi panels, each of which was asked to trace the process emerging from the data and to test the theoretical model.

3.10 PROCEDURES OF DATA ANALYSIS

Different approaches to the analysis of data can be found in different phenomenographic studies, those differences sometimes relating to how the data is processed, holistically or granularly (Bowden & Walsh, 2000), and often based on the number of steps undertaken through the process. In relation to how the data is handled, Marton and Booth's (1997) approach was a granular method, selecting, sorting and re-sorting specific quotations across all the interviews, while others (Bowden & Walsh, 2000) described an approach focused on keeping the whole transcript in context. While the approach to analysis in the current study could be described as mixed, drawing from a number of phenomenographic studies, it more closely approximated that of Marton and Booth (1997) in the greater attention paid to the granularity of the data, although returning to the transcripts as whole pieces at regular intervals. The intention was to work intensively and iteratively.

The number of steps taken in the analysis is not prescribed (Marton, 1986) and can, for example, vary from four (Schroder, Ahlstrom, & Larsson, 2006) to five (González, 2010) to seven (Sjöström & Dahlgren, 2002). In a study of eLearning, González (2010), for example, defines five steps—becoming familiar with the text and identifying possible sections related to conceptions, more focused reading looking for similarities and differences and relationships to prior research but without imposing

categories, generating initial categories of description and further reducing these, re-reading of texts and an iterative process of testing and retesting the data against categories to reach a stable meaning of the data, and building the final outcome space organised as a hierarchy of lower level and higher level categories. Sjöström and Dahlgren (2002) referred to Dahlgren and Fallsberg (1991) in defining the seven-step approach—familiarisation, reading through and correcting transcripts where appropriate; compilation, compiling from across transcripts to certain questions; condensation, reducing answers to their central parts; grouping, preliminary classification; comparison, comparing and establishing borders between categories; naming, identifying and giving a name to their essence; and contrastive comparison, a description of the uniqueness of every category and the resemblance between categories. The two approaches are characterised more by their similarities than differences and the seven steps in data analysis undertaken in the current study draw from across these models. The steps applied are described in the next section.

3.10.1 SEVEN STEPS OF ANALYSIS

The seven steps of analysis were not ‘lock steps’, but rather iterative phases in which the data was interrogated both holistically and atomistically. The phases are detailed in Chapter 4, but can be summarised as:

1. *Immersion*, involving corrections to the transcripts, familiarisation with the data, de-identification and anonymisation, and importing to the NVivo software program
2. *Preliminary interrogation*, involving the identification of initial codes in NVivo, linking codes to the three research questions and preliminary mapping of ideas

3. *Applying a preliminary framework*, involving designing an initial matrix of concepts for each transcript grouped into referential and structural aspects (Marton & Booth, 1997), showing key concepts at a glance, both for each transcript and across the set
4. *Making meaning*, involving developing meaning statements, sorting and re-sorting statements to define categories, and naming categories (Herbert, 2015; Rapp, 2014)
5. *Identifying variations*, involving identifying dimensions of variation within the categories and identifying of the attributes of these dimensions (Richardson, 1999)
6. *Defining the outcome space*, involving the design of an architecture (Bowden & Walsh, 2000) to demonstrate the hierarchical structure to the categories, distinctions of variation and attributes
7. *Applying the outcome space*, involving determining how the outcome space informs theory (Bowden & Walsh, 2000), specifically autopoietic theory, and, in doing, so shed light on the research object of destructive leadership.

3.10.2 UNITS OF DESCRIPTION

In phenomenographic research, a conception is the basic unit of description, referring to the ways in which people conceive of or ‘see’ the phenomenon. Conceptions are developed into categories of description which are units of analyses used to show distinctions, that is, similarities and differences (Rapp, 2010). As outlined in Section 3.3, a conception has two dialectically interrelated aspects of meaning and structure, its referential aspect denoting the global meaning of the conceptualised object and the structural aspect denoting the specific combination of features that have been discerned (Marton & Booth, 1997). Meaning is about interpreting what a person

is saying when referring to the phenomenon, while structure can be identified by linguistic markers (Marton & Pong, 2005). A phenomenographic approach usually entails enabling categories to emerge from comparisons within the data rather than be predefined, although a defined structure may be considered. For the purposes of this study, the conceptions arose from within the data, after which a framework drawn from across the data was applied.

3.11 QUALITY CRITERIA

The aim of the methodology was to produce a piece of research (Bowden & Walsh, 2000; Sin, 2010) that satisfied quality measures. What proved useful to the researcher in trying to make sense of the different terms in the methodological literature and their interpretation was to think of them as quality criteria comprised of inputs, outputs and outcomes where the ultimate outcomes were quality and rigour within the context of a phenomenographic study. While the signification of particular terms as outputs or inputs may be debated, the differentiation served to clarify for the researcher the different and/or similar aims of the various commonly used terms. Thus, as shown in Figure 10, internal and external validity, reliability, dependability and reflexivity were construed as processes built into research and, thus, may be conceived as inputs. Authenticity, credibility, generalisability, transferability and trustworthiness were interpreted by the researcher as often seen as arising as a consequence of quality research design and, thus, termed outputs. Signifying terms in this way bears similarity to Cope's (2004) argument that such output measures evaluate rigour after completion of the research, which he suggested can de-emphasise researcher responsibility. In this study, both inputs and outputs serve as criteria indicating researcher responsibility in ensuring the quality and rigour of the research. Thus, in framing the study, each was considered for its application to and enhancement of the study. A key approach was to

consider the outputs not only as endpoints of the input processes, but as a further means by which quality could be assured. This was achieved by designing from the outset for trustworthiness, transferability and credibility through consistency, coherence and alignment of the research purpose, procedures and outcomes.

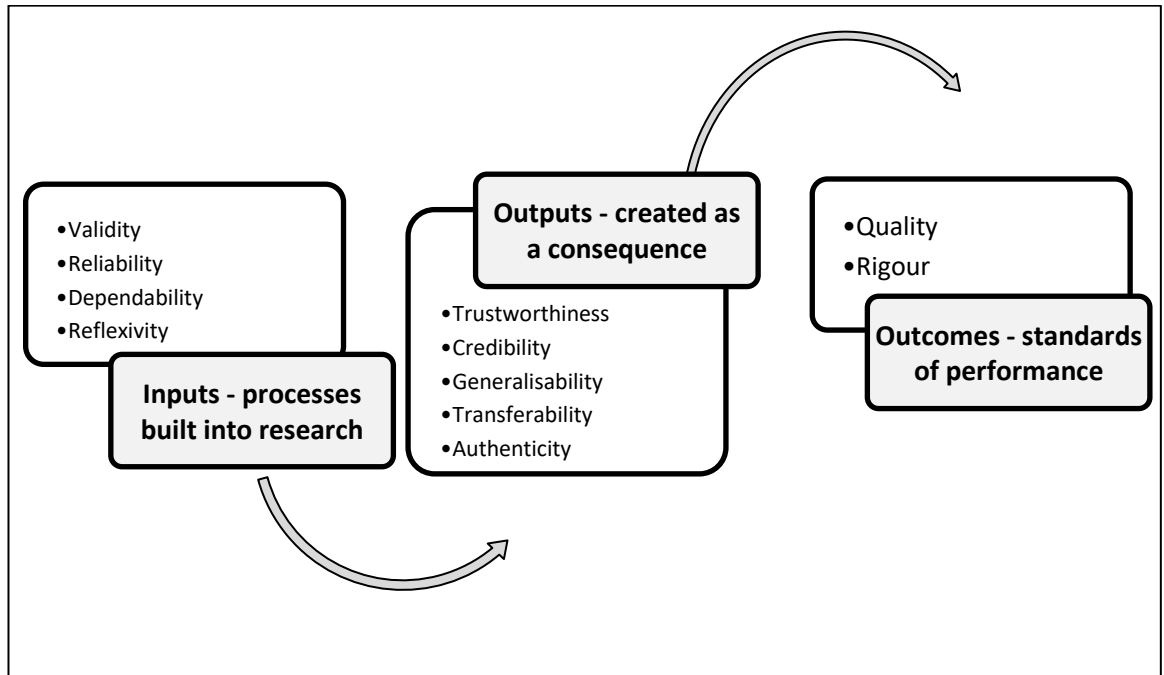


Figure 10. Understanding Quality Criteria as Inputs, Outputs and Outcomes.

Validity (the accuracy of findings), reliability (the consistency of the measures used) and generalisability (the applicability of the findings) are considerations in research design which present some challenges for the social sciences and qualitative studies, where the intangibles of perceptions, behaviours, emotions or personalities are involved (Cope, 2004; Wheeldon & Åhlberg, 2012). Given its interpretivist approach (Sandbergh, 1997), phenomenography is not measured within a positivist frame where ‘truths’ may be considered absolute, however, this is not to absolve the phenomenographer from satisfying measures which signal quality research (Sin, 2010).

In contrast to positivist approaches, Robson (2002) used the term ‘trustworthiness’ in reference to flexible design research and argued for establishing

the integrity of the design, methods and findings. In the influential work of Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness was defined through the notions of credibility, transferability and dependability. Credibility relates to the way in which the researcher portrays the perceptions of participants in the research process, transferability to the application for the research outcomes and processes, and dependability to their consistency. Collier-Reed et al. (2009) argued that trustworthiness has both internal and external dimensions and serves as an important alternative to traditional positivist forms of measuring the value of research and of providing rigour, and is, therefore, particularly relevant to phenomenography. With regard to reliability, Sandbergh (1997) suggested that the intent in phenomenography is interpretative awareness rather than replicability. Guba and Lincoln (1989) and Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba (2007) introduced the concept of ‘authenticity’ and its permutations of ontological (the function of personal constructions), educative (the sociality the researcher obtains), catalytic (research promoting action) and tactical (research empowering action) authenticity (Pope & Denicolo, 2001). These authenticity measures are discussed in Chapter 7 in relation to their particular applicability to the present research and its instructive intent.

For this study, strategies for ensuring trustworthiness included those related to ensuring credibility, transferability and dependability. Content, methodological and communicative credibility (Collier-Reed et al., 2009) was established through the alignment of the goals and methodology of the study, the accurate portrayal of participants’ input through transcription of interviews, member checking of the transcripts, triangulation of data through testing the summary outcome space with several participants representative of varied experiences, peer examination of the methodology and inter-judge communicability (Cope, 2004) through the Delphi expert

panels, researcher familiarity with the subject matter of leadership and of education, and the comprehensive communication of results. Dependability was established through the consistent application of techniques across data collection and analysis (Kvale, 1996), clarification of researcher bias and bracketing (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000), the maintaining of rich data sets, accurate transcriptions of interviews (Collier-Reed et al., 2009) and consistent interpretation of data and application of categories of description. Transferability was sought through the explanation of the research process and the detailed presentation of results in the form of a seven-step process of analysis, and the development of the outcome space as a model applicable to other circumstances or possible studies. While external generalisability is not claimed, the findings may help in understanding the phenomenon and, thus, provide a level of theoretical generalisability (Robson, 2002). The intent is transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) rather than generalisability in its more positivist conception, such that the results represent patterns (Larsson, 2009) which may have application in other situations or at other times (Rapp, 2010), further discussed in Chapter 8.

An overview of the various quality criteria found in the methodological literature, their definitions from a phenomenographic perspective and a summary of the way in which this study either interprets or addresses each of the criteria are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Criteria for Assessing Quality in a Single Phenomenographic Study

	Quality Criteria	Definitional Points	Approach Taken
OUTCOMES	Quality	<p>The standard by which the value of the study can be measured</p> <p>Consists of multiple criteria</p> <p>Clear purpose and coherent method (Bowden & Walsh, 2000)</p> <p>Begins at the start—framing the question, choosing methodology, applying procedures through to reporting</p> <p>Contribution to knowledge (Collier-Reed et al., 2009; Sin, 2010)</p> <p>Subsumes rigour and extends beyond satisfying validity and reliability (Sin, 2010)</p>	<p>Recognised as an outcome of the application of each of the criteria phenomenographically</p> <p>Alignment of purpose and method (per Chapter 3)</p> <p>Careful attention to quality at each stage of the research process</p> <p>Accounting for validity and reliability but within phenomenographic context, with emphasis on conscious consistency throughout</p> <p>Contribution to knowledge (per Chapters 7 and 8)</p>
	Rigour	<p>Traditionally evaluated by validity and reliability (Sin, 2010)</p> <p>Ensures that findings reflect the object of study (Sin, 2010)</p> <p>Relates to rigour of interpretation of results (Schwandt et al., 2007)</p>	<p>The application of principles of trustworthiness</p> <p>Detailed descriptions of procedures and processes via seven steps</p> <p>Synthesis of the theoretical and empirical findings</p> <p>Linking of the structure of the outcome space to the research questions</p>
OUTPUTS	Trustworthiness	<p>A holistic means of strengthening of the research outcome (Collier-Reed et al., 2009)</p> <p>Vital to establishing rigour in phenomenography (Collier-Reed et al., 2009)</p> <p>Requiring integrity of the design, methods and findings (Collier-Reed et al., 2009;</p>	<p><i>Internal trustworthiness</i> addressed through elaboration of the seven steps intended to demonstrate integrity of both design and application</p> <p>Engagement of other researchers in the process for inter-judge communicability through use of expert Delphi groups</p>

	<p>Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Robson, 2002)</p> <p>Building relationships between the research object, the context of the researcher, the research purpose and outcome</p> <p><i>Internal</i> trustworthiness (of the process; i.e., alignment of steps in the research process) and <i>external</i> trustworthiness (of the impact of the research) (Collier-Reed et al., 2009)</p> <p>Potential to contribute to knowledge and also to impact on social change</p>	<p><i>External trustworthiness</i> addressed through the framework of ‘why, what, who and how’ beyond the study (Chapter 8)</p> <p>Intent to influence social change made explicit in discussion of the design and in the communication of findings</p>
Credibility	<p>‘Truth value’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 294) in phenomenography not interpreted in an absolute sense. Rather, providing an aspect of truth (Sin, 2010)</p> <p><i>Content-related, methodological and communicative</i> credibility:</p> <p>Content credibility through comprehensive knowledge and research of the field (Collier-Reed et al., 2009; Cope, 2004)</p> <p>Methodological approach</p> <p>Communicative through the way the process and findings are communicated (Collier-Reed et al., 2009) (i.e., presentation of results and openness to scrutiny)</p> <p>Credibility determined by others (as opposed to objective ‘truths’)</p> <p>Researcher’s accurate portrayal of participants’ perceptions important to credibility</p>	<p>Testing the findings against relevant sources</p> <p>Rich and detailed reporting of the data</p> <p>Formulation and elaboration of the seven steps</p> <p>Direct and interrelated quotations of participants (Cope, 2004)</p> <p><i>Content-related</i>: researcher’s knowledge and experience in and of the field and familiarity with the subject matter of leadership and of education (Chapter 2 literature review)</p> <p><i>Method credibility</i>: framing of question; selection of sample for its relevance and variation; contest, content and structure of interview; data analysis</p> <p>Search for meaning via meaning statements</p> <p>Alignment of the goals and methodology, accurate portrayal of participants’ input through transcription of interviews, member checking of the transcripts,</p>

		<p>triangulation of data through testing the summary outcome space with five participants, peer examination of the methodology via Delphi expert panels</p> <p><i>Communicative credibility:</i> use of three expert panels. Outcome space presented to five participants, comprehensive communication of results</p>
Generalisability	<p>Relationship to other contexts and applicability of the findings</p> <p>In phenomenography, extent to which the findings are representative of the target population (Sin, 2010)</p> <p>Recognition of patterns (Larsson, 2009)</p> <p>Making wise judgements about the use of the study (Larsson, 2009)</p>	<p>Treated as a specific phenomenon and so generalisability not the main intent. However, potential of enhancing generalisability through using variation (Larsson, 2009)</p> <p>There is generalising from collective experience, but not individual cases</p> <p>Sampling was purposively systematic</p> <p>Attention to audit and documentation were maintained</p> <p>Multidimensional theory offered</p>
Transferability	<p>Other applications for the research outcomes and processes</p> <p>Applicability of outcome of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)</p> <p>Provision of sufficient detail to enable a researcher to make a judgement on similarity (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004)</p>	<p>Transferability emphasised rather than replicability of this study</p> <p>Detailed explanation of the research process and description of the steps, detailed presentation of results within the seven-step analysis, development of outcome space as a model with potential application to other contexts</p> <p>Potential applications hypothesised in Chapter 8</p>
Authenticity	<p>Validation of phenomenography through authenticity (Pope &</p>	<p>In Chapter 7, authenticities are interpreted as learning</p>

	Denicolo, 2001; Schwandt et al., 2007)	outcomes with: ontological authenticity (represented as learning about), educative authenticity (learning through), catalytic authenticity (learning from) and tactical authenticity (learning for)	
	Four types: Ontological (the function of personal constructions), Educative (the sociality the researcher obtains), Catalytic (research promoting action) and Tactical (research empowering action)		
INPUTS	Validity	<p>Extent to which a study measures what it sets out to (Collier-Reed et al., 2009).</p> <p>Phenomenography an interpretive rather than an objective process (Collier-Reed et al., 2009)</p> <p>Internal consistency of research object, data and findings (Sin, 2010)</p> <p>Accuracy of findings</p> <p>‘Appropriateness’ of the tools, processes, and data (Leung, 2015)</p> <p>Process of change as part of the research process, critical, performative and collective learning potentials (Collier-Reed et al., 2009)</p>	<p>In this study not applying measurement in an absolute sense (Collier-Reed et al., 2009)</p> <p>Well-documented audit</p> <p>Respondent verification through</p> <p>Peer triangulation</p> <p>Multidimensional analysis</p> <p>Relating conceptual meanings to participant utterances</p> <p>Surfacing of identification of internal relationships via the outcome space</p> <p>Change as a research driver evidenced by suggested interventions and theoretical models</p>
	Internal	<p>Internal consistency ensures defensibility</p> <p>In phenomenographic terms is akin to credibility (Collier-Reed et al., 2009)</p>	<p>Internal validity related to credibility and content, methodological and communicative consistency</p>
	External	<p>Extent to which findings can be applied or used in other contexts (Sin, 2010)</p> <p>Responsibility of the researcher to provide sufficient information for users to extrapolate</p> <p>In phenomenographic terms akin to transferability (Collier-Reed et al., 2009)</p>	<p>No direct application of findings to other contexts— not ‘true’ in a positivist sense</p> <p>But provision of sufficient detail to enable transferability</p>

Reliability	<p>Extent to which the findings can be replicated</p> <p>Consistency of the measures used</p> <p>Essence of reliability for qualitative research lies with consistency (Leung, 2015)</p> <p>Per Sandbergh (1997), the intent is interpretative awareness and acknowledging subjectivity (Cope, 2004) with maximum fidelity to the data rather than replicability</p> <p>Deliberately setting presuppositions aside to engage with the participants (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000)</p>	<p>Transferability and consistency rather than replicability</p> <p>Constant data comparison</p> <p>Comprehensive data use</p> <p>Use of tables of meaning statements</p> <p>Peer triangulation</p> <p>Maximum fidelity via quotations to support meaning statements</p> <p>Explicating the research in accordance with Ashworth and Lucas' model (2000) in Chapter 3</p> <p>Ongoing awareness and disclosure of subjectivity (e.g., through acknowledgement of observer status and involvement in the boundary of the participants)</p> <p>Inter-judge communicability through sharing of the outcome space with expert panels assisted in controlling and checking interpretation</p>
Dependability	<p>Consistency of the research processes and outcomes</p> <p>Consistency in data interpretation</p> <p>Care during transcription—spoken word transcribed accurately (not discourse analysis so do not need tonal changes) (Collier-Reed et al., 2009)</p> <p>Care during analysis (Kvale, 1996) and in development of categories of description</p>	<p>Accurate transcription</p> <p>Interviewer during the interview conversation, nature of the questions, focus on the interviewee, a few key questions then clarifications</p> <p>Interpretive awareness (Sandbergh, 1997) maintained throughout by discerning codes and meaning statements, use of expert panels at the point of interpretation, identification of observer subjectivity</p> <p>Consistent application of techniques across data collection and analysis, clarification of bias and</p>

		bracketing, maintaining of rich data sets, consistent interpretation of data and application of categories of description
Reflexivity	Identification of own preconceptions (Sin, 2010)	Documentation of each stage of the process
	Researcher's place within the research process	Structure and conduct of the interviews minimising intervention
	Self-scrutiny and acknowledgement of ethical dilemmas	Conscious bracketing
		Identification of the researcher as observer with potential influence
		Exploration of ethical challenges
		Closing reflection statement

Although the criteria have been disaggregated, tabulated and addressed individually, they are in practice interdependent, so that the means of satisfying one criteria may serve the purpose of another. Consistency (Leung, 2015; Sin, 2010) and alignment illustrate this point, where these would be required for validity, reliability or dependability. In relation to this study, the criteria applied relate to the distinctive nature of phenomenography while acknowledging more conventional criteria. The intention is that by paying attention to both input and output criteria from the outset and building in consistent and transparent processes, the outcomes of quality and rigour are achieved.

3.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The key ethical consideration and the one from which other related considerations flow is the sensitivity of the subject of destructive leadership. According to Lee (1993), sensitive research is that which potentially poses a threat to those involved. That threat may be one of intrusion, where it impinges on a private or

stressful area; threat of sanction, where there is concern over possible recriminations over participating in the research; or political threat, where there may be repercussions from powerful vested interests. The study clearly touched on the first of these as the individual experience may have been and may remain an emotionally charged one. Threat of sanction or political threat was also potentially relevant. Lee's (2013, p. 16) advised that, rather than the alternative of opting out of researching sensitive issues which could be considered an evasion of responsibility, threats need to be, 'minimised, managed and mitigated' without compromising the research.

With regard to the potential threats, a preventative response was implicit in the design of the study, whereby the sample interview population was one of survivors who were willing to share the experience, had already demonstrated resilience and the capacity to survive the experience and who had subsequently moved in their careers and/or their lives. During the course of the study, it was essential to observe the protocols of confidentiality and anonymity (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) in the conduct and reporting of the study. The question of anonymity, for example, relates not only to the participants but to those leaders who might be referenced through the recounting of experience. As well as prior agreement to the non-disclosure of identity, the data was examined for possible identifiers that were then stripped and replaced with arbitrary identifying codes (Lee, 1993). The issue of the threat of intrusion was addressed by endeavouring to develop a relationship of interpersonal engagement and trust and designing methods which minimised interviewer effect (Lee, 1993), focusing on the narrative of the participant with minimal intervention from the interviewer, while a further anticipatory measure was the availability of counselling contact details in the event that recounting the experience triggered distress.

Another question of ethics relates to the role and conduct of the researcher and, in this case, ensuring that through the data-gathering process it was the participants' perceptions and the meaning they ascribed that were kept in focus (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). As a researcher, attention should be paid to capturing, recording and, thus, respecting those perceptions rather than identifying with them. As noted previously, Ashworth and Lucas (2000) referred to 'bracketing' and the requirement of the researcher to set aside personal assumptions and expectations, while at the same time being empathetic. However, Corbin and Strauss (2008) held that as it is impossible to suspend one's own experiences and biases, these should be acknowledged and used constructively. The guiding principles of the research were those of the Australian Government's National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2015), paying due regard to merit and integrity, justice, beneficence and respect. In respect of the researcher's circumstances in conducting the fieldwork, a Safety Protocol was agreed with the Principal Supervisor (see Appendix F). Approval for the research was granted by The University of Sydney Human Ethics Committee (see Appendix G).

3.13 CONCLUSION

Phenomenography offers a methodology consistent with the ontological, epistemological, axiological and theoretical assumptions of the study. The approach enabled an empirical investigation of the phenomenon of destructive leadership from the lived, subjective experience of individuals perceived to have been directly affected by that phenomenon. The qualitative, inductive methodology was designed to test a hypothesis through the investigation of three research questions linked respectively to the relevant ontology, epistemology and theory. In exploring these three questions and in light of the sensitivity of the topic, all care was taken in the design and execution of the study to select a secure and less vulnerable population, to ensure anonymity and

confidentiality, to engage empathetically and to ensure internal and external trustworthiness. Using a seven-step process of analysis, the ultimate goal was to discern the conceptions, categories of description and dimensions of variation within the data that comprise the architecture of logical relationships and thereby reveal the phenomenon of destructive leadership and, importantly, the learning which may derive from the experience. Chapters 4 and 5 present the findings of the study in terms of those conceptions, categories of description and dimensions of variation as the basis for a better understanding of the phenomenon and for developing (in Chapter 6) an autopoietic-designed and phenomenographically-derived interpretation of destructive leadership.

CHAPTER 4:

PHENOMENOGRAPHIC PROCESS: STEPS 1 TO 6

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The methodology of the study, as outlined in Chapter 3, is phenomenography. Originating from the work of Marton and Wenestam (1978), Marton (1986, 1988) and subsequent researchers (Richardson, 1999; Ashworth & Lucas, 2000; Bowden & Walsh, 2000; Trigwell, 2000; Sjöström & Dahlgren, 2002; Wright et al., 2007; Collier-Reed et al., 2009; Rapp, 2010; Yates et al., 2012), the approach is relevant in the context of a study of people’s lived experience of a phenomenon, in this case, destructive leadership. Phenomenography guides the approach to data analysis and generation of findings as described in this and the following chapter.

4.2 CHAPTER STRUCTURE

This chapter focuses on the process undertaken in the analysis of data and initial findings generated through that process (see Table 8). The analytical approach adopted is consistent with the ontological, epistemological, axiological and theoretical paradigm of the study and its qualitative inductive methodology, drawing from phenomenography.

Table 8

Elements of the Study Relevant to Chapter 4

Theory	Autopoietic theory, critical social systems theory
Ontology	Subjectivist, constitutive ontologies
Epistemology	Constructivist, interpretivist
Axiology	Ethical, moral

Methodology	Qualitative, phenomenographic, inductive
Instrumentation	Semi-structured interview, expert panels
Analysis	Conceptions, categories of description, outcome space

The phenomenographic analysis is conducted through the identification of conceptions and organised into categories of description and their dimensions of variation that then give rise to the architecture of the outcome space, showing the logical relationship between the categories and their underlying meaning (Marton, 1995). The outcome space is applied to the data in Chapter 5 and frames subsequent discussion and interpretation, the focus of Chapters 6 and 7.

The main purpose of this chapter is to explain the process of data elicitation and analysis through steps one to six of the seven steps and provide an outline of the findings that address the hypothesis and three research questions of the study. The chapter is structured so that the initial section presents data related to the participants who made up the sample population and whose interview responses provided the basis for determining the variations of experience that describe the phenomenon. The analysis then turns to the interviews and a consideration of the data they generated based on a phenomenographic framework, that is, their referential and structural meaning. As outlined in Chapter 3, Marton and Booth (1997) suggested how a phenomenon may be studied by proposing that human awareness is made up of two key features, meaning and structure, which bear a simultaneous dialectical relationship. Meaning is called the referential aspect, defining the existence of a phenomenon. In the present study, this represents the ontological first research question. The structural aspect relates to the features of an experience discerned by and focused on by the person. The second and third research questions centre on the structural aspect. With meaning and structure as key elements, the analysis was

conducted and is explained according to seven steps: 1) immersion, 2) preliminary interrogation, 3) applying a preliminary framework, 4) making meaning, 5) identifying variations, 6) defining the outcome space, and 7) applying the outcome space. The first six of these steps are described in this chapter and the seventh step is described in Chapter 5.

4.3 PARTICIPANTS

The study population consisted of 15 participants, each of whom engaged in an audio-recorded interview. The average length of interviews was 55 minutes. The non-randomised purposive sample consisted of current or recently retired school leaders with direct personal experience of destructive leadership. In keeping with phenomenographic research, the qualitatively different ways in which a phenomenon may be experienced and to maximise the potential for variation in the data (Manasatchakun et al., 2016), the nine female and six male participants, although from one Australian state, came from different sectors (11 government and four non-government), phases and roles. As secondary principal and independent school associations were the main avenues for recruitment to the study, the majority of participants came from secondary schooling (11), with other participants from primary (1) and K–12 (3) contexts. At the time of their respective experiences, of the 15, four were principals, one a director, six deputy principals, three middle leaders and one a non-school-based officer. In terms of their situations at the time of interview and subsequent to the experience, seven were principals, one a deputy principal, two in university positions, two non-school-based officers, one a school middle leader and two semi-retired and performing other education-related roles. Of the 15 participants, nine had held the position of school principal at some time in their career. The participants were located in the one Australian state, 810,000km² in size, but from

different areas across that state including metropolitan areas, large regional areas and rural contexts.

The demographic details of those perceived to be leading destructively included six females and nine males, four of whom were in systemic supervisory roles, termed ‘director’ for the sake of consistency; eight were principals, one a deputy principal, one non-school-based officer and one a board member. The demographic data are summarised in Table 9.

Table 9

Sample Population Demographic Data

	Gender		Location			Phase		
	M	F	Metro	Regional	Rural	K–12	Primary	Secondary
P	6	9	5	6	4	3	1	11
L	9	6						
	Director	Principal	Deputy	Middle	NSB	Board	Lecturer	Other
P^a	1	4	6	3	1	-	-	-
P^b	-	7	1	1	2	-	2	2
L^c	4	8	1	-	1	1	-	-

Note, ‘P’ denotes Participant, ‘L’ denotes Leader.

^a participant position held during experience. ^b participant position held post-experience/during this study. ^c leader position held during participant’s experience.

Five other potential candidates for interview did not participate—two because, although still willing, they followed up the participant information sheet and made further contact after the completion of the data-gathering cycle; one lived outside the state chosen for the study; and two expressed initial interest, but did not reply further when sent the participant information statement. The final 15 provided a sample of school leaders who collectively exhibited extensive school leadership experience.

Fourteen of the interviews were conducted face-to-face across sites in metropolitan, regional and rural areas of one Australian state. One interview was conducted over the telephone at the request of the participant who felt more comfortable conducting the interview via this mode. Although several exhibited clear emotion at different points of the interview, such as by being tearful or using strong language, no participant asked to terminate the interview or to take time out during its conduct. None requested counselling support, although several mentioned they had previously accessed counselling, the need for which they attributed to the experience they were recounting.

4.4 SEVEN-STEP APPROACH TO ANALYSIS

As outlined in Chapter 3, the data were analysed iteratively, according to a seven-step approach of 1) immersion, 2) preliminary interrogation, 3) applying a preliminary framework, 4) making meaning, 5) identifying variations, 6) defining the outcome space and 7) applying the outcome space. The process of analysing the data is described in terms of these steps, with the seventh step described in Chapter 5.

4.4.1 STEP 1: IMMERSION

Consistent with phenomenographic methodology, all interviews were transcribed to yield data for analysis. A process of immersion in the data was achieved through listening to the recordings on multiple occasions and multiple readings of the transcripts. In this initial stage, as well as enabling familiarisation with the data, the transcripts were reviewed typographically and revised in respect of de-identification of places and events and anonymisation of people. Care was taken to substitute the names of people and places and to adjust identifiable incidents, events and timeframes. Each participant was assigned a number and subsequently referred to as 'P1' to 'P15'. Because the interviews were conducted over a four-month period, the immersion phase

was an extended one which enabled each transcript to be considered individually and the overall process to be conducted progressively. Once reviewed and revised, each transcript was then imported into the NVivo software program for coding.

4.4.2 STEP 2: PRELIMINARY INTERROGATION

The second step of analysis involved identifying the conceptions in terms of overall meaning and marking transcripts thematically by ascribing codes. A predetermined code structure was not applied to the data; rather, a process of allowing conceptions to arise from within the data was adopted (Marton & Pong, 2005). The first three transcripts were analysed and annotated by hand to start identifying common or novel ideas which might emerge as possible codes. This process gave rise to a number of emerging themes and reason to begin coding the transcripts using NVivo software.

In phenomenographic terms, a unit of conception is the basic unit of description that refers to the way in which a person perceives something (Rapp, 2010). The units of conception were progressively developed by ascribing nodes, with the number and content of nodes accumulating as more transcripts were analysed. Early in the coding, as the NVivo nodes started to build, the parent nodes of Research Question 1, Research Question 2 and Research Question 3 were created to provide a logical frame under which further nodes would form. The purpose of this was to ensure the integrity of the study in remaining faithful to the research questions and interrogating the data in light of the questions. While this proved a useful initial organisation it was not entirely satisfactory—for many of the participants, much of the answer to Research Question 1, the meaning of destructive leadership, was integrally connected to how it was experienced, that is, Research Question 2. Thus, the categorisation of the data developed and was reshaped through later stages of the analysis, as described below.

The NVivo coding of the 15 transcripts yielded 85 nodes comprised of 2,877 references related to participants' experience and understanding of destructive leadership. Of the nodes aggregated under Research Question 1, some of the data most readily referred to definitions of destructive leadership and were coded, for example, as 'meaning of DL' (destructive leadership) or 'pattern of behaviour'. Other data consisted of the ways participants labelled destructive behaviours, represented by nodes such as 'control', 'retribution' or 'divisiveness'. The ideas classified under this research question were principally descriptive in nature. Common to the narratives, and implicit in the definitions and descriptions, was the notion of harm perpetrated and perpetuated at the personal, interpersonal or organisational levels.

The nodes created under Research Question 2 related to the explanatory features of the phenomenon and the ways in which participants understood and tried to make sense of destructive leadership and tried to cope with the experience. References indicated that participants commonly turned to family or colleagues for support. The interplay with the system, in the form of either system support or dysfunction, was referenced on multiple occasions. At this stage, knowledge of the phenomenon, coded as 'learning', was included in this section.

The nodes created under Research Question 3 related principally to an interpretation of the outcomes of destructive leadership. There were, for example, multiple references to the impact of the phenomenon, whether experienced personally or professionally, by others or at the organisational or cultural levels. A slightly different outcome related to how the participant and others in the environment either reacted to or were able to accommodate the experience. The concept of accommodation was interpreted as the means by which participants were able to adjust to or deal with the behaviours or the situation in which they found themselves. As will

be explained later, the concept of accommodation was subsequently determined to correspond better to Research Question 2. A final outcome was about the resolution of the situation, in every case caused by one of the major players exiting the situation, discussed in Chapter 6.

Other codes sitting outside the research question parent nodes included those relating to particular linguistic and narrative features and nodes incorporating references related to the concept of observers, that is, the participants themselves as observers of their situation or references to the researcher as an active observer in the process. The nodes for this phase of the analysis are presented in Table 10.

Table 10

Destructive Leadership Coded as NVivo Nodes

Research Question 1	Research Question 2	Research Question 3
Examples of DL: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abuse • Laissez faire • Social exclusion • Poor organisation • Retribution • Corruption • Negligence • Personal aggrandisement • Harassment and targeting • Manipulation • Ego • Poor decision-making • Callousness • Violations of norms of conduct • Lack of integrity • Stifling creativity • Two-faced • Emotional intelligence • Lack of courage • Divisiveness 	Temporal elements Coping mechanisms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical activity • Professional support • Collegial support • Friendships • Withdrawal • Resilience • Family • Approach to work • Colleagues System <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith in • Operation of Gender Relationship with leader Relationships with others Sense-making Learning Reactions	Linguistic modes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of direct speech • Strong or emotive words • Narrative Impact on others Impact organisationally Impact culturally Impact professionally Impact personally: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Resolution Identity For the organisation For the leader For the participant Accommodation Participant as observer Researcher observer

-
- Professional exclusion
 - Attack on self-esteem
 - Lack of empathy
 - Lack of ability
 - Unfair
 - Mobbing
 - Clandestine behaviour
 - Control
 - Threatening behaviour
 - Nepotism

Patterns of behaviour:

- Immediate environment
- Systemic patterns
- By an individual

Duration

Meaning of DL

Moral and ethical questions

Context before

Self-perception

Worldview

Power

Values

While the nodes created under the three research questions were useful in identifying key conceptions and continued to provide ongoing reference points and sources of utterances throughout the analysis, the allocation of the nodes to the three questions was not yet stable, particularly in relation to Research Question 2. In essence, the issue was not in the identification of the conceptions themselves, but in the preliminary structuring according to the research questions.

4.4.3 STEP 3: APPLYING A PRELIMINARY FRAMEWORK

The preliminary interrogation phase conducted in NVivo constituted a granular analysis of the transcripts. The data disaggregated from the transcripts into the 85 codes with their 2,877 references was an important step in moving the lens away from individual narrative and onto elements of the phenomenon and, thus, ultimately, the

phenomenon itself. Seen through the lens of conceptions such as ‘abuse of power’ or ‘lies and deception’, for example, the notion of destructive leadership took a less individual or personalised guise. As well as shifting the focus onto the phenomenon, this had the additional advantage of further de-identifying places and events and anonymising the stories.

While the preliminary granular interrogation was a valuable step in terms of the study and making sense of the data, Bowden and Walsh (2000) recommend maintaining a holistic view of the transcripts. Therefore, the next phase of the data analysis process was to review each transcript again so it could be encapsulated as a whole piece, but also viewed in relation to the other transcripts. To this end, an initial framework was devised that drew on the phenomenographic concepts of structural and referential aspects and of internal and external horizons. A table of emerging conceptions was designed, the unpopulated version of which is shown in Table 11.

Table 11

Emerging Conceptions of Destructive Leadership

REFERENTIAL MEANING	STRUCTURAL FEATURES - INTERNAL & EXTERNAL HORIZONS			REFERENTIAL MEANING
Of the object DL	Of self in face of DL (internal)	Proximal environment (foreground)	Distal environment (background)	Resulting change/learning
P1				
P2				
PX				

The ‘referential what’ referred to the research object of destructive leadership and the ontological question of its existence. This column consisted of conceptions of what each participant considered destructive leadership to be. Examples included ‘hypocrisy’, ‘callousness’, ‘control’, ‘vindictiveness’ and so on. The ‘structural meaning’ comprised the element of ‘self’ where conceptions related to the participants’ views of themselves through exposure to destructive leadership, for

example, conceptions related to ‘self-confidence’, ‘resilience’, ‘fear’ and ‘reputation’. As each participant was recounting a personal experience, internal conceptions of self were central to the story. In line with the phenomenographic approach, also of relevance was what was occurring externally, in the environment, both proximal and distal. Here the proximal environment was interpreted as what was happening in the participant’s immediate context, for example, through interactions with the leader in question, family or peers. Conceptions related to the distal environment were interpreted as actions and interactions narrated as happening in the wider sphere, such as between colleagues, organisationally or in the system. The final column, the ‘structural what’, comprised conceptions of change or of learning because of exposure to destructive leadership.

Each of the 15 interviews were summarised and tabulated in this way. To preserve strict confidentiality and anonymity, however, the actual table is not reproduced. Any possibility for an individual participant to be identified by presenting a summary of their experience has been avoided. By way of illustration and to convey the process accurately, however, Table 12 presents two synthetic participants, PX and PY, whose conceptions consist of an amalgam from across the entire data set. Thus, while Participants X and Y are purely illustrative, their conceptions are drawn from the actual data. As all 15 participants were entered similarly, the tabulation provided a capture of ideas which could be read and interpreted both vertically and horizontally, the horizontal rows providing a holistic sense of the particular participant and the vertical columns a sense of that aspect of the phenomenon across all participants.

Table 12

Synthetic Example of Aggregated Emerging Conceptions Merged from Data

REFERENTIAL MEANING	STRUCTURAL FEATURES - INTERNAL & EXTERNAL HORIZONS			REFERENTIAL MEANING
Of the object DL	Of self in face of DL (internal)	Proximal environment (foreground)	Distal environment (background)	Resulting change/learning
Merged PX:				
Divisiveness	Humiliation	Silence of others	Toxic culture	Avoidance strategy
Control	Anger	Loss of relationships	System dysfunction	Redirection
Stalking	Loss of confidence	Family support	Impact on students	Affirmed values
Lies & deception	Resilience	Negative talk	Wider nepotism	Seek support
Secrecy	Feeling implicated	Power struggle	Collegial strength	Loss of system trust
Negative cycle	Reaching out	Impenetrable wall	Poor performance	Need for self-care
Favouritism	Exit	Others' warnings	Patterns of bullying	Positive role models
Merged PY:				
Inconsistency	Counselling	Team support	Power vacuum	Decisive action
Laissez faire	Conflicted values	Offensive comments	Behaviour contagious	Mental health care
Corruption	Lack of recognition	Like-minded colleagues	System support	Stronger character
Sociopathy	Health problems	Resentment of others	Opposing forces	Work to strengths
Retribution	Focus on work	Impact on family	Others aware	Take precautions
Game playing	Not be beaten	Reframed stories	Falling enrolments	Early intervention
Hypocrisy	Sense of failure	Invasion of space	Community disquiet	Stronger policy

4.4.4 STEP 4: MAKING MEANING

At this point in the analysis, there were data derived from two processes, the ascribing of NVivo codes under the three research questions yielding 85 nodes and the tabular referential and structural framework which provided both a capture of each transcript and a capture of elements across the transcripts. The next phase, the fourth

of the seven steps, was to build on these two processes, synthesising the outcomes to make meaning of the data. This was undertaken to devise ‘meaning statements’ (Herbert, 2014), that is, a set of statements which articulated the phenomenon as indicated by the coding in Step 2 and/or tabulation in Step 3. These meaning statements were then grouped under the three research questions. The statements grouped under Research Question 1 each began with ‘Destructive leadership is perceived to be...’, signalling the ontological intent of the question and the descriptive ‘referential what’ of phenomenography. The second set of meaning statements related to Research Question 2 each began with ‘Destructive leadership is experienced as...’, signalling the epistemic intent of revealing explanatory features, knowledge and understandings of the phenomenon. This set of statements linked to the ‘structural how’ of phenomenography. The stem of the third set of meaning statements related to Research Question 3 and read, ‘Destructive leadership is responded to as...’, the intent of which was to explore consequential and interpretive features of impact and learning from the experience. This set of statements explored the ‘structural what’ in the phenomenographic approach.

The meaning statements, once grouped under each research question, were further regrouped to find their similarity or difference. Table 13 shows the meaning statements categorised and sub-categorised in relation to Research Question 1, with the number of direct individual quotations or ‘utterances’ (Cope, 2004) that comprised that meaning statement (column ‘N’), allowing for grouping and regrouping to find a stable set of statements. A form of ‘heat map’ has been applied to the number of utterances per meaning statement to distinguish those more densely referenced.

Table 13

Meaning Statements for Research Question 1

Referential (Ontological; conceptions of the phenomenon; what it is conceived to be)	Category^a	N^b
DL is perceived to be control over people	A1	17
DL is perceived to be control over ideas	A1	26
DL is perceived to be an abuse of power in absence of checks and balances	A1	13
DL is perceived to be an unequal balance of power	A1	8
DL is perceived to be an (intentional) abuse of positional power	A1	29
DL is perceived to be targeting those weaker	A1	8
DL is perceived to be personal attack	A1	9
DL is perceived to be harmful change	B1	11
DL is perceived to be a pattern of harmful behaviour	B1	35
DL is perceived to be a self-perpetuating, self-reproducing cycle	B1	20
DL is perceived to be a psychological condition; expression of personality	C1	31
DL is perceived to be an excess of ego	C1	12
DL is a lack of capability	C1	37
DL is a lack of courage	C1	15
DL is perceived to be a manifestation of hierarchical systems	D1	21
DL is perceived to be an assumption of privilege	D1	9
DL is perceived to be a sociological phenomenon	D1	4
DL is perceived to be a normative environment where power is exercised without checks and balances	D1	38
DL is perceived to be all encompassing; pervasive—individual, relationships, school, community	D1	6
DL is perceived to be unethical practices	E1	20
DL is perceived to be the antithesis of accepted ethical norms	E1	7
DL is perceived to be an absence of core values	E1	11
DL is perceived to be a philosophical worldview/set of values	E1	23

^a A1 = power and control (N = 110), B1 = patterns (N = 66), C1 = personality issues (N = 95), D1 = sociological issues (N = 78), E1 = philosophical questions (N = 61). ^b number of utterances per meaning statement; ≤ 10 = blue, 11–18 = green, 19–26 = yellow, 27–34 = orange, ≥ 35 = red.

The meaning statements generated for Research Question 2 and the number of utterances that comprised them are presented in Table 13 and refer to the understandings and knowledge participants have gained through their personal experience. The development of meaning statements for Research Question 2 resulted

in greater clarity between the intentions of Research Question 1 and Research Question 2 and gave specificity to the conceptions.

Table 14

Meaning Statements for Research Question 2

Structural (Epistemological; knowledge about the phenomenon; how it is experienced)	Category^a	N^b
DL is experienced as physical behaviour	A2	14
DL is experienced as bullying	A2	21
DL is experienced as retribution and vindictiveness	A2	14
DL is experienced as aggression	A2	11
DL is experienced as an invasion of personal space	A2	7
DL is experienced as lies and deception	B2	27
DL is experienced as hypocrisy	B2	18
DL is experienced as the silence or mobbing of others	C2	21
DL is experienced as damaged relationships	C2	12
DL is experienced as isolation	C2	8
DL is experienced as humiliation	C2	10
DL is experienced as lack of support	C2	19
DL is experienced as white-anting	C2	9
DL is experienced as fear and anxiety	C2	3
DL is experienced as the compliance and complicity of others	C2	9
DL is experienced as professionally limiting	D2	10
DL is experienced as professional barriers	D2	11
DL is experienced as powerlessness	D2	13
DL is experienced as being restricted, constrained verbally or otherwise	D2	6
DL is experienced as system dysfunction	E2	20
DL is experienced as a toxic culture	E2	18
DL is experienced as favours and nepotism	E2	13
DL is experienced as conflicted or irreconcilable values	F2	16
DL is experienced as unfairness	F2	6

^a A2 = direct, physical and personal presentations (N = 67), B2 = hidden presentations (N = 45), C2 = reactions and feelings of participants in relation to others (N = 91), D2 = profession experience (N = 40), E2 = understandings at the social systems level (N = 51), F2 = understandings about values (N = 32). ^b number of utterances per meaning statement; ≤ 10 = blue, 11–18 = green, 19–26 = yellow, 27–34 = orange, ≥ 35 = red.

The meaning statements in Table 15 are those generated for Research Question 3 and interpret the impact of destructive leadership and the learning that may be

derived individually or more broadly. It may be noted here that ‘learning’ was originally coded, as described in Section 4.4.2, under Research Question 2, but through the process of developing meaning statements was regrouped and seen as better classified as an outcome construct. The meaning statements were categorised according to the following conceptions and the related number of utterances that comprised them.

Table 15

Meaning Statements for Research Question 3

Structural (Epistemological; knowledge gained from the phenomenon; how it impacts)	Category^a	N^b
DL is responded to as an attack to avoid	A3	11
DL is responded to as career ending	A3	7
DL is responded to as a weakening of identity or sense of self	A3	18
DL is responded to as a model not to emulate	B3	13
DL is responded to as a challenge to confront	B3	33
DL is responded to as character building	B3	9
DL is responded to as an affirmation of personal values	B3	34
DL is responded to as an opportunity for learning	B3	31
DL is responded to by being resilient	B3	23
DL is responded to by reflecting on own practice	B3	25
DL is responded to by reference to the positive and positive role models	B3	42
DL is responded to as a loss of psychological wellbeing	C3	29
DL is responded to as a loss of physiological wellbeing	C3	13
DL is responded to as a loss of organisational wellbeing	C3	35
DL responded to as a loss of faith/trust	C3	15
DL responded to by turning to or establishing networks	D3	25
DL responded to by turning to family and/or friends	D3	10
DL responded to by establishing a circle of trust	D3	22
DL responded to by exiting the situation	E3	39
DL responded to by taking precautions	E3	6
DL responded to by acting early	E3	16
DL responded to by looking after self/self-care	E3	13

^a A3 = reactive responses from individuals (N = 36), B3 = proactive responses to the phenomenon (N = 210), C3 = refer to the impact of the phenomenon (N = 92), D3 = ways participants seek support through the experience (N = 57), E3 = possible actions and interventions (N = 74). ^b number of utterances per meaning statement; ≤ 10 = blue, 11–18 = green, 19–26 = yellow, 27–34 = orange, ≥ 35 = red.

The meaning statements in Tables 13, 14 and 15 provided a rich source of material in respect of defining categories of description and helped in discerning the dimensions of variation, the subject of the following section.

4.4.5 STEP 5: IDENTIFYING VARIATIONS

Variation is a key element of analysis in phenomenography (Richardson, 1999). Variation does not refer to the individual who experiences the phenomenon or to the difference of his or her individual story from others or to possible differences in background, but to the variations of the experience under study. One individual may present a number of variations of experience within the one story. The point of phenomenography is to distinguish the qualitatively different and relatively limited ways in which a phenomenon is experienced (Richardson, 1999).

By generating meaning statements, it was possible to start mapping the dimensions of variation. Thus, for example, 'control' was a common theme in the narratives with the construct experienced in distinct ways. In some instances, the meaning had to do with control over people, while in others it was the control over ideas. The concept of 'impact' also serves to illustrate the point of dimensions of variation in that impact could be differentiated at the individual, organisational or cultural level. Further, it could exhibit in physiological, psychological or social ways. The aim was to pay attention to explicit and implicit variations.

Once the meaning statements were developed, grouped and regrouped, they were subsequently populated by utterances from all of the manuscripts using both the NVivo codes and the transcripts themselves as sources. Although a time-consuming process, this enabled each meaning statement to be illustrated and expanded and also tested for those that proved less sustainable in terms of evidence. Although the working data set was reduced from over 100,000 words to 70,000, for the sake of brevity and

to protect identity the full data set is not reproduced here. Instead, an extract from the collated meaning statements is presented in Table 16. The populated meaning statements were instrumental in identifying variations in the ways participants experienced the phenomenon and in informing the next stage of the process, defining the architecture that would describe the phenomenon comprehensively.

Table 16

Extract of Meaning Statements with Utterances for Research Question 1

Destructive leadership is perceived to be a pattern of harmful behaviour	Category^a
P11. A few things came to mind; one is in some of the work I've done previously around leadership and management—that crab-pot mentality where people crawl on top of each other to get to the top. While you might be seen by others as doing great things, you've in fact done something to someone else along the way that isn't a positive thing...In order for someone to gain a position or gain notoriety, they don't care about their colleagues around them and build up together. If you think of the crabs coming out of the pot, you've actually got to keep some down to stand on them. There's also going to be a scrambling at different levels so that whoever it is that makes it to the top...there might be various crabs that make it to the top.	B3
P2. For me it was destroying. It nearly destroyed my confidence, had me questioning my experiences...I felt that it could have destroyed relationships, personal and professional. Every aspect of my day, every minute of my day was consumed by just surviving at times and just managing at times.	B3
P5. To me, it means you're in a context where things haven't been working well and you have a decline. You are in amongst it and suffer from the culture or the poor leadership, and you're then making changes or enacting a vision which counteracts those negative influences, and start to push forward and turn things around.	B3
P1. ...there are other instances where she has, a few cases, where she has isolated and then tried to remove teachers from the school. [Name] would be a classic example of it. [Name] would be another classic example of it. She's used pretty much the same modus operandi with me.	B3
P8. Because I had to every single day to survive some sort of conflict.	B3

P7. Not to that degree...the people were very cautious. It was like, if this person liked you everything was fine, but if they didn't like you they could make your life difficult.	B3
P9. Interestingly, when he was appointed to the position, several people who had worked with him who knew me said, 'Watch out. He's very nasty'.	B3
P10. Things just get worse and worse.	B3
P12. There's a total pattern to it. I don't think it's not that the large decisions are made, because they have to be made so visibly, especially in the schools that I've been in, which have been [organisation] schools. The issue is that it's an ongoing dishonesty in a day-to-day way. You're slowly getting more on what has disheartened with the process and with the institution and the structure.	B3
P14. She then began an email war with the director. She sent emails, I think four or five times, every day. Threatening emails, abusive, harassing emails for I think more than 18 months.	B3
P15. I think just the way she dealt with crisis after crisis, probably reinforced her aggression and coarseness. Then she just continued to use that style. The subtleties underneath of dividing and breaking down the systems that were there aren't really tangible. They just sort of happened and people were unhappy and lots of things were going on.	B3
P6. That went on across the primary and secondary and with the office staff in terms of his remarks about me and the way he directed staff and positioned staff and the way he set up expectations that hadn't been discussed with me, which is not a good position to be in when you are the principal. Things like 'What's the matter' and 'How do you feel about Leonie as a principal', but said with a tone that was down-putting and just flat out derogatory comments or insults.	B3
P13. There was a general fear, I think. I was not aware of it when I first went there. I went there quite magnanimous and thinking there was no issues there at all...But I certainly was shocked. Well I had that initial time at Waterfall, which was just typical of what he did to people. He put down people in front of other principals. And he was renowned for it. And particularly secondary principals. I think it was a culture of fear, loathing would be probably true of some people.	B3

^a B3 = proactive responses to the phenomenon.

While Table 16 is an abbreviated extract of one meaning statement on one research question, all 75 meaning statements were populated in this way. Any meaning

statement that did not ultimately elicit a significant number of quotations was eliminated from the set. In contrast to coding at multiple nodes, determining the most appropriate meaning statement for each quotation and assigning that utterance to that one statement had the added benefit of highlighting distinctions within and between categories. Relevant utterances from across the full data set were used in the final step of the analysis, presented in Chapter 5.

4.4.6 STEP 6: DEFINING THE OUTCOME SPACE

The aim of phenomenography is to understand the complex of relationships that constitute a phenomenon (Yates et al., 2012) by identifying the logical connections inherent in the data. Marton (1995) referred to the architecture of these relationships as the outcome space. The next phase of analysis was to design an architecture for the data set derived from the 15 interviews. As a basis for defining the outcome space a number of sources had now been generated—the 15 transcripts, the NVivo nodes (see Section 4.4.2), the cross-tabulation of referential and structural concepts (see Section 4.4.3), the meaning statements (see Section 4.4.4) and the variations within and across the meaning statements (see Section 4.4.5), and pertinent utterances. Together, these various means of interrogating the data provided the material for building the eventual framework.

The analysis so far had revealed a number of elements integral in the design of a framework. These elements included the categories of description (now delineated by dimensions of variation), the referential and structural aspects of the phenomenon and the three research questions the analysis was seeking to answer. Each category of description, for example, could be further deconstructed into component parts indicating different dimensions of variation. Given the richness of the data, this process of differentiation could be even further disaggregated into the attributes characterising

each dimension of variation (Herbert, 2014). The referential and structural aspects could be aligned to each of the three research questions, assigned to the one most ontologically, epistemically or axiologically relevant. To help illustrate the process, an unpopulated outline of the resulting structure for understanding the complex of relationships in relation to the first research question is presented in Table 17.

Table 17

Format of the Outcome Space

Research Question 1: The Referential What		
What destructive leadership is		
Categories of Description (nouns)	Distinctions of Variation	Attributes

The framework of the outcome space brings all the of elements together, mapped to each of the three research questions, their referential or structural aspects and the categories of description, dimensions of variation and attributes that define them. An unpopulated outline is presented in Table 18. The first research question is labelled as the ‘relational what’ since it describes what destructive leadership is and, as will be detailed Chapter 5, nouns linguistically mark the ‘what’. The second epistemic research question is labelled the ‘structural how’ since it explains how destructive leadership is perceived and the features by which it is understood. Linguistically, verbs signal the ‘how’. The third research question is labelled the ‘structural what’ since, while still denoting features of the phenomenon, it does so interpretively, relating specifically to outcomes in terms of impact and learning.

Table 18

Full Structure of the Outcome Space

Research Question 1: The Referential What What destructive leadership is			Research Question 2: The Structural How The experience of destructive leadership			Research Question 3: The Structural What Personal & organisational impact and learning		
Categories of Description	Distinctions of Variation	Attributes	Categories of Description	Distinctions of Variation	Attributes	Categories of Description	Distinctions of Variation	Attributes

4.5 CONCLUSION

The basis of this chapter has been a seven-step approach to the analysis of data consistent with a phenomenographic methodology. The first six steps of the process—immersion, preliminary interrogation, applying a preliminary framework, making meaning, identifying variations and defining the outcome space—have been detailed in this chapter and lay the foundation for the seventh step of data analysis and findings, applying the outcome space, detailed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5:

THE PHENOMENOGRAPHIC OUTCOME SPACE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Phenomenography is the methodology which guides the analysis of data in this study. It is a process that concentrates on understanding a phenomenon by focusing on its variation, exploring the relatively finite ways in which such variations may present and designing an architecture to explain their logical relationships. This chapter presents the principal findings of the research via an elaboration of the seventh step of the study's analytical framework, applying the outcome space.

5.2 CHAPTER STRUCTURE

Chapter 4 provided an elaboration of six of the seven steps of the model analysing the data generated by 15 interviews with participants who articulated their perceptions of the experience of destructive leadership in schools. The purpose of this chapter is the application of the outcome space to the data as the seventh step. The resulting architecture is a 3 x 3 x 3 matrix that represents the outcome space and consists of the three research questions, three categories of description per question and three dimensions of variation per category. The dimensions are further particularised by multiple attributes. Specific evidence for the elements of the outcome space is drawn from the interview transcripts and presented as the utterances of the participants. The question of the role of the researcher as observer and the participant as observer is also addressed in this chapter and illustrated through the utterances of the interviewees. The aggregation of the elements of the outcome space and its logical relationships are presented as six outcome statements which represent the principal

findings of the study and answer the three research questions designed to test the hypothesis of the instructive value of destructive leadership. The six outcome statements and the theoretical interpretations to which they give rise form the basis of the discussion of Chapters 6 and 7.

5.3 STEP 7: APPLYING THE OUTCOME SPACE

Once the outcome space was designed in terms of the three research questions and the three elements (categories, dimensions and attributes) as described in Chapter 4, the final step in the seven-step process was its application to the data that had been examined iteratively to identify categories of description, illustrated by quotations (termed 'utterances' in phenomenography) (Cope, 2004). The categories of description represented the collective experience of all those in the study, rather than individual experience. The purpose of applying the outcome space to the data represented the culmination of the entire study, answering the three research questions designed to illuminate how destructive leadership may prove instructive at the individual, group and macro levels in the creation and maintenance of individual and organisational health and wellbeing.

The 3 x 3 x 3 layout of the outcome space was introduced in the previous chapter in Table 18. Although somewhat of a contrivance, the structure was designed purposely to allow vertical and horizontal mapping of the outcomes. Bowden and Walsh (2000) highlighted the point of tension between being true to the data and presenting a tidy construction. The phenomenographic debate is whether the process of devising categories of description and an outcome space is one of discovery or of construction, whereby a process of discovery would suggest that categories are constitutive of the data and one of construction would suggest they follow a predetermined pattern or set of procedures (Bowden & Walsh, 2000). The intention in

this case was to maintain a balance between discovery and construction, such that through the initial stages the categories emerged from the data and were subsequently constructed into a framework at the point at which those categories were largely stable. The further advantage of applying a framework lies in the ability to formulate the logical relationships within the data and embed these through the framework. Developing sets of three is also consistent with the phenomenographic approach; Trigwell (2000) suggested that the variations of a phenomenon will usually range in number from two to nine. While initially there had been a greater number of categories of description arising from the meaning statements, these were iteratively examined and reclassified into the overall outcome space, inclusive of the three research questions. The aim here was to further layer rather than repeat elements of the phenomenon, so that the outcome was a logical, nested and articulated framework.

Given this aim, at this point of constructing the outcome space it became apparent that several of the meaning statements as presented in Tables 13, 14 and 15 better aligned with the outcome space of another research question, thus, the utterances of those meaning statements were transferred to the respective question, as was the case with C1 related to personality dispositions, better linked with Research Question 2; with D2 related to professional consequences, better linked with Research Question 3; and with particular statements in A3 and B3 related to accommodation and better linked to Research Question 2. Once the three research questions were aggregated into the entire outcome space, with their categories, dimensions and attributes stabilised, the result was a matrix of multiple permutations and variations, offering a wide and deep interpretation of the phenomenon (see Section 5.7).

5.4 RESEARCH QUESTION 1: WHAT IS THE PHENOMENON

Three categories of description were identified for Research Question 1, what is the experience of destructive leadership as experienced and retrospectively described by school leaders who have survived the experience? These categories suggested that destructive leadership is a) harm, b) power and control and c) a dominant worldview without checks and balances. The three categories of description are interconnected and hierarchically structured so that the concept becomes increasing complex, with each more sophisticated category building on the one before. Table 19 presents the relationships among the categories. Read vertically, the categories in the table indicate that, in answer to Research Question 1, destructive leadership is harm resulting from an abuse of power and an exercise of control within the context of a dominant worldview and in the absence of adequate checks and balances.

Each of the categories was further delineated so that harm was distinguished as physical, psychological and social harm, each exhibiting particular attributes. Psychological harm, for example, could be to a person's self-confidence, his or her sense of identity or sense of agency. Power and control could be exercised over people, ideas or norms. Delineated as attributes, power and control over people, for example, could be exhibited physically, personally or professionally. A dominant worldview without checks and balances could manifest in terms of the values implicit in conflicting worldviews, expressed through hierarchical structures or as a factor of the operation of social systems. The attributes of the latter could, for example, variously be in relation to their self-referencing characteristics, to the lack of oversight or to the inadequacies of systems. The way in which the categories, dimensions and attributes are structured into the outcome space for Research Question 1 is shown in Table 19.

Table 19

Research Question 1 Outcome Space

Research Question 1: The Referential What		
What destructive leadership is		
Categories of Description (nouns)	Dimensions of Variation	Attributes
1A. (Is) Harm	Physical	Physiological, spatial, whole body, health
	Psychological	Self-confidence, identity, wellbeing, sense of agency, hope
	Social	Relational, pervasion, organisational, cultural, unidirectional, multidirectional
1B. (+A) (is from) Power and control	Over people	Physical, personal, professional, groups
	Over ideas	Barriers, stifled creativity, opposition, elimination, veto
	Over norms	Conformity, expectations, behavioural, cultural
1C. (+A +B) (is within) A dominant worldview without checks and balances	Values	Conflicting, conflicted, unethical, status
	Hierarchies	Assumptions of privilege, positional power, nested layers, nepotism and favour
	Social systems	Self-referencing, temporal, unchecked, inadequate policy or procedures
Meaning read vertically A + B + C	1A+1B+1C <i>DL is harm resulting from an abuse of power and an exercise of control, within the context of a dominant worldview and in the absence of adequate checks and balances.</i>	

Evidence in support of the outcome space can be found in the utterances of the participants and, as has been indicated, these utterances provided the basis for that architecture. Tables 13, 14 and 15 summarised the utterances conceptually and the architecture of the outcomes space draws from across the tables. The participants'

utterances provide a rich illustration of the conception under discussion and, as the words of the interviewees, present direct lived experience.

5.4.1 UTTERANCES: HARM

There was evidence from participants' utterances concerning the first category of description, which was of harm experienced in different ways. At the first level was a suggestion of physically felt harm. Although not as prevalent in the data as more subtle permutations, it was a distinctive variation considered worth capturing. As shown, for example, through the meaning statements of Tables 13 and 14, there were a total of 41 utterances related to personal attacks, physical harm, aggression or invasion of personal space.

P2: He would swear. He would swear, yeah. He swung me around on my chair one day, swung me around to talk to him. He did that to another fellow. I saw him do that to another fellow. Every day I felt sick...

P6: The Board were completely acting outside of...any normal part of behaviour in that not only did they have an office on site but [person] would go around speaking to teachers in a way that was undermining of what I was doing and directly direct staff in ways that were downright dangerous. When I say dangerous, I mean potentially physically dangerous...

Another presentation of harm was as personal psychological damage with significant and, in some cases, lasting effect on self-confidence and personal identity. Such presentations were reflected in the data as shown, for example in Tables 13 and 15, with eight utterances related to targeting those weaker, 18 related to a weakened sense of identity and a further 29 to a loss of psychological wellbeing:

P1: *I just still to this day don't know why you destroyed this. I don't know. It's hard enough to build something, but to wreck it. To wreck me at the same time. I don't know whether I was just collateral damage.*

P2: *For me it was destroying. It nearly destroyed my confidence, had me questioning my experiences...I felt that it could have destroyed relationships, personal and professional. Every aspect of my day, every minute of my day was consumed by just surviving at times and just managing at times...It was destructive in it destroyed the relationships of the team that I worked with too,*

The third distinction related to social harm, specifically at the organisational level where an entire school or school area could be affected. This delineation includes harm to students whether directly targeted or indirectly felt through the effect on the learning culture. The extent of social harm was expressed, for example in Table 13, as harmful change (11 utterances), as unethical practices (20 utterances) and, in Table 14, as system dysfunction (26 utterances).

P9: *Over the years I've witnessed, and been part of, educational leaders whose leadership is such that not only do schools not progress, in terms of their core function of student learning, but in fact they regress. I suppose in that sense it's destructive, because it's not allowing the school to function as it should.*

P15: *I think just the way she dealt with crisis after crisis, probably reinforced her aggression and coarseness. Then she just continued to use that style. The subtleties underneath of dividing and breaking down the systems that were there aren't really tangible. They just sort of happened and people were unhappy and lots of things were going on.*

5.4.2 UTTERANCES: POWER AND CONTROL

The second category of description, power and control, was also experienced in different ways. The construct of power figured prominently in the interviews as illustrated in Table 13, with a total of 50 references such as to the abuse of power in the absence of checks and balances, unequal power and the abuse of positional power:

P13: I think it was an abuse of power and control. Essentially an abuse of power and control. It was bullying in the worst form, and I always call it pincer movement, which I became aware of, and I took measures to stop it...And it was a 'nudge, nudge, wink, wink' sort of situation.

P6: It was partly to do with his power and control of the school; his power and control because he was the [position] and his power and control because he knew about the religious dimension of the school and I didn't.

Control over people themselves was one expression of the phenomenon, whereby people felt constrained and unable to act freely and in accordance with their values, as indicated, for example, in Table 13 by 17 utterances related to control over people. At its most intense, such control may take the form of bullying and harassment (for example, Table 43 shows 21 related utterances), intimidation or retribution (14 related utterances):

P4: I didn't enjoy the way he controlled his senior staff because I used to go for a term to senior staff meetings. They had to fit into a very narrow profile of what was acceptable to Fred. [At morning tea] ...the other directors came up to me and said, 'Good on you for raising that', but not one of them was prepared to speak out because he was a very vindictive sort of person, and they would be putting their own salaries on the line by speaking up.

P14: ...there can be a leadership by complete neglect but also that micromanaging nit-picking, harassment model. I think it's extreme leadership, where it's taken too far, like parenting in a way. ---. I actually think it's the same thing in a school context. It's destructive in that it destroys school culture.

Control over ideas was another expression of the use of power which was perceived to be destructive, as indicated in Table 13 by 26 utterances directly related to the concept.

Thus, innovation was stifled and the generation of new ideas discouraged:

P4: Nobody was thinking outside the square. There were lots of things that could have been done imaginatively in the region, but there was no thinking being allowed or being prepared to go further...Now some of it was a good way of doing things, but it meant that there was no dialogue. There was no dialectic, that there was no disagreement. It was implementation rather than talking things through and coming up with good ways of doing things.

P13: I use these words 'micromanagement'. And that was very destructive. If it wasn't done in a particular way, it wasn't right, so there was no scope for a major notion, no scope for trying things that you particularly want to try, unless that particular person agreed that that's the way it should be.

The third expression of power reflects a transference from the individual into a normative environment, where control had to do with the development of behavioural norms and the pervading control of the 'way things are done'. The significance of this development is reflected in the number of utterances, with 35 in Table 13 related to the patterning of harmful behaviour. In such a context conformity and submission become the norm:

P11: *In my view, there are organisations that have hierarchy and that becomes the thing that stops them doing things differently. You've got hierarchy, therefore, if someone wants to get higher up the ladder or there's always someone saying, 'You can't do that' from above..., the hierarchy in something like a department, has a great deal of influence on what happens or how it happens. I think that's how people also manipulate the kind of person that's in a particular role or the kind of outcome they might get.*

P3: *I think there are certain people that have been chosen higher up the ladder and they can be what we commonly refer to...as bilbies. They're called bilbies because they're protected species. I think that there are rules for some and rules for others and there are chosen people who people want because they fit the mould. I don't think it's based on merit or things like that.*

5.4.3 UTTERANCES: A DOMINANT WORLDVIEW WITHOUT CHECKS AND BALANCES

The third and increasingly complex category involved the philosophical position that may underlie power and lead to a worldview of dominance and unchecked presumption of privilege. The 38 utterances in Table 13 related to the development of a normative environment where power is exercised without checks and balances and the 23 utterances indicative of a privileged worldview lend weight to the incidence and significance of this concept. Fundamental to such a worldview are the values that characterise it which are antithetical to those of ethical conduct. Examples of such values included self-interest, disregard for students and a lack of genuine care and humanity:

P5: *All those things were wrapped up in virtually all of the leaders in the school. There were weak points everywhere that everyone was looking to feather their own nest. They weren't student-centred. It's all about them, them, them...I'd never seen anything like that before, but it was everywhere.*

P6: *It was very stressful and very challenging. I was warned about that particular school so I did go into that with my eyes open. I guess I found strange in a few of the schools I've been in, in the situations I've found myself in. We're meant to be in a caring profession but that care is not modelled at the higher levels within the school. There's bullying and lack of integrity and disrespect and this kind of thing going on.*

The dominant values-set becomes perpetuated through hierarchical structures (21 utterances in Table 13), institutionalising privilege (nine utterances) and positional power (29 utterances). Those in power exercise it for their own benefit, assuming that advantage as their right, 'earned' by virtue of their leadership position.

P11: *Also it gives privilege to a particular philosophy. If you're in a particular position in a hierarchy and you've made your way there, that way of doing things becomes the privileged view.*

P12: *It's that question of, what's happening with honesty where the next level goes up, and who's putting the pressure on those people that they go from being at the same level as we are, which is middle management, to higher executive levels, and then out of the classroom? The dishonesty seems to become more prevalent. I guess it's power, and that's not unusual, and it's not something*

that's ground-breaking at this point, but it is something that's completely destructive to the individual and, therefore, to the student

At its most sophisticated manifestation, the dominant worldview becomes a self-referencing system, whereby it perpetuates itself and the culture it has created. The self-referencing cyclical nature of the phenomenon is indicated by 20 utterances in Table 13, in addition to the patterning behaviour previously cited. Such a culture becomes tightly controlled and reinforced and difficult to oppose or to break. Those new to the system are likely to become either absorbed by it or isolated within it:

P10: The relationships are there initially and then when people see that there's not follow through or there's inconsistencies then they start to question and doubt. Then they'll suspend judgement and keep working hard but then the same things keep happening, and keep happening, and reinforcing, and then people become disenchanted. Then, I suppose, they form strong networks and cliques within the school. ...It then creates that division within the school as well.

P9: ...it's self-reinforcing because it's only person A's word against person B...and often person B is a victim. The other scene actually, thinking again of who Barry Johnson used to pick on, he'd pick on people who other people would have picked on anyway, or would have thought, 'Oh, they're not real good'. He'd hone in and make it personal and stronger.

5.5 RESEARCH QUESTION 2: HOW IS IT UNDERSTOOD

There were three categories of description identified in response to Research Question 2, how do survivors of destructive leadership understand and accommodate the phenomenon? Framed as verbs to denote the action behind the 'how' (Trigwell,

2000), the three categories of description were a) manifests as, b) is understood and c) is accommodated through, with the latter concept referring to how participants were or were not able to respond or adjust to the experience. In answer to Research Question 2, destructive leadership manifests overtly, covertly or normatively, understood as emanating from personality dispositions, professional inadequacy and/or aberrant values systems and social contexts, requiring individual or collective accommodation. In line with the structure of the outcome space, each category was particularised into dimensions of variation and attributes so that destructive leadership was perceived as manifesting overtly, covertly and/or in normative ways, that is, in ways where violations became the norm. Overt manifestations exhibited physically, psychologically, as aggression, verbally or non-verbally. Covert manifestations were discerned, for example, as clandestine activity, silence, dishonesty or callousness. Normative manifestations were characterised as crossing accepted lines or as corruption of organisational norms.

Participants explained destructive leadership variously as arising from personality dispositions, a lack of professional capability and/or aberrant personal or broader cultural values. Personality dispositions were described, for example, as narcissism, sociopathy, psychopathy or excessive ego. Professional inadequacy was attributed to a lack of knowledge or skills, poorly developed interpersonal skills or inexperience. Aberrant values and culture were about a lack of ethics, mistrust, social exclusion or contagious poor behaviour.

Participants accommodated destructive leadership through, for example, adjusting their own thinking or behaviours and accommodating the self. Some developed strategies to deal with the other (the leader), with other people in the context or with the circumstances, or they applied past knowledge and learning. Another

dimension of variation was to reference alternative role models to explain different ways of acting or beliefs about leadership that contrasted with the destructive manifestation. The way the categories, dimensions and attributes are structured into the outcome space for Research Question 2 is shown in Table 20.

Table 20

Research Question 2 Outcome Space

Research Question 2: The Structural How		
The experience of destructive leadership		
Categories of Description (verbs)	Dimensions of Variation	Attributes
2A. Manifests	Overtly	Physical, verbal, non-verbal, psychological, aggression
	Covertly	Clandestine activity, silence, dishonesty (lies and deception), callousness
	Normatively	Crossing lines, corrupted norms
2B. (+A) Is understood as	Personality dispositions	Narcissism, psychopathy, sociopathy, excess of ego, win-lose
	Professional inadequacy	Lack of knowledge, technical skills, interpersonal skills, experience and courage
	Aberrant values and culture	Ethical deficit, lack of integrity, mistrust contagion, exclusion, prevailing way of things
2C. (+A +B) Is accommodated through	Self	Positive, negative, efficacy, self-reaffirmation, implicated self, adjustment, exit
	Other(s)	Rationality, strategy, reassessment, use of judgement, retribution, use of past learning
	Alternative models	Positive role models, alternative power systems, different ways, leadership beliefs
2A+2B+2C		
<i>DL manifests overtly, covertly or normatively, understood as emanating from personality dispositions, professional inadequacy and/or aberrant values systems and social contexts, requiring individual or collective accommodation.</i>		

As was the case with Research Question 1, the elements of the outcome space for Research Question 2 are supported by participants' utterances in relation to the three categories of description. By way of illustration, reference is made to Table 14, which captures the Research Question 2 meaning statements and breakdown of utterances that comprise them, and to Tables 13 and 15 where appropriate.

5.5.1 UTTERANCES: MANIFESTS AS

Destructive leadership manifests in ways that are perceived to be overt manifestations of accepted norms, such as in aggressive verbal or non-verbal behaviour. Sixty-seven combined utterances in Table 14 comprise direct personal and physical presentations. Several of those exposed to such overt encounters describe the visceral nature of the experience and their consequent fear and anxiety:

P9: No, the first strange thing that happened, I walked into the office ahead of him and he walked behind me, and he locked the door. He didn't just shut it, he locked it; he turned the lock, so to get out of the room you had to unlock it. It had like a handle and a lock on top of it. I remember thinking, 'That's a funny thing to do'....Then he turned, I remember, and it was a swivel chair, he turned and he had this absolute look of malevolence and venom, and he was bright red, and he said, 'No. It's because you're fucking hopeless'....I said...I think we'll end this interview now. 'No we won't'. I said, 'I think we will'. It was very hard to get out of the room because he had locked the door, and for a minute I was frightened, I thought he was actually going to hit me. I went out and I was shocked. I've never met anyone like that.

P8: A senior officer came to the school one day, and he's looking for me everywhere and she got in every obstacle....he's there one day at something,

and we're heading for each other just to say hello and to talk, and I don't know where she came from, but that's the sort of petty tiny thing she did. She actually turned her back to me so I was stopped, and I couldn't actually say hello.

P2: I asked him not to come into my work space, so he'd come and stand by it and just stand there. When I asked him, and typical of me, as anxious and as worried I was, I couldn't keep my mouth shut. I asked him not to come into my workspace, so he'd come and stand by it and just stand there. He would do that often during the day.Me going outside after work, was standing out in the car park one day talking to a colleague, and she didn't know anything of this, and she said, 'Do you think so and so...? He seems to be watching you'. We played a little game, we'd move and he'd move. That was very off-putting.

P14: I had drama with my daughter, as you do, and I was just talking to her on the phone....This woman walked in. She walked into my office, she walked over to my phone and hung it up! I just thought, 'oh my God!'

There are also covert ways in which destructive behaviour is perceived to be conducted. In Table 14, for example, 45 utterances relate either to lies and deception or hypocrisy. There were a range of behaviours that illustrated the conception, such as dishonesty in the way business was conducted or people managed, clandestine activity conducted in a climate of secrecy and withholding of information, or callousness whereby there was a blatant disregard for the rights and feelings of others:

P12: Destructive leadership, in my experience, is founded in dishonesty fundamentally. I think that what ends up happening is that whether it's

dishonesty in not following through with decisions that are made, or saying something's going to happen and then something doesn't happen...

P7: I wasn't allowed to tell anyone, because it was an investigation matter. I couldn't tell anyone, and that there would be a process...Then he said, 'Well, this is an investigation matter, so you can't tell anyone'. He said to the DP [Deputy Principal], 'And you cannot tell anyone this is going to be investigated'.

P1: There was silence. Just, I don't know how you describe silence, other than gobsmacked silence. There was only about five or six people in the room. It's not very big, and no one knew what to say. Particularly I think because I was present...No, this was a public humiliation of me, for I'm not too sure what, what I did, other than my job...I went and saw her and said, 'You didn't think about telling me about this before?' 'Oh, I didn't think it was needed'. 'You didn't realise that this would be humiliating for me?'

5.5.2 UTTERANCES: IS UNDERSTOOD AS

Those who experience destructive leadership try to make sense of it, attributing it variously to particular personality dispositions, to incompetence or to an aberrant values system. Personality emerges as a key factor in some experiences of destructive leadership where terms such as sociopath and narcissist are coined to describe the leader in question. Reference to Table 13 highlights the 31 utterances related to personality. The issue of ego (12 utterances) emerges as an indication of self-importance, where individuals place their own needs and interests above those they lead:

P13: *I saw that stemming really from personality factors, and a personal factor between myself and the particular person that had arisen from an incident that had occurred probably 12 months before. I thought really it was just a case of payback, vindictiveness. So that brings in the personality aspects that I saw, of someone who had a bigger ego, not a great deal of confidence that was masked by strutting, and posing, and jovial on occasions when he wished to be jovial. But in fact I think it was masking a total inadequacy of someone who was trying to fulfil his brother's role.*

P14: *An extraordinary person. Like totally...She's a psychopath I think...I really think it was a personality disorder. I guess we have to be careful about people like that. Also people palming psychopaths off. Like, 'Oh wow, she's applied for a job [elsewhere], excellent'.*

P8: *I figured that I was with some megalomaniac psychopath...I would always seek out the research. I would always [seek] an academic understanding of it. An academic medical understanding of it, because it wasn't logical. It wasn't normal to behave the way he was behaving.*

In some cases, the destructive nature of the leadership is seen to arise from the professional inadequacy of leaders, in terms of their managerial or emotional capability (Table 13 indicates 37 relevant utterances) or their lack of courage (a further 15 utterances). They may lack the required skills for the particular role or situation, have not yet gained the necessary experience or not exhibit the emotional intelligence required:

P14: *A nice fellow called Maurice Dyson. He is an example of someone who was indecisive and out of his depth, and I think was unable to make a decision. I always thought of him as living in a parallel universe because he didn't seem to be able to make contact with the realities and nuts and bolts of school management.*

P10: *Or if he knew there was an uncomfortable meeting that was going to happen, he wouldn't turn up.*

The issue of aberrant values systems, which may exhibit as unethical practices (Table 13, 20 utterances) or as a form of social contagion, was apparent in several of the interviews. More extreme examples took the form of suspected fraudulent activity and evidence of nepotism and favour were also cited (13 utterances). Others may become enmeshed in such a culture and so succumb to the contagion (in Table 14, 21 utterances relate to the silence of or mobbing by others and 19 to a perceived lack of support).

P3: *For a principal I think that sort of crosses the line. I know it doesn't in real world but in the world of schools, as we know, it does tend to cross that line and it leads to so much animosity and hatred amongst the teams, within themselves and the visions of the boss. I don't think anytime the boss, really once it was open about his affair, I don't think anyone really listened to anything that he had to say.*

P13: *He played games by supporting all those people or giving them little perks here or there, or covering up for people who were away, and giving them days off and this and that. So they bring this culture up of people doing this, getting*

to school when they wanted, and slipping out because they were going to run their own business and other things...

P15: Calling of nicknames, using coarse language, being involved in gossiping. That's the basest, to appeal to the basest part of human instincts and things. I think it's easy to get sucked into that negative place. People get sucked into that pretty quickly.

5.5.3 UTTERANCES: IS ACCOMMODATED THROUGH

Often associated with the experience of the phenomenon is the need not only to make sense of it, but to adjust in some way and so accommodate the experience in terms of the self, the other person, or by reference to alternative ways of leading or different and more positive role models. In fact, the preponderance of utterances, a total of 210, were associated with some form of proactive response. People may adjust, either positively or negatively, for example, their perceptions of themselves and their sense of efficacy. The ultimate adjustment in every case was an exiting of the situation by either the participant or the leader, as highlighted in Table 14 through 39 utterances:

P12: I think it's just a sense of hopelessness with it and over time, you experience...No one goes into teaching for the money and no one goes into teaching for any other reason really, than loving what they do, having a passion for the subject and for kids and getting a genuine efficacy out of loving being around that and seeing what we do in the world. Having that destructive leadership in such an integrally positive part of society, it really should be something that is joyful and we should believe in our leaders, because really that's what we're teaching kids. When you're feeling that what you do is not

listened to and not valued, then over time, I think that permeates the way that you interact with kids in the classroom.

P6: ...they wanted me to take on some things that I wasn't happy to do...and they were sort of pushing me. Then they were saying, 'Oh, I think we don't actually need a principal. I think we need really at this point someone just to oversee K to 6 and for one of the Board members to really run the school'. I just left. I just had to get out of there...I decided and I left.

P8: I just wanted him to stop, and I thought it was wrong what he was doing. I had heart palpitations, and I was just really, really ill. I thought, when this director said, 'He has to talk to you', I went, 'Oh thank goodness'. I'm stupid. I should have realised that Tony wouldn't do that. Tony answers to nobody, and immediately I had a letter on my desk, and I said, 'None of this'. I packed up all of my stuff, and I left. I just walked out.

People may accommodate an experience through the ways in which they try to make sense of the other person and adjust their own behaviours. A number of participants actively tried to understand the behaviour they were encountering and to respond in ways which might have helped to manage it or at least lessen the impact. Others were more conscious of moving into avoidance mode and trying not to attract attention to themselves, as shown in Table 15 by 11 utterances:

P2: I would try to present my information in a way that he liked to present it...If I had to show him a program I would never show him a draft. I would make sure that it had passed through a lot of eyes before I got to it so that if there was going to be something picked it would be minor because I realised that he

doesn't like mistakes. I used a lot of that learning that I had to try to be objective and find a way to have a relationship, change my way to meet his.

P10: I read through the report and the report said that on occasion I was really aggressive and rude...That's how he saw me—that I was aggressive and I was rude. I was really frustrated. I pulled my head right in after that. After that I tried to make sure that I wasn't aggressive with him, that I tried to be polite and calm when I did talk to him...Yeah, because he wasn't a bad person he was just doing a bad job...Yeah, because I was really horrified that someone thought that I was rude...I did have to change my way and think about him as a person when I spoke to him.

A significant accommodation was through reference to the antithesis of destructive leadership and to positive role models and experiences of leadership. To make sense of their experience, most of the participants drew on the example of other leaders they admired. They sought to explain the nature of the negative by reference to its opposite. This was a common response as indicated by 42 utterances in Table 15, the highest number for any single meaning statement:

P5: I've recently graduated from my masters of educational leadership. I had started that course, and everything that I was studying in that course, the school were doing in the complete opposite of all the evidence base.

P7: I thought, well I can trust this person, because it made me not being as trusting or open with the people who come in, like the boss I have now. She's fantastic.

P15: *I guess that's the important thing, isn't it. It's about a school that has to have a positive culture for people to feel comfortable, for things to work well. People know the consequences, or behaviours and things like that.*

5.6 RESEARCH QUESTION 3: WHAT IMPACT AND LEARNING

Using the same structure as for the preceding research questions, three categories of description were identified for Research Question 3, what is the outcome for survivors of the experience of destructive leadership in terms of impact and potential for learning? This interpretive question represented the 'structural what' of destructive leadership and was answered in terms of the categories of description, a) impact, b) conditions and c) learning potential. Taken together, the categories suggest that destructive leadership impacts in personal, interpersonal or intrapersonal cycles, mediated or mitigated through individual or social conditions, and with instructive potential. The impact may be at a personal level presenting as problems with physical or mental health, affecting personal relationships, breaking down trust and/or having either short- or long-term effects. Short- or long-term impact may also be felt at the professional level where reputation may be affected, career prospects may be threatened, collegial relationships affected and competence questioned. At the cultural level there may an impact on students, on the school as an organisation or on the wider system.

Destructive leadership occurs in conditions that mediate or moderate its negative impact and are discernible as patterns and cycles. Factors such as the behaviours of others who become involved in the situation, through mobbing, feelings of isolation and compromised values for example, all reinforce the impact of the experience. There may also be counterbalancing factors, such as the care of family or friends; the support of colleagues or collegial networks and/or the affirmation of one's

values. A feature of these conditions is that there are discernible patterns of events or behaviours which may become cyclical, analogous to virtuous or vicious cycles, whereby actions and behaviours are either beneficially or detrimentally mutually reinforcing.

Learning potential, the third category of description of Research Question 3, may present variously as the learning at the micro level which takes place about self, the learning at the meso level which occurs about or potentially for the group(s) and institution(s), and/or the knowledge which may be gained at the macro level about social systems. Learning about self may have both positive and negative connotations where one's personal or professional sense of self may be affirmed or threatened. A learning outcome may be a strengthening of resilience or greater attention to self-care and to building wellbeing. Because destructive leadership has been shown to impact at the organisational level, there is room for institutional learning in terms of how the institution may be understood and improvement potential. The ways in which power is conceived and exercised institutionally, the presence of checks and balances, the development of policy and availability of support systems are all salient for organisational learning. Finally, a study of destructive leadership can be illuminating in respect of social systems, suggesting that in such circumstances innovation and the generation of ideas may come under threat and require protection. Since, as seen through the conditions within which the phenomenon occurs, cycles develop, either virtuously or viciously, there can be learning about the need for intervention and the points at which such intervention may occur. Table 21 summarises the outcomes of the analysis in answer to Research Question 3.

Table 21

Research Question 3 Outcome Space

Research Question 3: The Structural What		
Personal and organisational impact and learning		
Categories of Description (nouns)	Dimensions of Variation	Attributes
3A. Impact	Personal	Physical health, visceral, mental health, relationships, immediate, long-term, trust
	Professional	Reputation, career prospects, competence, relationships, immediate, long-term
	Cultural	Effect on students, school and climate; loss of faith in system
3B. (+A) Conditions	Mediating	Others involved, mobbing, clash of values, isolation
	Mitigating	Family, friendship, collegial networks, values compatibility
	Cycling	Patterns, reinforcing, balancing, vicious, virtuous, system dysfunction
3C. (+A +B) Learning potential	About self	Personal identity, professional identity, affirmation, resilience, lifestyle
	Institutional	Checks and balances, support, policy frameworks, use of power
	Social systems	Intervention points, vicious cycles, virtuous cycles, innovation protection
3A+3B+3C		
<i>DL impacts in personal, interpersonal or intrapersonal cycles, mediated or mitigated through individual or social conditions, and with instructive potential.</i>		

5.6.1 UTTERANCES: IMPACT

Destructive leadership is perceived to have both short- and long-term detrimental effects and at the personal, professional and wider organisational levels. For some individuals, significant mental or physical health implications coincided with the experience, as indicated by 11 utterances in Table 15 in relation to the impact on physiological wellbeing and 29 in relation to the psychological effects. The impact of

destructive leadership may be felt in deeply personal ways, such as relations with others, including those with family or friends.

P1: I still have scars from that. I think you probably hear it in my voice. I felt devalued, depowered, isolated, unworthy, and it questioned my commitment. ...But after this, I didn't believe in what the [the organisation] was anymore. If I didn't believe in that, I lost my faith in [the organisation] because I didn't believe the people who were representing it anymore. That's big. I'll never go back into a school. I'll never go back into a school...Mary [wife] knew I was struggling big time.

P11: I know it had a huge impact. I probably didn't realise what kind of impact until I finished. When I was travelling with a guy it was then at one point...he said to me, 'You guys are all suffering post-traumatic stress'. I thought, don't be stupid. I kept driving and thinking about it and that weekend I thought really hard about it. You know what? I think that's what it was. It was like a battlefield.

P7: I don't want to go to work. Max [husband] had pushed me out the door basically...Immediate? The immediate impact was I had a couple of days off. It was very hard to go back...It was hard to go back to work. I have very vivid memories.

Destructive leadership may have significant professional consequences, impacting on career prospects or collegial relations. Several of the interviewees received threats that their career paths would be impeded unless they acceded to certain conditions (see Table 14, with 10 utterances in reference to professional limitations

experienced and 11 in relation to professional barriers perceived as put in the way). There were instances of colleagues and/or friends taking ‘sides’ with consequent feelings of isolation or abandonment:

P3: He said to me, ‘You’ll never be the principal at this school’. We didn’t have a bad relationship at the time. He just said to me, ‘You’re never going to be the principal of this school’.

P4: He then said, ‘I want you to apply. We’re going to advertise again in a fortnight’s time’. I said, ‘I’m not going to apply...No Fred, I will go back to my school’. He said, ‘Well, if that’s your answer, you will never get another position in [the organisation]’. Guess what? I never did, but I never applied for one either.

P1: ‘No. I wouldn’t be supportive of you being principal of any of the schools in this district’. ‘I was just talking about x high, though. Oh, none?’ ‘While I’m the director, you’ll never get a principal’s job’....I went, this is all power and the way [the organisation] delivers power.

The cultural impact may be such that the effects are felt at the organisational level, whereby, importantly, there are implications for students and/or for the sustainability of the school. Declining school numbers, loss of curriculum options and poor public perception were just some of the ways the organisational effect was evidenced. For example, in Table 15, 35 utterances referred to a loss of organisational wellbeing:

P15I don’t know whether that was a deliberate breakdown of school’s name but it certainly was a consequence of it...The impact was huge. We had falling

numbers, staff leaving, people being employed casually without the expertise in the subject areas. Ultimately, the kids don't respect people with that sort of approach, so lack of respect from students. Staff feeling disempowered. Consequently, curriculum being dropped down. Staff morale hugely down, very down and always struggling to manage. Situations that could have been handled calmly would often escalate because of people's feeling that they couldn't do a thing about it.

P5: It was the perfect storm. No leadership. No innovation...Staff weren't doing anything. Staff in-fighting, and, of course, financially, the families couldn't afford it. It was a perfect storm, so they walked out in droves.

P4: I did talk to you briefly before we started recording about impacts on children, because I think destructive leadership not only destroys people in the profession, but it can destroy opportunities for kids...Now that meant several years of kids whose teachers were not teaching them effectively because they were looking over their own shoulders. They weren't working with each other. They didn't feel part of the place. There was no loyalty. It was just a terrible thing for the kids.

5.6.2 UTTERANCES: CONDITIONS

Destructive leadership was perceived to occur within certain conditions, to be counterbalanced by other factors and to develop into cycles of harm on the one hand or trust and support on the other. The type of environment that mediated the phenomenon was one where others became implicated, sometimes in the sense of

mobbing (Leymann, 1996) and contributing to bullying or unethical behaviours, or other times through their silence.

P12 And it sort of feels like a ganging up idea... It then became, 'I'm gathering all the executive together and I'm speaking on behalf of a group of people', as opposed to one person. Then you feel like the shield goes up and this wall goes up and again, you can't... it's impenetrable.

P7: ...months later I said to one of them... 'Who's going to be the next one?' She said, 'We all knew. We just had to keep a distance'... I think the lessons are there for principals too... I guess you know there would be people who'd been, have had similar things happen... you have to have those people around you. It was a disappointment for me that the local principals didn't come [with support].

As well as mediating factors in the face of destructive leadership, there can be counterbalancing factors which may mitigate the impact, such as partners or friends. Collegial networks were commonly held to be essential to maintaining wellbeing through difficult situations. These mitigating factors are illustrated in Table 15 by the 25 utterances about establishing networks and a further 10 about turning to family and friends. Although not necessarily easy when under intense pressure, staying true to one's own values was a further counterbalancing measure (evidenced by the 34 related utterances in Table 15).

P1: In the denouement, I would say counselling helped. I've moved my focus very deliberately to, in particular, a male friendship group. Buying my boat. I've been a sailor for 10 or 15 years when I was younger, but it was a strategic

decision so I could be with Glen and Gordon and go sailing. Just do stuff with my mates, you know...

P8: I did turn to the union in terms of union stuff. All of my friends were just beside themselves, because I was really, really destroyed by it. My friends...some of my family...There's a variety of people there. Some of my family, but mostly my friends, definitely my union mates [gave support].

P10: It's about building that trust It's about respecting people's confidentiality, not discussing what they tell you so that you are seen as a trusted person. There's some people you know that if you say something you're never quite sure where it's going to end up. I've got a couple of people in our learning community who are recent principals and they ring me because I'm the old one that's been in the game a bit longer. Also, just listening, because sometimes all they want to do is just say this, this, this, and this. I think the cycle can still happen.

Patterns, whether positive or negative, or virtuous or vicious, become cyclical and, therefore, reinforcing. What may begin as isolated behaviour may develop into an ongoing pattern that in turn becomes habituated and reinforcing. Cycles of interactions between people and circles of friendship take on increasing importance, described in the meaning statements as establishing circles of trust (22 utterances).

P10: Especially when it's in a small community and everyone has an opinion and will be quite happy to talk about it when they're in [the supermarket] or whatever and feed it and not really care about what the truth is but just feed whatever people say and feel. It becomes cyclic. It becomes this negative cycle where things just tend to implode...Things just get worse and worse.

P15: *And the whole thing just spiralled upwards and out of control without being able to have a principal bring it...close it down...It was just out of control I think. It was really out of control.*

P6: *I have a very strong affinity with young people and even through these challenging situations, you do set up bonds with the people who experience some of these things with you. For example, the deputy principal I just mentioned, we speak to each other on a daily basis. This experience will bond us together for life. That's how strong the [bond] because it's so difficult and you both find yourself in the midst of something you didn't think would happen.*

5.6.3 UTTERANCES: LEARNING POTENTIAL

Although participants were reflecting on challenging and damaging experiences, there were extensive data across the set centring on positive attributes, on effective leadership and on the lessons to be learned from the more negative manifestations, as demonstrated in Table 15 by the eight meaning statements categorised under B3, proactive responses to the phenomenon and the 210 related utterances. Learning about oneself through the experience, lessons pertinent institutionally and learning about how social systems operate featured explicitly and implicitly in the data.

In terms of self, there was evidence of participants recognising and drawing on their resilience (23 utterances), on affirming their beliefs and values (34 utterances) and on reflecting on their own practice (25 utterances). Many had grappled with their sense of self, questioning their own motives and actions and using the experience to

better understand what they valued about the profession, their place in it and the values they wanted to enact.

P5: I can live black. I'm comfortable being in there. I've lived it my whole life. I don't know any other way, I don't. It's okay. It doesn't frighten me. The dark doesn't frighten me and I'm resilient. Whatever they throw, I know I can catch and throw it back even faster. It's different to courage, different to courage or strength. It's having a self-belief that the dark times aren't going to frighten me because I've seen much worse at home or other things I've seen. It doesn't really worry me.

P10: I said right back there at the start our resilience has grown within our families...I think that's where resilience comes from, our background and our upbringing. That just gives you that strength to get on with life. Shit happens but some things you can control and some you can't. Get over it, and get over yourself, and move on. I suppose that's the attitude I've adopted.

P14: I think that's important too, to be a really good leader you have to be prepared to be aware of your weaknesses or your gaps in knowledge and seek some advice, because people who don't seek advice...You don't know everything and it's always good to discuss it with somebody. That would be the other way I operate, is to talk to people. Also, when I do do the wrong thing, I always apologise. I always acknowledge it. That's the other thing—I really believe that you've got to be a human being.

The data demonstrated there is much to be learned for all parties from the experience of destructive leadership. There is learning to be had at an institutional level

and the ways in which destructive leadership may be prevented or addressed when it occurs in a school or district context. There is also learning about having checks and balances which may act either preventatively or restoratively to counter the phenomenon. There is learning about the need for adequate functioning policy and about what support mechanisms should be in place.

P11: The other thing is learning about the support of employees and their mental health does not get fixed by having a phone number you can ring. It does not get fixed by having the support when someone's broken. That's not so much me, but in observing other people. Mental health and supporting people's mental health comes through the way we have relationships. There's got to be some education and training around that for leaders and others, but if you're going to start somewhere in a large organisation that's where it should come from.

P4: I think we probably as a system could do more about training people, a professional program on how to be effective in group situations. I don't think we do anything much with that at all, unless it's incidental... Most of the system stuff is compliance....

Encompassing of and yet wider than individual and organisational learning is a recognition of how social systems work and the ways in which systems develop and become self-replicating. People may find themselves enmeshed in a situation without realising it and inadvertently contribute to its continuance. Recognising the point at which the self-reproducing cycle may be broken is important to individual and organisational health, as indicated in Table 15 by the 33 utterances in reference to

accepting the challenge to confront destructive leadership and the 16 related to acting early.

P11: For organisations, I think there's something about deciding you're not just employing a principal or a senior director. You're employing a person for a context, time, and history for some places. I think there's a lot to be learned from that. I think there's a lot to be learned in large organisations about creating some flexibility in organisations so that there isn't a sense of, 'We've all come through the same ranks, therefore, we must be smarter than everyone else'. Or that there is no space for something different.

P13: Well, I'm an optimist. And that's what I was caught very much in an unfortunate set of circumstances in an environment inside the school that I couldn't control. ...But I think probably being task-oriented; I was more focused on getting things done, and trusting in people. I suppose you maybe need to be a little more careful in whom to trust a bit more, and probably being more firm in feedback to a person saying. 'Why did you say that?' 'I'm not happy with that comment' or 'Can you give me more feedback?' These are probably things that I should have done in that line, rather than just take it.

P8: I should've walked away from it...I shouldn't have confronted it, because it wasn't normal behaviour, and it was not going to react to normal confrontation. He was determined that what he said, and what he wanted was what was going to happen, regardless of what anybody else said...Yeah, no I should walk away from things. If anybody asked me advice in a similar situation I would say, 'Get away from it'.

Through the commonalities and variations in their responses and through their implicit and explicit advice the participants offered insights into proactive and reactive points of intervention in confronting destructive leadership. At a personal level, the advice was to be more alert to the possibility and to act early in confronting, avoiding or escaping the experience; to draw on one's values and beliefs in affirming what is ethical; to build strong friendship and collegial support networks; to adopt means to manage one's own wellbeing; and to use strategies to help moderate or manage the behaviours of the other person.

At the school or institutional level, the recommendations were to maintain open and transparent policy and decision-making, be alert to and diffuse systems of favour and preference, build effective and efficient teams where all feel valued and involved, take swift action where there is inappropriate behaviour at whatever level, ensure there are genuine avenues for concerns to be raised and responded to, and use the power of positive role modelling.

At the systems level, the suggestions were to ensure advocacy of sophisticated understandings of leadership as ethical and non-privileged; appoint leaders suited to the particular time and place; avoid rigid hierarchical approaches to leadership appointment; ensure appropriate selection and transfer processes that filter for inappropriate appointments or transfer of personnel; provide professional training and support for leaders to ensure the appropriateness of their knowledge and skills; focus less on compliance training and more on building and sustaining healthy relationships; have in place checks and balances, such as accountability policies and the processes to ensure their implementation; provide effective staff support, particularly in respect of psychological wellbeing; and provide ready access for leaders to frank and non-

judgemental guidance and advice. A summary of participants' views on the learning to be gained from the experience is provided in Table 22.

Table 22

Participants' Suggested Interventions

Level	Suggested measures and interventions
Micro (Individual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be alert and act early • Affirm personal values and beliefs • Build strong family, friendship and collegial networks • Manage own health and wellbeing • Develop strategies to cope with or manage dispositions of the leader • Exit the situation if necessary
Meso (Group/Institution)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain open and transparent policy and decision-making • Be alert to and diffuse systems of favour and preference • Build effective and efficient teams • Take swift action against inappropriate behaviour • Ensure there are genuine avenues for raising concerns • Use the power of positive role modelling • Provide effective support for staff wellbeing • Conduct regular organisational health checks
Macro (System)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure promotion of sophisticated understandings of leadership • Appoint leaders suited to context • Avoid rigid hierarchical approaches to leadership appointment • Ensure appropriate filters in selection and transfer processes • Provide sustained professional training and support for leaders • Focus less attention on compliance training • Focus more on education in building and sustaining healthy relationships

- Have in place checks and balances, such as accountability policies
 - Have in place the procedures to ensure policy implementation
 - Provide effective support for staff wellbeing
 - Provide ready access for leaders to guidance and advice
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5.7 UNDERSTANDING DESTRUCTIVE LEADERSHIP

Reference to entire outcome space is shown in Table 23, with the table being read vertically to answer the three discrete research questions and horizontally to enrich the understandings gained from the analysis and ultimately addressing the hypothesis that destructive leadership may have instructive value in the creation and maintenance of ethical and resilient school social systems. For example, reading across row 1A and 2A and 3A, it may be seen that destructive leadership is physical, psychological or social harm which may manifest overtly, covertly or normatively, and has impact at personal, professional or cultural levels.

Table 23 Framework for Analysing a Dysfunctional System

Research Question 1: The Referential What What destructive leadership is			Research Question 2: The Structural How The experience of destructive leadership			Research Question 3: The Structural What Personal and organisational impact and learning			Meaning read horizontally: 1 + 2 + 3
Categories of Description (nouns)	Distinctions of Variation	Attributes	Categories of Description (verbs)	Distinctions of Variation	Attributes	Categories of Description (nouns)	Distinctions of Variation	Attributes	
1A. (Is) Harm	Physical	Physiological; spatial; whole body; health	2A. Manifests	Overtly	Physical; verbal; nonverbal; psychological; aggression;	3A. Impact	Personal	Physical health; visceral; mental health; relationships; immediate; long-term; trust	1A+2A+3A <i>DL is physical, psychological or social harm which may manifest overtly, covertly or normatively, and has impact at personal, professional or cultural levels.</i> +↓
	Psychological	Self-confidence; identity; wellbeing; sense of agency; hope		Covertly	Clandestine activity; silence; dishonesty (lies & deception); callousness;		Professional	Reputation; career prospects; competence; relationships; immediate; long-term	
	Social	Relational; pervasion; organisational; cultural; unidirectional; multidirectional		Normatively	Crossing lines; corrupted norms;		Cultural	Effect on students, school, climate; loss of faith in system	
1B. (+A) (is from) Power and control	Over people	Physical; personal; professional; groups	2B. (+A) Is understood as	Personality dispositions	Narcissism; psychopathy; sociopathy; excess of ego; win/lose	3B. (+A) Conditions	Mediating	Others involved; mobbing; clash of values; isolation	1B+2B+3B <i>DL is power and control exercised over people, ideas or organisations understood as emanating from personality dispositions, professional inadequacy or aberrant values, in the presence of reinforcing or counterbalancing conditions.</i> +↓
	Over ideas	Barriers; stifled creativity; opposition; elimination; veto		Professional inadequacy	Lack of: knowledge, technical skills; interpersonal skills, experience, courage		Mitigating	Family; friendship; collegial networks; values compatibility	
	Over norms	Conformity; expectations; behavioural; cultural		Aberrant values and culture	Ethical deficit; lack of integrity; mistrust; contagion; exclusion; prevailing way of things		Cycling	Patterns; reinforcing; balancing; vicious; virtuous; system dysfunction	
1C. (+A +B) (is within) A dominant worldview without checks and balances	Values	Conflicting; conflicted; unethical; status;	2C. (+A +B) Is accommodated through	Self	Positive; negative; efficacy; self-reaffirmation; implicated self; adjustment; exit	3C. (+A +B) Learning potential	About self	Personal identity; professional identity; affirmation; resilience; lifestyle	1C+2C+3C <i>DL represents a dominant, self-referencing worldview of privilege and hierarchy which is accommodated through reference to self, the other(s) and alternative possibilities and from which there may be personal, institutional or systemic learning.</i>
	Hierarchies	Assumptions of privilege; positional power; nested layers; nepotism & favour		Other(s)	Rationality; strategy; reassessment; use of judgement; retribution; use of past learning		Institutional	Checks & balances; support; policy frameworks; use of power	
	Social systems	Self-referencing; temporal; unchecked; inadequate policy or procedures		Alternative models	Positive role models; alternative power systems; different ways; leadership beliefs		Social systems	Intervention points; vicious cycles; virtuous cycles; innovation protection	
Meaning read vertically A + B + C	1A+1B+1C + →: <i>DL is harm resulting from an abuse of power and an exercise of control, within the context of a dominant worldview and in the absence of adequate checks and balances.</i>		2A+2B+2C + →: <i>DL manifests overtly, covertly or normatively, understood as emanating from personality dispositions, professional inadequacy and/or aberrant values systems and social contexts, requiring individual or collective accommodation.</i>			3A+3B+3C: <i>DL impacts in personal, interpersonal or intrapersonal cycles, mediated or mitigated through individual or social conditions, and with instructive potential.</i>			↗ + ↘ = DL

From Table 23 there emerge six definitional outcome statements which address the research object. Statement 1, in reference to the ‘referential what’; Statement 2 in reference to the ‘structural how’; and Statement 3, in reference to the ‘structural what’, relate to the respective research questions. Statements 4, 5 and 6 each combine the ‘referential what’, the ‘structural how’ and the ‘structural what’ into one statement, indicating what destructive leadership is, how it is understood and what the outcomes are in terms of impact and learning. The aim of the combination of the outcome statements is to give breadth and depth to an understanding of destructive leadership, describing, explaining and interpreting the phenomenon. Their aggregation into a model defining destructive leadership constitutes one of the distinctive contributions of this study.

1. Destructive leadership is harm resulting from an abuse of power and an exercise of control, within the context of a dominant worldview and in the absence of adequate checks and balances.
2. Destructive leadership manifests overtly, covertly or normatively, understood as emanating from personality dispositions, professional inadequacy and/or aberrant values systems and social contexts, requiring individual or collective accommodation.
3. Destructive leadership impacts in personal, interpersonal or intrapersonal cycles, mediated or mitigated through individual or social conditions, and with instructive potential.
4. Destructive leadership is physical, psychological or social harm which may manifest overtly, covertly or normatively, and has impact at personal, professional or cultural levels.

5. Destructive leadership is power and control exercised over people, ideas or organisations understood as emanating from personality dispositions, professional inadequacy or aberrant values, in the presence of reinforcing or counterbalancing conditions.
6. Destructive leadership represents a dominant, self-referencing worldview of privilege and hierarchy which is accommodated through reference to self, the other(s) and alternative possibilities and from which there may be personal, institutional or systemic learning.

These six outcome statements, derived from the empirical phase of the study, are discussed in Chapter 6 and examined in light of the literature review and the aims of the study in Chapter 7.

5.8 THE ROLE OF THE OBSERVER

Consistent with the theory underpinning the study, autopoietic theory (Maturana & Varela, 1987; Parboteeah & Jackson, 2007) and the methodological approach, phenomenography (Yates et al., 2012), the role of the observer is of relevance to the analysis. In this study there were dual observers, the researcher as observer of the participants and their conceptions of the phenomenon, and the participants themselves as observers recounting their experience of that phenomenon. As indicated in Chapter 3, researchers as observers are encouraged to bracket as they design and conduct a study, whereby pre-existing knowledge, assumptions and expectations are set aside (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000). The researcher remained conscious of this advice, while noting there were times during some interviews when participants drew the researcher into the frame, either by assuming positional knowledge as a former school leader or background knowledge of people or events.

P3: *There is a mould that they want. You know that, you're an experienced principal yourself. You know what they're after.*

P4: *Things were going pretty well there and then there was a tragic incident about some students. You might remember this?*

The participants were also observers in the process of recounting their stories. Five of the interviewees made direct reference either to the notes they had made or the thinking they had done in preparation for the interview. In a number of instances, participants stated that their recount was their own interpretation of events and acknowledged that others may hold different views. They recognised their version as one perspective and were observing themselves through the process of reflection elicited by the interview.

P1: *There's not a lot of evidence there, if you go by evidence, that they wanted me in, is there? This is my version of it of course, and they would have different versions.*

P9: *When I was thinking about this interview it came flooding back. It wasn't distressing. It was just, I'm puzzled by it.*

P11: *I did have a little think the other day about what this all means, just trying to put myself in the 'it' space.*

Post interview, several interviewees made observations about the interview itself, one stating that it had been 'cathartic', another 'cleansing' and a third the 'cause for a two hour sleep straight afterwards', again signalling their observations of

themselves as both active and reflective participants in the interview process. Through the process of checking the transcripts, several of the interviewees in their emailed responses again indicated their position as observers of themselves and/or the process.

P5: It was wonderful to read over your notes. I really gained much from the experience.

P12: The transcript looks good. Gosh, it is a shock to read those things and realise it wasn't that long ago. Having some distance from all that is really fantastic.

In a subsequent email received by the researcher six months post interview there was this further reflection:

P5: Firstly, I want to thank you for your time and the opportunity to verbalise and acknowledge my personal transformational experiences and accept that on occasions life's challenges can be cruel, but with the right support and mindset absolutely anything is indeed possible...After reading my answers I started to realise that I no longer 'live black', but now have an approach to life which focuses on improving myself and others.

The researcher's reflections as observer are discussed in Chapter 8.

5.9 PATTERNS OF LANGUAGE

In analysing the transcripts there were some notable linguistic features. One of these was the common use of direct speech as participants told their stories. At some point in their interview all the interviewees used this technique, with several principally recounting their experiences as remembered conversations and verbal interactions with different major players. Such exchanges conveyed the leaders in

particular as 'real' figures, in the sense that they were given life through the words attributed to them. The direct quotations also conveyed a sense of the participant and his or her status in the exchange, whether intimidated or empowered.

P7: Carrie said to me, 'My advice to you is, is just play the game on this one'. She said, 'There's no, there's no legs to this. It's not a formal improvement program, and it can't be. He brought it through some investigation process'. She just said, 'My advice would be that'. She said, 'You could make a formal complaint but...'. 'I don't know', I said. 'I don't want to do that. I don't want to make anything worse'.

P4: I was there as a support person and I turned to the principal and said, 'Don, I don't think you should continue with this line of questioning. I don't think it's appropriate'. At which stage Jim turned to me and said, 'You're the support person. You're not allowed to say anything'. I said, 'All right, I won't. Don, let's go', and we walked out.

There were a number of instances of strong or emotive language as participants recalled their feelings, such as of frustration, betrayal or responsibility. Perhaps not consciously, but in effect, phrases were repeated for emphasis, words chosen for their impact and images used for their potency.

P1: I still smoulder...you may pick up my language at this, I still smoulder over that. Not getting the opportunity to be in that room has pissed me right off, but I can't do anything about it.

P12: *Therefore, that's what we do, that's our job and really, this was your conversation to be had, but you threw me under a bus and allowed me to become the person that is the antagonist at school for this family and the medical profession, not you. I just found that that was stunningly poor form...*

P11: *In order for someone to gain a position or gain notoriety, they don't care about their colleagues around them and build up together. If you think of the crabs coming out of the pot, you've actually got to keep some down to stand on them. There's also going to be a scrambling at different levels so that whoever it is that makes it to the top...there might be various crabs that make it to the top.*

A further dimension to this languaging aspect was of the participants in some instances being voiceless and in other cases finding their voice through the course of the experience and speaking out in some way.

5.10 CONCLUSION

Building on the six steps of analysis described in Chapter 4, this chapter has concentrated on the seventh and final step in the analysis process, applying the outcome space to the data. A 3 x 3 x 3 matrix was presented as the means by which the logical relationships are revealed through the data. The interrelationships of the outcome space provide six outcome statements which respond to the three research questions and describe the qualitatively different and relatively finite ways (Richardson, 1999) in which the phenomenon of destructive leadership may be understood and its instructive value assessed—an analytical framework which forms an important basis for the discussion in Chapters 6 and 7.

CHAPTER 6:

BEYOND PHENOMENOGRAPHIC PROCESS TO SYNTHESIS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

As a qualitative, inductive and non-dualist approach that is consistent with the constitutive ontology of autopoietic theory (see Chapter 3), phenomenography has provided the basis for the analysis of data and presentation of findings in Chapters 4 and 5. The transcripts of interviews with 15 school leaders were examined to elicit data that could address three research questions relating to their perceptions of the existence, meaning and consequences of destructive leadership, and its instructive value. Their firsthand accounts of their experiences were analysed for similarities and variations and the collective meanings drawn from this process organised into an outcome space illustrative of the logical relations that define their collective understanding of the phenomenon of destructive leadership.

6.2 CHAPTER STRUCTURE

Following the advice of Bowden and Walsh (2000) and the argument that once the categories of description are defined the phenomenographic research process is complete and the focus turns to the interpretation of the outcomes, this chapter brings together the findings of the literature review of Chapter 2 and the empirical analysis of Chapters 4 and 5. The purpose is, through the three research questions of the study, to address the central hypothesis that destructive leadership can prove instructive for the health and wellbeing of individuals and organisations:

1. What is the phenomenon of destructive leadership, as experienced and retrospectively described by school leaders who have survived the experience?
2. How do survivors of destructive leadership understand and accommodate the phenomenon?
3. What is the outcome for survivors of the experience of destructive leadership in terms of impact and potential for learning?

As a means of maintaining the integrity and coherence of the work, the chapter structure follows that of Chapter 2. The initial focus is on definitional questions, moving through the secondary literature and the applicability of the disciplines of philosophy, psychology and sociology and the field of education, before covering the primary autopoietic discourse and its application in understanding the process and outcomes of destructive leadership. Mirroring Chapter 2, the logic flows from description to explanation to interpretation. The final means by which the interpretive process is achieved is through a review of the outcome space and the six outcome statements as derived in Chapter 5, firstly to confirm their intersection with the literature and then to advance the discourse on educational leadership by offering an original theory of leadership.

In terms of the structure of the study, Chapter 6 cycles back to the first phases of the organising elements, concentrating on the theory, ontology, epistemology and axiology that may elucidate the phenomenon of destructive leadership. Table 43 illustrates the foci and applies to both Chapters 6 and 7.

Table 24

Elements of the Study Relevant to Chapters 6 and 7

Theory	Autopoietic theory, critical social systems theory
Ontology	Subjectivist, constitutive ontologies
Epistemology	Constructivist, interpretivist
Axiology	Ethical, moral
Methodology	Qualitative, phenomenographic, inductive
Instrumentation	Semi-structured interview, expert panels
Analysis	Conceptions, categories of description, outcome space

6.3 DEFINING THE RESEARCH OBJECT

Defining the construct of leadership was central to this study and the initial starting point of the literature review. For the purpose of the review and as the basis for the empirical element it was necessary to arrive at an understanding of the object under discussion, especially so given the first ontological research question which presupposed the existence of leadership as exercised destructively and sought to uncover the meaning participants attributed to the term ‘destructive leadership’.

6.3.1 DEFINING LEADERSHIP

In Chapter 2, leadership was defined as a function (Avolio, 2007) between the leader and the led which operates as a process of dynamic interplay (Lord et al., 2001), the purpose of which is to exercise influence (Bush & Glover, 2003; Vroom & Jago, 2007) to achieve particular outcomes. Historically, from Aristotle (Shay, 2000) through to contemporary commentators the leadership discourse has been based on assumptions of the intrinsically positive nature of the construct. Terms such as servant leadership (Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010; Sendjaya et al., 2008; Spears, 2010);

transformational leadership (Abu-tineh et al., 2009; Caldwell, Dixon, Floyd, Chaudoin, Post & Cheokas, 2011; Muchiri et al., 2012); participative leadership (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2011), authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio et al., 2009; Emuwa, 2013) and values-based leadership (Frost, 2014; Kraemer, 2015; Warwas, 2015) connote constructive conceptions. Literature from the educational field shares this view (Davies, 2011; Fullan, 2014; Hargreaves et al., 2014), with the further obligation that educational leaders work in the academic and social best interests of their students (Caldwell, 2006).

Although definitions based on such intrinsically positive assumptions may be widely employed, Chapter 2 contended that leadership may present negatively, as demonstrated by major political or business figures (Kellerman, 2004; Lipman-Blumen, 2005), and, thus, has no intrinsic values-set. Rather, it is the ways in which it is qualified which determine its values base. Leadership may be ethical or unethical, constructive or destructive and possibly all of these at once (Einarsen et al., 2007). This is not to suggest that any permutation is of equal moral value, rather, the construct of leadership requires qualification.

Evidence from the empirical phase of the study showed that typically participants either explicitly or implicitly subscribed to the widely held notion of leadership as an exercise of positive influence. The relatively high number of utterances in Table 15 related to positive role models (N = 45) are indicative of this perspective. The very fact of leadership being exercised for negative motives or with negative consequences and, thus, confounding this view was typically cause for a loss of trust or a sense of distress. Reflecting on an experience of disillusionment, Participant 12 conceived of 'true' leadership and expectations of what ought to be, that

is, implying a moral imperative (Ciulla et al., 2005). Understanding comes from defining what leadership is not and what it is:

P12: Absolutely and it's not loud at all. It's not fierce; it's not loud; it's not black and white; it's not demanding; it's not any of those things. True leadership, in my estimation, which was what I saw, was true communication, 'How can we fix this? How can we do things better?' and I think when the ego is removed, and there is a true sense of understanding and democracy and not dictatorship.

There were clear understandings of what knowledge and behaviours constitute leadership when practised effectively. Given that participants had been asked about their understanding of the construct of leadership as qualified destructively, some like Participant 13 made meaning by reference to the positive as a way to recognise where leaders were lacking. In this sense, the constructive view was the default position.

P13: I'd say it's really around your definition of what an effective leader is. So that's where I come from...I think back on to what's a good leader do. Well, a good leader is understanding of education, understanding of pedagogy, is supportive, recognises people for what they're doing, supports, gives feedback, sets direction, builds teams. My experience with this particular leader was he did none of that at all. In fact, he did the reverse.

The participants in the study demonstrated that, whether through their personal beliefs, study of relevant literature, professional development, observation and/or experience, they had internalised a conception of leadership defined positively and, therefore, regarded destructive leadership as both contrary and confronting.

6.3.2 DEFINING DESTRUCTIVE LEADERSHIP

The literature review of Chapter 2 indicated the ways in which destructive leadership is defined in the relevant literature. While not the dominant leadership discourse, and largely unexplored in the field of education, there was a solid body of relevant studies upon which to draw. In the literature on ‘the dark side’ (Conger, 1990; Griffin & O’Leary-Kelly, 2004; Mathieu et al., 2014) various terms are used, each suggesting a slightly different perspective on a negative phenomenon—bad (Kellerman, 2004; Schyns & Schilling, 2013), unethical (Craig & Gustafson, 1998), abusive (Chi & Liang, 2013; Mackey et al., 2013; Tepper, 2000; 2007), pseudo-transformational (Lin et al., 2017; Schuh et al., 2013), toxic (Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Pelletier, 2010; Thoroughgood et al., 2012; Whicker, 1996) or tyrannical (Ashforth, 1994; Ma et al., 2004; Pelletier, 2010; Tepper, 2000). The one chosen as most pertinent to the intent of the current study was destructive (Aasland et al., 2010; Einarsen et al., 2007; Goldman, 2009; Padilla et al., 2007) because of its implicit incorporation of the consequences and the attributes of the phenomenon.

It was a given that the term destructive leadership would resonate with participants in the study since they had volunteered on the basis that they recognised the phenomenon through direct experience. What was of interest, however, was how they defined the term and what it meant to them. Each interview began by trying to clarify that meaning.

P5: I actually see the definition is what I’m living and breathing. It’s in amongst all these tales of woe. Lived and breathed it, and now it’s up to me to strategically action changes which make it better for everyone, in particular the students and the families who have stuck solid.

P2: I didn't actually go and Google the meaning of destructive leadership because I wanted to talk about it from my perspective and my interpretation of what that might be. For me, it was destroying. It nearly destroyed my confidence, had me questioning my experiences. I felt that it could have destroyed relationships, personal and professional.

Common to all of the definitions offered by the participants was the causing of some sort of harm. For Participant 5, it was a pervasive culture of multiple tales, 'lived and breathed' and affecting the whole school community, while for Participant 2 it was personally directed behaviours that created deep inner conflict. Participant 1 defined the construct both behaviourally and consequentially, with unethical behaviours having harmful consequences personally and organisationally:

P1: Well, the way I literally interpret destructive leadership is in the word 'destructive', meaning to destroy. In my case, I believe one of my leaders in particular destroyed not only my career, personally; at a personal level I think my career was terminated by this person, and I still believe it. Now whether I can prove that in fact is not the point of this discussion. It's that I'm left believing that. I think this person also destroyed something that had been created by a large number of people, and that she didn't have the right to destroy that...So I'm taking a very literal interpretation of that, and I would overlap with a sense of unethical behaviour because that destruction to me strikes a chord. I haven't clarified what she's destroyed yet, but that ethical nature, if you look up the word 'ethics', it often comes to moral questions of right and wrong. I don't know whether they're universal or not, but they're

certainly personal and in terms of my ethics, she walked over the line many times in terms of wrong ethical behaviour.

The original intention in the research design had been to narrow the definition for the purpose of the study to those behaviours that were personally directed (Schyns & Schilling, 2013), such as manipulative, bullying or abusive behaviours and to exclude those less personalised that could be regarded as illegal, negligent or fraudulent. While there was ample evidence from the interviews of all of the former behaviours, the latter also figured prominently. In reality, it proved impractical to limit artificially what might otherwise emerge. The fact that the interviews were openly structured and participants actively invited to ascribe meaning meant a range of manifestations would be raised. Indeed, in retrospect, such limitations would have been counter to the spirit of the phenomenographic methodology which seeks to understand a phenomenon through its variations (Rapp, 2010). Consequently, such behaviours ultimately became legitimate distinctions within the complex architecture of the outcome space (Marton, 1995).

As illustrated by the following utterances, Participant 9 gave an example of conduct considered corrupt, while Participant 3 had suspicions of fraudulent behaviour confirmed. Both interviews cited these as instances of destructive leadership not because of the behaviour per se, but because of its consequences and wider detrimental impact on relationships and on school culture. Several other participants made reference to the actions of leaders including misappropriation or suspected misappropriation of funds, extramarital affairs and unethical practices, all of which they saw as having destabilising and destructive consequences.

P9: *While I was there, I learned of some very corrupt things that she had done. Very corrupt things. One was she changed a staffing panel's decision as to an appointee. She told them that the successful candidate, successful applicant, had declined the position, which was not true.*

P3: *There were times when it came in as a whole stack of training and development forms and half are hotel rooms or expenses to go... Well, to me, it was always a bit suspicious because 95 kilometres away, what were you doing going staying overnight?... Why would you stay overnight...? Was I suspicious? Yes, I was. Could I prove anything? No, I couldn't... When it broke open there was probably more relief than anything else... Didn't have to pretend.*

P5: *He racked up a debt which he should be in prison for. He should be in prison.*

A laissez faire style of leadership was another manifestation recognised in the literature (Skogstad et al., 2007), but originally excluded from the definition of the type of leadership to be considered in the study. However, once again the voices of the participants prevailed because of the frequency of references (37), as indicated by the Research Question 1 'heat map' in Table 13 and the meaning statement, 'Destructive leadership is a lack of capability'. As indicated in Table 13, often such an approach was associated more with incompetence or lack of ability, as Participants 6 and 11 suggest, or sometimes avoidance for want of courage, as described by Participant 10.

P6: *I see it's also about a lack of professional skill or ability and a lack of emotional intelligence, as well as possibly ignorance.*

P11: *...there are people who might be destructive leaders or disruptive leaders when they are unable to do their job. So a school principal who doesn't have the skills to do a job in this context; so the team around them might see them as destructive but in fact you've got to figure out other ways to make the relationships in the team work. Again, a person probably gets the job because they're part of a system, rather than because they've got the skills for the time and place.*

P10: *Lots of good things happening but he wasn't involved in them and was, in a way, isolated from participating in a sense. Then he started taking time off. Whenever it got to periods of time where he felt, 'I can't deal with all these things', he'd take a period of time off and then that got longer and longer. He just ran away from it.*

A further definitional distinction made in Chapter 2 related to the intentionality of leadership described as destructive. While not necessarily pertaining to laissez faire presentations, which are often characterised by a lack of intent, personally directed actions, such as manipulation, are indicative of more deliberate behaviour. This is a point highlighted in the literature on pseudo-transformational leadership (Schuh et al., 2013) and by Klaussner's (2014) supervisor-subordinate dyad. Participant 10 implied the intentionality, while Participant 15 encapsulated the distinction:

P10: *One of the things that he said, that I never forgot, he says, 'I believe in divide and conquer. That's the best way to rule'. What he did was he divided the primary and the secondary bits of the school. He didn't have them working together as a team.*

P15: *I think in terms of destructive leadership, to me that has a connotation of deliberate divisiveness. Deliberately setting out to divide and conquer or to take something apart deliberately. Some people's leadership might be just purely accidental and not good. A destructive one to me seems intentional. It's an intentional type of leadership that goes about destroying or dividing people and systems basically.*

In defining destructive leadership, the empirical findings support those of the literature review, suggesting that the construct is of unethical behaviour which either intentionally or unintentionally causes personal and/or organisational harm. As a negative presentation of leadership, it runs counter to commonly-held conceptions of principled influence exercised for good purpose.

6.4 SECONDARY DISCOURSE

As explained in Chapter 2, the discourse pertinent to a study of destructive leadership could be differentiated into primary and secondary elements, the former being the critical lens through which the phenomenon would be explored, that is, autopoietic theory, and the latter providing significant background material. The secondary discourse stemmed from the disciplines of philosophy, psychology and sociology; the field of education; and studies of resilience. The empirical phase of the study lent support to the findings of the literature review, for example, according

significance to ethics and moral conduct, the personality of the leader in question and the sociological context in which the phenomenon played out. The germane factors in Figure 3 are similarly applicable in the context of the empirical data.

6.4.1 THE DISCIPLINE OF PHILOSOPHY

Literature from the discipline of philosophy centred on questions of ethics and morality (Ciulla et al., 2005; Duignan, 2006; Eisenbeiss et al., 2014; Solomon, 2005; Woodruff, 2005). Concepts such as ‘reverence’ and its opposite ‘hubris’ stem from ancient times (Woodruff, 2005) and refer to the actions of the leader in terms of respectful relations with others. Participant 4, in a humorous channelling of such thinking, spoke in all seriousness of the ways in which trusted others may temper conduct:

P4: I came home after a few months thinking I was doing a crash hot job and said something to that effect, and Michelle [wife] said, ‘You’re not all that bloody good. You’re just a normal prick’, you know, that sort of thing. I said, ‘What about my hubris?’ She said, ‘I’m pricking it’....They were my joint hubris prickers, so that they kept me grounded the whole time. Jane would keep me grounded because I’d put things in to be typed up or sent off and so she would say, ‘You think you’re pretty good here, don’t you?’ That was really handy and it kept me focused on making sure that what I was doing was for the greater good, rather than about me...I think a lot of people would benefit from having hubris prickers.

Ethical leadership can be recognised through particular attributes (Eisenbeiss et al., 2014) which are universally identifiable (Den Hartog et al., 1999), such as honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, encouragement and acting justly. Attention to the

converse of these attributes was in evidence across the interviews. For example, meaning statements relating to Research Question 2, as shown in Table 14, indicate 'lies and deception' as being the most referenced conception of this heat map with 27 references. There were a further 18 references to hypocrisy, a related conception. An element of dishonesty was the way in which it compromised others.

P9: Anyway, they went home and the next day he took me to one side and he said, 'You didn't hear that comment I made yesterday'. I said, 'You just better hope I'm not asked. There's no way I will lie'.

P3: I credit it all to the leadership of the boss at the time and the deception and the lies. Not being able to be straight, even with the people who were closest to him. As it turned out, one of the people he did work closest with...was the one who absolutely coughed him up.

P1: Certainly with me, but I have validation of this with other people, is that she, whilst we were building things, and she was publicly speaking of the wonderful nature of it, she was carrying out actions that were absolutely destructive to it at the same time, and I think that's unethical.

Rather than encouragement and recognition (Den Hartog et al., 1999), participants were more likely to experience reprisal and encounter vindictiveness from the leaders they perceived as destructive:

P13: I saw that stemming really from personality factors, and an interpersonal personal encounter between myself and the particular person that had arisen

from an incident that had occurred probably 12 months before. I thought really it was just a case of payback, vindictiveness.

P8: Over time that eventually made me a target, because I wouldn't do exactly as he wanted me to, and I'm a negotiator. I'm somebody who doesn't confront with you, and as outspoken as I am, I would follow the established rules, particularly the union rules on how you deal with those issues. He just was having none of it.

Understandings from the literature in the tradition of philosophy were highly consistent with those evident in the participant interviews. An ethical void was noted at both the personal and organisational levels and with deep personal and organisational consequences:

P12: I think the word integrity is bandied around a lot, and for me integrity and honesty are intrinsic. They are combined. When the school undermines you in that sense, and they talk about integrity, there is none, and you lose even more hope. With honesty, I think personally, it's just being told one thing, one action happening, and then it being undermined and not dealt with in a face-to-face manner. I think that personally it's just such a cowardly way of going about leadership. I think that honesty and that integrity that's then thrown in your face a lot from the institutions or from the hierarchy, then becomes just so undermined that you're not just thinking, 'This is disappointing', you're actually losing hope in the whole foundation of what it is that you're doing.

6.4.2 THE DISCIPLINE OF PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology offers a rich source of material applicable to a study of destructive leadership. The relationship between personality traits and leadership styles (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005) features in the literature and may present as callous, antagonistic, intimidating, hostile, distant, controlling, blaming and/or contemptuous behaviours (Schaubroeck et al., 2007), all of which could be detected as perceptions of different participants. As noted in the analysis of Chapter 5, control over people and/or ideas was commonly referenced:

P7: From my point of view, it means people who lead in a destructive way and that has a very limiting impact on the people that they're trying to lead. They're not letting other people lead and sometimes I would say controlling.

P15: I don't know whether it was her way of trying to get things to happen, it wasn't well developed and, therefore, used a 'power over' type, a dominating type manner to implement things and deliberately went about trying to divide, which is why I think she's an example of destructive leadership. I think she deliberately went around doing that.

Pathological dispositions such as psychopathy (Hare & Neumann, 2008; Mathieu et al., 2014), narcissistic superiority (Corry et al., 2008; Goldman, 2009; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006) and Machiavellianism (Jones & Paulhus, 2009; Kiazad et al., 2010) may present in leaders with significant consequences for their subordinates. Further, there is evidence to suggest the reliability of subordinates' assessment of the personality traits and behaviours of their leaders (Judge et al., 2002; Mathieu et al., 2014; Ostroff et al., 2004). In a number of cases, participants in the

study referred to leaders in terms of their perceived pathologies or, as indicated in Chapter 5, presentations of their excess of ego. As part of their sense-making, some participants had undertaken research into possible explanations:

P11: I once looked for the tag and I think it's narcissistic sociopath. I think that might fit with this particular kind of disruptive, destructive leadership. It's about them. I think the finishing off as you say, how did it end up? It hasn't ended in a way. A narcissist needs to still be in there and it wasn't resolved.

P8: Eventually what I did was I got John Clarke's book on psychopaths, and there's a list where he's got these are the qualities of a psychopath, and I just ticked them all off.

6.4.3 THE DISCIPLINE OF SOCIOLOGY

The sociological dimension to destructive leadership is discussed in the literature in terms of the hierarchical nature of organisations, specifically schools (Hatcher, 2005), power relations (Price, 2005) and the way authority is exercised (Maner & Mead, 2010). Asymmetrical power relations confer power and status to those in authority (Van Vugt et al., 2008) which may give rise to abuse (Maner & Mead, 2010). These were the same kinds of manifestations identified in the analysis in Chapters 4 and 5, where destructive leadership was explained as an abuse of positional power, targeting those weaker or bestowing of favours. As illustrated in Chapter 5, several of the participants were told by their leaders that they would use their position of authority to block the person's career path. There were many examples of such power exercised without checks and balances and where the leader was seen to answer to no one.

P8: *He picked a few people around him, and he had granted them all the favours, and thereby kept them on side. He did that because he had the power to do it, and she could pick those people, and he actually said to me one day, 'I can use him. He's hungry'...He had that all sussed out, and was approaching him in that way, and he was completely loyal to him regardless of what he did.*

While power can be abused at the individual level, as identified in the literature hierarchical structures can similarly be used in perverted ways, such that a culture of privilege becomes normative. Such were the perceptions of the participants, who made references to people 'higher up the ladder', 'people from above' and 'political masters'.

P11: *That suggested to me that other people were seeing a culture developing too. I think it just grew...the culture grew with the sense of this place being privileged...It was like the further along we went it was like protecting ourselves from being like others or that we had to be better than everyone else everywhere and we had to be winning...I think that's destructive...It also means that you're not willing to listen to your faults or other ways of doing things.*

P13: *That's the sort of stuff that was happening, and those people were promoted, and anyone who had a different opinion was discounted...[People] promoted actually into positions. And given roles and responsibilities. And given praise that was probably not due. And I saw that. I could give examples of that.*

The notion of the toxic triangle (Padilla et al., 2007) representing the interplay between the leader and the subordinate within a conducive environment found

expression in the interviews, with Participant 15, for example, regretting becoming enmeshed in less commendable conduct where others were targeted:

P15: To tell me about all the bits and pieces so I can add to it. I did get drawn into that once and afterwards I felt so terrible, I went and spoke to the person that I'd been talking about and actually said what I'd done. I just said, 'Look, I think this is...I've had enough of that, and this is my take now, I'm certainly not going to participate in any of those conversation and the gossip-making and I'm going to continue to change the subject whenever that happens'.

Sociological constructs, as evident in the literature and empirically, focused particularly on notions of power and control and on the institutionalising of such power through the creation and maintenance of hierarchies. In an asymmetrical power dynamic the potential for abuse is high where there are inadequate checks and balances.

6.4.4 THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

Although a review of the literature had not uncovered an extensive body of material on destructive leadership in education environments, there was certainly evidence to suggest the experience from other contexts could be found in the education industry (Blase & Blase, 2002; Fahie, 2014; Riley et al., 2011). Blase et al. (2008), for example, highlighted the serious physiological and psychological harm caused by perceived mistreatment at the hands of principals. The greatest harm was reported to result from intimidation, failure to recognise or praise achievements, lack of support in difficult situations, unwarranted reprimands and unreasonable demands.

Again, many of the empirical findings were consistent with those from the literature. As indicated through the meaning statements in Tables 13, 14 and 15,

participants recounted, for example, instances of intimidation, including physically threatening behaviour and violations of personal space, to the point of being followed and even possibly stalked:

P7: Carrie was there, and I was trying to get to talk to Carrie, and he was following me around. I said that to her, I said, 'Look, I can' talk to you'...The only chance I got was just before she was about to leave and there wasn't enough time. Obviously we didn't use the internet; we used the phone.

P2: I was nervous about leaving that afternoon because previously he'd been down in the car park. My car was out the back.

The absence of support found by Blase et al. (2008) was echoed in the present study by a number of participants, with the leader, others in the environment or the broader system the cause of the lack of support. Participant 7 referred to the absence of collegial support in times of need, while Participant 3 looked for system support:

P7: We've worked as colleagues. It may have been inconvenient for him to be my support person. I went along with that, and it was a local principal, and he was just...he wasn't very supportive at all. He was present, is what I would say.

P3: You hope like crazy that the people above you can support you in the fact of being able to say that, 'This is a difficult pill to swallow and this is not the easiest gig to sort out, just as long as you understand that'. If you've got the support from above, fortunately...Now I do. At the time I don't think I did.

A particularly damaging experience for some was the perception that their peers, although aware of the situation, were either silent or even engaged in mobbing behaviours where they became complicit in the destructive conduct. This lack of support was in stark contrast to other examples when participants felt able to continue because of collegial networks and supportive peers.

P13: And in the subsequent investigation, the investigator said to me, 'That deputy said to me you were subjected to a horrific vendetta'. He said it to the investigator, who I subsequently spoke to in the investigation. But it just confirmed exactly what I've been thinking. That it wasn't just paranoia. That there was—so he was admitting a vendetta going on.

Of note is the corroboration of the view of Wieland and Beitz (2015, p. 292) in reference to social bullying as unbecoming of 'a caring profession or a community of scholars'. The reference was to the nursing profession, but participants in the present study expressed similar sentiments about the teaching profession. As indicated in Chapter 5, Participant 6 used that very phrase of 'a caring profession' and what may stand in its stead:

P6: We're meant to be in a caring profession but that care is not modelled at the higher levels within the school. There's bullying and lack of integrity and disrespect and this kind of thing going on.

6.4.5 RESILIENCE

Given the limited amount of literature on destructive leadership in education, a lack of literature on the survival and resilience shown in the face of such experiences in education it is to be expected. The literature tends to originate from fields such as nursing (Wieland & Beitz, 2015) or social work (van Heugten, 2010, 2012). While

bearing in mind the small-scale nature of the study and the self-selection of the sample on the basis of survival, the findings of the present study bear strong similarity to that literature. The effects are most powerfully felt when someone's integrity has been questioned (Maidaniuc-Chirila, 2015) and survival achieved through drawing on adaptability, strong self-esteem, use of humour and the ability to use internal and external resources (Wieland & Beitz, 2015).

Finding ways to adapt to the phenomenon was one of the survival responses exhibited by the study participants. In some cases, that involved changing behaviours to accommodate the disposition of the relevant leader, as indicated in Chapter 5. Participants 2 and 10 demonstrated this approach:

P2: I used a lot of that learning that I had to try to be objective and find a way to have a relationship, change my way to meet his.

P10: I did have to change my way and think about him as a person when I spoke to him.

Strong self-esteem was a common theme evident either explicitly or implicitly. Table 15 illustrated the number of relevant self-esteem-related meaning statements, such as having the determination to confront the challenge of destructive leadership (33 references) or affirming one's own values as a consequence (34 references). Many of the participants took a stand at some point during the experience, although not all felt empowered to so do.

P6: I was pretty assertive with the Board member, in fact very assertive at the end. I had to stand up for myself. I just had to speak openly and assertively with

him and let him know what other people were expressing to me about the impact of his behaviour...I just had to speak openly.

P11: One of the things I realise on reflection is that every time I left a meeting or a confrontation in any way, I was determined that I might be upset, but I would also leave the room knowing that she was rattled because I was not going to leave without my position, my statement, my view being put out there. That was actually problematic because she was used to using her power in that position to turn people around. I was quite happy to have conversations, but I was not going to be turned around just because she said so.

Indirectly recognising alternative valence, Participant 15 differentiated between those who are victims of destructive behaviours, such as bullying, and those who, although targets, do not become victims because they are able to dissociate themselves from the experience.

P15: A victim I think would be feeling like you're being intimidated by someone bullying you and getting that victim feeling. Whereas it could have been targeted at you but you don't take it on board is probably where I'm going.

Despite surviving and possibly learning from the experience, for some the aftermath involved lasting detrimental effects. One participant vowed never to go into a school again as a direct consequence of the experience, while another was unable to open mail for fear of what it might contain, because written communication had been one form of perceived bullying:

P1: I'll never go back into a school. I'll never go back into a school.

P8: *Look, I can't really bear to open letters. I can go for months and not open a letter, because of it. That's the consequence of it.*

The question of how people conceive of themselves and their sense of identity will be pursued further in the primary discourse section below.

The secondary discourse, as evidenced by the literature of Chapter 2 and the empirical findings of Chapters 4 and 5, showed destructive leadership to be the cause of significant harm to people, individually and collectively, to organisations and to social systems. The field of education is no less susceptible to the phenomenon than other fields, although the perceived hypocrisy may be more strongly felt. Surviving the experience calls for resilience, strong self-esteem and the support and encouragement of others. Taken together, the two complementary sets of findings provide a valuable descriptive foundation for understanding the phenomenon of destructive leadership. The summary from Table 5 is applicable to both sets of data.

6.5 PRIMARY DISCOURSE

As outlined in Chapter 2, autopoietic theory forms the basis of the primary discourse relevant to a study of destructive leadership. There it was argued that a biological theory of autopoiesis, developed by Maturana and Varela (1992), may help move the discussion from descriptive insights into destructive leadership to explanatory and on to consequential and interpretive understandings. Autopoietic theory was deemed relevant for a number of reasons—its applicability at the individual (micro), group (meso) and the social system (macro) level, encompassing both self and other (Sice et al., 2013); its exploration of relationships, interactions and the ‘couplings’ between individuals (Goldspink & Kay, 2003); its applicability to social subsystems and normative environments (Michailakis, 1995) such as education; its

consistency with both psychological and sociological concepts; its inherent ethical dimension (Maturana & Varela, 1992); its emphasis on cognition, language and communication (Luhmann, 1995); its consistency with phenomenography and a methodology using narrated experience (Besio & Pronzini, 2010); and its facility in framing the research questions ontologically, epistemologically, axiologically and theoretically.

A feature of autopoietic theory is that it accounts for alternative valence and different individuals' adaptive capacity (Parboteeah & Jackson, 2007), so that a phenomenon such as destructive leadership may be experienced differently by different people and cause different types of change. Maturana and Varela (1992) distinguished four domains of change: 1) changes of state that do not change the organisation of a unity or its identity, 2) destructive changes that involve loss of organisation or identity, 3) perturbations that are interactions that trigger changes of state but not of organisation or identity, and 4) destructive interactions that are perturbations that result in destructive change.

6.5.1 AUTOPOIESIS AND THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Applying an autopoietic lens to the outcomes of the empirical phase of the research yields deep insights into the phenomenon of destructive leadership. The participants' 'self-reinforcing', 'negative cycle' and 'spiralling' images highlighted in Chapter 5 take on greater meaning when understood as the self-referencing self-reproducing cycles of autopoiesis. The structural couplings which are the interactions between people and their environment become cyclical and strengthened, whether positively or negatively.

P15: And the whole thing just spiralled upwards and out of control.

P9: *...it's self-reinforcing because it's only person A's word against person B...and often person B is a victim.*

P10: *It becomes this negative cycle where things just tend to implode... Things just get worse and worse.*

Ultimately, it is through 'implosion', 'things spiralling out of control' or by taking independent action that the cycle is broken. In all 15 cases, while various participants may have taken evasive or proactive measures through the course of the experience, the ultimate means of breaking the cycle at the micro/individual level was through an exiting of the situation. In some instances, this was the leader in question moving on, often through promotion, and, in other instances, the participant taking the decision to leave. At some point, it seems the cycle must be broken through exiting.

There is a further implication, however, related to the issue of one player exiting the situation. Where it is the subordinate who exits and, it would seem, regains self-confidence and trust, for others, remaining in that environment the cycle of harm continues and potentially further strengthens. Where the leader leaves, a common experience was that their moving on to another, sometimes higher, position in the hierarchy, was the perceived potential for the pattern to be repeated and a new cycle of harm to emerge. For several of the participants, the inference was of system inadequacy to deal with and even at times to reinforce aberrant leadership.

P3: *The person was demoted but within 18 months had already picked up another position. That absolutely has tainted my view of the system.*

P9: *Interestingly, when he was appointed to the position, several people who had worked with him who knew me said, 'Watch out. He's very nasty'.*

P15: *I don't know, but I've heard similar sorts of things were happening at that school as well where she went...I do believe another executive went on stress leave from that particular place. Anyway, I don't know that. I wasn't there. It wasn't part of me, but I think it's sort of [a pattern].*

P2: *I really feel that it's very hard in the education system as it is for people who manage in that style to be redirected...I think that person was rewarded. That person, he relieved as an executive at a school and then ended up relieving as a principal.*

P1: *I think I'd like to add, the irony is they promoted her.*

6.5.2 ALTERNATIVE VALENCE

Maturana and Varela's (1992) distinction between the concepts of 'perturbation' and 'destructive change' offers an explanation for the alternative valence evident in the participants' reactions to their experiences. For some, it was evident that, while unpleasant, the experience could be described as a perturbation. To others, it was a devastating experience that changed career trajectories and triggered intense personal self-doubt and loss of confidence—and that in a sample of survivors. In the utterance previously quoted in this chapter, Participant 15 suggested just such an alternative response when drawing the distinction between a victim and a target, whereby the latter does not have that 'victim feeling' or necessarily 'take it on board'.

In autopoietic terms, for one the phenomenon is experienced as a perturbation, while for the other, the victim, it may represent a destructive change. Further, there is some evidence to suggest that this may apply not only to psychological destructive change, but also physiological. Although it is not possible to attribute causal connections, it was noteworthy that, for several participants, serious physical health problems (heart- and stroke-related) coincided with the experience. Such a finding harks back to Maturana and Verden-Zöller's (2008) argument that humans, as love-dependent beings, become physically and psychologically ill when engaged in mistrustful and manipulative relationships and essentially deprived of love.

6.5.3 IDENTITY

As previously shown, one of the ways in which an individual may be affected by the experience is in the sense of self and the question of personal and professional identity. Sfard and Prusak (2005) defined identity as a set of stories about a person told as first-person narratives about the self; second person, told by others to the individual; and third person, told by others to others about the individual. In a climate of destructive leadership, all three perspectives may conspire to compromise the individual's sense of self. The individual's internal dialogue and/or conversation with others may, for example, suggest a breakdown of the internal organisation that constitutes the person:

P12: When she said, 'I'm so sorry, I didn't realise that was going to happen', I said, 'That's okay'. I think that's a personal thing, where I'm a weak person. I think, what else was I supposed to say?

P7: *What happened in the process of all of this, was that everything that I had ever said, was said back. 'You yourself said', and I lost a lot of confidence.*

P1: *Much of what I've learned is, I just should have stayed in the classroom teaching. If I'd stayed there, then none of this would have personally taken any toll on me. I think I had that inkling for a lot of years while I stayed there, when other people were saying, you should go up. There is a high personal cost.*

P3: *Sometimes, maybe, I think I was a better DP [deputy principal] than I am a boss. I suited the role, I guess.*

6.5.4 SOCIAL SYSTEMS

The aforementioned consequences at the micro level, in accordance with autopoietic theory, also affect the meso and macro social systems levels. Luhmann (1995) argued that social systems are self-referential, with their boundaries distinct from the external environment and continually reproducing themselves. Thus, just as destructive leadership was seen to cause harm to individuals, it may also have self-referencing organisational consequences. The empirical evidence attests to the causing of organisational harm. In Table 15 there were 35 utterances referring to the loss of organisational wellbeing. Importantly, in an educational context, the organisational impact may translate into detrimental effects for students.

P11: *If you think about all the players in education and there are lots of them, that destructive leadership means people can't do their jobs and there aren't outcomes in the case of education, children and communities...Because they*

can't apply their understanding, their expertise to achieve what's supposedly the outcome.

P15: The impact was huge. We had falling numbers, staff leaving, people being employed casually without the expertise in the subject areas. Ultimately the kids don't respect people with that sort of approach, so lack of respect from students. Staff feeling disempowered. Consequently, curriculum being dropped down. Staff morale hugely down, very down and always struggling to manage. Situations that could have been handled calmly would often escalate because of people's feeling that they couldn't do a thing about it.

6.5.5 LANGUAGING

In autopoietic theory, language is the distinguishing human characteristic (Mingers, 2006) through which humans define and create the world and is a vehicle through which structural coupling is achieved between individuals (Sice et al., 2013). Conversation constitutes the interlinking between languaging (what is said and done) and emotioning (the flow of emotions) (Brocklesby, 2007). Sice et al. (2013) argued that where language is used to reinforce the status quo or to reinforce the dominant worldview it may result in organisational life, termed 'pathological'.

Such findings from the literature help explain some of the linguistic features discerned through the analysis process of Chapters 4 and 5. As outlined in Section 5.9, there were a number of discernible language patterns in the interviews, one of which was the regular use of direct speech when participants recounted interactions with the leader in question. Experiences were often remembered through fragments of

conversations or sustained exchanges, with often the most powerful or sensitive memories recalled in this way:

P1: *I found through Jane...(and these are almost exactly her words) 'I can't believe you didn't get an interview for Womble principal'. I didn't know at that stage I didn't get an interview...I said, 'Oh, you know I didn't get an interview?' 'Oh, haven't you been told?' 'No, I haven't been told anything'. 'Oh no, you haven't got an interview, and you were just the most outstanding candidate. We were all...I can't believe you didn't get it'. 'Oh, thank you!'*

6.5.6 MEDIATING AND MITIGATING CYCLES

The complexity sciences, to which tradition autopoietic theory belongs, provide a means of understanding patterns of reinforcing and balancing behaviours and the cycling feedback effect of virtuous and vicious cycles. Such concepts were to be found in the transcript data, where certain conditions mediated the effects of destructive leadership. Patterns of behaviour, the silence or complicity of others, system dysfunction and the development of a normative environment all helped reinforce negative, disintegrative cycles:

P10: *That's what I suppose that I mean that things become such a negative cycle that every time there's a mistake made it's just another thing that says you're hopeless; you're no good; you shouldn't be doing the job.*

P15: *...she got to a stage where she couldn't really back down from the way in which she'd gone. She'd started off on this pathway of trying to do things the right way but ended up in the way in which she was implementing it. Not being able to change her ways and having to continue on in that direction I think.*

Other conditions were regarded as mitigating the negative effects. The alternative, counterbalancing integrative cycle is one of trust which Luhmann (1979) held as integral to our internal structure, in terms of maintaining self-respect and social justification. The empirical data showed circles of trust deriving from colleagues or collegial networks and/or from family and friends:

P10: It's about building that trust...It's about respecting people's confidentiality, not discussing what they tell you so that you are seen as a trusted person...I've got a couple of people in our learning community who are recent principals and they ring me because I'm the old one that's been in the game a bit longer. Also, just listening because sometimes all they want to do is just say this, this, this, and this. I think the cycle can still happen.

P7: Obviously, I have very strong friendships with the Logantown girls...I had two principals that I was probably close to in the area...I guess I learned a lot about the power of your colleagues, and the power of having a very strong Executive team. I've always been lucky there....

The nature of the prevailing norms in an environment may reinforce either in an integrative or disintegrative way and also serve to draw others into that environment. The notion of a toxic culture (Pelletier, 2010; Whicker, 1996) is that of self-perpetuating negative norms.

P11: I thought, you know what this is kind of it. That is the culture. Someone who I would say is a lovely man but was caught up in a culture. That came from a couple of fronts, senior director and director in terms of me questioning or coming into their space.

P4: *Joe turned up there and that was part of the quite toxic culture in the school. He tried to do things and the school didn't want to do things. I mean there were power groups there that they liked the way it operated for their own personal benefit.*

P13: *...he played games by supporting all those people or giving them little perks here or there, or covering up for people who were away, and giving them days off and this and that. So they bring this culture up of people doing this, getting to school when they wanted, and slipping out because they were going to run their own business and other things.*

Drawing on Gurwitsch's (1964) theory of awareness, the analysis may be constructed into a four-quadrant model in which the vertical axis represents the internal and external horizons. The internal horizon refers to the individual 'self' and the external refers to the wider environment inclusive of the leader in question. The horizontal axis represents the conditions that either mediate or mitigate the phenomenon. The first presentation of the model, in Table 24, conveys the concept textually showing what outcomes of the study sit within each quadrant. For example, a negative experience may create self-doubt and mistrust, may compromise a person's health and wellbeing and, thus, have a disintegrative effect. Conversely, an individual may affirm his or her personal values and experience a process of personal integration as a consequence. Similarly, in the external environment, destructive behaviours may be disintegratively mediated by the silence or complicity of others, but may be mitigated by collegial support in a process of integration.

Table 25

Factors Mediating and Mitigating Destructive Leadership (Textual Representation)

	DISINTEGRATIVE PATTERNS OF INTERACTION	INTEGRATIVE PATTERNS OF INTERACTION
INTERNAL/Self	<p>Internal factors mediating destructive leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflicted values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Self-doubt ○ Mistrust of others • Compromised wellbeing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Psychological ○ Physical • Irreconcilable perspectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Non-sense-making ○ Curbed creativity ○ Divergent worldview 	<p>Internal factors mitigating destructive leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affirmed values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Trust in self <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identity ▪ Competence ▪ Assertiveness ▪ Creativity ○ Trust in others • Stable wellbeing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lifestyle choices • Adjustment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Adapted behaviours ○ Sense-making ○ Learning
EXTERNAL/Environment	<p>External factors mediating destructive leadership (create a circle of control)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clash of values • Relational disintegration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mobbing ○ Social contagion ○ Silence ○ Professional exclusion • System dysfunction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Poor process ○ Policy inadequacy / application ○ Nepotism 	<p>External factors mitigating destructive leadership (create a circle of trust)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values compatibility • Supportive relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Personal support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family ▪ Friendships ○ Collegial support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Networks ▪ Individuals • System efficacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policies ○ Designated roles
	MEDIATING/REINFORCING	MITIGATING/BALANCING

To demonstrate the patterning and cyclical nature of the phenomenon, Figure 11 illustrates this information graphically to convey the dynamic, reinforcing and counterbalancing elements of the forces at play and the ways in which they impact. While this diagram has been created using Vensim causal loop graphics, it has no technical literal basis in that methodology, rather, it is used figuratively to convey a conceptual interpretation of how the phenomenon works and its intrinsically systemic nature.

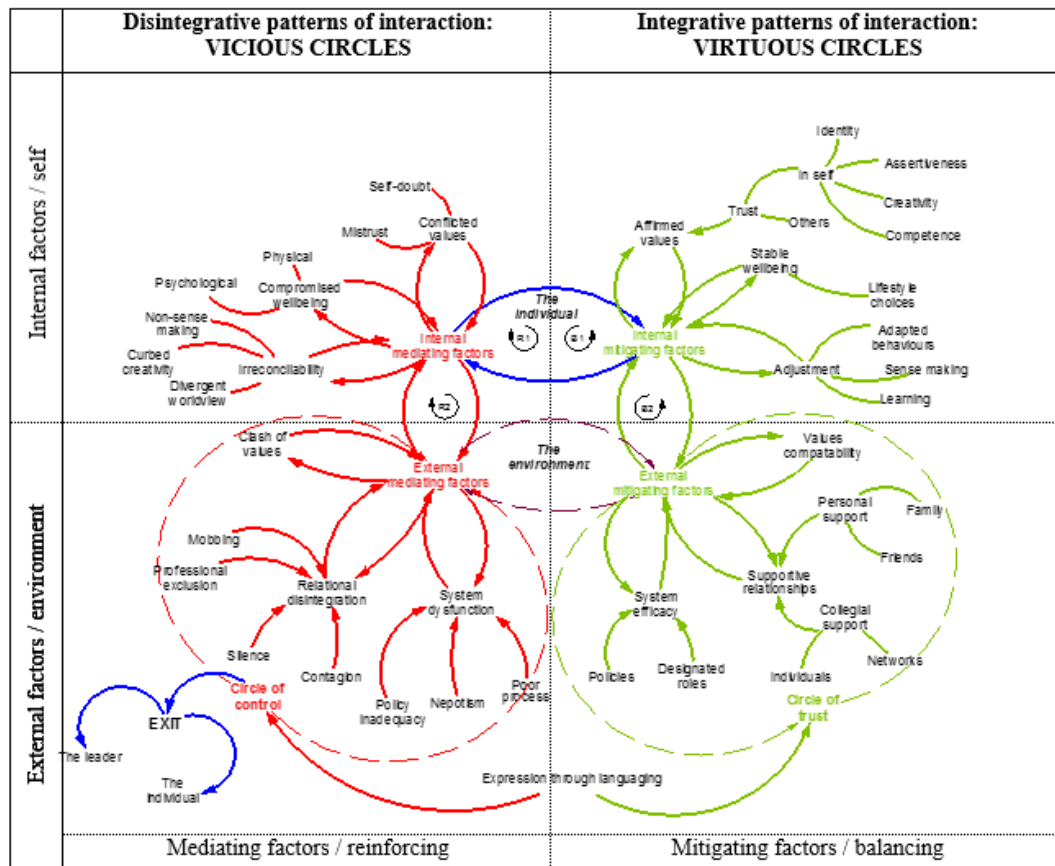


Figure 11. Responses to Destructive Leadership as Vicious and Virtuous Circles.

Figure 11 shows that it is not only a matter of the existence of negative influences, but that these feed each other and become strengthened and pervasive. They form circles of control. The means by which to escape the impact of such an environment is by exiting the situation. Conversely, there can be counterbalancing cycles internally, where the process is integrative and affirming of identity, personal values and wellbeing, and externally, through circles of trust established through efficacious systems, supportive relationships and personal support.

6.6 A SYNTHESIS OF THE DISCOURSE

Through synthesising the primary and secondary discourses it was argued that there are micro, meso and macro level changes which occur as a consequence of destructive leadership. Using autopoietic theory as the basis for understanding the

process, in the context of this study the micro level was interpreted as a focus on the individual and the internal changes which may occur, the meso on the group and institutional changes, while the macro related to the broader milieu and systemic, environmental and cultural changes. The theoretical model used to help convey the process was an adaptation of Maturana and Verden-Zöllner's (2008) graphic shown in Figure 5. The intention was to determine whether this model could be applied to the empirical data from the participant interviews.

According to the model, destructive leadership may be understood as influence operating at four levels, although not all necessarily occurring simultaneously.

1. At the individual level, where the internal structure of the subordinate person (a^l) is disturbed, physiologically and/or psychologically, by the experience.
2. At the level of structural coupling (c^l) in the space in-between the leader and the subordinate (a^l) and the leader (b^l), where the destructive dynamic actually takes place, in circumstances where the influence of the leader (\leftarrow) is exercised as asymmetrical power.
3. At the wider environment level (e.g., other people, the institution) in the space in-between the subordinate (a^l) and the environment (d^l) and the leader and the environment (e^l), such that the subordinate's identity and position in the setting may be disturbed and the subordinate marginalised as the leader exercises greater power in and over that environment.
4. At the universal level where the ethical milieu (f^l) is compromised by the existence of the phenomenon, and its individual and environmental consequences.

From Chapters 4 and 5, it is apparent that the four ways in which influence operates can be discerned in the empirical data: 1) individual participants were 'disturbed' by the experience physiologically and/or psychologically; 2) the asymmetrical power as exercised by the leader was a key dynamic, felt through the imposition of power and control; 3) there were effects evident in the wider environment, as shown through the involvement or detachment of others, and their mobbing behaviours or their silence (Leymann, 1996; Qureshi et al., 2013); and 4) antithetical norms developed into aberrant cultures, at odds with the values and beliefs of the subordinates and of accepted practice. An autopoietic model of destructive leadership could, therefore, be inferred from the collective experience of the 15 participants.

In Chapter 2, an elaboration of the autopoietic conception of destructive leadership was to overlay the idea of identity as stories (Sfard & Prusak, 2005), suggesting the influence on identity at multiple points. As identified in Chapter 5, there was empirical evidence of 1) first-person narratives occurring internally within individuals as they reconceptualised themselves as leaders or teachers a^l ; 2) second-person narratives possible at both c^l and d^l , where others were telling the individual identity-shaping stories, such as, 'You are not the bully here'; and 3) third-person narratives at e^l , where the participants were aware that identity-shaping stories were being told about them by the leader (b^l) or others in the environment (e^l). The fourth overlay was shown by 4) implications in the wider ethical realm, with examples of impact on cultural identity represented at f^l . The data indicated examples of immediate effect on actual identity and subsequent impact on designated identity, a consequence mediated through alternative valence and the individual adaptive capacity of different

participants (Parboteeah & Jackson, 2007). As shown in Chapter 5, some participants felt strengthened by the experience, confirming the theory that individuals may adapt by developing resilience, learning from the experience and moving to a state of personal integration and self-actualisation (Richardson, 2002; Wieland & Beitz, 2015).

The analogy of the ripple effect was introduced in Chapter 2 as a means of illustrating the way in which destructive leadership may not only disturb equilibrium at the individual level, but may affect the broader ecosystem and its health and sustainability. The data illustrated this effect with examples of falling school numbers, disaffected communities and ill-disciplined student bodies. The immediate point of impact created by the particular actions and enactions of the leader was shown to have repercussions elsewhere and for other people, ultimately developing into a pervasive culture (see Figure 6). The destructive action may affect subordinates' wellbeing or identity and may enhance the power of the leader. It may have an effect beyond this interaction, as others may become influenced, implicated or impacted by its consequences. In an accretive process, the broader negative culture was shown to build.

6.7 SUMMARY OUTCOME STATEMENTS

The research was designed to address the hypothesis that destructive leadership can prove instructive for in the creation and maintenance of individual and organisational health and wellbeing. It was designed to do so through the three research questions which explore the experience and understandings of school leaders who had past, firsthand accounts of destructive leadership.

1. What is the phenomenon of destructive leadership, as experienced and retrospectively described by school leaders who have survived the experience?
2. How do survivors of destructive leadership understand and accommodate the phenomenon?
3. What is the outcome for survivors of the experience of destructive leadership in terms of impact and potential for learning?

The analysis in Chapters 4 and 5, based on a phenomenographic approach, resulted in six outcome statements which together answer the three research questions. They reflect the findings from the Chapter 2 literature review as to the harm that destructive leadership causes as a consequence of the abuse of power and the ways in which that harm is felt personally and organisationally. Further, they provide reasons for the phenomenon in terms of its philosophical, psychological and sociological origins and propose an explanation of the conditions conducive to the phenomenon. They suggest how the experience is managed and the learning which may result. In total, the statements summarise the findings of the study and offer a comprehensive interdisciplinary description and explanation of destructive leadership consistent with an autopoietic perspective.

6.8 CONCLUSION

The structure of this chapter followed that of Chapter 2, with the findings from the literature presented to enable a comparison with the empirical data and allow a synthesis of the two data sets. Through their narrated experiences, the participants consciously and unconsciously employed concepts and understandings from across the disciplines of philosophy, psychology and sociology and within an autopoietic

paradigm. Consistent with the literature, the participants defined their constructions of leadership and identified ways in which those constructions had been compromised through negative experience. The intent of this chapter has been descriptive and explanatory. The principal intent of the next chapter is consequential, interpretive and instructive.

CHAPTER 7:

FROM SYNTHESIS TO THEORY: AN AUTOPOIETIC INTERPRETATION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This exploratory, small-scale study into the phenomenon of destructive leadership was informed by two data sets, the first developed from a review of the literature on the subject and the second from a phenomenographic study of 15 school leaders with firsthand stories to tell. In Chapter 6, the two data sets were drawn together to help describe what the phenomenon is and how it may be explained in terms of its operation and its impact. This process was essentially confirmatory in that the data generated by the empirical phase of the study reflected the data derived from the literature. Chapter 6 synthesised the first level of discussion and understanding presented by a matrix of the findings, termed the summary outcome space, and the six summary outcome statements derived through the development of the matrix. This summary outcome space may serve as an analytical framework for understanding the phenomenon of destructive leadership.

7.2 CHAPTER STRUCTURE

The underlying premise of the study was that a negative phenomenon could produce positive outcomes in terms of the meaning and learning to be discerned from collective experience. While the pathology was of intrinsic interest, the exploration was not for the sake of the pathology, but to discover what may be learned in both theoretical and practical terms. Following on from the presentation of the descriptive

and explanatory findings via the discussion in the previous chapter, the intent of the current chapter, therefore, is interpretive and instructive. Using the answers to the three research questions, as derived from the data analysis and synthesised as the outcome space, the purpose is to discern an emergent theory that explains the phenomenon of destructive leadership, suggests the means by which an individual may find an integrative pathway through such an experience and signals the change strategies necessary to build and maintain an ethically-led school-related social system.

The analytical framework, previously presented in Table 23, provides the basis for the development of a theory to explain the destructive phenomenon and the means by which it may be addressed. The phenomenon was previously elucidated in terms of a complex social system comprised of certain elements, logically nested layers, inherent processes and feedback loops. In this chapter, the outcome space is interpreted in Section 7.3 as a dysfunctional system requiring of remediation. The diagnosis of the pathology of the system, as made possible through the analytical framework, reveals 12 features of the system. The empirical data set is examined in light of the 12 features of the dysfunctional system to discern integrative and disintegrative responses. Inherent in the integrative and disintegrative responses are two archetypal pathways discussed in Section 7.5. Together, the analytical framework, 12 features, integrative and disintegrative responses and archetypal pathways constitute the elements of a theory of leadership. This theory is of leadership dysergy outlined in Section 7.6. In contrast to the synergy consistent with effective leadership, dysergy connotes a system where, as a consequence of destructive behaviours, the systemic whole is less than the sum of its parts.

When exercised destructively, leadership can impact at all levels, at the micro (individual), meso (group and organisation) and macro (cultural) levels. In doing so, each level of dysfunction reinforces suboptimal personal and organisational performance within and across the social system. Conceiving destructive leadership in this light presents the opportunity to convert the diagnosis into strategies for intervention and change, elaborated on in Section 7.8. Ultimately, despite its pathology, such a system may give rise to personal and organisational learning and resilience in the face of the experience, as explained in Section 7.9 and to fresh insights into the construct of leadership. In the interests of individual and organisational health and wellbeing the phenomenon warrants study.

7.3 A DYSFUNCTIONAL SOCIAL SYSTEM

The phenomenographic outcome space (in Table 23) was derived from the data and constructed as a 3 x 3 x 3 matrix (three questions, three categories of description and three variations within each category). The nested, articulated and increasingly complex categories of description together explained destructive leadership in the context of the study in terms of six key summary outcome statements. The increasingly sophisticated level of category from A to C is a means of demonstrating that, at its most complex, destructive leadership forms patterns which become cyclical and self-reproducing, leading to a disintegrative, negatively pervasive normative culture. Fundamentally, for example, destructive leadership is harm, which may derive from an exercise of power and control. Further, it represents a prevailing worldview of privilege unchecked by adequate accountabilities. In effect, the summary outcome space maps the broader terrain of destructive leadership and, in doing so, reveals the

pathology of a dysfunctional complex social system. It serves as a framework by which to analyse a system and/or to track the incidence of the phenomenon.

Although the 3 x 3 x 3 matrix (in Table 23) provides a comprehensive analytical framework for the phenomenon based on a social systems interpretation, the tabular representation is less able to convey its dynamic, changing, organic or interactive features. A more dynamic single capture of the complex set of relationships and interrelationships among variables is shown in Figure 12, the intent of which is both to convey the complex social systems conception and to provide the first element of a wider and more intricate theory, elaborated on in this section.

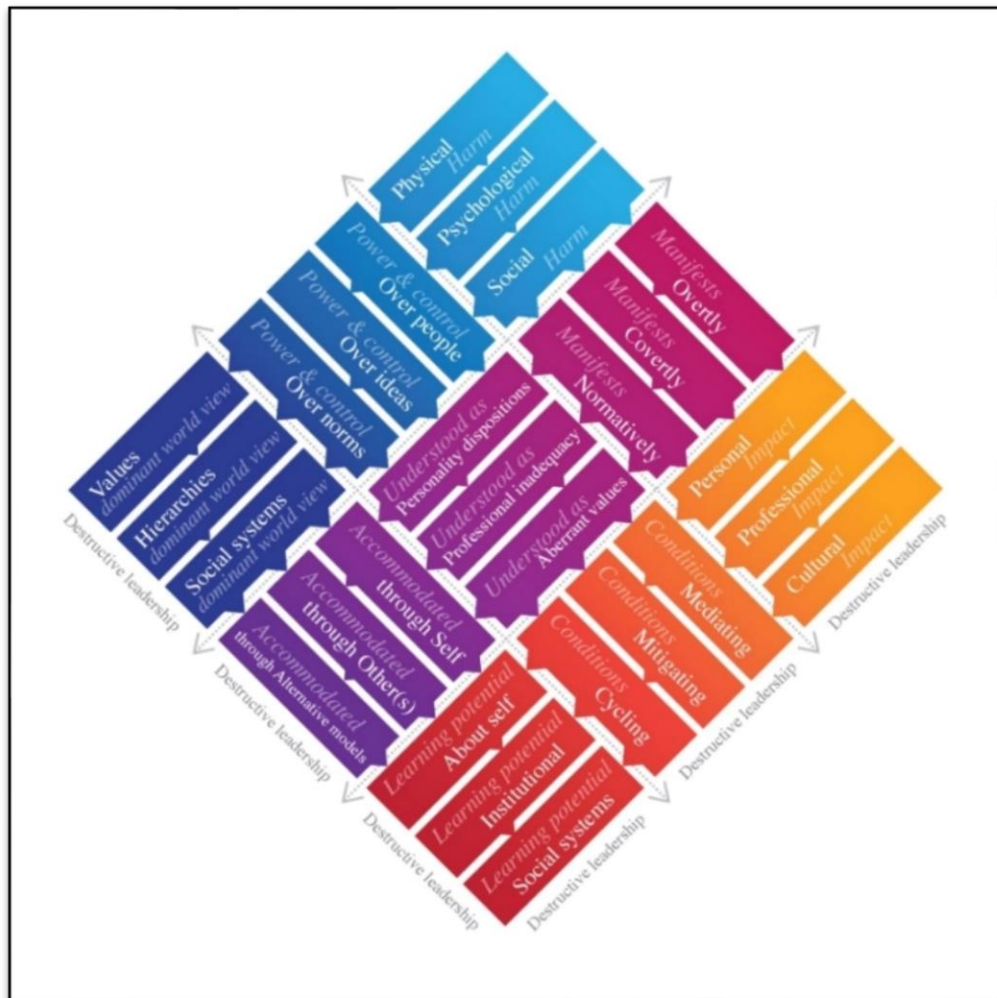


Figure 12. Logical Relations Defining Destructive Leadership.

Viewed as a social system, the phenomenon is comprised of properties that define the system, processes that explain how it works and products that are its outcomes. Recognising the phenomenon as a social system is at the heart not only of understanding, but being able to find ways to address the pathology of that system, preventatively or remedially. The underlying logic is that the diagnosis of the pathological system makes possible the identification of potential points of intervention and change strategies that may give personal and organisational voice and agency to affected individuals and/or organisational leaders. The notion of the asymmetry of power, discussed in Chapter 2, shifts from ‘power over’ to one of empowerment, whereby individuals make their own choices, take responsibility for their actions and grow stronger and more resilient in the process. The positive implication is of a sense of agency (Câmpeanu & Fazey, 2014), with people having the capacity to choose and act within the environment and even to change that environment. Such agency applies at the individual and organisational levels. An example of the latter is where senior leaders do not remain silent, but step in at early signs of dysfunction. Awareness and understanding may empower people to take control of personal behaviour, responses and actions. At both the individual and system level it becomes possible to locate voice and agency in the face of destructive school leadership and so maintain or restore health and wellbeing.

7.3.1 FEATURES OF A DYSFUNCTIONAL SYSTEM

From an examination of all the elements of the outcome space—the categories of description and their variations of distinction and attributes—it is possible to discern the features that distinguish the pathological system. The process of discerning the features was assisted by the input of five of the participants who agreed to review the

outcome space in terms of their personal experience. This was done individually to maintain anonymity. Their responses confirmed that they recognised their personal situation in the matrix and were able to trace their respective paths through it. Their reactions to the matrix reflected the variation in experience as indicated by their original narratives. One participant, for example, traced from left to right through the matrix, concentrating on the three centre rows in each column, so that the particular experience was encapsulated as being about power and control resulting from a personality disposition mediated through conditions in the environment such as the silence of others. In contrast, another participant approached the matrix in a more random fashion, circling multiple elements recognised as relevant. The accompanying reflective comment was that, as a consequence of receiving counselling support, there developed a greater appreciation of the pervasiveness of the phenomenon and its wide-ranging consequences. In all five cases, respondents were able to identify their own version of the phenomenon. The five participants were also able to confirm certain dimensions of that experience such as its dynamic nature, the way it played out over time, the roles others played and the points at which they took action. Therefore, through further examination of the framework, supported by participant input, it was possible to distinguish a number of features implicit in it.

From an exploration of the categories of description and the architecture of the outcome space and the initial and subsequent participant input, 12 recurrent system features emerged, showing that, as conceived through this small-scale study, a destructively led system is:

1. **Human.** The dysfunctional system is initiated and fuelled by the behaviours and actions of individuals and/or groups of individuals. It is an intrinsically human condition with human consequences.
2. **Dynamic.** There is movement and change created through people's actions, interactions and/or inaction. Conversations form a significant part of the overall dynamic and paradoxically silence or inaction may add to it.
3. **Temporal.** There is a dimension of time where events are bounded within a time period and the whole experience evolves over time. Each incident is time-related. There may be lasting impact.
4. **Ecological.** The system is comprised of interdependent relationships between people and their environment, inclusive of other people in that environment. One part of the system impacts on other parts. Toxins in one part of the chain contaminate those nearby.
5. **Colonial.** The destructive impact is migratory and transferrable to other susceptible environments or to other subcultures within the same environment. If there are insufficient protections and protocols, the leader may move on or be promoted and replicate the cycle.
6. **Accretive.** There is growth in the system in the form of a cumulative momentum building the dysfunction. The core of dysfunction may start small but grow over time, thus, also signalling a temporal dimension to the aggregation.
7. **Trajectile.** There is progression apparent through the system in the form of paths and trajectories whereby interactions and events lead on to other interactions. While each experience is unique to the person there are

common paths where, for example, actors in the system make choices, such as approach or avoidance (May et al., 2014).

8. **Self-referencing.** As the dynamic continues, it strengthens and reinforces into self-replicating and self-perpetuating cycles. This autopoiesis has application to individuals and to systems. As described in Section 6.5.6, virtuous and vicious circles develop and become ubiquitous.
9. **Unethical.** The system resulting from destructive leadership is characterised by values that have been either perverted or subverted. In the former, values are corrupted and, in the latter, completely overturned. Untrustworthiness and a lack of integrity prevail.
10. **Pathological.** The result of destructive leadership represents a departure from what is generally considered the normal healthy functioning of the school as a social system. A supposedly caring social system becomes typified by callousness and lack of care. Perverted norms operate as the new normal.
11. **Dysfunctional.** The ultimate outcome is dysfunction and a disruption of the way the system should operate in achieving its ethical purpose. There are discernible negative effects on performance, with communication breakdowns and people unable to do their jobs and the system unable to achieve desired outcomes.
12. **Dysergistic.** There is a negative synergy, whereby the sum of the parts represents a destructive whole. The concept is the reverse of the concept of synergy, such that the whole becomes less than the sum of its parts. In this sense, there is less than expected capacity, more fractured and disjointed

performance, personal disintegration and organisational failure to achieve intended purpose.

7.3.2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FEATURES

The 12 features of the system discerned in this study highlight different parts of the system—its properties, processes and products. The properties of the system are its essential characteristics and the first five features may be described in this way. Thus, the system is human, dynamic, temporal, ecological and colonial. The next three features relate to the processes that can be discerned in the system, that is, the ways it moves, flows, patterns and develops, indicating it is accretive, trajectory and self-referencing. The final four features are the outcomes or products of the system, so that the result is an intrinsically unethical, pathological, dysfunctional and dysergistic system. Figure 13 illustrates the 12 features of the social system created as a consequence of destructive leadership.

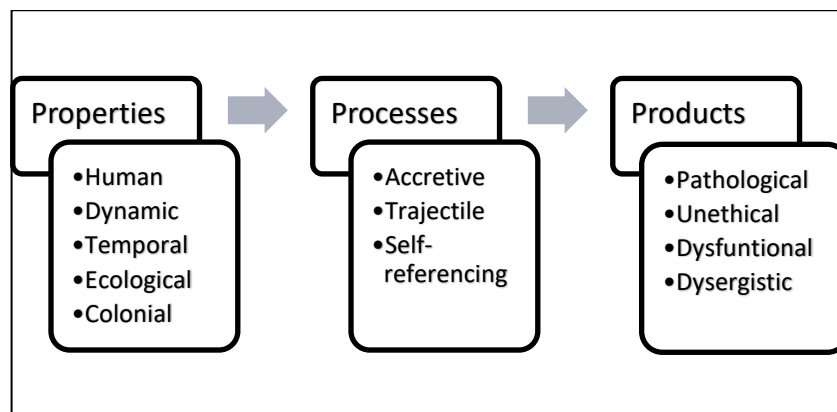


Figure 13. Properties, Processes and Products of a Dysfunctional System.

The majority of the properties and processes of the system are not of themselves problematic. Human, dynamic, temporal, ecological and colonial systems are not intrinsically dysfunctional. Similarly, accretive, trajectory and self-referencing processes do not necessarily produce pathology. However, when those features are

corrupted, moving in a direction that undermines the intended purpose of the system, it is the negative disintegrative outcomes and the diminished dysergistic whole that become problematic.

7.4 INTEGRATIVE AND DISINTEGRATIVE RESPONSES

The key features of the system as discerned from the study provide the basis for suggesting a model of integrative and disintegrative responses in the face of destructive leadership, as exhibited by the study participants. For example, the human feature is indicative of internal and external human processes, the temporal feature signals there are key moments in time, the dynamic characteristic implies the potential to change, the inherent trajectories may be mapped as pathways and self-referencing indicates the cyclical nature. The possibility becomes one of alternatives and the question one of decision-making as to when and how one may act in the face of destructive leadership. From the analysis undertaken in this study and synthesis of the data, a conception of destructive leadership emerges which can be likened to a decision-making chain as illustrated in Figure 14. The decision-making flow moves from one point in time to the next, as an individual acts or is acted upon, reacts, interacts with others, and enacts a decision.

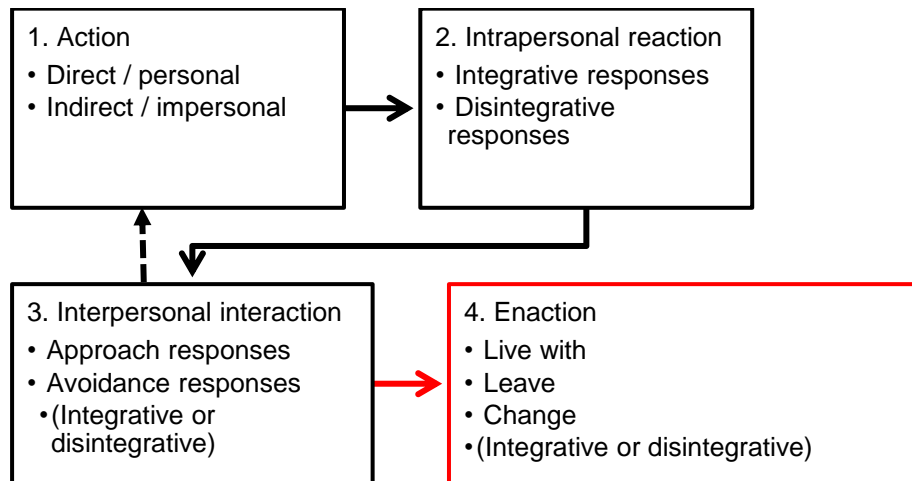


Figure 14. Integrative and Disintegrative Decision-making.

In setting off that chain, an action by the leader may be experienced by the participant as direct and personally hostile or as indirect and impersonal, such as through obstructive behaviours or as actions directed at another, as has been suggested by Schyns and Schilling (2013).

Such action sets in motion a response termed in the model as an intrapersonal reaction. As attested by the participants, the individual may have an internal reaction such as fear, shock or puzzlement. That intrapersonal reaction may take an integrative form whereby the experience can be integrated into an individual's worldview so, for example, the person feels affirmed in his or her values and beliefs about themselves and the world or tries to make sense of the actions of the leader. Such reactions were all evident in the data. Conversely, and again referenced in the data, the response may take a disintegrative form so there is a discrepancy between the internal sense of self and personal values and the destructive environment such that the person may become alienated, afraid or loses a sense of confidence or identity as a professional. A worldview and sense of purpose, so pivotal in education, is strengthened or may begin to break down and disintegrate. Adapted from Klaussner's (2014) model of

dysfunctional and functional coping strategies, the connotation of integration is of a well-integrated and healthy system and the connotation of disintegration a fractured and pathological one.

The empirical data from this study indicates that the person may then become engaged in interpersonal interactions, with the leader and with others in the environment. In the model, those interactions are described as approach or avoidance as proposed by May et al. (2014), indicative of whether the interaction that followed the trigger is characterised by confronting either the situation or the person or, conversely, by trying to evade them. Both the approach and avoidance response as reported by the study participants may have integrative or disintegrative implications. Where, for example, the subordinate reported being able to approach the leader or the situation in a proactive and constructive way, the approach would be described as integrative. Where the subordinate recounted responding to the leader in an aggressive or retaliatory way, for example, the approach would be disintegrative, as it perpetuates the wider destructive milieu. Similarly, an avoidance interaction could be either integrative or disintegrative. Where the avoidance takes the form of absenteeism or disassociating from colleagues, it could be described as disintegrative. Where it takes the form of avoiding compromising conversations or situations, it could be regarded as integrative because it has its basis in maintaining the health of the system.

While it may also be the case for integrative interactions, it is likely that disintegrative interactions will lead to further actions and the perpetuation of a cycle of dysfunction and disintegration. The model in Figure 14 is illustrative of this ongoing cycle as part of the system. The alternative is enaction, a term adopted from Sice et al. (2013), which involves breaking from the cycle and making decisions which may take

three forms—to come to terms and ‘live with’ the situation, preferably without compromising one’s values or sense of self; leave the situation, as was the case for most of the study participants; or change the antagonist or the environment in which the destructive action takes place. This latter option was not a decision within the participants’ locus of control and was seen as a wider system responsibility. While it might be reassuring to suggest that enaction is always integrative, this is not necessarily the case since leaving the situation may or may not give a sense of resolution either to the individual or to the environment left behind. Similarly, as reported by some participants, even a decision to live with a situation may result in the experience of ongoing negative emotions. The potential, however, is an integrative one.

To validate the findings and their interpretation and to add value to the schema, a Delphi-style group comprised of four experienced academic researchers, experts in the field of complexity, examined one or more de-identified interview transcripts. In a discussion forum the members of the group were tasked with reading the anonymised script(s), identifying trigger points and tracing the subsequent flow of events according to the schema (Figure 14). The group members were able to recognise examples of a flow from action to reaction to interaction to enaction in each of the transcripts examined, noting these on the relevant scripts. As well as providing inter-judge communicability (Cope, 2004), the particular added value of their observations lay in the discussion of the evidence of integrative and/or disintegrative responses as the interviewees moved from action to intrapersonal reaction to interpersonal reaction. The group agreed that in their respective scripts they could locate examples where the interviewees responded to their experience in ways which may have either reinforced

or counterbalanced negative cycles and evidence of interviewees in integrative or disintegrative frames of mind.

In a second Delphi group of four, this time composed of experienced school leaders including a director, a principal, a deputy and a middle leader, the analytical framework (Table 23) and decision-making schema (Figure 14) were again explained and comment sought. In this instance, the group were exposed only to the models. The value added to the thinking by the resulting group discussion was of the application of the integrative and disintegrative processes to the enaction phase. The suggestion was that the ultimate decision-making may be integrative and emancipatory, but could alternatively perpetuate negative personal or organisational disintegrative patterns (see Section 7.6).

A third Delphi group was sourced through an association of retired secondary school principals. In this case, in a presentation and discussion forum 20 retired principals provided their comments on the analytical framework and theory of dysergy. They brought to the discussion their practical knowledge and years of leadership experience. The responses of the group indicated that they found the framework an intelligible means of understanding a phenomenon they had witnessed and, in several cases, directly experienced. The concept of a theory of dysergy (see Section 7.6) was also of interest and meaningful to them. The particular value of their feedback lay in their endorsement of exposing destructive practice and their encouragement to challenge inaction at higher levels of authority. Their written responses focused on methods of intervention, such as 360-degree assessments, improved promotion processes and support for those concerned. Such suggested interventions aligned with those of the study participants, as summarised in Table 22. It was noted in one of the

responses, ‘This worthwhile concept needs progressing...How can the concept of negative leadership be used positively to promote effective leadership?’ This statement captured the challenge at the heart of the study.

Each of the four consultation groups, the five interviewees who traced pathways of their experience through the analytical framework, the four researchers who confirmed a movement from action through to enaction and identified integrative and disintegrative in the intrapersonal and interpersonal responses, the four experienced school leaders who suggested the two pathways applied also to the enaction stage and the 20 retired principals who recognised the phenomenon and stressed the need to confront and address it, confirmed the accessibility of the conceptual frameworks and also assisted in clarifying further elements of the emerging theory.

7.5 TWO ARCHETYPAL PATHWAYS

As indicated in the previous section and illustrated in Figure 14, two archetypal pathways are implicit in the model. One is integrative where the individual manages intrapersonal reactions and subsequent interactions in healthy ways, leading to decisions which ultimately release them from the oppressive and destructive experience. The ultimate enaction may take the form of accepting the situation, exiting or effecting change in either the environment or the leader. The latter outcome, however, was not usual for individuals in the empirical study. Typically, where that enaction is integrative, the outcome is most likely to be an emancipatory one for the individual.

The second archetypal pathway is disintegrative where, for a range of personal or environmental reasons, the individual is unable to manage their reactions and

interactions in functional and personally healthy ways, leading to a perpetuation of a cycle of further actions of dominance and oppression. As shown in the empirical data, individual trajectories present as various permutations of the archetypes where at different times through the experience an individual may fluctuate between integrative and disintegrative responses. The model is indicative of alternative valence, whereby different individuals respond differently including at different times and with different consequences.

7.6 A THEORY OF DYSERGY

The theory that emerges from the synthesis of the empirical evidence and the interdisciplinary literature is one of ‘dysergy’, whereby the ultimate consequence of destructive leadership is a diminished whole. The term was appropriated when searching an antonym for synergy, which applies when the whole is assessed as greater than the sum of its parts. A familiar example of the latter comes from chemistry where hydrogen and oxygen molecules combine to produce water. The notion of synergy is not only used in the physical sciences, but in social sciences in its application to organisational evolution theory (Baum, 1999), psychology as related to whole-as-group therapy (Schermer, 2012a, 2012b) and to integral philosophy where Wilber (1998, p. 56) stated:

To be a part of a larger whole means that the whole supplies a principle (or some sort of glue) not found in the isolated parts alone, and this principle allows the parts to join, to link together, to have something in common, to be connected, in ways that they simply could not be on their own.

In complex nonlinear systems there are multiple variables at work so that the system can only be understood as,

an emergent consequence of the holistic sum of the myriad behaviours embedded within. Reductionism does not work with complex systems, and it is now clear that a purely reductionist approach cannot be applied...in living systems the whole is more than the sum of its parts. (Levy, 1992, p. 7)

In systems thinking the property of a system (whether people, organisations, information, processes or nature) that indicates the interacting parts constitute something more is referred to as ‘emergence’.

A system is a group of parts that interact so that the system as a whole can do things the parts can’t do on their own. This property of systems is called **emergence**—‘the whole is more than the sum of its parts’. (Sillitto, 2014, p. 4) (Bold as per original).

The circumstances typically described by the participants of the study were in sharp contrast to notions of synergy, seeming to represent the antithesis of the emergence of higher states or levels of performance—thus, the term dysergy was coined. In a dysergistic situation, a fractured and weakened culture of subverted and perverted norms is created in which individuals may feel devalued and unable to thrive personally and professionally. The whole is ‘other’ than the sum of its parts, so that rather than being ‘more’, in a synergistic sense, that ‘otherness’ is a diminution. The challenge becomes one of navigating a way through such as system, which the theory suggests may be achieved by finding voice and locating personal and professional agency. At a broader level, dysergistic leadership is contrary to the commonly espoused goal of education of synergistic high performance centred on moral purpose. In the resulting environment individuals and schools fail to flourish or serve the best interests of their students.

While the theory of dysergy emerges principally from the empirical phase of the study and the term dysergy was appropriated for the purpose of interpreting the findings at the micro, meso and macro levels, support for the concept was sought in the literature. A second search was undertaken specific to the notion of organisational dysfunction and dysergy inclusive of individual and group intra and interpersonal dynamics. In a discussion of organisational evolution, for example, Baum (1999) discussed the notion of whole-part coevolutionary competition, whereby individuals and face-to-face groups engage in conflicts which undermine organisational efficacy. Baum (1999) argued that organisations evolve simultaneously at nested hierarchical levels (individual, group, organisation, population and community), with each part comprising a more extensive whole and each of the various parts trying to optimise ‘fitness’ in terms of evolutionary selection. Competition between agents arises as they try to direct activity in favour of their own wellbeing (Baum, 1999). Contrary to wider organisational and cultural cooperative interests, the result can be sub-optimisation, with competition causing the erosion and collapse of organisational-level cooperation: ‘Groups of individuals who are regularly in face-to-face contact quickly develop an in-group solidarity and the power to discipline, reward and punish...’ (Baum, 1999, p. 116).

Pasieczny and Glinka (2016), when identifying and describing types of organisational dysfunction, similarly noted the interconnection between factors and the creation of a system that prevents performance, attributing this to negative empowerment and undesirable goal displacement. They argued that prolonged exposure to dysfunction results in pathology, the study of which they regarded as an underrepresented area of research, possibly because researchers are attracted to

success and positive phenomena (Samuel, 2010). Pope and Burnes (2013) focused on the National Health System in the UK, finding that its ability to address issues and learn was impeded by high levels of collective ego defences and protection of image and reputation:

Organisations and the individuals within them can hide and retreat from reality and exhibit denial; there is a resistance to voice and to ‘knowing’. The persistence and tolerance of negative behaviour is a corruption and is not healthy or desirable. (Pope & Burnes, 2013, p. 676)

As indicated, there is evidence in pertinent literature of concepts consonant with dysergy. Whether referred to as ‘whole-part co-evolutionary competition’, ‘sub-optimisation’, ‘organisational dysfunction’, ‘pathology’ or the ‘impediment of collective ego defences’, the sources have in common notions of dissonance between individuals and/or groups within the wider organisational whole that results in substandard performance, inclusive of individuals, groups and systems. Further, there is congruity with the adaptation of the autopoietic model presented in Figure 5, whereby a phenomenon can be explained by the interactions within and between agents (individuals and groups) in an environmental context framed by a wider milieu. The ‘recursive co-modulations’ depicted by Maturana and Verden-Zöller (2008) signalled the interdependencies between agents and the wider medium which may be in harmony, but also have the potential to be destructive and, thus, may be described as either synergistic or, in the latter case, dysergistic.

7.7 THE THEORY AS A MODEL

Figure 15 illustrates the theory of dysergy and its component parts. This is built from four elements: 1) the analytical framework encapsulating a dysfunctional social

system; 2) 12 features of that system, properties, processes and products which ultimately lead to dysergy; 3) a chain of integrative and/or disintegrative decision points which may either maintain or break the cycle, and 4) two archetypal pathways which typify alternative ways through the system.

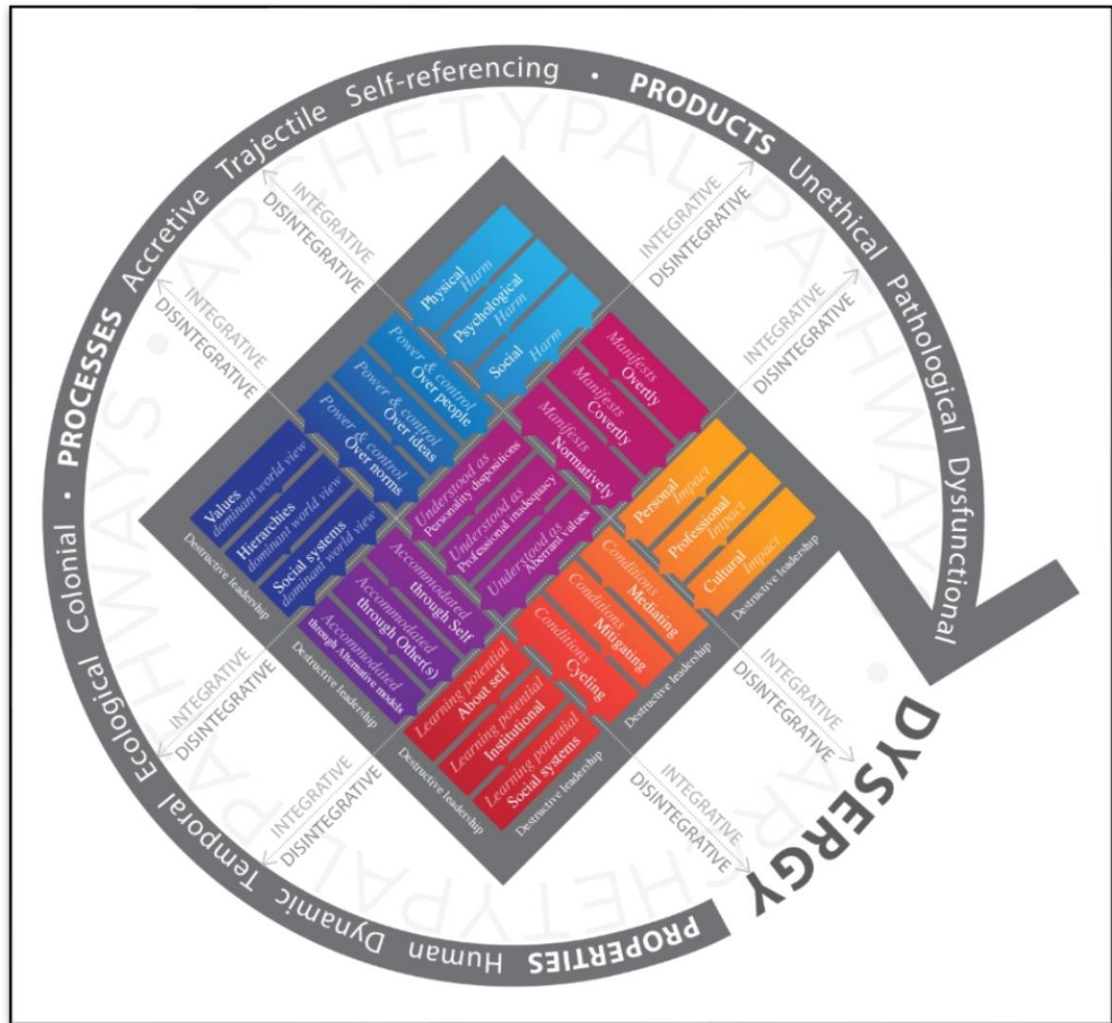


Figure 15. A Theory of Dysergy.

The first inner element, the analytical framework (based on Table 23), provides a structure for understanding what destructive leadership is, how the phenomenon is understood and what its consequences are. The 3 x 3 x 3 matrix has been rotated so that at its apex destructive leadership is represented as physical, psychological and

social harm and at its base point there can be personal, organisational and systems learning. In this orientation of the matrix, the central focus is on leaders' personality dispositions, capabilities and values.

The second element indicates that for those experiencing the phenomenon there are key points at which things happen—points of action, reaction, interaction and enaction. Actions by the leader may be directly or indirectly experienced. Such actions necessarily cause a reaction and, thus, the intrapersonal internal processing of that action by the subordinate may be either integrative or disintegrative—that is, internalised positively or negatively. The interaction that subsequently takes place, with the leader and/or with others inside and outside the environment, may also be integrative or disintegrative, respectively mitigating or mediating the impact. At this point, those interactions may lead into a cycle of further actions and reactions or, conversely, a breaking of the cycle through enaction, where an individual makes a decision to live with, leave or change the social system.

The third theoretical element proposes two archetypal pathways of integration or disintegration inherent in the system. The integrative pathway is indicative of people making healthy decisions that, for example, preserve their professional identity or self-confidence, or that cause them to seek collegial support or to reshape their interactions with the leader, while maintaining their own integrity. The integrative pathway is ultimately the emancipatory one in the sense that the individual is able to make choices (to live with, leave or change) that align with his or her core values and with educational moral purpose. Conversely, the disintegrative pathway represents responses where individuals are unable to maintain their identity or their wellbeing, interpersonal interactions become dysfunctional and the pattern becomes cyclical. It is

likely that any one person will choose or become involved in different integrative or disintegrative alternatives at different times so that the pathways are archetypal rather than particular to individuals in this study.

The fourth proposed element consists of the properties, processes and products that are the 12 implicit features of such a dysergistic social system. These features surround the system in the circular outer rim, indicating that it is human, dynamic, temporal, ecological, colonial, accretive, trajectile, self-referencing, unethical, dysfunctional, pathological and, ultimately, dysergistic. The features are directional, leading to the fracture that is dysergy. The circular arrow with its break adjacent to the point of learning not only represents the dynamic flow but also the need to break free of the situation.

Although the theory is one of dysergy located in a destructive phenomenon, the potential of the theory is of optimism and agency. While not minimising the significance of the individual and organisational impact of destructive leadership or its basis in unethical practice, the theory suggests there are choices that can be made by those affected to change the direction of the flow of negative energy so the cycle is broken. At the individual level, it may be that people can only make their own personal integrative choices. The aggregation of sufficient similar choices, however, could alter the system. Because in a social system there would be multiple such cycles in operation, the accretion of integrative pathways could positively change the school and system culture. In the same way that negative culture grows, one counterpoint and one voice may become many. Although this was not the experience of many in this study who, through the course of the experience, felt isolated and a powerless lone voice, the theory suggests the potential for a way forward in addressing destructive leadership.

Such a proposition requires further testing. As the result of a small-scale study, further research is required to validate the model and confirm these theoretical propositions.

7.8 POINTS OF INTERVENTION AND CHANGE

In line with the overall constructive intent of this study, the identification of the 12 features that distinguish the dysfunctional system (see Figure 13) suggest a way to recognise the points of potential intervention in such a system and possible strategies for change. Advice from the participants on their learning was provided in Chapter 5. The data suggested key points at which destructive leadership should be anticipated and curtailed, with such interventions necessary at the micro (individual), meso (group/school) and macro (organisational/social systems/cultural) levels.

The participants observed how they needed to be more alert to the possibility and to act early in confronting, avoiding or escaping the experience. In a process of personal integration, they spoke of reverting to their own values and beliefs and affirming their understanding of what is ethical. Their advice was to build strong networks of family members and colleagues and to call on their support. For some, it was adopting strategies to cope and manage their own wellbeing and to use strategies that might help cope with the behaviours of the leader in question.

At the school or institutional level, participants' observations were about having open and transparent policy and decision-making. In the school context, they saw it as important to be alert to and diffuse systems of favour and preference. Their counter to favouritism and nepotism was to build inclusive, effective and efficient teams. As was the case personally, it was important to take swift action where there is inappropriate behaviour at whatever level. For that to be possible there must be

genuine avenues for the raising of concerns and for these to be treated seriously. All advocated the power of positive role modelling in demonstrating good leadership.

Organisationally and systemically, their advice was to ensure the culture of an education social system exhibits a sophisticated understanding of leadership as ethical and non-privileged. They believed it important to select leaders suited to the particular context and need and for only as long as appropriate—the latter implying greater flexibility in selection and the avoidance of rigid hierarchical approaches and presumptions of power. To ensure the integrity of recruitment or transfer processes, it was important to filter for inappropriate appointments or transferral of personnel. A key issue was the professional training and support for leaders so they had the requisite knowledge and skills. In such training there should be less focus on compliance training and greater attention paid to how to build and sustain healthy relationships. To avoid instances of destructive leadership developing there should be adequate checks and balances through effective policy and processes. The provision of effective staff support, particularly in respect of psychological wellbeing, was crucial. For leaders, there should be ongoing access to guidance and advice from experienced peers who can be frank and honest.

The participants' suggested interventions, previously presented in Table 22, may be linked to the 12 features of the dysfunctional social system. The participants' learning suggests that, at both the individual and the social level, there is the potential for intervention and the assertion of personal and organisational voice and agency. Based on the participants' suggestions, it is possible to make connections with the 12 features of the system. These linkages are presented in Table 26, where it can be seen, for example, that, as human agents, people are able to assume responsibility for what

is happening for them personally and/or for the organisation. Being dynamic, a system is subject to change so that the situation need not be perpetuated. As an ecological system, changing one element may impact positively on the wider ecosystem. A self-referencing system may be broken through individual or social action or through the building of counterbalancing cycles. An unethical situation can be addressed through reaffirmation of and commitment to ethical values and norms. Data from the participants' responses would indicate each of the 12 features offers some potential for what could be changed and how, at either the personal and/or the collective level.

Table 26

Agency and Intervention

	Features of a social system shaped by destructive leadership	Individual agency and intervention	Organisational agency and intervention
PROPERTIES	<p>1. Human – initiated and fuelled by the behaviours, actions and interactions of individuals and groups of individuals.</p> <p>2. Dynamic – created through people's actions, interactions and/or inaction. Inaction of senior leaders or silence as a dynamic (as opposed to nothing).</p> <p>3. Temporal – time-related, happening within a time period and over time. Impact having lasting</p>	<p>As a human system, it can be prevented or resolved by further human action. Individuals take agency over and responsibility for behaviours and actions.</p> <p>Individuals take responsibility for personal actions and relationships. There is an active decision not to get caught up in the 'dance'.</p> <p>Individuals are alert and take early action and decision-making. Individuals understand the situation can be</p>	<p>Destructive leadership is created as a human problem, thus, with potential to resolve. Preventative or remedial measures are based on the dignity of people.</p> <p>There is system action through relational education and coaching. Disciplinary processes are in place and action taken.</p> <p>System leaders act early. There is accountability for delay or inaction.</p>

consequences. Every incident time-related.

changed in time and space.

4. Ecological – comprised of the interdependent relationships between people and their environment, inclusive of other people in that environment. One part of the system impacts on other parts.

Individuals recognise that changing one element of an interdependent system, such as relationships with others, may proactively affect the overall ecosystem.

Capacity is built at one or more points of interdependence within the system, such as through personnel and counselling support systems.

5. Colonial – migratory and transferrable to another susceptible environment or to other subcultures within the environment. Leader moves on or is promoted.

Individuals avoid similarly dysfunctional contexts. Alternatively, they approach the phenomenon with a preparedness to act early.

There are adequate checks in selection processes. System leadership takes responsibility and accountability for the dysfunction.

PROCESSES

6. Accretive – has cumulative momentum building the dysfunction. May start small and grow. Aggregation over time.

Personal responsibility is taken in refusal to contribute to the momentum. One less player adds to the accretive process.

There are timely and effective policies and processes. The momentum is actively diffused. There is preparedness to intervene at system level.

7. Trajectile – follows its particular path or trajectory. Each experience unique but also common paths. Interactions and events lead on to others.

Individuals recognise their personal choice in following the trajectory or choosing an alternative way through the system.

System leaders recognise the destructive trajectory, intervening to redirect it or triggering a new trajectory.

8. Self-referencing – strengthens, reinforces and becomes self-perpetuating. Autopoietic. Virtuous and vicious circles

Individuals are aware of own self-referencing. There is knowledge of self. Individuals break the

Counterbalancing circles are available and strengthened. System leaders accept responsibility for breaking the cycle.

	develop and become ubiquitous.	cycle. They build networks of trust.	
PRODUCTS	9. Unethical – characterised by perverted (corrupted) or subverted (ruined) values.	Individuals clarify personal values and affirm beliefs. They draw on personal efficacy and resilience. They refer to good modelling.	There is a reversion to shared values and moral purpose. Values and beliefs are reasserted.
	10. Pathological – a departure from what is generally considered the normal healthy functioning of the school as a social system. Perverted norms operating as the new normal.	People attend to care for personal health and wellbeing. The pathology is recognised and protective measures taken. Individuals pay attention to personal healing.	The pathology and harmful consequences are recognised and acknowledged. Processes necessary for gauging system health are in place.
	11. Dysfunctional – disruption of the way the system should operate. Effect on performance. People unable to do their jobs.	Personal and professional integrity is maintained. Preventative or remedial strategies are taken. People exercise choice whether to stay in the system.	Vigilance is maintained about organisational health and wellbeing. System leaders are alert to the signs and symptoms.
	12. Dysergistic – a negative synergy whereby the sum of the parts represents a destructive whole, that whole being less than the sum of its parts, fractured and underperforming.	Individuals refuse to contribute to the equation. There is a conscious contribution of positive energy to the cultural context.	There are preventative checks and balances. System leaders are alert to and proactive in changing culture.

Although at the system and even institutional level a case may be argued that such measures and interventions already exist in school-related environments, if that were the case they are either misunderstood or misapplied. The fact that the existence and impact of destructive leadership has been established in this study demonstrates,

at best, the ineffectiveness of current policies, processes and practices in school education settings. In what has been termed a ‘caring profession’ such a situation in both human and financial terms is costly and unacceptable.

By using soft systems thinking it is possible to take these points of prevention and work them into a high level systemic intervention model (Checkland & Scholes, 1990; Midgley, 2000) as a means to anticipate and respond to dysergy and threats to the health and wellbeing of individuals and school organisations as social systems. Based on the empirical findings and informed by autopoietic theory (Maturana & Varela, 1992), the model acknowledges three levels of the social system—macro, meso and micro—and distils some key interdependent attributes that need to be evident for the system and actors in it to be healthy and resilient. Each of the three levels interacts with the other two in ongoing feedback and self-reproducing loops, so that strong and constructive attributes at one level create a positive influence internally, in the other two levels and in the synergistic whole. The model is both intra and interdependent, with each level representing scale, as distinct from power or hierarchies. At all levels leadership helps create and maintain the system and is in turn fed by that system. Leadership in reference to self becomes about choice and agency over one’s own decision-making. Thus, leadership is simultaneously an input and an output of the system. This concept is illustrated in Figure 16.

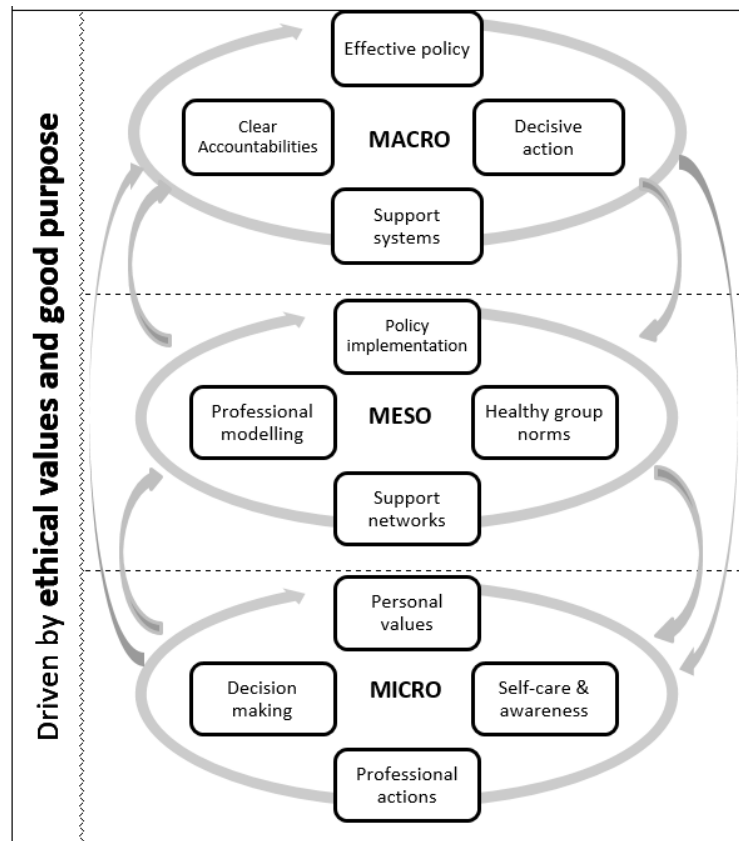


Figure 16. A Whole Systems Model of Leadership.

The danger to the system can occur at any point, ultimately throwing the entire system out of positive balance and into dysergy. Thus, at the macro level, if there is ineffective policy or executive inaction, or if support systems are lacking or there are inadequate checks and balances, leadership can emerge destructively. At the meso level, if there are aberrant group norms, a lack of positive role models, policy ineffectively implemented or an absence of supportive personal and professional networks, destructive leadership may dislocate the system. At the micro level, if individuals revert to self-doubt or make disintegrative decisions, if they fail to take care of physical and psychological health, if their values are compromised or if they engage unprofessionally, destructive leadership can feed into and off those factors. Each level of the system is predicated on the existence and enactment of ethical

purpose and values, such that a healthy and resilient individual or organisational system is fundamentally ethical and moral. The conception of leadership in the system is of influence that champions and reinforces that ethical purpose.

While the model may possibly have broader application, it is derived from data collected within a school-related context and can be located within that context. Of the three terms, micro, meso and macro, micro scale holds a constant meaning in that the term refers to an individual person or specific team within a broader social system. In a school education context, the meso level could refer to different groupings within a school or district office, such as faculties, year groups or teams, in which case macro could refer to the school, office or institution. If the meso level is interpreted as the school level, then the macro becomes the particular wider schooling system, such as state-run or religious denominational. Increasing the scale still further it would be possible to interpret the meso level as the school system (e.g., religious or state), with the macro as the wider national or governmental instrumentalities shaping national policy, curriculum, standards and the like. The point of having a scalable model is that, given that leadership is exercised within and across the system, the model could be applied to diagnose the way in which leadership is contributing to health and wellbeing in different types of school-related social systems.

7.9 THE LEARNING

The purpose of this study was to tap the learning potential of a negative phenomenon. Consistent with the research design, the implicit conception of learning was a constructivist one, in which the relativity of knowledge and the nature of its personal construction are recognised (Pope & Denicolo, 2001). A metaphor employed by Kelly (2005) to illuminate concepts of learning and change was to imagine humans

as experimental scientists in an ongoing process of hypothesising, anticipating, designing and developing worldviews (Pope & Denicolo, 2001). Such a conception allows that there may be learning in different ways and for differing purposes and, accordingly, the approach to learning taken in this research was multidimensional. There was the potential to learn ‘about’ the research object of destructive leadership and what may be understood of its existence and consequences; ‘through’ the research object in the sense of developing understandings and growing as a consequence of the experience, or even as a consequence of the research process itself; ‘from’ the phenomenon with a view to identifying ways in which individuals and organisations may perceive, decide and act differently; and ‘for’ with an intention of empowering individuals and organisations to intervene and act to bring about change. These dimensions of the learning made explicit through the research may be loosely aligned with Guba and Lincoln’s (1989) definitions of authenticity in the validation of qualitative research (Schwandt et al., 2007). Thus, ontological authenticity is represented through learning about, educative authenticity represented by learning through, catalytic authenticity represented by learning from, and tactical authenticity represented by learning for.

Viewed this way, what may be learned ‘about’ destructive leadership has been encapsulated in categories of description and variations of dimensions as illustrated by the analytical framework and six outcome statements. Together these indicate the harmful and pervasive characteristics of the phenomenon. The fact that there can be learning ‘through’ destructive leadership has been demonstrated by the lessons attested to by the participants and by their integrative and disintegrative pathways. Further, as first and second order observers (Yates et al., 2012) in an educative process, both the

participants and the researcher presented as learning through the course of the research. The research also suggests there is much to be learned ‘from’ destructive leadership in terms of the ways in which it may be explained theoretically and interpretively and points of prevention and intervention identified (as presented in Figure 16), so catalysing action. Finally, a study of destructive leadership may promote empowerment and learning ‘for’ change, the admittedly aspirational intent of the research. The research suggests that the cycle that destructive leadership triggers can be broken and the wider system acted upon, feeding back into the establishment of a more ethical and harmonious whole.

Consistent with this conception, Deakin Crick, Huang, Shafi and Goldspink’s (2015) research positioned learning itself within a complex systems architecture, whereby learning is an emergent or synergistic property deriving from interdependent intrapersonal, interpersonal, organisational, social and political connectivities (see also Deakin Crick, Jelfs, Huang, & Wang, 2011; Ren & Deakin Crick, 2013). The resilience and agency demonstrated by the research participants were illustrative of their capacity to learn through and from the experience, responding openly to the complexity of the social system in which they were engaged and clarifying their identity and sense of purpose (Deakin Crick & Goldspink, 2014). Through that learning process, the participants were generating new knowledge about and for themselves and/or the organisation and, via their participation in the research, for the wider education community. Learning to render change is fundamental to this study and is ultimately expressed through the theory of dysergy and whole systems model of leadership.

7.10 LEADERSHIP REVISITED

As explained previously, the term leadership has to do with the exercise of influence for particular purposes to achieve particular ends through a dynamic interplay between people within an environment. It is qualified in many different ways in the literature, such as transformative, transactional, laissez faire, authentic, values-based and so on. Often the different descriptions have to do with how it is exercised, for example, as a transformative, transactional or participative process, and by whom, that is, by the leader(s). As a means of better understanding the construct, the exploration in this study focused on its impact and, in this case, the negative consequences for people and organisations. From this study emerged an interpretation of leadership as necessarily ethical and values-based so that any destructive potential is anticipated or remediated. It is also generative and participative rather than directive and controlling, so that people and ideas are able to flourish, as opposed to being controlled. Rather than located in a person as the leader, it is a multidirectional, whole systems phenomenon encompassing leaders, the led, the wider environment and the ways in which the elements or levels of the social system interact. In this sense, leadership is interpreted as whole system phenomenon of interdependent relationships and actions necessarily based on ethical values and generating healthy individual and systemic outcomes. It is a system of individual and organisational choice and agency. Thus, as demonstrated by Figure 16, combating destructive leadership becomes a whole of system challenge and responsibility.

7.11 CONCLUSION

The existence and impact of destructive leadership practices in education environments are of deep concern to those who have experienced the phenomenon, but

also to those who carry responsibility within that environment and to anyone who values the integrity of a caring profession. While destructive leadership has been shown to have harmful, self-reproducing and pervasive consequences, in this chapter the focus has been on the personal and organisational learning which may be taken from the experience. The negative phenomenon can throw into relief positive lessons. Informed by autopoiesis, the proposed theory is one of dysergy whereby the destructive, self-referencing whole is less than the sum of its parts. In the face of dysergy, the alternative trajectory to disintegration is one of personal and organisational empowerment and integration, whereby, despite destructive experience, it is possible to locate voice and agency and choose a path that affirms ethical purpose, so promoting individual and organisational health and wellbeing. Given the systemic nature of leadership, the responsibility to do so rests with all the players in the system. The research suggests it is possible to learn about destructive leadership, to learn through the experience, to learn from it and to learn to bring about change. Through understanding destructive leadership, identifying the qualitatively different ways in which people respond and through interpreting it systemically, the ultimate intent of this chapter, as of this study, has been to turn negative experience to good purpose.

CHAPTER 8:

CONCLUSION

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters mapped a qualitative study into the existential reality and significant impact of educational leadership when exercised destructively. Chapter 1 gave a brief overview of the study, introduced several key concepts, signalled the phenomenographic methodology and outlined the findings. A review of the relevant literature comprised Chapter 2, broken down into the secondary and primary discourses, the latter associated with the biologically-derived theory of autopoiesis. In Chapter 3, the qualitative methodology was outlined and the phenomenographic approach explained according to a seven-step process. An analysis of the empirical data according to these steps was presented in Chapters 4 and 5, with the preliminary findings of the first six steps treated in Chapter 4 and the last step, applying the outcome space, elaborated on and illustrated in Chapter 5. Chapters 6 and 7 offered a synthesis and discussion of the findings from both the literature review and the empirical data, proposing in Chapter 7 a theory of dysergy and a whole system model of leadership as a means by which the phenomenon could be explained, ways of responding identified and, thus, answering the three research questions.

8.2 CHAPTER STRUCTURE

The purpose of this final chapter is to briefly reiterate the purpose and findings of this study, draw conclusions in regard to the central hypothesis and three research questions, consider the significance of the study and suggest what the specific research

adds to the general literature in terms of the phenomenon, consider implications of the study for theory and for policy and practice, acknowledge the limitations of the study, and suggest what research may be undertaken in the future either as an extension of this study or in terms of the broader research area. Consistent with a study about learning, the final note is an autobiographical reflection on personal learning.

Each of the preceding chapters has presented elements of the overarching structure of the study (see Table 27). In this final chapter, the elements of the study are all in focus in a summation of the research process. In accordance with a phenomenographic approach, the instrumentation used was a semi-structured interview, analysed from conceptions into categories of description and their dimensions of variation which ultimately gave rise to the outcome space. It is this outcome space that provided the analytical framework as the basis for interpretation, leading to the development of a theory consistent with autopoietic theory.

Table 2

Elements of the Study Relevant to Chapter 8

Theory	Autopoietic theory, critical social systems theory
Ontology	Subjectivist, constitutive ontologies
Epistemology	Constructivist, interpretivist
Axiology	Ethical, moral
Methodology	Qualitative, phenomenographic, inductive
Instrumentation	Semi-structured interview, expert panels
Analysis	Conceptions, categories of description, outcome space

8.3 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH PURPOSE AND FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to draw on the relevant literature and the stories of 15 school educators to shine a light on the dark presentation of school leadership, thus, acknowledging its existence and trying to understand the phenomenon, its impact on people and organisations. The purpose was also to identify resilience and coping strategies in the face of such an experience and to explore the lessons to be learned at the personal or organisational level about prevention and intervention. It was argued that much contemporary literature focuses on bright side constructions and that ignoring negative manifestations is tantamount to allowing such practice to continue. As in the study of medical pathologies, there is greater potential to address a problem if it can be studied and better understood, so the ultimate goal was to tap learning potential and influence positive social change.

This study found through both the literature review and empirical phases that people generally conceive of leadership as an intrinsically positive construct. When exercised destructively, it was found to be unethical behaviour that either intentionally or unintentionally caused personal and/or organisational harm. In the empirical study, the discrepancy between the assumed moral imperative of what ought to be and the unethical reality of what was happening was of particular concern, with the educational context of a supposedly caring profession a confronting additional dimension.

The secondary discourse related to the disciplines of philosophy, psychology and sociology, each of which added to an understanding of the phenomenon. Understandings from the philosophical literature were consistent with those evident in the participant interviews, showing that unethical conduct at both the personal and organisational levels could have deep personal and systemic consequences.

Psychological concepts emerged from both aspects of this study, highlighting the significance of personality dispositions and the harmful ways in which leaders could exercise their influence. Sociological constructs were evident in the literature and empirically as notions of power and control and their institutionalisation through the creation and maintenance of hierarchies in the absence of adequate checks and balances.

The biological theory of autopoiesis developed by Maturana and Varela (1992) provided the primary discourse of this study and helped move the discussion from descriptive insights to explanatory and instructive understandings (Cray, 2007; Stang & Wong, 2014; Shepherd et al., 2011). The data revealed the structural couplings that are the interactions between people and their environment and suggested how these interactions become cyclical and strengthened, into self-referencing self-reproducing cycles. In situations of destructive leadership, those cycles are negative and damaging to people, organisations and cultures. Within such circumstances, different people may react differently, the alternative valence due to internal factors such as resilience and a sense of identity and/or to external factors such as the reactions and behaviours of others. The ultimate solution for each of the interviewees in this study was for one party to leave the situation, not necessarily a satisfactory resolution since it may result in a lack of closure, feelings of powerlessness, or transference of the unethical behaviours to another school context.

8.4 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study was designed to address three research questions, the combined answers to which would describe and explain the phenomenon of destructive leadership as directly experienced. Further, the intent was to explore its instructive

potential to inform the ways in which people may respond to and survive the experience. The lessons also ultimately led to knowledge about the creation and maintenance of ethical and healthy social systems:

1. What is the phenomenon of destructive leadership, as experienced and retrospectively described by school leaders who have survived the experience?
2. How do survivors of destructive leadership understand and accommodate the phenomenon?
3. What is the outcome for survivors of the experience of destructive leadership in terms of impact and potential for learning?

The answers to the three research questions are encapsulated in six outcome statements derived from the phenomenographic outcome space of Chapter 5 and subsequently confirmed through reference to findings from the related literature in Chapters 6 and 7.

In answer to Research Question 1, this study found that 1) destructive leadership is harm resulting from an abuse of power and an exercise of control within the context of a dominant worldview and in the absence of adequate checks and balances. In answer to Research Question 2, this study suggests that 2) destructive leadership manifests overtly, covertly or normatively, understood as emanating from personality dispositions, professional inadequacy and/or aberrant values systems and social contexts, requiring individual or collective accommodation. In answer to Research Question 3, this study suggests that 3) destructive leadership impacts in personal, interpersonal or intrapersonal cycles, mediated or mitigated through individual or social conditions, and with instructive potential.

Further explanatory statements collectively applicable to all three research questions suggest that 4) destructive leadership is physical, psychological or social harm which may manifest overtly, covertly or normatively, and has impact at personal, professional or cultural levels; 5) it is power and control exercised over people, ideas or organisations, understood as emanating from personality dispositions, professional inadequacy or aberrant values, in the presence of reinforcing or counterbalancing conditions; and 6) it represents a dominant, self-referencing worldview of privilege and hierarchy which is accommodated through reference to self, the other(s) and alternative possibilities and from which there may be personal, institutional or systemic learning.

8.5 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

In the context of this study there are a number of conclusions to be drawn about the research problem. First, the evidence from the literature review and experiences of the 15 survivor participants establishes that destructive leadership can exist in education environments as a significant cause of harm that has individual physiological and psychological consequences and organisational and social consequences. Second, ethical, moral and competent leadership is integral to the health, wellbeing and performance of individuals and organisations in educational environments. Third, leadership, when manifested destructively, presents as a dynamic and highly complex interplay between individuals and the environment requiring sophisticated understandings and multilevel response. Inherent in the resulting dysfunctional system are 12 features which signify not only its complexity, but its potential for change. Fourth, while exiting a harmful situation may or may not prove a solution for the individual subordinate, there is the likelihood of a continuing cycle of

ongoing harm in the given environment or transference into another context when the leader moves on.

Fifth, the purpose of this study was to explore the phenomenon as an existential reality, but also, importantly, to tap its learning potential in terms of individual voice and agency and organisational health. There may be learning about destructive leadership, through and as a consequence of the experience, from the phenomenon to catalyse action and to empower and to take action. A major conclusion from this study is that, irrespective of its complexity and challenges, there are ways in which the phenomenon can and should be addressed and at multiple levels so that individuals and the social systems to which they belong are strengthened. Sixth, the experience of the phenomenon requires action by individuals in terms of the positive integration of their personal identity, professional standing and their health and wellbeing, and by the system in terms of both preventative and responsive policy and accountability structures and organisational health and wellbeing. Seventh, rather than located in any one person as the leader, leadership is a whole system phenomenon comprised of interdependent relationships and actions which must have their foundations in ethical values to generate healthy individual and systemic outcomes and the achievement of purpose. Notions of hierarchy in the systems model (Figure 16) represent scale (macro, meso and micro) rather than hierarchical relationships of power and control. Confronting destructive leadership is a whole of system challenge and responsibility. Finally, given its damaging impact, the phenomenon of destructive leadership is a problem worthy of further research in educational contexts. The small-scale and self-selecting nature of the present study is only a beginning.

8.6 COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The point of this research was to address a gap in the literature related to the nature and impact of leadership when exercised destructively in school-related settings from the perspective of survivors of the experience. In addressing the gap, this study aimed to make a number of theoretical, contextual, methodological and practical contributions.

While the existing literature on destructive leadership may not be extensive, it comes from a range of disciplines and theoretical positions. Of relevance was the philosophical literature on ethics and morality (Ciulla et al., 2005; Duignan, 2006; Eisenbeiss et al., 2014; Solomon, 2005; Woodruff, 2005), the psychological literature on the five-factor model of personality traits and the pathologies of psychopathy (Hare & Neumann, 2008; Mathieu et al., 2014), Machiavellianism (Jones & Paulhus, 2009; Kiazad et al., 2010) and narcissism (Corry et al., 2008; Goldman, 2009; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006), the sociological literature on hierarchies and power asymmetry (Hatcher, 2005; Maner & Mead, 2010; Price, 2005; Van Vugt et al., 2008), the resilience literature (Maidaniuc-Chirila, 2015; Wieland & Beitz, 2015), and that relating to identity formation (Sfard & Prusak, 2005). Autopoietic theory (Maturana & Varela, 1992; Maturana & Verden-Zöller, 2008) has been fundamental in shaping this study and informing the findings. All of these literatures stand in their own right in terms of addressing the research object, but, taken together, provided the platform on which the empirical study was founded.

The application of autopoietic theory provided a means of bridging the gap between psychological and sociological dimensions of experience within a broader philosophically ethical dimension. While the disciplinary literatures provided a

necessary descriptive part of the total picture, they were not sufficient in providing the explanatory and instructive dimensions. Consistent with systems thinking, an additional theoretical dimension was the transcending of disciplinary distinctions to offer a multi-disciplinary interpretation, linking micro, meso and macro constructions. An original contribution of this study lay in this disciplinary synthesis and in the application of autopoiesis to render a proposed theory of dysergy, as outlined in Section 7.7 and a systems model of leadership and intervention (Section 7.8). The implications of the theoretical contributions are explored in Section 8.7.

The contextual contribution of this study lay in its exploration of destructive leadership within school-related contexts. There is limited literature in this field, particularly related to empirical studies (Blase & Blase, 2002; Fahie, 2014; Riley et al., 2011), thus, this study was designed to uncover the existence of such practice in an avowedly caring profession.

The methodological contribution was twofold, firstly in the application of a methodology which ran counter to the convention of exploring positive experience (Pasieczny & Glinka, 2016; Samuel, 2010) and, secondly, in the linking of autopoietic theory with phenomenography, whereby a relational, experiential, content-oriented and qualitative approach (Marton, 1988, 1995, 2000; Marton & Pong, 2005; Marton & Pang, 2008) was seen to be ontologically, epistemologically and axiologically congruent with autopoietic theory.

The final contribution of this study was of a more practical nature in its relationship to informing policy and practice and in its intention to promote social action. The notion of the instructive negative (Cray, 2007; Stang & Wong, 2014; Shepherd et al., 2011) suggests that much may be learned from the experience, such

as in triggering resilience or using positive role modelling. Such learning is constitutive of learning about the phenomenon, through it, from it and to act and change it (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). A further practical contribution is the identification of a range of individual and organisational intervention and prevention strategies underpinned by a whole systems model of leadership by which individual and organisational health and wellbeing may be analysed and maintained. The implications of this contribution are explored in Section 8.8.

8.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY

There are three implications for theory arising from the study. The first relates to the direct application of autopoiesis to the phenomenon as a way to understand what is happening to and between individuals in such an experience. The second draws from systems thinking and the complexity sciences from which concepts of feedback loops and virtuous and vicious circles derive. The conception from this study is of reinforcing circles of either trust or control. The third implication is the contribution to knowledge in the form of a theory of dysergy and integrative and disintegrative responses and decision points translated into a whole systems model of leadership and intervention.

8.7.1 APPLICATION OF AUTOPOIETIC THEORY

As the guiding theory of the study, autopoietic theory (Maturana & Varela, 1992) proved a valuable means by which to explore the phenomenon of destructive leadership. Its biological origins meant the theory could help illuminate the ways in which people interact and the reasons why there may be variation in the way they respond to particular triggers. Its intrinsically ethical stance in respect of ‘humanness’ and people’s need for trust and love (Maturana & Verden-Zöllner, 2008) was

compatible with a study into circumstances where such a worldview was compromised. With autopoietic theory as the driving metaphor and frame, it was possible to arrive at a conceptual interpretation of the ways destructive leadership impacts on the individual, the organisation and the broader ethical milieu:

1. at the individual level, where the internal structure of the subordinate person is disturbed, physiologically and/or psychologically, by the experience
2. at the level of structural coupling in the space in-between the leader and the subordinate, where the destructive dynamic actually takes place, in circumstances where the influence of the leader is exercised as asymmetrical power
3. at the wider environment level (e.g., other people, the institution) in the space in-between the subordinate and the environment and the leader and the environment, such that the subordinate's identity and position in the setting may be disturbed and the subordinate marginalised as the leader exercises greater power in and over that environment
4. at the universal level where the ethical milieu is compromised by the existence of the phenomenon and its individual and environmental consequences.

A key implication of this study, therefore, is that autopoietic theory may be applied and extended to explain the process of destructive leadership.

8.7.2 CIRCLES OF TRUST AND CONTROL

A second conceptual model is of mitigating, counterbalancing or mediating reinforcing factors that, in the environment external to the individual, create coexisting

but antithetical circles of trust and control. The model is designed as a quadrant (see Section 6.5.6, Chapter 7, Table 25 and Figure 11), showing internal and external horizons on one axis and factors mediating or mitigating the incidence and impact of destructive leadership on the other. According to the model, the internal mediating factors involve conflicted values, compromised wellbeing and irreconcilable perspectives, and the external mediating factors that create circles of control involve a clash of values, relational disintegration and system dysfunction. Conversely, the internal mitigating factors include the affirmation of values, stable wellbeing and the capacity to adjust. External mitigating factors which create circles of trust include values compatibility; supportive relationships and system efficacy. Therefore, a further implication of this study is that destructive leadership may be counterbalanced and the mitigating factors reinforced to offset or minimise the effects of destructive leadership. This conception feeds into the third implication, similarly based on systems thinking, the theory of dysergy and integrative and disintegrative responses that flow.

8.7.3 A THEORY OF DYSERGY

The theory proposes that the consequence of destructive leadership is a diminished whole. The culture becomes unhealthy, fractured and weakened; norms are subverted and perverted; and individuals feel personally and professionally devalued. Instead of leadership influencing for good purpose and leading to synergy, in a process of dysergy individuals and schools fail to flourish. Finding a way through such as system involves an integrative process of locating voice and personal and professional agency.

The four elements of the theory include 1) an analytical framework which explicates a dysfunctional social system; 2) 12 features of that system that produce

dysergy; 3) a chain of decision points of action, reaction, interaction and enaction which either maintain or break the vicious cycle described in Section 8.7.2; and 4) two archetypal pathways—integrative and disintegrative—which represent alternative ways to respond and resolve the situation in some way.

Through the application of systems thinking it becomes possible to use the identification of dysergy and its impact to develop a systemic leadership model (see Figure 16) which highlights the points at which the system may become compromised as a consequence of destructive leadership. Maintaining a healthy and resilient social system is predicated on the presence and exercise of ethical values, on a clear sense of good purpose and on the need for all players in the system to assume responsibility for outcomes.

8.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

A significant finding of the research was the need for proactivity and timely intervention in the face of destructive leadership. As suggested in Table 26 in Chapter 7, there were three levels at which action is required:

- at the micro level, where the individual could act personally or be supported to: affirm personal values and beliefs; build strong family, friendship and collegial networks; manage personal health and wellbeing; develop strategies to cope with or manage dispositions of the leader, and/or where necessary exit the situation
- at the meso (organisational) level, where the school or institution would be expected to: maintain open and transparent policy and decision-making, be alert to and diffuse systems of favour and preference, build effective and efficient teams, take swift action against inappropriate behaviour, ensure

there are genuine avenues for raising concerns, use the power of positive role modelling, provide effective support for staff wellbeing and conduct regular organisational health checks

- at the macro (systems) level, where decision-makers need to: ensure promotion of sophisticated understandings of leadership; appoint leaders suited to context; avoid rigid hierarchical approaches to leadership appointment; ensure appropriate filters in selection and transfer processes; provide sustained professional training and support for leaders; focus less on compliance training and more on education in building and sustaining healthy relationships; have in place checks and balances, such as accountability policies; have in place the procedures to ensure policy implementation; provide effective support for staff wellbeing; and provide ready access for leaders to guidance and advice.

Figure 16 in Chapter 7 presented a working model of the concept. An important implication of this study is the need for a prevailing ethical worldview, reinforced by the presence of checks and balances which serve to counter instances where that worldview may be challenged or compromised. The model suggests that at each of the micro, meso and macro levels there are ways in which the system may be positively or negatively influenced by the various agents in the system (leaders, group or individuals). The identification of the key points of intervention means that a system can be examined in terms of where best to focus attention and resourcing. Given the particular circumstances, the executive may need to act more quickly or strongly, or healthy group norms need to be re-established, or individuals may need to concentrate on their personal wellbeing. Ultimately, in a whole system approach, all players in the

system have both choice and responsibility for the healthy functioning of the system and for themselves within that system.

8.9 LIMITATIONS

The study was conducted as qualitative phenomenographic research and, thus, subject to the acknowledged strengths and weaknesses of that methodology (Cope, 2004; Robson, 2002) including its subjectivist and interpretivist orientation. In terms of the population, it was a small-scale sample of 15 participants, all drawn from a particular profession and geographic and cultural context, all of whom had exhibited the capacity to survive the experience. Thus, the sample was exclusive of those who might be described as ‘non-survivors’ and/or those who may have changed profession, retired early or not perceived themselves to have experienced the phenomenon. Participants self-selected on the basis of identifying with having a direct experience of the impact of destructive leadership and this non-randomised sample was recruited through the channels of professional associations. Some participants were known personally to the researcher through past professional links. While every attempt was made to ensure variation in the sample, for example, in sectors, phase, location and gender, recruitment was not manipulated to ensure equal numbers. Rather, participants were accepted into the study on the basis that, having read the Participant Information Statement (in Appendix C), they believed they had something to contribute to the study.

As explained in Chapter 3, given the methodological phenomenographic design features, replicability and generalisability to other populations and contexts is not claimed, rather, the intention was to ensure the quality and rigour of the research by establishing the integrity of the approach taken (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Guba &

Lincoln, 1989; Sin, 2010) and so enable transferability and application of the research process and outcomes to other contexts.

The subjective and interpretive approach to analysis (Collier-Reed et al., 2009) can be regarded as a further limitation of qualitative studies. A different researcher could well discern a different complex of themes and derive a different outcome space from the same data, so external validity and applicability of the findings to other circumstances is not a claim made about this study. Rather, a seven-step analysis process was outlined as a means of establishing trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Schwandt et al., 2007). The use of direct utterances of the participants was further intended to lend credibility to the interpretive process. In response to questions of validity and reliability in phenomenography, trustworthiness has been posited as an alternative means of assessing the value of research (Collier-Reed et al., 2009) and this issue that was addressed through such methods as the seven-step analysis process and the analytical framework derived from the outcome space. Ultimately, the aim of the methodology was to meet criteria which would ensure quality and rigour consistent with a phenomenographic approach, as summarised in Table 7 in Chapter 3.

8.10 FUTURE RESEARCH

There are two ways in which this study may inform future research. The first relates to the way in which this study could be used as the basis for further research in either an extended or adapted way. The second relates to the broader field and opportunities to add knowledge through different types of research, from different perspectives or with different intent. As a means of exploring each of these

possibilities, a simple framework of ‘why, what, who, how and where’ has been applied in each case.

8.10.1 DIRECT EXTENSIONS OF THE STUDY

In the first instance, this study could be extended or adapted in different ways to indicate where the research could go from this point and what issues may be addressed. As was argued in Chapter 3, the intent of the research design has been to ensure trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Robson, 2002) and to facilitate transferability rather than claim generalisability (Rapp, 2010) and the extensions below are suggested in that spirit:

- An extended/adapted why: the purpose of this study was to explore the existence of the phenomenon of destructive leadership, to understand its manifestations and to determine its outcomes in terms of impact and learning potential. As a consequence, the outcome represented a comprehensive complex of relationships. An extension could be to focus more narrowly on a particular kind of learning, such as that of relevance for system improvement, or, alternatively, to focus on individuals and better understanding their resilience and coping strategies.
- An extended/adapted what: an adaptation of this study could be undertaken either using or adapting the three research questions so what was studied remained constant. Another variation might be to test the questions in a field other than school education, such as higher education or in a different professional or industry context. What was tested could include the theory of dysergy or one or more of the conceptual models derived through the study.

- An extended/adapted who: the sample population of this study was sourced for their variety and their post-phenomenon recovery. As it transpired, however, there were few participants from primary school backgrounds and the study cohort was essentially culturally and ethnically homogenous. An extension of this study would be to diversify further the sample population or, conversely, to narrow the sample, for example, to a specific level such as a principal, middle leader or teacher group. Another possibility would be to test the higher education environment with a sample population from that sector.
- An extended/adapted how: since the methodology of this study was phenomenography, a related study would stay true to that approach. One means of extending or adapting the methodology, however, could be in testing the applicability of the seven-step model or in applying one of the other such models (González, 2010; Sjöström & Dahlgren, 2002) and varying the means by which data was gathered or analysed.
- An extended/adapted where: the data was collected from a sample population located within the one geographical and political entity, a state within Australia. As previously mentioned, the participants were from largely homogeneous cultural contexts. One extension or adaptation of this study would be to test the design and methodology interstate or internationally, or with different cultural groups.

Clearly, the suggestions are not exhaustive and could be employed either individually or in combination, depending on the assumptions and purpose of the proposed research.

8.10.2 SUGGESTIONS FOR INDIRECTLY RELATED RESEARCH

In the second instance, this study might serve as a trigger for different research not directly emanating from this study, but related to advancing knowledge in leadership, destructive leadership and/or education:

- A difference why: while the purpose of this study was ultimately what might be learned, the extent of the perceived damage in schools suggests that research into the kind of damage and its cost could have a more pragmatic motivation. The fact that people take leave, receive counselling or withdraw from participating implies different types of significant cost.
- A difference what: this study was undertaken in the light of autopoietic theory and the research questions designed accordingly, but there are many other possible theories that could be applied to see what they may reveal about leadership enacted destructively. Further, the focus of the research questions need not be on outcomes as was the case in this study.
- A different who: the sample population was a small group of educational leaders. The literature indicates there could be many other populations sourced in other ways, which could inform the subject. Rather than individuals, given the impact on an entire system, the focus of a study could be a whole community.
- A different how: while the methodology of this study was qualitative, there would be multiple reasons for and ways to use either a quantitative or mixed method approach to studying such a phenomenon. A quantitative study establishing the extent of the phenomenon across a system or community

could provide valuable (if somewhat confronting) data. Not all organisations would be willing to show such courage.

- In the course of this study, the researcher became aware of instances which could provide material not only relevant to an individual, but indicative of institution-wide dysfunction. Were there to be sufficient ethical protections put in place, a case study of particular schools could be an instructive (if somewhat sensitive) story.
- A different where: as stated previously, this study was conducted in one Australian state and so where a different study takes place could be culturally or geographically distinct. A different kind of where, however, would be to conduct research in structurally flatter organisations to determine the types of behaviours that present or the sort of cycles that develop in non-hierarchical contexts.

8.11 CONCLUSION

The 15 participants who shared their narratives of an experience of destructive leadership did so in the belief that the phenomenon might be exposed in terms of its impact on people and schools and in the hope it might draw attention to the need to address the issue so that in the future other people and other places would not be similarly affected. The varying emotions they expressed—shock, bemusement, fear, anxiety, frustration, anger, hopelessness or resolve—illustrate the power of the experience and its lasting consequences. However, despite their vulnerability they willingly revealed these emotions for the broader instructive purpose of this study, actively demonstrating their resilience and their strengthened sense of agency. While they understood their individual stories were not the subject of the study, they

recognised the possible weight of their collective experience. In the telling of their stories they espoused commitment to a view of leadership as necessarily ethical and principled and to an imperative to unmask antithetical manifestations. Such a view provides the motivation for a study based on a belief in individual and collective moral and social responsibility and based on an assumption of the power of voice and agency to create and maintain ethical and healthy social systems.

8.12 PERSONAL REFLECTION

The subject of the research study was of intense personal interest to the researcher. As someone with over 30 years' experience of school leadership in both the public and private sectors and at various levels, there was a natural leaning towards research into educational leadership. Encounters, several observed and one direct, with specific instances of more damaging manifestations, however, presented the idea of researching such presentations of leadership. The original intention was to try to make some sense of the phenomenon—indeed, firstly, to establish it as a phenomenon. Possibly, there was an unconscious bid to justify feelings of frustration or even indignation because of the perception that its existence is either poorly managed or largely ignored. Further, there can be devastating consequences.

Over the course of the research and in conversation with the 15 participants, the researcher's perspective underwent significant change, most notably to become more objective and less personally invested. The latter observation is not to imply any less interest or commitment to the topic or to suggest anything other than a subjectivist ontology, but to give a sense of the personal learning journey. Both the relevant literature and the participants' stories helped demonstrate the breadth, depth and variety of what may present as damaging influence.

The phenomenographic methodology proved particularly pertinent in objectifying the phenomenon, so that it was discerned in its variety and its particularity. Such objectifying was not about lessening empathy with the participants or becoming insensitive to their individual experiences. Indeed, rather than soften the potency and importance of the personal narratives, the result was to render them even more powerful, because they were given collective and strengthened voice. While no one version could tell the full story of destructive leadership, or be accepted as a 'true' account of events, 15 narratives and the literature to support them are rather more difficult to discount.

Another aspect of personal learning was in respect of the role of the observer. In the same way several of the participants reflected on their observations of themselves through the experience and also on the interview process, so too the researcher was conscious of being an observer, not only of the individuals in the interviews but of self in the interviews and over the course of the study. Autopoietic conceptions of observers seeing the world through the process of living it (Parboteeah & Jackson, 2007) and the phenomenographic concept of second order perspectives (Yates et al., 2012) were fundamental to reconciling how it might be possible for the researcher simultaneously to perceive a world, as shared by the participants, and also to live it, through conducting and learning from the research.

The ultimate aim of this study was to find the instructive potential of negative experience so that the learning might inform ways in which leadership is conceived and practised. The initial thinking of understanding the negative and then looking for positive alternative views of leadership proved too one-dimensional. Consequently, the learning became not only about the phenomenon and the way it presents, but

importantly, about the alternative decision-making paths that are either liberating or perpetuating. Although not always possible or taken, locating a path of empowerment can be an active individual or organisational choice.

The learning process, however, was not confined to learning about the research object, but equally applied to the learning of the researcher. Partly, that personal learning had to do with new knowledge, for example, of personality disorders, autopoiesis or phenomenography. This learning was not, however, restricted to epistemic learning 'about'. The result of the shift in thinking, described in the previous paragraph, was to rely not only on extrapolation from existing theory, but to have greater confidence in proposing original conceptualisations. Partly the learning had to do with internal processing and finding new ways to reflect on personal experience. Conceiving of experience as the result of multiple integrative or disintegrative choices was illuminating and offered some degree of optimism for those faced with such circumstances. Finally, the learning served to confirm deep concern about the consequences of destructive leadership and to affirm a personal belief in the significance and power of 'humanness in the biology of love' (Maturana & Verden-Zöller, 2008) and the need to act accordingly.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: PUBLISHER'S PERMISSION

7/18/2017

Re: FW: Permission to use a diagram - Pamela Margaret Ryan

Re: FW: Permission to use a diagram

Graham Horswell <graham.jcs@gmail.com>

Tue 30/05/2017 8:40 PM

To: Pamela Margaret Ryan <prya7506@uni.sydney.edu.au>

Dear Pam

Thank you for your email.

If the PhD thesis is not to be made commercially available then we are happy to grant permission without charge for the reproduction of this figure (as long as the original source is duly acknowledged).

This permission is not applicable to any versions of the thesis that are made commercially available (e.g. ebooks or book versions for sale on the open market). You will need to reapply for permission for any versions to be sold to the public, for which a permission fee may be required.

Regards

Graham

Graham Horswell
Managing Editor - Imprint Academic
Email: graham.jcs@gmail.com

From: imprint.co.uk
Sent: 28 May 2017 02:21
Subject: Permission to use a diagram

Name: Pam Ryan
Email: prya7506@uni.sydney.edu.au
Subject: Permission to use a diagram

Message Body:

Hi

I am a PhD student at the University of Sydney in Australia. I am in the process of writing my thesis for which I have used autopoietic theory.

One of my references is a book published by Imprint Academic: Maturana, H., Verden-Zöller, G., & Bunnell, P. (2008). The origin of humanness in the biology of love.

I am writing to seek permission to include a diagram, Figure 2.3 from this book in my thesis. Naturally this will be referenced appropriately both in-text and in the bibliography.

I will include such permission in the appendices.

With thanks

Pam

--

This e-mail was sent from a contact form on Imprint Academic (<http://imprint.co.uk>)

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT ADVERTISEMENT



Faculty of Education
School of Education and Social Work

Appendix B: Recruitment Advertisement

Date

VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT ON LEADERSHIP

As a PhD student with the Faculty of Education and Social Work at Sydney University working under the supervision of Dr George Odhiambo, my interest is in the phenomenon of negative leadership behaviour and the perceptions and responses of those personally affected.

- I am seeking approximately 12 - 20 school leaders from a mix of backgrounds (male/female, primary/secondary schools, metropolitan/rural schools), willing to be interviewed about a past, direct, personal experience of adverse educational leadership practice that they would describe as 'destructive'.
- Participation would involve one semi-structured interview (45-60 minutes).

Strict confidentiality will be observed throughout the project and the anonymity and confidentiality of all parties maintained through the coding of data to ensure that personal identifiers such as names, roles, locations or personal characteristics are not revealed during the analysis and reporting of findings. Pseudonyms will be assigned and no identifiable information will be included that would allow people to guess who is being referred to during the interviews.

Interviews for the project are planned to take place from (dates). For those interested in being involved, further details will be provided. Potential participants may register their interest or seek further information via contact with Pam Ryan prya7506@uni.sydney.edu.au.

Thank you for drawing this invitation to the attention of colleagues who may be interested in participating in the study.

Pam Ryan

Email: prya7506@uni.sydney.edu.au

Phone: +61 2 9351 6239

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION



Discipline of Education
School of Education
Faculty of Education and Social Work

ABN 15 211 513 464

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Chief Investigator
Senior Lecturer, Educational Leadership & Management

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Education Building A35
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NSW 2006 AUSTRALIA
Telephone: +61 2 9351 6239
Facsimile: +61 2 9351 4589
Email: george.odhiambo@sydney.edu.au
Web: <http://www.sydney.edu.au/>

SCHOOL LEADERS' PERCEPTIONS AND PAST EXPERIENCES OF DESTRUCTIVE LEADERSHIP AND ITS IMPACT ON THEIR PRACTICE

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

(1) What is this study about?

You are invited to take part in a research study to investigate the resilience and learning of school leaders who have past experience of the impact of destructive leadership. The type of practices of relevance to the study are those perpetrated by superiors whom you perceived to have caused some level of harm and which might variously be described as bullying, abusive, tyrannical, toxic or unethical.

The purpose of this study is to uncover such practice, thereby acknowledging its existence; to try to understand the phenomenon; the process at work, and its impact at the individual and organisational level. The further purpose is to identify the ways in which the participant leaders have shown resilience in the face of such an experience, and to explore how they perceive it to have subsequently influenced their own leadership practice. The ultimate goal of a study into a negative phenomenon is to use its learning potential and influence positive social change.

You are invited to participate in this study if you have had direct, first-hand experience of negative leadership practices and their effects. This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the research. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research study is voluntary.

By giving your consent to take part in this study you are telling us that you:

- ✓ Understand what you have read.
- ✓ Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
- ✓ Agree to the use of your personal information as described.

You will be given a copy of this Participant Information Statement to keep.

(2) Who is running the study?

Pam Ryan is conducting this study as the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at The University of Sydney. This will take place under the supervision of Dr George Odhiambo, Senior Lecturer, Educational Leadership and Management.

(3) What will the study involve for me?

Your involvement will consist of one semi-structured interview where you will be asked to tell the story of your experience. The interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis. You will have the opportunity to review your transcript.

Your completion of the interview will take place at a time convenient to you and, should you consent to participate, individual arrangements will be made with you to identify a quiet and suitable location, such as an office, small meeting room, library space, or if requested, a private venue such as a home. If distance presents an issue in arranging a face-to-face interview, arrangements may be made to conduct the interview via Skype or phone.

(4) How much of my time will the study take?

Your time commitment for one interview of 45-60 minutes.

(5) Who can take part in the study?

Any current or past school leader associated with any school or school system who identifies as having direct, first-hand experience of destructive leadership practice is invited to take part.

(6) What if more people volunteer to be interviewed than required for the study?

The sample for the study is anticipated to be up to 20 participants, male and female who come from a range of backgrounds, such as primary and secondary, government and non-government, rural and metropolitan schools. Should more people express interest than required to provide these variations, the researcher will email these additional volunteers, thanking them for their expression of interest and indicating they will be placed on a reserve list to be accessed should other participants become unavailable. Once the required number of interviews has been reached, those on the reserve list will be advised that the data collection phase has been completed.

(7) Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I've started?

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney.

If you decide to take part in the study and then change your mind later, you are free to withdraw at any time. You can do this by advising the researcher either verbally or in writing at prya7506@uni.sydney.edu.au.

You are free to stop the interview at any time. Unless you say that you want us to keep them, any recordings will be erased and the information you have provided will not be included in the study results. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer during the interview.

If you decide to withdraw from the study, we will not collect any more information from you. Please let us know at the time when you withdraw what you would like us to do with the information we have collected about you up to that point. If you wish your information will be removed from our study records and will not be included in the study results, up to the point that we have analysed and published the results.

(8) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

While participation in the project is not intended to cause distress, recounting unpleasant experiences may give rise to troubling emotions. You can be assured that your experiences will be handled sensitively and confidentially. If you should become distressed you may pause or terminate the interview at any stage. Details of counselling support will be provided to you should you choose to access this. Although you may be recalling negative situations, the inclusion of your story will inform the broader picture and serve the positive and instructive purpose of the study. Aside from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any further risks. No costs are associated with taking part in this study.

You can be assured that confidentiality be maintained throughout the study and that individual identities will not be revealed. Anonymity of all parties will be ensured at all stages of data handling and reporting. No identifiable information that would allow people to guess who is being referred to during the interviews will be included.

(9) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

We cannot guarantee that you will receive any direct benefits from being in the study.

(10) What will happen to information about me that is collected during the study?

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to us collecting personal information about you for the purposes of this research study. Your information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise.

Your information will be stored securely and your identity/information will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Study findings may be published in the student thesis, at conferences or in journal publications, but you will not be individually identifiable in these publications. At the conclusion of the study any data maintained will already have been stripped of any identifying information such as names, roles, locations or personal characteristics and pseudonyms used. After five years, that is, at the end of the required record retention period, the information will be destroyed.

(11) Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes, you are welcome to tell other people the study is being conducted and to provide this information to others who may be interested in participating. However, because of the nature of the topic and the need for strict confidentiality with regard to the information provided, the details of your involvement and your actual input into the study will remain confidential.

(12) What if I would like further information about the study?

When you have read this information, Pam Ryan will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact her on prya7506@uni.sydney.edu.au or phone contact +61 2 9351 6358.

(13) Will I be told the results of the study?

You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell us that you wish to receive feedback by ticking the appropriate box on the consent form. This feedback will be in the form of a one page summary. You will receive this feedback after the study is finished.

(14) What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?

Research involving humans in Australia is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the HREC of the University of Sydney [2016/724]. As part of this process, we have agreed to carry out the study according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*. This statement has been developed to protect people who agree to take part in research studies.

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the university using the details outlined below. Please quote the study title and protocol number.

The Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney:

- **Telephone:** +61 2 8627 8176
- **Email:** ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au
- **Fax:** +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile)

This information sheet is for you to keep

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT CONSENT



Discipline of Education
School of Education
Faculty of Education and Social Work

ABN 15 211 513 464

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Chief Investigator
Senior Lecturer, Educational Leadership & Management

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SCHOOL LEADERS' PERCEPTIONS AND PAST EXPERIENCES OF DESTRUCTIVE LEADERSHIP AND ITS IMPACT ON THEIR PRACTICE

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

- ✓ I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.
- ✓ I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.
- ✓ The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.
- ✓ I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney now or in the future.
- ✓ I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.
- ✓ I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don't wish to answer.
- ✓ I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.
- ✓ I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW PROMPT

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to this interview. It should take between 45–60 minutes. Please be assured neither you nor anyone else will be identified in the project and that anything you say will be held in strict confidence. While I may include in my project excerpts from what we discuss, all data will be de-identified and all reporting will be anonymous.

I understand this topic may have some sensitivities so if you need to take a break or stop at any stage please let me know. I have contact details to access counselling if you would like those and should you wish can also provide references to some of the policies that might be relevant to your situation.

This is your interview. There are no right answers and rather than have a whole list of questions, my interest is in listening to your thoughts—my role will be to ask clarifying questions or to suggest where you might elaborate. There are, however, just a few opening question to gather some background information.

1. Let's begin with the background information:
 - What is your current position and how long in this position?
 - What was your position at the time of the experience we're about to discuss?
 - Your place of work, then and now?

2. Now for your story. As someone participating in this study you've indicated you've had direct personal experience of destructive leadership. Could you talk to me about what destructive leadership means from your point of view and how you've experienced it?

Possible additional clarifying prompts, only as or if appropriate:

- What behaviours did you observe?
- What is your particular story?

- What were the circumstances?
- Who was involved?
- What did you observe of others' behaviours
- Do you recall specific incidents?
- Do you recall certain conversations; use of language?

3. (If this data has not already emerged) Can you focus on your responses and reactions?

Possible additional clarifying prompts, only as or if appropriate:

- At different stages (e.g., early stages, later on)?
- Were you personally affected? If so, how?
- What comments would you make about your health and wellbeing at this time?
- How did you respond to the leader in question?
- How did you respond in relation others?
- What was the short-term impact?
- What was the long-term impact?
- What if anything did you learn through the experience?

4. Is there anything else you would like to say?

5. Do you have any questions of me?

I appreciate that this is important to you, as it is to me. Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX F: SAFETY PROTOCOL



Faculty of Education
School of Education and Social Work

SAFETY PROTOCOL

Risk management strategies have been discussed between the student researcher and her supervisor and the following safety protocols agreed:

- The research involves audio-recorded, one-on-one interviews with current and former school leaders and will be conducted in a quiet, public location such as a school office, small meeting room or public library discussion room. While the student researcher will conduct the interviews alone, the supervisor considers that the safeguards provided in this safety protocol are sufficient to manage the safety risks.
- Should anything untoward happen, or the student researcher becomes uneasy for any reason, the interview will be terminated immediately and the interviewer will leave. The supervisor will be contacted as soon as practicable.
- The student researcher will carry a mobile phone and have the supervisor's direct contact number should immediate contact be necessary.
- Interviews will be conducted in daylight hours or in the early evening.
- The student researcher will provide a schedule to her supervisor of the date, time and place of the interviews.
- Where interviews require travel within New South Wales or interstate, the student researcher will provide travel details to the supervisor.
- The researcher has comprehensive car insurance sighted by the supervisor.

This safety protocol has been agreed and accepted by supervisor and the student researcher.

Supervisor signature: _____

Student signature: _____

Name: _____

Name: _____

APPENDIX G: ETHICS LETTER OF APPROVAL



Research Integrity & Ethics Administration
Human Research Ethics Committee

Thursday, 1 September 2016

Dr George Odhiambo
Education and Social Work - Research; Faculty of Education & Social Work
Email: george.odhiambo@sydney.edu.au

Dear George

The University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has considered your application.

I am pleased to inform you that your project has been approved.

Approval is granted for a period of four years from **01 September 2016 to 01 September 2020**

Project title: School leaders' perceptions and past experiences of destructive leadership and its longer term impact on their practice

Project no.: 2016/724

First Annual Report due: 01 September 2017

Authorised Personnel: Odhiambo George; Ryan Pamela;

Documents Approved:

Date Uploaded	Version number	Document Name
30/07/2016	Version 1	Appendix 1 Initial recruitment
30/07/2016	Version 1	Appendix 2 Participant Information
30/07/2016	Version 1	Appendix 3 Participant consent
30/07/2016	Version 1	Appendix 4 Interview Questions
01/08/2016	Version 1	Appendix 5 Safety protocol

Special Condition/s of Approval

- Inclusion of a personal mobile phone number on a recruitment flyer that is distributed broadly in the community puts the researcher at risk of receiving unwanted non-related nuisance calls. Please replace with a University phone number.
- Please re-submit the safety protocol once signed by both the student and the supervisor.

HREC Suggestion: The researchers are seeking the assistance of the NSW Secondary Principals' Council and the Australian Primary Principals' Association to recruit principals from public schools. Have the researchers considered also extending an invitation to principals from independent schools through the Association of Independent Schools of NSW?

Condition/s of Approval

- Research must be conducted according to the approved proposal.

Research Integrity & Ethics Administration
Level 2, Margaret Telfer Building (K07)
The University of Sydney
NSW 2006 Australia

T +61 2 9036 9161
E human.ethics@sydney.edu.au
W sydney.edu.au/ethics

ABN 15 211 513 464
CRICOS00026A

- An annual progress report must be submitted to the Ethics Office on or before the anniversary of approval and on completion of the project.
- You must report as soon as practicable anything that might warrant review of ethical approval of the project including:
 - Serious or unexpected adverse events (which should be reported within 72 hours).
 - Unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
- Any changes to the proposal must be approved prior to their implementation (except where an amendment is undertaken to eliminate *immediate* risk to participants).
- Personnel working on this project must be sufficiently qualified by education, training and experience for their role, or adequately supervised. Changes to personnel must be reported and approved.
- Personnel must disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest, including any financial or other interest or affiliation, as relevant to this project.
- Data and primary materials must be retained and stored in accordance with the relevant legislation and University guidelines.
- Ethics approval is dependent upon ongoing compliance of the research with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*, the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*, applicable legal requirements, and with University policies, procedures and governance requirements.
- The Ethics Office may conduct audits on approved projects.
- The Chief Investigator has ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the research and is responsible for ensuring all others involved will conduct the research in accordance with the above.

This letter constitutes ethical approval only.

Please contact the Ethics Office should you require further information or clarification.

Sincerely



Professor Glen Davis
Chair
Human Research Ethics Committee

The University of Sydney HRECs are constituted and operate in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) and the NHMRC's Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007).