An Exploration of Leadership and its Development

Through the Inner Worlds of Leaders Using Metaphor

By

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Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

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Abstract

This research explores the naturally occurring metaphors of 30 business leaders from fifteen nationalities to discover what insight can be gained from a personalised approach to leader development. Building on the assertion that part of the complexity of leadership is its subjective and symbolic nature, this research explores the meaning that individuals make about their leadership and its development. This approach supports the development of authenticity in leaders, viewing authenticity as making one’s own meaning, relational and elusive.

This longitudinal, phenomenological enquiry, situated in the social constructivist paradigm, seeks to explore how leaders construct and make sense of their world at an intra-personal level. It addresses the question; what can leaders learn about their leadership and development from an exploration of their inner worlds through metaphor? Using Clean Language, an innovative interview method to elicit naturally occurring metaphors, leaders were invited to surface and explore their metaphors of leadership verbally and in drawings.

Results suggest leaders make meaning through surfacing and exploring their metaphors, gain clarity and confirmation about their leadership and view development as an on-going journey of becoming, rather than a fixed destination. Diverse conceptualisations of leadership are revealed in multiple and idiosyncratic metaphors, yet ten ‘key’ metaphors appear to underlie these diverse expressions. Moreover, the importance of relationship to provide subtle guidance and comfort during exploration of the inner world was revealed.

In tandem with the purpose of this study, methodological advances are proposed for qualitative interviews that aim to surface individuals’ metaphors. This seeks to contribute to approaches for eliciting and analysing metaphors that can illuminate sensemaking within the management and organisational field.
Acknowledgements

I won the lottery in life... several times ... in growing with fantastic people. And whilst a lottery may be seen as a game of chance, one still has to decide to play...

My first lottery win was my family. My parents, Barbara and Angus Cairns, have given me wonderful gifts in life notably a loving nest from which to learn to fly and roots from which to grow and my dear siblings, Rob and Net. Mum’s legendary words to ‘take a big brave breath’ and that everything is ‘part of life’s rich tapestry’ may be my earliest experience of how metaphors influence life. Dad’s use of mathematical symbols to put early GPS in space was incomprehensible to me as a child; but now I realise that his use of symbols to explore outer space is maybe not so different from my use of symbols to explore inner space. Different territories, different logics, but symbols nevertheless. Thanks Mum and Dad – for creating that first lottery win in life.

My second lottery win was my professional family. Without the crucible of work, I doubt I would have trodden this PhD path. So thanks Jack for nurturing my love of the symbolic and believing in me to do ‘the work’ that we created with dear friends Gianpiero Petriglieri, Declan Fitzsimons, Mette Stuhr, Jen Petriglieri and Suzanne Weeks. In more recent years I am grateful to the ‘Famous Five’ of Rene Molenkamp and Jane Lowther and particularly to Ginka Toegel, Katina Cremona and Mark Talbot who have lovingly encouraged me to continue when reaching the end seemed impossible. Thanks for the conversations, the belly laughs, and sharing the highs and ‘melancholic’ lows in life as we attempt to grow up a bit more in this second half of life. Special thanks to my dear friend Dena Michelli who trod the PhD path at Surrey before me and has told me since the beginning, you are ‘almost there’. Dena, I am beginning to believe you but for a long time the ‘gap’ between your ‘almost’ and my ‘almost’ was pretty large!

My third lottery win has been the people I have been fortunate to meet on this PhD adventure. To the thirty people who generously shared their inner worlds of metaphor with me, thank you. Without your trust and engagement this
endeavour would not have been possible. Special thanks to my supervisors Eugene Sadler-Smith and Paul Tosey – brilliant, observant, ‘gentle’-men. Paul, using our shared love of gardening metaphorically, thank you for helping me ‘grow’ through your careful ‘fertilisation’ and judicious ‘pruning’ of my ideas. Together with James Lawley you have made up the Expert Clean Language Team that has supported this study. I hope the result does justice to the seeds we planted. The Clean Language community has been very welcoming from my early learning with Wendy Sullivan to its authorities, Penny Tompkins and James Lawley. More than authorities, Penny’s warmth and encouragement and James’ thinking and engagement in this research have been absolutely invaluable.

Turning ideas into a thesis is quite a skill in itself; and I am grateful to Alison Yeung Yam Wah’s support in building a sense of confidence and unexpected enjoyment (!) in academic writing. Thanks Karen for being my ‘anchor’ at Surrey.

And ah yes, my ultimate win in the lottery of life – Walter, Heidi and Romie. Simply thank you and I love you. Wol, my partner in life and love for 23 years, thank you for our togetherness in life as well as the space to be who we are – what a wonderful combination! Heidi and Romie, you inspire and delight me in so many ways by being who you are and through your love of books, many artistic, musical, sporting and academic talents that you nurture with quiet but fierce determination and a large sprinkling of joy and zest for life. Our current family anthem - the ‘Bunny song’ from Zootopia expresses something of our family’s willingness to try things and to pick ourselves and each other up. The lyrics, sung with great gusto, certainly express my experience with this PhD; “Birds don’t just fly they fall down and get up. Nobody learns without getting it wrong. I won’t give up, No, I won’t give in till I reach the end.” (Shakira)

Like the Hobbit, (Tolkien, 2013) this has been “an unexpected journey”, and like many journeys, whilst the quest is important, the fellowship forged along the way is vital. Thank you, all of you, for being you and for gently encouraging me to be me. I think at the end of the day, that is what my study is about – gently encouraging people to be themselves through engaging with their inner world of metaphor.
Table of Contents

Abstract........................................................................................................................................... i
Acknowledgements.......................................................................................................................... ii
List of Figures................................................................................................................................ .......... x
List of Tables ............................................................................................................................................ xii

1 Overview of Study.............................................................................................................................. 1
  1.1 Purpose and Research Question .................................................................................................. 2
  1.2 Research Setting .......................................................................................................................... 3
  1.3 Nature of Study ............................................................................................................................ 4
  1.4 Practitioner Context and Personal Motivations for the Research .............................................. 9
  1.5 Academic Context of the Research .......................................................................................... 14
  1.6 Outline of Thesis ......................................................................................................................... 15

2 Leadership and its Development........................................................................................................ 18
  2.1 The Contested Nature of Leadership ......................................................................................... 18
    2.1.1 Are Leaders Born or Made? ................................................................................................. 19
    2.1.2 Leadership - Socially Constructed? ...................................................................................... 20
    2.1.3 Leadership Theories - Normative or Situational? ............................................................... 21
    2.1.4 Leadership at which Level of Analysis? .............................................................................. 22
    2.1.5 Leadership Research - Adding to the Complexity? ............................................................ 24
    2.1.6 Summary of the Contested Nature of Leadership ............................................................... 25
  2.2 Evolution of Leadership Theories ............................................................................................... 26
  2.3 Review of Authentic Leadership Theory .................................................................................... 29
    2.3.1 Critique of Authentic Leadership Theory ........................................................................... 32
  2.4 Philosophical Perspectives of Authenticity ................................................................................ 33
    2.4.1 Existential Authenticity ........................................................................................................ 34
    2.4.2 Modern Authenticity ............................................................................................................ 37
  2.5 A Multi-Component Conceptualisation of Authenticity ............................................................ 38
  2.6 Radical Authentic Leadership ...................................................................................................... 40
    2.6.1 Inauthenticity is Inevitable .................................................................................................. 41
    2.6.2 Authenticity Requires Creating One’s Own Meaning .......................................................... 41
    2.6.3 Authenticity Does Not Imply Goal and Value Congruence ................................................. 41
    2.6.4 Authenticity is Not Intrinsically Ethical .............................................................................. 42
  2.7 Self-Awareness ............................................................................................................................ 43

iv
3 Meaning and Metaphor

3.1 Leadership’s Role to Manage Meaning

3.2 Metaphor - An Introduction

3.3 Metaphors We Live By - Conceptual Metaphor Theory

3.4 Metaphor in Organisational Research

3.5 Elicited, Contextual, Multi-Modal Approach to Metaphor

3.6 Eliciting Naturally Occurring Metaphor through Clean Language

3.7 Properties of Metaphor

3.8 From Metaphor to Mental Models

3.9 Summary of Chapter Three

4 Research Methodology

4.1 Qualitative Research - Defining the Field

4.2 Purpose of the Study

4.3 Research Proposition

4.4 Research Question

4.5 Research Design

4.6 Research Philosophy

4.6.1 Ontology - The Nature of Reality

4.6.2 Epistemology - What is Acceptable Knowledge?

4.6.3 Phenomenology

4.6.4 Symbolic Interactionism

4.6.5 Axiology - The Role of Values
4.7 Research Approach - Inductive .................................................. 99
4.8 Research Choice - Multi-Method Qualitative Study .................... 100
4.9 Research Strategy - Phenomenology ....................................... 101
  4.9.1 Major Components of Phenomenological Research ................ 102
  4.9.2 Epoché - Bracketing Through Clean Language .................... 103
4.10 Time Horizons - A Longitudinal Study .................................. 105
4.11 Identifying and Inviting Participants to the Study ..................... 106
  4.11.1 Considerations for the Sample ............................................... 108
  4.11.2 Gaining Access and Trust in the Sample ............................... 109
  4.11.3 Practical Considerations for the Sample ............................... 112
4.12 The Sample ............................................................................. 113
  4.12.1 Participant Pseudonyms ....................................................... 113
  4.12.2 Gender .............................................................................. 114
  4.12.3 Nationality ......................................................................... 115
  4.12.4 Age .................................................................................... 115
  4.12.5 Level of Leadership .............................................................. 115
  4.12.6 Industry Sector .................................................................. 116
4.13 Technique and Procedures – Data Collection ........................... 116
  4.13.1 In-Depth Interviews ............................................................... 116
  4.13.2 Epistemological Foundation of Interviews ............................ 118
  4.13.3 Quality in Interviews ............................................................. 120
  4.13.4 Clean Language Conducted Interviews ............................... 123
  4.13.5 Interview Protocol ............................................................... 128
  4.13.6 Example of Clean Language Interview ................................ 130
4.14 Drawings .................................................................................. 135
4.15 Interview Logistics and Timing ............................................... 139
  4.15.1 Time for Interviews ............................................................... 139
  4.15.2 Interview Locations ............................................................... 140
4.16 A Note on Transcription ......................................................... 141
4.17 Techniques and Procedures for Data Analysis ......................... 141
4.18 Research Ethics ....................................................................... 145
4.19 Researcher Ethics and Reflexivity .......................................... 147
4.20 Summary of Chapter Four ...................................................... 149
5 Essence of Leadership ................................................................. 151
  5.1 Data from Interview One ......................................................... 152
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Data Analysis for Interview One</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Cleanliness of Interview Data</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>The Essence of Metaphor</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.1</td>
<td>Essence of Metaphor Process</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.2</td>
<td>Example of Essence of Leadership</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.3</td>
<td>Reflection on Essences</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Identifying Key Metaphors from Essences and Drawings</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Key Metaphors from across Essences and Drawings</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6.1</td>
<td>Journey</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6.2</td>
<td>Visualising the Future</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6.3</td>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6.4</td>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6.5</td>
<td>Connection</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6.6</td>
<td>Self-Reflection</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6.7</td>
<td>Creating the Environment</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6.8</td>
<td>Giving Space</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6.9</td>
<td>Puzzling Out</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6.10</td>
<td>Catalyst</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6.11</td>
<td>Combination of Key Metaphors for Leadership</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>Experiences of Being a Leader</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7.1</td>
<td>First Experience of Being a Leader</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7.2</td>
<td>Leading at Best</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>Summary of Chapter Five</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Leaders’ Learning</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Overview of Data from Interview Two</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Data Analysis Process</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Composite Structural Model of Experience</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>How Leaders Experienced the Process of Exploration</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.1</td>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.2</td>
<td>Comfort in the Relationship</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.3</td>
<td>Subtle Guidance Triggers Own Views</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.4</td>
<td>Surface and Explore Metaphors</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Becoming Aware of Leadership</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5.1</td>
<td>Realising</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5.2</td>
<td>Reminding</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5.3 Recognising</td>
<td>216</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6 What did Leaders Learn about their Leadership?</td>
<td>220</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6.1 Clarity through Metaphor</td>
<td>221</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6.2 Confirmation</td>
<td>226</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6.3 Choice</td>
<td>228</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7 What did Leaders Learn about their Development?</td>
<td>231</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7.1 Attention to Own Development</td>
<td>231</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7.2 Awareness and Affirmation</td>
<td>234</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7.3 Next Steps?</td>
<td>236</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8 Individual Variation - Nothing</td>
<td>238</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.9 Summary of Chapter Six</td>
<td>242</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Contributions and Discussion</td>
<td>244</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1 Introduction to Chapter</td>
<td>244</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2 Finding 1: Relationship that Supports and Guides ‘Cleanly’ Illuminates the Inner World</td>
<td>247</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2.1 Contribution and Discussion</td>
<td>247</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2.2 Implications</td>
<td>252</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3 Finding 2: Leaders Make Meaning through Surfacing and Exploring Metaphors</td>
<td>253</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3.1 Contribution and Discussion</td>
<td>253</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3.2 Implications</td>
<td>255</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4 Finding 3: Elicited Metaphors Illuminate Diverse Conceptualisations of Leadership</td>
<td>256</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4.1 Contribution and Discussion</td>
<td>256</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4.2 Implications</td>
<td>258</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5 Finding 4: Drawings Reveal the Essence of Phenomena</td>
<td>259</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5.1 Contribution and Discussion</td>
<td>259</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5.2 Drawings Reveal the Essence of Phenomena</td>
<td>260</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5.3 Treat Images with Care</td>
<td>262</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5.4 Implications</td>
<td>264</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6 Finding 5: Leaders Become Aware through Realising, Remembering and Recognising</td>
<td>264</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6.1 Contribution and Discussion</td>
<td>264</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6.2 Implications</td>
<td>268</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.7 Finding 6: Leaders Learn Clarity, Self-Confirmation and Choice</td>
<td>269</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

FIGURE 1-1 A SAILING GUIDE TO THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF LEADERSHIP............... 6
FIGURE 1-2 KNOW THYSELF INSCRIPTION, TEMPLE OF APOLLO, DELPHI 4TH CENTURY BC.... 12
FIGURE 3-1 MENTAL MODEL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS.............................................. 87
FIGURE 4-1 THE RESEARCH ONION ............................................................................ 95
FIGURE 4-2 CONTACT POINTS IN RESEARCH PROCESS............................................. 106
FIGURE 5-1 TAKING PEOPLE ON A JOURNEY - TIM .................................................. 161
FIGURE 5-2 ENERGY COMES FROM THE BATTERY PACK AND SOLAR POWER - TIM .... 161
FIGURE 5-3 TAKING PEOPLE ON A JOURNEY - SAM ................................................ 167
FIGURE 5-4 THE LONELY JOURNEY - ERV ................................................................. 168
FIGURE 5-5 A CLEAR FINISH LINE IN THE CHESS GAME - VAN.............................. 169
FIGURE 5-6 VISUALISING THE FUTURE - MAT ........................................................ 170
FIGURE 5-7 EMOTIONS ENGAGE PEOPLE - ARJ ...................................................... 171
FIGURE 5-8 USING ENERGY TO FIRE UP OTHER PEOPLE - CHB .............................. 172
FIGURE 5-9 FINE BALANCE BETWEEN GOLD BARS AND SMALL CHANGE - ANG ...... 173
FIGURE 5-10 CONNECTION WITH MYSELF - PAT ...................................................... 175
FIGURE 5-11 CONNECTION IS WHERE IT STARTS - OVR ........................................... 175
FIGURE 5-12 CHRISTMAS TREE CONNECTIONS THROUGH THE ORGANISATION - SAN...... 175
FIGURE 5-13 A LEADER’S INTERNAL WORLD - DIL ................................................ 177
FIGURE 5-14 COCKTAIL OF EXPERIENCE IN GROWING UP AT DIFFERENT LEVELS - GOR .... 177
FIGURE 5-15 SAFETY NETS ENABLE PEOPLE TO TRY THINGS - NAT .......................... 178
FIGURE 5-16 GOOD DAY WHEN LEADER GIVES SPACE TO OTHERS - KET ............... 180
FIGURE 5-17 SIMPLIFYING PROBLEMS - EATING THE ELEPHANT PIECE BY PIECE - GOR .... 181
FIGURE 5-18 WHITE HORSES CHARGE AHEAD AND CATALYSE CHANGE - GDM ............. 182
FIGURE 5-19 DRAWING ILLUSTRATING SEVERAL KEY METAPHORS FOR LEADERSHIP - ERG 183
FIGURE 5-20 LEADING AT MY BEST IS LIKE BEING IN SPORT DRIVE - FRC .................... 186
FIGURE 6-1 COMPOSITE STRUCTURAL MODEL OF THE EXPLORATION OF LEADERSHIP AND
DEVELOPMENT THROUGH METAPHOR...................................................................... 193
FIGURE 6-2 EXPERIENCE OF EXPLORATION............................................................... 194
FIGURE 6-3 BEING OPEN-MINDED ABOUT AN OPEN-ENDED JOURNEY - CHB .......... 196
FIGURE 6-4 AN OPEN-ENDED JOURNEY LIKE THE WIZARD OF OZ - JOS .................... 197
FIGURE 6-5 COMFORT IN THE RELATIONSHIP - GUL ............................................. 199
FIGURE 6-6 COMFORT IN THE RELATIONSHIP FREED ME UP TO EXPLORE - ANG .... 200
FIGURE 6-7 A SPOTLIGHT MAKES ME THINK - CH .................................................. 202
FIGURE 6-8 THINKING OUT LOUD - “THINK TANK TIME” - TIM ............................ 204
FIGURE 6-9 SUBTLE GUIDANCE WITH FREEDOM RESULTS IN A CLEAR PICTURE - SAN .... 205
FIGURE 6-10 SURFACING AND EXPLORING METAPHORS ILLUMINATES THOUGHTS - CHT .... 208
FIGURE 6-11 BECOMING AWARE OF OWN LEADERSHIP....................................... 209
FIGURE 6-12 THE ESSENTIAL CREATIVE CORE - GDM ........................................... 212
List of Tables

TABLE 2-1 KEY LEADERSHIP THEORIES, ASSUMPTIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS AND CRITIQUE ....28
TABLE 2-2 COMPONENTS OF AUTHENTICITY ........................................................................40
TABLE 2-3 KEY DISTINCTIONS IN THE ASSUMPTIONS UNDERPINNING EXISTENTIAL
     AUTHENTICITY AND AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP THEORY ........................................43
TABLE 3-1 PROPERTIES OF METAPHOR ........................................................................81
TABLE 4-1 MINIMUM NON-PROBABILITY SAMPLE SIZE ................................................109
TABLE 4-2 CHARACTERISTICS OF SAMPLE ................................................................114
TABLE 4-3 PROGRESSIVE LEVELS OF CLEAN LANGUAGE IN INTERVIEW-BASED RESEARCH
     (TOSEY ET AL. 2014, P.641) ..........................................................................................123
TABLE 4-4 SUMMARY OF DAVID GROVE’S CLEAN LANGUAGE ....................................127
TABLE 4-5 NUMBER OF WEEKS BETWEEN INTERVIEWS ..............................................141
TABLE 4-6 OVERVIEW OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS IN THE STUDY ..........144
TABLE 5-1 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS FROM INTERVIEW ONE ....................153
TABLE 5-2 CLEANNESS RATING SCALE ..........................................................................154
TABLE 5-3 EXPERT CLEAN RATING OF INTERVIEWS .....................................................155
TABLE 5-4 METAPHORS IN TIM’S TRANSCRIPT BY EXPERT CLEAN LANGUAGE TEAM ...158
TABLE 5-5 KEY METAPHORS OF LEADERSHIP IN ESSENCES AND DRAWINGS ........166
TABLE 6-1 DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS FOR INTERVIEW TWO ..................................191
TABLE 7-1 FINDINGS AND CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THIS STUDY ...............................245
TABLE 8-1 FOUR CLEAN QUESTIONS FOR INQUIRING INTO INNER WORLDS ............291
1 Overview of Study

Leadership has been practised, studied and debated for centuries and is a contested term for complex and multi-faceted phenomena. According to Conger (1998) this complexity is in part due its dynamism, multiple levels of analysis and its subjective and symbolic nature. Other authors have highlighted leadership as socially constructed (Fairhurst and Grant, 2010; Grint, 2005) comprised of diverse “meanings or multiple frames of reference” (Bresnen, 1995 p.496). This complexity and the social construction of leadership highlight the importance of framing and shaping leadership through the management of meaning (Smircich and Morgan, 1982) and through attention to leaders’ own frames of reference.

Authentic leadership, the desire for leaders who are transparent, true to themselves and motivated by the greater good rather than their egos (Luthans and Avolio, 2003), has been gaining researchers’ attention. Central to authentic leadership is that leaders know who they are, understand their purpose (George, 2003) and create their own meaning (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012). Authentic leadership has claimed to be the root construct for all positive forms of leadership development (Avolio et al., 2004) and emphasises the importance of self-awareness; however, current authentic leadership theory does not explain how self-awareness is developed. Hence a vital question that informs this study is how leaders develop awareness of their leadership? This question has attracted significant scholarly attention (Atwater et al., 1999; Day, 2001; DeRue and Ashford, 2010; Edwards and Turnbull, 2013; Ely et al., 2011; Fulmer, 1997; Johnson, 2008; Kennedy et al., 2012; Mabey, 2012; McCall, 2010; Pinnington, 2011; Probert and Turnbull, 2011; Riggio, 2008; Schyns et al., 2013; Shamir and Eilam, 2005; Van Velsor et al., 2010). It is also fundamental to leadership development initiatives in organisations and business schools. Many organisational and business school approaches use standardised models to develop awareness such as case studies, business models, 360 feedback or self-report instruments that tend to assess leaders against pre-defined models and
compare them to norm groups. Whilst coaching and reflective assignments are often much more oriented to the specific needs of the leader, they, too, are subject to the assumptions and framing of the coach. It is not straightforward for leaders to know what they think about their own leadership.

This study is based on the premise that for leaders to find out about their leadership, it is beneficial to turn to their own words and metaphors. This follows claims that all language is metaphor, “by which we express one thing – the complex fabric of people and their environments – in terms of another - language”, (Howard and Howard, 1995 p.2). This suggests the centrality of language in creating understanding.

This study adopts an inductive approach to working with leaders’ naturally occurring metaphors to understand how they make meaning of their own leadership. Metaphor is said to be the very foundation of a person’s conceptual system (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) and is a fundamental way of thinking. As metaphor helps understand abstract, complex phenomena, it is often used in leadership research. Researchers have used metaphor to understand organisations (Morgan 1986) and leaders (Alvesson and Spicer 2011); however, most research to date has been deductive with researchers applying their metaphors to the phenomena they study.

1.1 Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this research is to find out what leaders can learn about their leadership and development through an exploration of their own naturally occurring metaphors and implicit leadership theories (Schyns and Meindl, 2005; Schyns and Schilling, 2011). This research seeks to respond to the claim that “leaders may be unaware of the degree to which their models are shaping their leadership behaviours” (Hackman and Wageman, 2007 p.46) by understanding what leaders can learn through becoming aware of their internal models of leadership. This also follows the challenge to look for evidence “that different metaphors generate different understandings and conceptualisations of leadership” (Oberlechner and Mayer-Schönberger, 2003 p.172). In attending to leaders’ own conceptualisations of leadership, the study builds on personalised
approaches to leadership development (Day and Dragoni, 2015; Petriglieri et al., 2011).

This research seeks to answer the question:

“What can leaders learn about their leadership and development from an exploration of their inner worlds through metaphor?”

This question is guided by seven research objectives as follows:

1. To review critically the contested nature of leadership to situate this study in authentic leadership theory.

2. To review the philosophical foundations of authenticity in order to understand its existential nature, the inherent tensions between self and society and the centrality of self-awareness and meaning-making to authenticity.

3. To review critically the field of leadership development to understand the development of authentic leaders from a constructivist-developmental approach which foregrounds self-authorship and meaning-making.

4. To review critically the literature concerning metaphor in organisational research and the relationship between metaphor and mental models and to explicate how naturally occurring metaphor can be elicited with Clean Language.

5. To distil the ‘essence’ of leadership for leaders in this study from their naturally occurring metaphors and to synthesise key metaphors across leaders’ ‘Essences’ and drawings.

6. To present and synthesise data about what and how leaders learnt about their leadership and development from the process of exploring their inner worlds through metaphor.

7. To contribute to theoretical and practical understanding of what and how leaders can learn through attention to their inner worlds.

1.2 Research Setting

The study adopts a phenomenological approach to understanding the lived experience of 30 international business leaders. Through interviews this study elicits naturally occurring metaphors to explore the sense these leaders make of
their leadership experiences. The participants were selected purposively from people who were recognised as leaders by their organisations through their nomination to attend a leadership development program at a leading European business school at which I work. The heterogeneous sample includes nineteen men and eleven women from 15 nationalities working in a wide variety of industries and operating at different levels of senior leadership including Director, Vice President, Chief Executive Officer and Board Member.

1.3 Nature of Study

The view of leadership as ambiguous with contested realities sets the research in a social constructionist paradigm - a process that sees knowledge as constructed through the mental representations of people who interact in a social world to influence each other through language (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). Social constructionism has many perspectives, methods and definitions but is broadly seen as a dynamic, on-going process in which people define their perceived reality and examine their taken-for-granted assumptions. Berger and Luckmann claim that from the natural attitude of common-sense “the reality of everyday life is taken for granted as reality” i.e. as normal and self-evident (1967 p.37). They draw attention to how people impact each other in the ‘here and now’ through interacting in a social system developing mental representations based on their subjective realities. This knowledge becomes embedded in society over time hence the term social constructionism.

In social constructionism language is crucial in linking everyday life with understanding. Language enables people to typify experience in a manner which has meaning to the individual and others, it bridges different parts of experience and enables people to transcend beyond the ‘here and now’ of everyday life to integrate knowledge from diverse domains. The role of symbolic language is particularly important as Berger and Luckmann state it is:

- capable not only of constructing symbols that are highly abstracted from everyday experiences, but also of ‘bringing back’ these symbols and appresenting them as objectively real elements in everyday life. In this manner, symbolism and symbolic language become essential constituents
of the reality of everyday life and of the common-sense apprehension of this reality. I live in a world of signs and symbols every day” (1967 p.55).

Berger and Luckmann state that the “cognitive construction” of the “symbolic universe” operates as an organising principle for people and that “everybody may ‘inhabit’ that universe in a taken-for-granted attitude” (1967 p.122). Their ideas about symbolic language and the symbolic universe are important for two reasons: firstly they suggest that each person has their own universe that holds symbolic information in an idiosyncratic way. Secondly, it indicates that people often take for granted their own constructions, which has implications for what they notice and what they do not notice. A central notion of this study is to articulate and explore the idiosyncratic symbolic material of people in leadership roles to discover how their constructions of leadership influence their thoughts and actions.

This study is based on five assumptions of social construction identified by Gergen (2009). These assumptions are: (1) we construct the world in which we live through language; (2) meaning arises from relationships and communities; (3) constructions acquire meaning and salience from their social utility to the groups to which they pertain; (4) language creates action and creates the future; (5) reflection on taken-for-granted views is critical to understanding how people frame reality.

A core assumption of social constructionism is reflection on taken-for-granted frames of reality (Gergen, 2009). This assumption is central to this study that aims to find out what leaders can learn about leadership when they surface and reflect on their assumptions and conceptualisations of leadership. This study turns to leaders’ language to understand their assumptions of leadership with specific attention to their naturally occurring metaphors. This builds on the role of language (Barge, 2001; Barge and Little, 2002; Pearce, 1995) that has contributed to the linguistic turn (Rorty, 1967) in Western philosophy, which suggests that language does not mirror reality but constitutes it. This implies that language is not simply a matter of communication but of meaning
construction (Barge and Fairhurst, 2008; Cooren and Fairhurst, 2002; Fairhurst and Connaughton, 2014; Fairhurst and Grant, 2010). Furthermore, the importance of meaning and the role of symbols and metaphors, has been noted by many scholars including Crotty who claims “we are all born into a world of meaning”… inheriting a “system of significant symbols” (1998 p.54).

Social constructionism is “multifaceted, philosophically complex and methodologically variant” with the term used in various ways (Fairhurst and Grant, 2010 p.177), it is therefore important to be clear about choices made within this vast terrain. Fairhurst and Grant suggest a “sailing guide to the social construction of leadership” (p.177) to make sense of the literature, consider the term more discriminately and help researchers to clarify their stance and research approach. Fairhurst and Grant’s sailing guide comprises four dimensions (see Figure 1-1) “the construction of social reality versus the social construction of reality, theory versus praxis, critical emancipatory versus pragmatic interventionist, and monomodal versus multimodal” (p. 195).

![Figure 1-1 A Sailing Guide to the Social Construction of Leadership](Source: Fairhurst & Grant, 2010, p. 177 – Used with Permission)
The choices made for this study between these four dimensions are explicated to situate this study as a construction of social reality informed by a multi-modal approach, which concerns praxis and pragmatic intervention. Awareness of these choices is important for a reflexive approach to research and to be able to reflect on implications of these choices for research methodology that are discussed in chapter four.

The first dimension (12 o’clock on the diagram) distinguishes how reality is constructed. The “social construction of reality” foregrounds the influence of culture and social interactions and the “construction of social reality” foregrounds the perceptions, sensemaking accounts and cognitions of the individuals constructing reality. The construction of social reality (also known as social constructivist (Gergen, 2009)) puts the individual at the centre of meaning making and is adopted in this study to explore how leaders make meaning about their leadership. The second dimension (1 o’clock on the diagram) concerns theory and praxis, which distinguishes theoretical knowledge from a more practical use of theory or “theories in use” (182). Praxis is the name Aristotle gave to “practical wisdom (phronesis)” (Cronen, 2001 p.16). As the primary impulse for this study was a desire to support practicing leaders and leadership developers (see section on practitioner context and motivations for research) the study is informed by praxis or a practical use of theory. The third dimension (3 o’clock on the diagram) concerns attitudes to power and distinguishes between pragmatic interventionist and critical/emancipatory. Critical emancipatory approaches adopt a critical stance to power whereas pragmatic interventionist approaches engage with practitioners. This study is pragmatic engaging with “the logics, grammars and tasks of the participants involved” (Fairhurst and Grant, 2010 p. 190). The fourth dimension concerns whether researchers generate meaning mono-modally through language, the norm in management research, or multi-modally through incorporating other approaches. As this study is concerned with the meaning that leaders create through metaphor, which provide vivid visual images, this study adopts a multi-modal approach to generating data through leaders’ metaphors and drawings to understand their conceptualizations of leadership. As social constructionism is a
complex, broad area with myriad definitions and approaches the use of Fairhurst and Grant’s (2010) sailing guide clarifies choices made and helps guide the study.

Aligned with the purpose of the study (i.e. for leaders to understand their inner models of leadership) a qualitative, phenomenological approach was adopted to foreground the sensemaking of participants. Conger suggests that qualitative research is particularly appropriate for “illuminating in radically new ways phenomena as complex as leadership” (1998 p.107). Whilst qualitative research is a diverse field practised in many contexts encompassing various methods and epistemological underpinnings (Symon and Cassell, 2004) it is primarily exploratory in nature and concerned with understanding things in their natural environment. The “phenomenological analysis of everyday life or rather the subjective experience of everyday life” was foundational for Berger and Luckmann’s (1967 p.34) work on social constructionism. Phenomenology draws on the philosophical principle that reality is perceived within the meaning of the individual’s experience hence a phenomenological approach is compatible with a construction of social reality (or social constructivist) paradigm as both are “centrally concerned with the way in which the world is constructed or construed by individual mind” (Gergen, 2009 p.26). As this study is interested in the lived experiences of leaders and how they make meaning of being a leader through attention to their own metaphors and implicit leadership theories, a phenomenological approach was deemed the most suitable. Creswell notes that a phenomenological approach foregrounds “the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences” to describe the essence of the phenomenon (2013 p.59). The connection between phenomenology and social constructionism is important for this study, which views reality as socially constructed and aims to understand leaders’ experience and constructions of leadership. Phenomenology and social constructionism are both incredibly complex and multifaceted terms and in this study both terms are used in their philosophical sense and phenomenology is also used as a method (see the methodology chapter).
Two main approaches to phenomenology exist: hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 1990) which emphasises the interpretation of the lived experience; and transcendental or psychological phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) which is focused less on interpretation by the researcher and more on the participants’ descriptions. This study adopts a transcendental phenomenological approach, which foregrounds the meaning of the respondents in order to answer the research question: what can leaders learn about their leadership? Transcendental means “everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time” (Moustakas, 1994 p.34), and can be experienced if researchers are able to bracket their own assumptions. This bracketing is called epoché by Husserl (1982) and Moustakas (1994).

In order to facilitate epoché, this study draws on Clean Language (CL) (Grove, 1998; Tosey et al., 2014), which is notable for its fidelity to the client’s inner world and lack of interference from the facilitator’s metaphors and assumptions, hence the term ‘clean’. CL is a method to facilitate exploration of the inner world that pays particular attention the client’s naturally occurring metaphors. Originating in the work of psychologist David Grove (1989) it has been developed by Lawley and Tompkins (2000) as a process of facilitation to aid self-discovery and has been pioneered as a phenomenological research methodology for interviewing and analysing metaphors (Tosey et al., 2014). This study builds on these foundations and further elaborates how CL can contribute to rendering the ‘Essences’ of the phenomenon under question more authentic to the research participants themselves.

1.4 Practitioner Context and Personal Motivations for the Research

The context for this study is based on personal experience and observations in multiple roles including designer, coach and adjunct faculty in leading European business schools for the last 20 years. The business school at which I work is focused solely on executive education (rather than undergraduate or doctoral programmes) and therefore has a strong motivation to be relevant to business. The school’s relevance, real-world orientation and innovative methods have
been recognised in international rankings and whilst this provides a place amongst the elite schools worldwide, the need for relevance and reputation also strongly emphasises activity, value-for-money and results.

My professional experience has focused on the development of leaders and organisations and includes research into how organisations learn (Campbell and Cairns, 1994), responsibility for managing significant parts of the business school including the commission and design of in-company programs, the organisation and digital strategy of a learning network and faculty and coaching roles on leadership development programmes. I have moved from researching learning and acting as an interface between the business school and its business partners to the design and delivery of leadership programmes. This PhD brings my work full circle taking me back to researching what and how leaders learn. In my work I have used a broad range of developmental methods: case studies, lectures, action learning, indoor and outdoor experiential activities, equine assisted learning, psychometric instruments (Hogan, LEA, MBTI, Firo B, NEO), 360 feedback, reflective assignments and coaching with the objective to provide the opportunity for leaders to learn from experience and feedback. A central recurring question that underpins all these methods is; how do people develop awareness of their leadership?

Many management and leadership development programmes including those I have worked on use frameworks and models to educate people about leadership. It might be argued that it is easier to use proven frameworks to teach skills than to engage in the more complex process of developing critical reflection (Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003). Whether it is more effective is a different matter. The use of these frameworks might be related to the demand to deliver tangible results in leadership development. This echoes the reliance on key performance indicators in many organisations which, combined with a strong action orientation, can get in people’s way of slowing down and reflecting on their experiences (Daudelin, 1996; Gray, 2007). Hence there seems to be a conundrum for those in leadership roles, that in order to understand themselves they need to step back from the ‘busyness’ of daily life, filled with meetings, people, decisions,
problems, organisation – in short filled with a pre-occupation with the external world. Yet it is hard to find time to understand themselves on equally busy business school programmes that purport to develop leadership, but are filled with models and frameworks in order to deliver prescribed learning outcomes and return on investment. While frameworks and models can be useful, their over-use can imply that there is ‘a right way to do leadership’ and divert people’s attention away from understanding their own internal models.

During the last five years, based on anecdotal experience, in response to my asking about the expectations of participants on leadership development programs, the top two responses of over 200 people from international organisations are:

1. To understand myself
2. To learn about the strengths and weaknesses of my leadership.

These expectations are not about learning latest leadership models or networking (both often involved in programmes) but mirror scholars’ claims that leadership development is a question of personal development - “the process of becoming more aware of one’s self” (Hall, 2004 p.154). The expectations of twentieth century leaders resonate with the timeless inscription, ‘Know Thyself,’ on the Temple of Apollo at Delphi in the fourth century BC (Figure 1-2). It is as if despite all the theories of leadership, people know that they lead from who they are and therefore to enhance leadership they need to look inward at themselves and develop their self-knowledge. “Know Thyself”, declared to be leadership’s first commandment (Collingwood, 2001 p.8) in a special issue on leadership of Harvard Business Review, highlights the centrality of self-awareness in developing leaders. How leaders develop an understanding of their own leadership is the key focus for this study.
This admonition, “Know Thyself”, has been pivotal to encouraging people to develop self-awareness. The tools and techniques of many leadership programmes can be helpful in developing self-understanding but they can also be time-intensive and overly general in application. My experience shows that many participants particularly appreciate the coaching element of leadership programmes where they are able to set the agenda, discuss issues of importance and relevance to them and consider their identity, thoughts and practices as leaders. This is evident from programme evaluations and feedback in the business school I work as well as the increased demand for coaching as a pivotal part of leadership development.

The process of personal development has been central in my professional life both in the creation of experiences that develop others and in the commitment to developing myself. I have cultivated my personal development through a Masters in Human Resource Development at Lancaster University and the more therapeutic personal discovery through Jungian and Gestalt therapy. I have also trained in a broad spectrum of developmental approaches including: psychometric tools (MBTI, NEO, FIRO B, Hogan), psychologically oriented approaches like Transactional Analysis and Group Relations, and become a coach certified by the International Federation of Coaching. It was at a presentation at
the European Conference on Learning and Development, (Brussels, 2005) that I first experienced the respect and surprisingly rapid depth the ‘Clean Language’ (CL) approach offers. Subsequently I have trained as a CL facilitator.

Cassell et al. (2009) argue that researchers need more than skills and knowledge to create high quality research. They claim it is essential that researchers understand their own sense-making processes through “reflection, reflexivity and phronesis” (p.524). Reflection involves a purposeful interrogation of practice and reflexivity involves “becoming a self-conscious and self-questioning being” who can examine one’s taken-for-granted-assumptions (Cunliffe and Jun, 2005 p. 238). Furthermore, phronesis, from the Greek meaning practical wisdom, refers to the ability to discern how to respond flexibly in a specific context. Scholars claim reflective practice helps researchers understand how their epistemological and ontological perspectives affect the research process (Johnson and Duberley, 2003; Symon and Cassell, 2004). I would add the examination of assumptions and beliefs is not only essential for research practice but also for people to understand their ways of being in the world, which links with existential philosophy (Heidegger, 1962). Hunt claims that it is “essential to ‘do reflective practice’ in order to facilitate it” (2001 p.285), a view with which I fully concur. In order to facilitate leaders’ sensemaking of their experience in this study, it is imperative that I engage in my own reflective practice. It is not an imperative in the sense of something imposed, it is imperative in the sense of being vital as a cornerstone of a transformational experience. Through this PhD I have interrogated my often-fuzzy beliefs to come to a much more nuanced and precise understanding of how and why I believe something, which mirrors the learning of the leaders in this study.

When I started this PhD I was concerned to prove the relevance of my study by demonstrating how leadership development attracts significant resources and attention. Leadership development does indeed attract enormous attention from businesses (Lamoureux, 2007) and academics (Day et al., 2014) alike in terms of money spent, time invested and articles written. However, I am now drawn to viewing the relevance of this study through the ability to interrogate
assumptions and beliefs that underpin practice. This shift in perspective is indicative of the reflexive journey of this PhD.

### 1.5 Academic Context of the Research

I highlight here the academic context of the research and how this study aims to contribute to theory. It must be noted that there are several areas that impact this study – leadership, leader development, learning, authenticity, self-awareness and metaphor - therefore there is a need to be selective in reviewing these areas. Each of these key theoretical fields is a large domain of knowledge with multiple definitions, perspectives, theories and interpretations, all of which are keenly debated and contended. They each influence this research to varying degrees as explicated in the following two chapters. What follows is a synopsis of the key academic context of the study.

Central to this thesis is what and how leaders can learn about their own leadership, which foregrounds the centrality of self-awareness, meaning-making and the development of authentic ways of being. Developing self-awareness is a central component of authentic leadership theory (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Avolio et al., 2004; Gardner et al., 2005; George, 2003; Luthans and Avolio, 2003). There is no agreed definition of authentic leadership but there is consensus that self-knowledge and having a clear point of view are central to the construct. Shamir and Eilam (2005) define authentic leaders as original in the sense of being true to themselves with a developed self-concept and self-knowledge. Within authentic leadership, development is defined as growth of self-knowledge, gaining clarity of self-concept so that goals and behaviour can be consistent with a sense of self (Avolio and Gardner, 2005). Self-concept is the degree to which internal beliefs are defined and coherent (Campbell et al., 1996). Claiming that “people’s self-views reside at the centre of their psychological universe, providing the context for all other knowledge” Shamir and Eilam suggest that people are likely to rely on these internal models “to organize their experiences, predict future events, and guide behavior” (2005 p.398). Thus understanding these internal models is vital to developing a robust self-concept,
which can act as a compass to navigate through challenging situations.

Despite the importance of self-awareness to authentic leadership theory, literature concerning how it is actually developed remains in a formative stage, with scholars proposing a call to action (Gardner et al., 2005) and attention to life narratives (Shamir and Eilam, 2005). This study aims to contribute to the academic discourse about how leaders can develop their authentic leadership through attending to their own frames of reference. This research therefore, by definition, pays attention to leaders’ own frames of reference and also their tacit understandings of leadership referred to as ‘implicit leadership theories’ (Bresnen, 1995; Schyns et al., 2011; Schyns and Schilling, 2011; Shondrick et al., 2010). Implicit leadership theories are the everyday ways that people make sense of leadership, which Bresnan suggests may “be expressed in the form of metaphors” (1995 p.509). Linking implicit leadership theories, metaphor and leader development responds to a concern in the literature that leaders may not be aware how their implicit assumptions affect their behaviour (Hackman and Wageman, 2007). This link advances understanding about intra-personal approaches to leader development. Using CL as an innovative method to facilitate the surfacing and exploration of implicit leadership theories and naturally occurring metaphors and as a way to bracket my own assumptions, the study aims to find out what leaders learn by attending to their own frames of reference without interference from external frames or models. This study uses Kegan’s (1982) constructive-developmental approach to learning which is a stage theory of adult development that focuses on how people make meaning to understand what leaders learn by attending to their inner world.

1.6 Outline of Thesis

Chapter One has provided an overview of the study along with the research question, research objectives, the research setting, the nature of the study, my practitioner background that provides the motivation for this research and the academic context of the study.
Chapter Two highlights the contested nature of leadership and provides a critical review of authentic leadership theory. The chapter critically reviews the concept of authenticity including its philosophical and existential foundations, which are important for developing self-awareness. Chapter Two also reviews critical questions in leadership development including the scope and nature of development and how learning occurs. It concludes with Kegan's constructive-developmental approach to meaning-making as a useful approach to developing authenticity in leaders (Kegan, 1982; 1994; 2009).

Chapter Three reviews metaphor and its centrality in how people make meaning. A critical review of conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) provides the conceptual foundation for understanding the importance of metaphor for meaning-making. This is complemented by a description of the essential properties of metaphor. Metaphor's role in organisational research is reviewed to situate the elicited, contextual and multi-modal approach to metaphor adopted in this study. The chapter describes Clean Language and reviews how it can be used to elicit naturally occurring metaphors. It concludes by describing the relationship between metaphor and mental models, which is central to making meaning.

Chapter Four reviews the research philosophy and methodological foundations for this study including its ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions. It details decisions about research approach, strategy, sampling, data collection and analysis, and ethics using the “research onion” (Saunders et al., 2016 p.128).

Chapter Five presents an analysis of the data pertaining to leaders’ metaphors of leadership that were elicited in the first phase of interviews. The chapter details the process for arriving at the ‘essence’ of participants’ leadership metaphors. Furthermore key metaphors across the ‘Essences’ are presented.

Chapter Six presents an analysis of the data about what leaders learned about their leadership and development that were collected in the second phase of
interviews. The data are described in leaders’ own words and illustrated with their drawings and are presented in four sections. One, how leaders experienced the process of exploration of their inner worlds, two, how leaders became aware of their leadership, three, what leaders learnt about their leadership and four, what leaders learnt about their development.

Chapter Seven discusses seven contributions of the study and makes recommendations for theory and practice. The findings show how participants experienced the process of exploration and how they became aware through realisations, reminders and recognition. The findings discuss how leaders make meaning through surfacing and exploring their metaphors and furthermore how they gain self-confirmation, clarity and choice through this exploration. Leaders’ elicited metaphors offer diverse conceptualisations of leadership and their drawings provide complementary ways to reveal tacit understandings. A final contribution concerns the difference between metaphors of journey for development and metaphors of growth for maturation, which has implications for authentic leadership development.

Chapter Eight concludes the thesis with a summary of the research. It explains limitations of the study and suggests areas for future research. Apposite for a study concerned with what can be learned through exploring the inner world, the chapter closes with some personal reflections and metaphors.
2 Leadership and its Development

The aim of this chapter is to situate this study in authentic leadership theory with specific attention to the development of self-awareness in leaders through the intra-personal process of reflection on inner models and metaphors. The chapter emphasises the contested nature of leadership and provides a concise review of the extant literature highlighting the key theories, influences and discourses. Adopting the perspective of authentic leadership for this study the chapter outlines the key tenets of authenticity, from its origins in ancient Greek philosophers to the modern day, and reviews the construct of authentic leadership and the importance of self-awareness. The chapter also reviews leadership development and with particular attention to authentic leader development. This study adopts a constructivist-developmental approach to learning as it emphasises the subjective construction of social reality, views experience as the source of meaning and reflection as “the method for changing mental frames” (Schwandt, 2005 p.180).

2.1 The Contested Nature of Leadership

Warren Bennis summarised the problem of defining leadership when he said it is “vast, amorphous, slippery and desperately important” (2007 p.2). In this short phrase he highlights some of the issues to be addressed in working in the domain of leadership. What to focus on given that it is such a vast topic? How to define it when it is amorphous? Why is it so slippery? Yet as Bennis (2007) states, it is widely considered a “desperately important” subject and thus it attracts much attention. Nevertheless, leadership remains elusive to define and is frequently polarised – either demonised or idealised. It is contested in research literature and amongst practising leaders alike.

Definitions of leadership are situated within a discourse which is a socially constructed approach to understanding and framing situations, “often so familiar as to be unremarkable” (Mabey, 2012 p.2). Discourse shapes how we define reality, privileging some aspects as ‘truth’ and marginalising others (Foucault,
hence discourse is vitally important as it operates as an “interpretive repertoire” favouring some perspectives and discounting others (Fairhurst, 2009 p.10). Due to their familiarity, discourses are often taken for granted, hence there have been calls for greater reflexivity concerning epistemological assumptions (Cunliffe, 2003). Following Alvesson and Deetz’s (2000) identification of four research discourses; the functionalist, the interpretive, the dialogic and the critical, Mabey (2012) has considered how these different discourses define leadership and development.

Based on Mabey's framework I situate my study in the interpretive discourse because it is primarily concerned with a socially constructed view of leadership emphasising its contextual nature, the importance of tacit knowledge and the embodied experiences of leadership. Development in this discourse occurs through sensemaking and attention to the role of symbols and meaning. It is the most appropriate discourse within which to frame and answer my research question.

Discourses of leadership entail numerous questions, including whether leaders are born or made, whether leadership theories are normative or situational, the different levels at which leadership is studied, when and in what contexts leadership is important and indeed how the construct of leadership is constructed (Avolio et al., 2009; 2009; Grint, 2005; 2010; Mabey, 2012; Muczyk and Adler, 2002; Yammarino and Dansereau, 2005). These questions are fundamental to understanding leadership hence I examine them in the following sections to contextualise the study and to make clear my assumptions.

2.1.1 Are Leaders Born or Made?

The perennial question of whether leaders are born or made has affected the study, practice and development of leadership for years and draws on a larger debate in society about the role of nature and nurture which pervades the social and psychological sciences (Pinker, 2002; 2013). The notion that leaders are born was popularised by Carlyle (1841) leading to the ‘Great Man’ theory. This was refuted by Spencer (1896) who claimed that great men are the product of
their society. However, the myth of the Great Man continues to pervade research (Hoffman et al., 2011), popular press articles (Tselepy, 2015) and the implicit images of practising leaders. Tackling the question of why some people are such accomplished high performers Ericsson, Krampe and Tesch-Römer (1993) drew attention to the role of deliberate practice in the acquisition of expertise (See also Ericsson et al., 2006; Ericsson and Charness, 1994). Colvin popularised this stream of research saying those who practice deliberately in business, music and sport are able to “perceive more, to know more and to remember more than most people” (2010 p.84). In a similar vein, the popular science writer Malcolm Gladwell has popularised the notion that people need “ten thousand hours to achieve a level of mastery associated with being a world-class expert-in anything” (2008 p.40). This study adopts the assumptions of the expertise literature and suggests that leadership can be learned as a type of expertise, especially by people who are open and committed to developing their talents.

2.1.2 Leadership - Socially Constructed?

Within an interpretivist discourse, leadership is seen to be open to interpretation and shaped through the contexts and ways in which it is practised and socially constructed. There is an extensive literature on the social construction of leadership (Fairhurst and Grant, 2010; Grint, 2005; Grint and Jackson, 2010) stemming from disillusionment with many mainstream theories. Social constructionists view language as fundamental to constructing leadership (Fairhurst, 2009; Fairhurst and Connaughton, 2014; Fairhurst and Grant, 2010). Grint claims leadership is “an ensemble of arts” rather than a science, suggesting that it is “critically concerned with establishing and coordinating the relationship between four things: the who, the what, the how and the why” (2000 p.27). Despite the apparent simplicity of ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’, these four dimensions of leadership are fundamental – who adopts a leadership role, what they wish to achieve, how they wish to achieve it and why people would follow them which Grint (2000) explains by drawing on art metaphors. Who relates to the identity of a leader, which is constructed from their history and “is rooted in the philosopher’s stone not the scientist’s microscope” (Grint, 2000 p.27). This compares identity to the legendary elixir of life that was viewed as a magnum
opus of creation. What relates to the organisation’s strategic vision, which is “the equivalent of fine art not physics” for the creation of a vision involves imagination (Grint, 2000 p.28). How depicts tactics, the ways in which organisations achieve their strategic vision, which are more akin to “martial arts than mathematics” able to react with speed to unpredictable outcomes. Why relates to persuasive communication, “the theatre of rhetorical skill... and of inducing the audience to believe in the world you paint with words and props” (2000 p.28).

Grint’s (2000) conceptualisation of leadership as socially contested as encompassing ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ is considered “exemplary” (Fairhurst, 2011 p.498) and provides a useful frame for this study as it is simple but comprehensive, both conceptualising leadership in broad terms whilst giving scope for different interpretations depending on the context. This fits the purpose of this study, which takes a socially constructed perspective and aims to find out how practising leaders conceptualise leadership. Socially constructed approaches including Grint (2000; 2005) and Fairhurst (2011; 2014; 2010; 1996) underscore the role of symbolic language, which resonates with the attention to metaphor taken in this study.

2.1.3 Leadership Theories - Normative or Situational?

Leadership is practised in diverse settings, private and public organisations, in small enterprises and large multinationals as well as in educational, charitable and religious organisations worldwide. Over one hundred years of academic research have yielded more than 200 definitions of leadership, according to Rost’s (1991) review of the period between 1900-1990, 65 classification schemes for leadership behaviour (Fleishman et al., 1991) and several major theories of leadership (Norton, 2013). Yet, despite the burgeoning of the field and the extensive literature about leadership (Day and Antonakis, 2012), it is rife with disagreement about its definition (Kelly, 2008; Kelly, 2014) and its practice.

When leadership is viewed, as in this study, as socially constructed, contextually situated and open to social influence it is impossible to “arrive at universal,
replicable leadership theories” (Mabey, 2012 p.4). This implies that leadership is understood through a situational approach that aims to understand the actors embedded in their natural environments. This is different from normative theories that are situated in the functionalist discourse in Mabey’s (2012) scheme that establish standards and norms to be achieved and emphasise performance. Until the development of the situational model of leadership (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969) leadership theories and research tended to be normative. This normative and functionalist bias is still evident in much of the way leadership is ‘taught’ in business schools, using frameworks and psychometrics to measure competencies. In their review of the current state and future direction of leadership studies Avolio et al. (2009 p.441) call for “a more holistic view of leadership” that examines the context and interaction between leaders and followers to expand the field of research. Questioning how leadership is conceptualised, either as a practice with universal norms or as a subjective endeavour with a symbolic nature, opens alternate discourses about leadership (Kelly, 2014). This study takes a situational perspective, aiming to understand how practising leaders conceptualise their own frameworks of leadership, through their implicit everyday theories of leadership rather than adopting a universal framework or theory.

2.1.4 Leadership at which Level of Analysis?

The multiple levels of analysis at which leadership can be practised or developed add to its contested nature. These levels of analysis include individual, interpersonal, group, organisational, cross-cultural and even transpersonal. These levels have been conceptualised in various ways: the three levels of individual, team and organization (Avolio and Bass, 1999 p.211); the four domains of; “(1) intrapersonal skills, (2) interpersonal skills, (3) leadership skills, and (4) business skills” (Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003 p.78); and the five phenomena of “the intra-psychic, the behavioural, the interpersonal, the organizational, and the environmental” (Conger, 1998 p.109). Whilst there is no defining terminology of the levels of analysis there is broad agreement that gaining clarity about levels of analysis informs how leadership is conceptualised, practised and developed (Yammarino and Dansereau, 2011). For example,
identifying questions and methods relevant to levels of analysis can improve conceptual clarity in research (Day and Harrison, 2007; Yammarino et al., 2005). Furthermore, Yammarino and Dansereau (2011) claim that attention to levels of analysis helps develop a mature discipline by developing ideas that are well conceptualised and employ the most appropriate method for the level of analysis studied. It is beyond the scope of this study to review all levels of analysis but it is important to note that the levels are inter-related and build on one another in a natural hierarchy.

I adopt Hogan and Warrenfeltz’s (2003) domain model (intrapersonal, interpersonal, leadership and business) for this study as it focuses explicitly on leadership development. They claim that “the four domains form a natural, overlapping developmental sequence, with the later skills depending on the appropriate development of the earlier skills” and that these domains “define the content for management education” (2003 p.78). They emphasise that the intrapersonal level might be harder to develop but is foundational for other leadership skills. Furthermore, their distinction between an inner and outer perspective is useful. The inner perspective is related to identity or a person’s self-view, self-knowledge and evaluation. The outer perspective concerns other people’s views and evaluations. Typically the outer perspective gets significant attention in business school programs with the use of 360 feedback instruments (Atwater et al., 2007; Conger and Toegel, 2003; Drew, 2009; Hezlett, 2008; Kets de Vries et al., 2007; Nowack, 2009; Nowack and Mashihi, 2012). As noted in relation the practitioner context in Chapter One, practicing leaders are hungry to understand their ‘inner’ perspective. In summary the Hogan and Warrenfeltz (2003) domain model provides a useful framework for this study with its heuristic for the content of leadership development, the arguments about how people “conceptualize reality” and the need for individualised development (2003 p.83). I return to this model in the section on leadership development.

As this study is concerned with how leaders can make sense of their leadership and development through an exploration of their inner worlds through metaphor it is situated at the intrapersonal level of analysis (Marshak et al.,
2000). This level relates to what goes on within the individual leader and provides insight into the assumptions, thoughts, behaviours and skills of an individual leader. Criticism levelled at the individual level of analysis is that it does not account for the influence that leaders have on the people within their environment and that it over-exaggerates the importance of the leader and downplays the influence of followers giving rise to terms such as the ‘romance of the leader’ (Meindl et al., 1985). However this level of analysis is useful for uncovering the mental models and assumptions upon which people operate (Bolman and Deal, 1991) hence appropriate for answering my research question.

2.1.5 Leadership Research - Adding to the Complexity?

A final factor discussed in this thesis that contributes to the contested nature of leadership is the way in which it is researched. Much leadership research has followed a positivist approach based on an adherence to traditional investigation that privileges objectivity and quantification. The “philosophical legacy” (Johnson et al., 2007 p.33) that equates quantification with legitimate research tends to favour methodological approaches and standards based on the Cartesian ideal of certainty (Schwandt, 1996) and “large samples to uncover “truths”” (Conger, 1998 p.116). However, disillusioned with a scientific approach that did not sufficiently address people, organisations and a socially constructed view of reality, qualitative research has proliferated in the last thirty years. Prasad and Prasad define qualitative research as an “omnibus term” that in its most simple definition is non-quantitative research (2002 p.6). They stress however that qualitative research is extremely diverse encompassing many approaches including inter alia; critical theory (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000), discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995), grounded theory (Glaser and Straus, 1967) and phenomenology (Giorgi, 1997; Moustakas, 1994). As qualitative research covers such a multitude of philosophical and methodological approaches, it has no single agreed meaning. It has been described as understanding everyday experience, exploratory to investigate little understood areas, a way to access the hidden symbolic aspects of management or even in its most basic terms of what it is not, i.e. not quantitative (Johnson et al., 2007). The
ways in which research is undertaken is based on epistemological and ontological foundations (Saunders et al., 2016). These have implications for the framing of research, the role of the researcher, the methodology chosen and how the research is legitimised. As the field of leadership studies draws on various disciplines including education, psychology, philosophy and sociology, methods from these disciplines influence and converge in leadership research, leading to a complex, relatively unbounded field with divergent claims about quality research. This all adds to the complexity and contested nature of leadership studies. It also makes it imperative for researchers to make clear their philosophical positions (Cassell et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2006; Johnson et al., 2007; Saunders et al., 2016; Symon and Cassell, 2012). Chapter Four is dedicated to articulating my epistemological and ontological positions and the research methodology for this qualitative study.

2.1.6 Summary of the Contested Nature of Leadership

This section has highlighted some of the key debates that make leadership a contested domain - debates about nature-nurture, social constructionism, normative or contextual theories, levels of analysis, and approaches to leadership research. Each of these areas is keenly debated with extensive literatures, hence the objective in this section has been to provide a brief outline of how these debates contribute to the contested nature of the study of leadership. This section has articulated the assumptions that underpin the present study, some of which I shall elucidate further, such as the role of symbols and metaphor in Chapter Three and research choices and methodology in Chapter Four. I view leadership through a socially constructed lens, as symbolically rich, locally situated and possible to develop through attention to the relevant level of analysis. Situated at the intrapersonal level this study explores the individual conceptualisation and meaning of leadership of thirty practising leaders through attention to their experience and metaphors of leadership. This pays attention to leaders’ symbolic language, which is central to a social constructionist frame. Viewing leadership as a social construction, and therefore locally situated, this study does not adhere to normative theories but frames the research question with reference to authentic leadership theory as
this foregrounds an intrapersonal approach and the development of self-awareness. In order to situate authentic leadership theory within the leadership literature I now provide a brief, selective critique of leadership research.

2.2 Evolution of Leadership Theories

“The concept of leadership remains largely elusive and enigmatic.”

Meindl and Long (1990 p.161)

It has been said that there are “almost as many definitions of leadership as there are people who have attempted to define the concept” (Stodgill, 1974 p.7) and with an ever-increasing fascination with leadership the debate shows no sign of slowing down. Notable amongst the legion books are those written by Northouse (2016), Bryman, Collinson, Grint, Jackson and Uhl-Bien (2011), and Day and Antonakis (2012) which provide comprehensive attempts to cover key theories, trends and the evolution of leadership from an academic perspective. Day and Harrison ask whether leadership can be defined in a “single, concrete and widely accepted view of the term” (2007 p.360) which is consistent with a socially constructed perspective.

Table 2-1 presents a selective overview of key leadership theories, their focus, assumptions, contribution and critique to understand the context of leadership research and the antecedents and influences on authentic leadership theory that underpins this study. The table is necessarily selective in outlining theories that have had the most impact on the development of theory and practice. As there is no commonly agreed classification of leadership thought, a historical approach is adopted based on an approximate time-frame according to dates of key publications to illustrate the progression from theory to theory. The time periods are, however, somewhat arbitrary as there is no consensus about chronology.

Leadership theory has developed through different eras, assumptions and approaches viewing leadership as: a birth-right of great men (Carlyle, 1841), a set of characteristics or traits (Cattell, 1965), a set of skills or behaviours (Blake
and Mouton, 1964), as dependent on the needs of the situation (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969) and as a process (Uhl-Bien, 2006) or relationship (Cunliffe and Eriksen, 2011). This context is important for understanding the evolution of theory from the biographies of great men, for whom leadership was seen as innate and unquestioned through to a more relational, contextualised endeavour in which many factors play a role – the situation, relationships and ethics. Shared influence, the creation of positive environments in which task and relationships are nurtured and a move towards ethical leadership nudge towards the development of authentic leadership theory (Avolio et al., 2004). Some scholars claim that much leadership theory repeats and reframes previous themes, although Yukl notes that “symbolic processes and management of meaning” warrants further study (1989 p.279).

In tandem with the evolution of leadership theory, leadership research has also evolved by moving from its positivist and quantitative origins to diverse qualitative methods (Bryman, 2004). This has enabled more wide-ranging studies to account for the complexity of leadership and the expansion of methodologies such that, “leadership research comes across as a more confident, self-assured and fertile field” (Bryman, 2004 p.731). There is also an increased recognition that theory is based on researchers’ “subjective efforts to interpret ambiguous events in a meaningful way” rather than “precise descriptions” (Yukl, 1989 p.279), which helps to legitimise subjective perspectives.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Era</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Assumptions</th>
<th>Contributions</th>
<th>Critique</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Man 19th Century</td>
<td>Biographies of heroes</td>
<td>Leaders are born, not made. The gifted few are able to lead</td>
<td>Learning through example and biography</td>
<td>Fails to acknowledge role of society/context Leaders are primarily male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trait 1930’s</td>
<td>Who makes it to the top? What are their characteristics?</td>
<td>Leadership is a hierarchical individual concept</td>
<td>Intuitive appeal Strong research base Provides some benchmarks</td>
<td>No definitive list Fails to take situation into account Not useful for development as traits are considered inherent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural or Style 1950’s onward</td>
<td>Identify the leaders and develop them.</td>
<td>Leadership is about identifying behaviours Leadership behaviour can be taught</td>
<td>Task and relationship dimensions are both important Pragmatic appeal</td>
<td>No style linked to results Research is inconclusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingency 1960’s onwards</td>
<td>Fit the leader to the context</td>
<td>Leadership is an interaction between leader and context</td>
<td>Acknowledges the importance of context &amp; followers</td>
<td>Fails to explain how to rectify a mismatch between a leader and context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational 1970’s onward</td>
<td>Diagnose the situation and adapt leadership style</td>
<td>Leader can adapt style to situation</td>
<td>Practical, easy to understand Guidelines for leaders Reminder that different approaches required</td>
<td>Lack of research justification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) 1975</td>
<td>Dyadic relationships between leader and individual followers</td>
<td>Leadership consists of the relationships between a leader and the individuals in their team.</td>
<td>Intuitively makes sense Highlights the importance of interpersonal relationship Treats followers as individuals Solid research base</td>
<td>In and out groups deemed to be unfair Unclear how people get into in-group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational 1980’s onwards</td>
<td>Leadership based on proactive engagement</td>
<td>People will follow someone who inspires them</td>
<td>Significant research attention Intuitive appeal Emphasis on followers’ role &amp; morals</td>
<td>Lack of conceptual clarity Often confused with charismatic leadership Can be seen as elitist &amp; heroic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic 2005 onwards</td>
<td>Leadership has to have intrapersonal meaning, is developmental &amp; relational</td>
<td>Leadership needs to be trustworthy &amp; morally oriented Leaders have to make their own meaning</td>
<td>Meets expressed desire for trustworthy leadership Developed from practice &amp; theory Provides agenda for development</td>
<td>Theory still under development Debate about positive focus of theory Lack of guidelines for creating self-awareness despite its centrality to theory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Whilst leadership is practised and researched in diverse ways, conceptual differences about it remain as encapsulated in Bennis and Nanus remark that there is no consensus either in practice or in the literature “about the essence of leadership, or the means by which it can be identified, achieved or measured” (1985 p.2). This study aims to identify the essence of leadership of 30 practising leaders and views leadership as based in authenticity – a fidelity to one’s own conceptualisations of leadership. Hence the study is based in the frame of authentic leadership, which is now reviewed.

2.3 Review of Authentic Leadership Theory

The theoretical construct of authentic leadership is still in a formative stage of development and there is work to be done to clarify the definition of the concept, its dimensions and the level of analysis at which it operates. A small but committed group of researchers have developed the theory and research since 2003 has been productive and broad in scope. Examples of its scope include attention to developing the moral component (May et al., 2003) and the influence of authentic leadership on eudemonic well-being (Illies et al., 2005). A search for ‘Authentic leadership’ on EBSCOHost, Psychology and Behavioural Sciences Collection and PsychINFO returned 616 peer-reviewed articles between 2003 and June, 2017. Authentic leadership (Luthans and Avolio, 2003), authentic leaders (Avolio et al., 2004), and authentic leadership development (Avolio and Gardner, 2005) have been defined and differentiated in an attempt to create conceptual clarity and pay attention to levels of analysis from early stages of theory development. Avolio and Gardner (2005) claim that in contrast to many previous leadership theories that were conceptualised without attention to development, authentic leadership theory deliberately incorporates development as part of its theorisation. This developmental perspective emphasises the importance of self-awareness as core to developing authenticity (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Chan et al., 2005; Sparrowe, 2005). Authenticity is conceptualised in authentic leadership theory from its psychological and philosophical foundations dating back to Socrates’ aphorism “Know Thyself”. This study views authenticity through the lens of existential philosophy,
combined with Kernis and Goldman’s (2006) seminal work and Algera and Lips-Wiersma’s (2012) radical authenticity to emphasise the centrality of self-awareness and meaning-making. This section reviews the development and definitions of authentic leadership before explicating the concepts of authenticity and self-awareness which are central to authentic leadership theory and this study.

Avolio et al.’s (2004) definition of authentic leaders acting in accordance with their convictions provides a useful starting point for the development of authentic leaders. Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans and May (2004) suggest that understanding how to develop authentic leaders is a critical question. They recommend attention to a leader’s life history and experiences of leadership, which they suggest may contain “antecedents to authentic leadership” (p. 815). Drawing on Luthans and Avolio’s (2003) suggestion that life is the best way to develop authentic leadership, this study picks up the challenge to identify what develops in authentic leader development and how authentic leaders can develop through attention to their own implicit leadership theories and experiences of leadership.

Authentic leadership theory developed in response to the perceived deficiencies of previous theories as outlined in Table 2-1, the loss of confidence in leadership, a questioning of its ethics and an incorporation of positive organisational scholarship (Cameron et al., 2003). These concerns and the emphasis on positive elements of leadership suggest a social construction of leadership as broken, in need of moral guidance and a positive impulse. These are important influences on the development of authentic leadership that are explicated in order to indicate the antecedents and context for authentic leadership. Luthans and Avolio (2003) claim that authentic leadership has developed as a response to the loss of confidence in leadership at all levels and all types of organization. Examples of dishonesty, corruption, bribery and plain lack of ethics pervade all walks of life including institutions that were erstwhile considered trustworthy such as sports, church and business. When combined with wars and conflicts around the world and political maelstrom, the dark side of leadership is often lamentably visible and it is easy to see why a loss of confidence is rife (See:
The loss of confidence in leadership combined with the challenging environment of an unstable and fragmented world has stimulated discussions about the “right and wrong of leadership, rather than just the utilitarian effectiveness of organizational leadership” (Parry and Bryman, 2006 p.456). Accordingly, authentic leadership pays particular attention to a moral or ethical dimension by focusing on the greater common good for society, which starts with an understanding of one’s own values. Practitioners such as Medtronic ex-CEO, Bill George (George, 2003) emphasise the need to lead from a sense of authenticity and stress that an inner moral compass helps leaders work towards a purpose with a clear sense of values about the right thing to do for the greater good. Many scholars concur that ethics are a vital component in authentic leadership (Jackson, 2005). Moreover, Novicevic, Harvey, Buckley, Brown and Evans (2006) emphasise that authentic leadership is particularly significant in times of change as conflicting social norms present executives with ethical dilemmas and special challenges to being authentic.

The claim that authentic leadership has “renewed focus on restoring confidence, hope, and optimism” (Avolio and Gardner, 2005 p.5) is in part a response to a loss of confidence in leadership and in part an embrace of positive organisational scholarship. Cameron, Dutton and Quinn (2003) assert positive organisational scholarship is not a single theory but a “fresh lens” (p.10) that emphasises a scholarly understanding of positive potential with an emphasis on “positive outcomes, processes and attributes” (p.4), which had been under-represented in scholarly literature. Positive organisational scholarship was influenced by the fresh lens that Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) introduced to psychology when they drew attention to the scant knowledge that psychologists had about “what makes life worth living” lamenting psychology’s nearly exclusive focus on a “disease model” of human beings that concentrated on suffering and healing damage (2000 p.5). The emergence of positive psychology at the start of the millennium and of positive organisational scholarship shortly thereafter informed the development of authentic leadership which aims to respond to society’s perceived need for hope and confidence. The strong influence of
positive organisational scholarship can be seen in the early conceptualisations of authentic leadership (Luthans and Avolio, 2003), authentic leaders as “confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and of high moral character” (Avolio et al., 2004 p.4) and authentic leadership development (Avolio and Gardner, 2005).

2.3.1 Critique of Authentic Leadership Theory

Some scholars (Shamir and Eilam, 2005; Sparrowe, 2005) have criticised the overly positive nature of early definitions of authentic leadership. Furthermore, Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012) claim that authentic leadership tends to adopt a normative approach to creating positive environments and authenticity, which leaves little room for acknowledgement or acceptance of inauthentic behaviours. Apprehension that the authentic leadership construct contains “elements from diverse domains - traits, states behaviours, contexts and attributions” (Cooper et al., 2005 p.478), that makes it difficult to operationalize or measure have led to refinements of the theory.

Concerned that authentic leadership is in danger of becoming a technique focused on results but forgetting its existential origins, Algera and Lips-Wiersma claim that the enthusiasm and haste to operationalize authentic leadership has overlooked a depth “understanding of the ontological roots of authenticity” (2012 p.118). This is not a trivial matter as “the concept of authenticity goes to the heart of what it is to be human” which they claim is a pre-requisite to understand authentic leadership (2012 p.118). Agreeing with Algera and Lips-Wiersma’s concern, I review the philosophical and psychological origins of authenticity, which are central to this study and provide the foundations for a modern view of authenticity. These stress self-awareness and the difficulty of becoming authentic due to the pull of society to conform to external norms (Heidegger, 1962). Whilst philosophy might seem removed from concerns about leadership and its development, Chia and Morgan stress that philosophising is critical for management education as it enables people to become sensitive to their own “culturally–based (and often idiosyncratic) ways of ordering the world”(1996 p.58). Hence the following section outlines the philosophical origins of authenticity that underpins authentic leadership theory.
2.4 Philosophical Perspectives of Authenticity

Authenticity can be traced back to Greek philosophers and the words immortalised above the Temple of Delphi, “Know Thyself” (See Figure 1.2 in Chapter One). Socrates’ famous aphorism, “the unexamined life is not worth living” epitomises the drive to question and self-reflect and has profoundly influenced philosophy, psychology and leadership development. Aristotle emphasised the importance of actions connected to a higher good to guide a purposeful life which enables people to organise their lives with a clear purpose “like archers with a target to aim at” (Irwin, 2003 p.1094a18-22). This, he claims generates a sense of integration and ‘eudaimonia’ or well-being which are concepts reflected in current literature about the creation of positive environments (Agote et al., 2016). Aristotle’s connection of self-knowledge and a purposeful life is still evident in modern conceptualisations of authenticity (Kernis and Goldman, 2006).

In the 1600’s Rene Descartes, famous dictum “Cogito, ergo sum” or “I think, therefore I am” emphasised the importance of mental processes and subjectivity to understanding. His declaration was a significant break with Greek epistemology and emphasised the importance of the mind to understand experience. This has significant implications for authenticity as Kernis and Goldman claim that by “mentally scrutinizing their consciousness, people may attain clarity and distinctiveness in their idea of things, and thereby grasp their very essence” (2006 p.286).

In the 16th century it became largely accepted that an outer self was different from an inner self (Trilling, 1972) with differences between the “misleading appearances” of the outer self contrasted with the “underlying realities” of the inner self (Baumeister, 1987 p.165). This differentiation of selves underscored the complexity of authenticity, gave rise to the concept of authentic and false-self behaviours and emphasised the influence of societal norms and cultural contexts in determining perceptions of authenticity (Trilling, 1972). This tension between an individual and the social structure in which they are embedded is described
as “the interface of personal inclinations and social obligations ... that form the stage on which authenticity is portrayed” (Kernis and Goldman, 2006 p.287). This interface between self and society is a pivotal concern of existential philosophers and also for leaders who have many social obligations as a result of their multi-dimensional roles.

Continuing thinking about this tension between the individual and society, David Hume claimed that morality needed to distinguish between natural virtues - behaviours that people undertake to promote individual and social well-being and artificial virtues - defined by conformity to social conventions and cultural norms (Wilson, 2003). Furthermore, Hume asserted that developing an authentic self requires interaction between individuals and others, which is reflected in modern conceptualisations of authenticity (Erickson, 1995; Ilies et al., 2005; Luthans and Avolio, 2003; Sparrowe, 2005).

These ideas from philosophy have been foundational to existential and modern conceptualisations of authenticity, which emphasise subjectivity, societal constraints on becoming authentic and the need for relationship (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012; Erickson, 1995; Kernis, 2003; Novicevic et al., 2006).

2.4.1 Existential Authenticity

The existential view of authenticity is important for this study, not only because it lays the foundations for modern understandings of authenticity but also because it emphasises that self-reflection is a choice that requires courage. Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, often considered the first of the existential philosophers as well as a major influence on modern psychology, stressed the importance of subjectivity and people's own essential knowing in making sense of human existence. He protested against the objectivity of science and claimed that people make sense of their lives subjectively and yet doing so is anxiety provoking. Claiming that institutions tend to create the crowd that offers a sense of safety through adherence to societal norms yet alienates people from themselves, Kierkegaard highlighted the role of existential angst as people become themselves. He considered angst as the “dizziness of freedom” (1946
p.61) which could only be resolved through consciously choosing to take responsibility for one's life and choices. Effectively people have to let go of the safety of belonging to the crowd with its implicit or explicit rules of behaviour and have faith in themselves in order to make their own choices. Kierkegaard framed this as a 'leap of faith', which he contended enabled people to follow their "innermost" selves. This has an important implication for authenticity as it suggests that it is not something that can be learned from external sources, but has to be cultivated through increasing attention to the self. This has significant implications for how authentic leaders are developed. For example, how much they are 'fed' with external models and how much they are encouraged to develop self-awareness? These are very different processes and whilst it might be easier to impart models, Kierkegaard's conceptualisation of angst raises the question of how securely leaders are 'held' when they take the risk to become themselves? Some scholars have started to address this question by calling attention to creating, a "holding environment" (Winnicott, 1964) - a safe supportive space that provides affective containment. Holding environments enable leaders to engage in identity work (Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2010; Sinclair, 2011) and authentic becoming (Eriksen, 2012).

Nietzsche's nihilism, immortalised in his aphorism, "God is dead", took Kierkegaard's thinking further and highlighted that life has no purpose except for that which individuals imbue in it. By deconstructing taken-for-granted cultural constructions, Nietzsche claimed that social categories need to be evaluated from an individual perspective. This deconstruction of social categories is considered a precursor to social construction (Mallon, 2014). Both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard suggested that people's essence can only be understood in their own way of being, which means that subjectivity must be the starting point for understanding. This is crucial for this study that aims to examine how leaders think about leadership and what they can learn from attending to their own subjectivity.

Heidegger's (1962) focus on Dasein or being is central to the existential foundations of authenticity emphasising what it means to be true to oneself in
the world whilst dealing with all the external pressures. He moved from epistemological questions concerning knowledge to ontological questions about being by seeking to answer the question, “What is meant by being?” He asserted that knowledge of the world is informed by being in the world and interpreting it. His enquiries renewed interest in the metaphysical and ontology - the nature of Being that were associated with Aristotle (Moran, 2000). Heidegger considers an authentic self as fundamental to an understanding of authenticity, which he claims is being aware, free to make choices about how to be and live. He refers to this ability to choose as Dasein (or translated literally from the German - being there or existence). However, he claims authenticity is constrained by people being “thrown” into a world they did not make nor over which they have much control. Thus to be authentic people have to consciously consider the environment they have been thrown into and question it, which Heidegger refers to as resoluteness. When people do not make choices about how to live they risk loosing themselves in the enculturation of society. Heidegger claims that people thrown into society will be constrained by “Theyness”, living by prescribed norms and conformity to the environment, “tranquilized and understanding everything” (1962 p.222) but alienated from their own Being. He claims that authenticity cannot be imposed but has to come from within from owning and taking responsibility for the self. Not everyone wants to take this responsibility and some may seek the comfort of a prescribed life. This has an important implication for leaders who may find themselves thrown into a leadership role. Without questioning the situation or themselves they may be seduced into conforming to learned models of leadership and are unlikely to be authentic in a Heideggerian perspective.

Drawing on Heidegger’s work Sartre makes more explicit the psychological processes involved in authenticity and explicates the more unconscious aspects of self. This suggests that people are not aware of their internal world but can become so if their attention is drawn towards it, which is important for this study, which aims to direct leaders’ attention to their inner worlds through the use of CL facilitated interviews. He emphasises the need for courage to self-reflect and overcome the pull to self-deception, termed “bad faith”, which avoids
the responsibility for reflection or making choices by living a “pleasing untruth” (1943, p.89). The need for courage in becoming authentically oneself is well documented (Duarte, 2009; Kinsler, 2014; Terry, 1993; Tillich, 1952; Woodard, 2010). Courage is described not only as an ethical concern but primarily as an ontological concern by Tillich in his work on “The courage to Be” (1952). Courage to act according to one’s own beliefs and values is fundamental to many conceptualisations of modern authenticity (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012; Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Avolio et al., 2004; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

This section has discussed how philosophy has influenced conceptualisations of authenticity. For example the philosophical entreaty to examine one’s life and thoughts (Socrates), viewing authenticity as a relational endeavour (Hume) that requires courage to become oneself (Sartre) and resist societal norms (Heidegger, 1962). This is angst provoking, which provides a compelling reason to remain part of the crowd (Kierkegaard, 1946). Furthermore this review of the philosophical origins of authenticity is aligned with Chia and Morgan’s (1996 p.37) entreaty to penetrate the “veneer of managerial concepts” through philosophising which involves “deconstructing or ‘de-signing’ of hitherto self-evident social and management concepts and categories in search of deeper and bigger issues affecting the human condition” (p.41). They claim this deconstruction is important, otherwise concepts become platitudes that render “management education impotent” (p.37). These philosophical perspectives are fundamental to modern concepts of authenticity, which has informed much authentic leadership theory and is critically reviewed next.

2.4.2 Modern Authenticity

Unlike Heidegger (1962), Erickson (1995) does not view authenticity as an either or experience but suggests that people are more or less authentic. She suggests the question of authenticity is increasingly important as people now have a wide range of choices about how to lead their lives. This is largely due to the decline in influence of tightly defined roles and norms previously provided by family, class and religion. Quoting Gecas and Burke (1995 p.55) who view “the self as essentially interdependent (rather than independent), contextual and
relational (rather than autonomous), connected and permeable (rather than bounded)”, Erickson claims that the key question of authenticity is less about whether one is true to oneself but rather “true to self-in-context or true to self-in-relationship” (1995 p.139). This is an important definition of authenticity that emphasises the influence of others and the situation on an individual’s attempt to become authentic. This relational perspective is echoed in Terry’s idea of “self and world” (1993 p.141) and Novicevic et al.’s (2006) emphasis on the importance in making sense of the self psychologically (self-awareness, self-regulation and as identity work) and making sense of the self in interaction with the world philosophically (moral orientation and ethical choices).

Using Trilling’s description of authenticity as “understood to exist wholly by the laws of its own being” (1972 p.93), Erickson (1995) claims that authenticity is a system of self-values that provide criteria and standards for “presentations of self, social comparison and self-evaluations… that are simultaneously stable and yet open to change”. Noting that these self-values will be influenced by an individual’s culture, Erickson claims they provide a sense of self, through the “basic assumptions” people “make about “who” they are” (1995 p.133). These self-values provide a sense of meaning and congruence across roles and identities. Having a sense of self derived through their own meaning-making is particularly important for leaders who occupy multiple roles e.g. boss, subordinate, member of management team and expert as an anchor for their actions.

2.5 A Multi-Component Conceptualisation of Authenticity

Synthesising the origins of authenticity from a philosophical perspective, Kernis and Goldman (2006) claim it is a rich and complex construct that reflects five core themes. The first theme is self-understanding. In Socrates opinion this was core to a person’s existence whilst other philosophers e.g. Aristotle have emphasised how self-understanding organises people’s actions. Second, authenticity is reflected in behaviours that are established through self-awareness. For Aristotle this was the pursuit of the highest good, for Heidegger this was a project, for Kirkegaard this was essential knowledge and subjective truth and for Husserl it was the idea of intentionality. Third, authenticity
involves unbiased processing of information about the self, the relative absence of false-self behaviours and an acceptance of core aspects of the self. Fourth, authentic behaviour occurs in relation to others and not in isolation from the world. This idea was introduced by David Hume, elaborated by Heidegger’s notion of “Being-in-the-World” and is emphasised by Erickson's (1995) modern conceptualisation. Fifth, authenticity is “self-authoring a way of being” (Kernis and Goldman, 2006 p.293). This links with the Greek origins of the word authentic – ‘authenteo’, meaning “to have full power” suggesting that people are masters of their own worlds (Trilling, 1972). These five mental and behavioural themes describe how people form and maintain an authentic self.

From these five philosophical themes, Kernis and Goldman (2006) suggest a multi-component model of authenticity based on four inter-related but separate components: self-awareness, unbiased processing, behaviour and relational orientation. These four components of authenticity are summarised in Table 2-2. Their seminal work on authenticity has been largely referenced and widely accepted in authentic leadership theory (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Ilies et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008). For the purposes of this research I adopt their conceptualisation of authenticity due to its solid philosophical and psychological foundations and due to the explicit emphasis on self-awareness and self-authoring which are intrapersonal processes of development that are central to the purpose of this study. This study focuses specifically on the “most fundamental” component of Kernis and Goldman’s model - self-awareness, which they claim is “at the heart of behavioural and relational authenticity” (2006 p.302). As this study focuses specifically on how leaders develop self-understanding I complement Kernis and Goldman’s work with that of Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012) who foreground meaning-making in their conceptualisation of existential authenticity.
Table 2-2 Components of Authenticity
(Kernis and Goldman, 2006, p.302)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Awareness and knowledge of, and trust in, one’s motives, feelings, desires, and self-relevant cognitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Includes awareness of one’s strengths and weaknesses, dominant-recessive aspects of personality, powerful emotions, and their roles in behaviour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unbiased Processing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Minimal, if any, denial, distortion, exaggeration, or ignoring of private knowledge, internal experiences, and externally based self-evaluative information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Acting in ways congruent with one's values, preferences, and needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rather than acting merely to please others or attain rewards or avoid punishment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relational Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Value and make efforts to achieve openness and truthfulness in close relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Important for close others to see the real you, those deep, dark, or potentially shadowy self-aspects that are not routinely discussed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relational authenticity means being genuine and not “fake” in one's relationships with others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.6 Radical Authentic Leadership

Like Ford and Lawler (2007) and Ashman (2007), Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012) stress that the existential perspective can deepen understandings of leadership by emphasising its subjective nature and by focusing on the “everyday experiences of subjects, rather than on abstract generalizations common to leadership research” (p.121). Returning authenticity to its existential ontological roots Algera and Lips-Wiersma identify four overlapping themes of authentic existence as relevant to authentic leadership in what they term “radical authentic leadership” (2012 p.118). These themes are: that inauthenticity is inevitable, that authenticity requires creating one’s own meaning, that authenticity does not imply goal and value congruence and that authenticity is not inevitably ethical. These existential authenticity themes are explained and then summarised in Table 2-3 alongside authentic leadership perspectives.
2.6.1 **Inauthenticity is Inevitable**

The first theme is that inauthenticity is inevitable. The over-emphasis in authentic leadership on the creation of positive environments does not acknowledge the societal pull to inauthenticity delineated in existential philosophy (Heidegger, 1962; Kierkegaard, 1946; Sartre, 1956). Furthermore the idealistic expectations of leaders may result in leaders hiding their failure to live up to such expectations through presenting a false self. Rather than hide inauthenticity, Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012) advise acknowledging it as inevitable, and creating conditions for discussion.

2.6.2 **Authenticity Requires Creating One’s Own Meaning**

The second theme is that authenticity requires creating one’s own meaning. Authentic leadership theory emphasises leaders’ roles in creating meaning, which can devalue the ability of followers to create their own meaning or compel them to unquestioningly accept leaders. An existential perspective recognises that individuals might avoid the responsibility of creating their own meaning by handing it over to leaders. In previous work, Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009 p.508) stressed the importance for meaning to “emerge from the collective being of everyone in the organization regardless of formal power positions”. This implies that organizations need to legitimate discussions about meaning rather than taking leaders’ meaning for granted and that individuals need to take responsibility for voicing their own meaning. There is, however, little explanation in Algera and Lips Wiersma’s (2012) work about how individuals including leaders develop their own meaning.

2.6.3 **Authenticity Does Not Imply Goal and Value Congruence**

The third theme is that authenticity does not imply goal and value congruence. Authentic leadership theory does not recognise that goals and values are likely to diverge in organisations and it therefore idealises the extent to which harmony is feasible or useful. Furthermore authentic leadership theory fails to recognise how a desire for harmony might get in the way of authenticity. An existential view of authenticity entreats organizations not to settle for “a convenient story”
(Briskin, 1998 p.184) and to pause from “goal-directedness and busy-ness of everyday worklife” to reconsider goals (Goodpaster, 2000 p.196). This requires that everyone in an organization is prepared to be open to reflection, able and willing to resist the drive for short-term results in order to clarify and confirm goals and values.

2.6.4 Authenticity is Not Intrinsically Ethical

The fourth theme is that authenticity is not intrinsically ethical. Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012) and others (Liu et al., 2017; Price, 2003; Sendjaya et al., 2016) question the assumption that authenticity leads to moral behaviour. Faith in this assumption can lead to “false moral confidence in authentic leaders and followers” (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012 p.126). They stress that it is up to all members in an organisation to act in an ethical way, that organizations have a duty to create agreement on what constitutes ethical behaviour and that individuals have a duty to consider how their words and actions have ethical consequences. Drawing on Clegg, Kornberger and Rhodes (2007) they suggest that business ethics are considered as a “collective practice... on an on-going basis” (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012 p.128).

Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012) return authenticity to is existential roots and provide useful conceptual foundations for this study. Their perspective views authenticity as neither automatically probable nor ethical and it emphasises the tensions between self and society that are inherent in the search for self-awareness. The importance of this perspective and particularly the role of context in discursively co-constructing CEO narratives has recently been highlighted (Liu et al., 2017). Furthermore Algera and Lips-Wiersma’s meaning-making perspective is particularly useful to this study. They claim that existential authenticity impacts authentic leadership research and call for more qualitative longitudinal studies. This study responds to this call for empirical research from an existential perspective and does not view authenticity as an instrumental concept but as concerned with understanding how people make meaning when embedded in culture, society and organisations. The following section reviews
self-awareness, which is central to authentic leadership theory and fundamental to how people make meaning.

Table 2-3 Key Distinctions in the Assumptions Underpinning Existential Authenticity and Authentic Leadership Theory

(Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012, p.125)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existential Theme</th>
<th>Existential Perspective</th>
<th>Authentic Leadership Perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-authenticity is unavoidable</td>
<td>Leaders cannot be authentic in relation to all individuals and all situations at all times as the practical reality of life promotes inauthenticity over authenticity</td>
<td>Emphasis on the positive qualities of the authentic leader and authenticity is understood as a state-like or permanent quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity requires creating one's own meaning</td>
<td>Authenticity or meaning cannot be given or created by anyone else, each person is responsible for creating their own meaning in life Each human being is capable of creating their own meaning in life &amp; realising their potential</td>
<td>Authentic leader can influence authenticity and meaning in followers (here leader-follower power discrepancies and dependencies are not taken into account) Followers need both influence and guidance in finding values, beliefs and meaningful objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity does not imply goal and value congruence</td>
<td>Goals and values of organization, leader and follower are not necessarily aligned. Goal and value divergence is likely</td>
<td>Authenticity will lead to an alignment of goals and values (between organization, leader and followers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity is not intrinsically ethical</td>
<td>Authenticity does not necessarily have ethical implications for the character or objectives of the leader/follower</td>
<td>An authentic person is a more benevolent or moral person that the non-authentic person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.7 Self-Awareness

I consider self-awareness as the most essential element of authentic leadership for answering my research question, not only because of its lineage in the philosophical entreaty “Know thyself”, nor because it features in all definitions of authentic leadership but because it enables reflection about the self and facilitates self-evaluation of other intrapersonal processes (i.e. unbiased processing or behaviour). Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May and Walumbwa (2005 p.349) claim that “self-awareness is a core element” of developing authentic leaders. Furthermore Avolio and Gardner suggest that emerging authentic
leadership theory can “enhance the importance of self-awareness in explaining the highest forms and impact of leadership on sustained veritable performance” (2005 p.334).

Self-awareness is a process that can be nurtured and developed over time to “increase knowledge of and trust in one’s motives, feelings, desires, and self-relevant cognitions” (Kernis and Goldman, 2006 p.294). Nurturing this process can increase understanding of motivations and mental models that are frequently out of conscious awareness. Being aware and clear about mental models has two benefits: firstly awareness of values can help guide decision making (Kark and Dijk, 2007) and secondly awareness can guide managers about when to use different behaviours (Goleman, 2000). In effect self-awareness serves as a cue for leaders to understand their own patterns, typical behaviours, ways of interacting and likely reactions (Bem, 1972). Gardner et al. suggest that self-awareness can build a sense of self that provides clarity of who leaders are and what they stand for, which “provides a strong anchor for their decisions and actions” (2005 p.347). This sense of clarity through becoming aware of one's values and resources is essential to build and maintain a coherent sense of self and involves understanding how one makes meaning.

Following Perls (1951) Gestalt therapy, which emphasised the multi-faceted nature of people, Kernis and Goldman (2006) suggest that self-awareness enables people to become aware of potentially contradictory aspects of self rather than only acknowledging aspects that are consistent with their self-image. Some of these aspects might be more known, more valued, more regularly used and in the foreground, others might be unknown, disliked, repressed or denied and therefore unused. Furthermore, Kernis and Goldman claim as people function more authentically and are aware of different aspects of the self they “strive to integrate them into a cohesive self-structure” (2006 p.295). They make two claims that are important for this study. The first is that awareness is a component of healthy functioning exemplified in an integrated self that is “anchored in strong self-beliefs, self-confidence, self-acceptance, and agency rather than self-doubt, confusion, and conflict” (2006 p.296). This healthy functioning is important for leaders, who have to deal with ambiguous situations,
different stakeholders and diverse motivational, structural, technological and economic challenges. Having a robust healthy sense of self and inner conviction enables leaders to deal with ambiguity rather than becoming confused by it. The second claim is that a multi-faceted self enables people to confidently “call into play multiple, perhaps contradictory, self-aspects” (2006 p.295). This is important for leaders to be able to access and use different parts of themselves in different situations rather than adhere rigidly to an idealized sense of self.

Acknowledging that self-awareness is essential but preliminary to accepting, integrating and using self-knowledge, Kernis and Goldman suggest that an important issue is “how individuals attain self-knowledge in ways that foster integration and acceptance of self” (2006 p.296). They suggest that techniques that “deliberately attend... to aspects of self without evaluating their implications” are important to enable people to become aware of unknown, unexamined or ignored aspects of themselves. They also acknowledge that people might be uncomfortable with enhancing self-knowledge and stress that any process to do so should take this concern into account to enable self-knowledge to be accepted and integrated. Furthermore, they note that becoming aware of the discrepancy between an ideal and an actual self can be frustrating and create negative emotions. They are not alone in their claims, for example Trilling (1972 p.5) also refers to the “arduous effort” required to be authentic to self. These claims are vital for this study, which directs leaders' attention to their own models of leadership to foster self-knowledge. Taking account of Kernis and Goldman's suggestion about the potential for discomfort in developing self-awareness, CL facilitated interviews were chosen as a respectful and non-invasive method of directing leaders attention to their inner worlds.

There are a number of ways that have been suggested for developing self-awareness including consideration of a leader's life story (Shamir and Eilam, 2005) and finding one's purpose to guard against external pressures (George, 2003) but overall the authentic leadership literature is rather vague in describing how leaders become self-aware. For a theory centred on self-awareness it is surprising how little the literature explices how this can be developed. One example comes from Gardner et al.'s (2005) self-based model of
authentic leader development. Advocating the urgency of developing authentic leaders, they reference Kegan’s (1982) work to view self-awareness as “working to understand how one derives and makes meaning of the world” (Gardner et al., 2005 p.347). Their model suggests interpreting personal history and trigger events that shape identity as important antecedents of authenticity assuming they catalyse growth and development. Gardner et al. (2005) theorise that authenticity can be developed through attention to the core components of self-awareness: values, identity, emotions, motives/goals and self-regulation comprising internalised, balanced processing, relational transparency and authentic behaviour. The model is theoretical in nature, excellent in identifying relevant literature for each of the components but it does not explicate how leaders actually develop their self-awareness. Instead each section ends with a proposition, for example: “More as opposed to less authentic leaders possess higher levels of self-awareness including self-clarity and self-certainty” (2005 p.349).

In summary the authentic leadership literature provides a strong case for why leaders should become more self-aware (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Gardner et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008) but little practical guidance on how this can happen. This study aims to contribute to this gap through attention to leaders’ experience and descriptions of leadership through their naturally occurring metaphors.

2.8 Summary of Authentic Leadership, Authenticity and Self-Awareness

These sections have reviewed the emergence of authentic leadership as a theory that purports to meet a crisis in confidence in leadership and doubt about the ethical behaviour of leaders. Development of the theory initially reflected the strong influence of positive organisational scholarship (Cameron et al., 2003), which has subsequently been criticised as normative and idealistic (Ford and Harding, 2011; Liu et al., 2017). Scholars recognise the importance of relationships in developing authenticity (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012; Kernis and Goldman, 2006; Sparrowe, 2005) and most conceptualisations of authentic leadership emphasise the centrality of self-awareness and yet there is a relative
absence about how to develop this in practice. In haste to operationalize authentic leadership theory, scholars may have overlooked the importance of the existential foundations of authenticity (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012), which are critically reviewed in this thesis. Existential authenticity emphasises the courage for people to become themselves rather than remain enculturated by societal norms (Erickson, 1995; Heidegger, 1962; Kierkegaard, 1946). This study draws on Kernis and Goldman’s (2006) comprehensive multicomponent conceptualisation of authenticity due to its focus on the centrality of self-awareness and self-authoring and on Algera and Lips-Wiersma’s (2012) radical authentic leadership because of its strong connection to the existential origins of authenticity, its recognition that leaders are inevitably inauthentic and the centrality of meaning-making. The centrality of self-awareness has been explicated as a process that can be nurtured to clarify and develop trust in cognitions, motives and the self-concept. Self-awareness is a component of healthy functioning important for leaders dealing with ambiguous environments and is a preliminary step to using self-knowledge. I now focus on how leaders are developed, both in general and specifically in relation to authentic leadership.

2.9 Leadership Development

Identifying the scope and nature of leadership development is not straightforward. It is an expansive and fluid field based on leadership itself with its contested, socially constructed nature, encompassing questions such as: how people learn, what develops in development and what methods enhance leadership development. These questions are based on educational philosophies (Beatty et al., 2009), conceptualisations of the processes of learning and development (Sadler-Smith, 2006), adult learning theory (Baker et al., 2005; Knowles et al., 2015), and leadership development theory (Day, 2001; Day, 2012; Day et al., 2014; Day and Harrison, 2007). The remainder of this chapter covers the following issues:

1. The nature of authentic leader development.
2. How is authentic leadership developed?
3. What develops in development?
4. Constructive-developmental approach to authentic meaning-making.
5. Summary of authentic leadership development

2.10 The Nature of Authentic Leadership Development

A comprehensive review of leadership research is provided by Dinh et al. (2014) who confirm the breadth of leadership research and note the emergence of leadership development as a flourishing domain since the millennium. Indeed 2,811 articles have been published in peer-reviewed journals concerning leadership development between January 2000 and June 2017. However, in the same period only 35 articles were published about authentic leadership development (search updated June, 2017 in EBSCO Host for peer reviewed articles in English). The domain may be flourishing, but Day notes that as an applied field it is led by practitioners, comprises “a collection of disparate best practices” (2012 p.108) and that there is a gap between theory and practice. Indicative of practitioner interest is the purported USD$20bn to USD$40bn that organisations spend annually in the USA on leadership development (Lamoureux, 2007; O’Leonard and Krider, 2014). Day (2012) suggests that these significant sums signal that “organisations firmly believe that leadership can be developed” (p. 110). He supports this inference with data from three longitudinal studies that demonstrate that leadership does develop over time: AT&T Management Progress study, (Bray et al., 1974) a study in the US military (Atwater et al., 1999) and the Fullerton Longitudinal Study (Gottfried et al., 2011). Whilst data from these studies are useful in confirming that leadership can be developed, research concerning developmental trajectories (Day et al., 2009) shows that individuals develop in different ways over different routes which has important implications for how leadership learning occurs.

With the emergence of leadership development as a domain of practice and research, attempts to define its nature are relevant. Inherent in the term ‘leadership development’ is that both leadership and development are important. In their review of advances in leadership development Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm and McKee suggest there is a fantasy that if the “correct” leadership theory could just be identified, “then the development piece would
inevitably follow” (2014 p.64). This may go some way to explaining the vast number of leadership definitions and theories synthesised in Table 2-1. However as development is complex it is important to understand how development occurs rather than simply assuming it will follow a clear definition of leadership. Day suggests that leadership development is an inclusive term for a large domain but that it is useful to differentiate between leader development which focuses on developing the capacities of individual leaders and leadership development which focuses on “the expansion of an organisation’s capacity to enact basic leadership tasks” (2012 p.109). This study focuses particularly on individual leader development but, like Day, it uses the more encompassing term of leadership development to discuss the field in general and theories of learning. It could be assumed that the content of what gets developed will be based on conceptualisations of leadership but it is also important to pay attention to the process of how development happens. The latter is influenced by philosophies of education (Beatty et al., 2009) and theories of learning and development (Sadler-Smith, 2006) and so it is important to consider these.

Beatty, Leigh and Dean note the importance for educators to be mindful of the philosophies that underpin their practice claiming this promotes self-awareness and an ability to “make visible philosophical choices that were formerly taken for granted” (2009 p.101). Drawing on Ornstein and Levine’s work that philosophies are “complete bodies of thought that present a world-view” (1997 p.383) they describe the development of five philosophies: idealism, reality, pragmatism, existentialism and critical and relate the philosophies to metaphysics (the nature of reality), epistemology (the theory of knowledge) and axiology (the nature of values). Not only is their frame useful for gaining a deeper understanding of philosophical roots but they suggest it is a way to create and maintain self-awareness and “a critically reflective approach to practice” (2009 p.113).

Consistent with my adoption of existential authenticity, this study is situated in an existentialist philosophy to development that views reality as “grounded in the personal and subjective experience”, that sees knowledge as personal and “created through the act of living one’s life” and regards values as chosen by the individual” (2009 p.109). This existential philosophy encourages deep personal
reflection on experience. Approaches to learning from this philosophical perspective include the goal of encouraging people to make choices about how they define themselves through processes of reflection, which is congruent with the aim of this study.

Sadler-Smith (2006) provides a comprehensive account of learning and development and carefully differentiates these terms from related terms such as education (often seen as the acquisition of a body of knowledge in formal settings and removed from work) and training (often seen as instrumental, tangible and episodic). Development, he says, “occurs as a result of learning” and is an increase in the capacity of a person:

> to live a more effective and fulfilling professional and personal life as a result of learning and the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes. It is a directional shift towards a higher condition or state of being and in this sense is concerned with an outcome (2006 p.10).

Based on Antonacopoulou’s (2001) research, he suggests that learning broadens and liberates, is ongoing, involves questioning and experimentation with freedom to learn and unlearn, has unpredictable outcomes and is conducive to change. With attention to how it has been conceptualized in different disciplines: andragogy (Knowles, 1973; Knowles et al., 2015), behaviourist and cognitive psychology (Schwartz and Resisberg, 1991), education (Rogers, 1983), instructional design (Gagne, 1985), organisational behaviour (Rollinson and Broadfield, 2002) and training (Goldstein and Ford, 2001), Sadler-Smith provides a useful definition of learning that broadly encapsulates skills, assumptions and attitudes and emphasises growth:

> Learning is a longer-term change in the knowledge possessed by an individual, their type and level of skill, or their assumptions, attitudes or values, which may lead to them having increased potential to grow, develop and perform in more satisfying and effective ways (2006 p.4).

This section has shown that leadership development is emerging as a complex and important domain, that it is largely practitioner led, attracts huge sums of money from organizations and that philosophies of education and theories of
leadership, development and learning are essential to its understanding.

2.11 How Are Authentic Leaders Developed?

Day (2012) suggests that most leadership development occurs through structured programmes or through experience. These two major approaches dominate theory and practice, yet neither explicitly attends to the intrapersonal meaning-making of leaders. A more personalised approach to developing authentic leaders that attends to how meaning is constructed is suggested by Berkovich (2014). He offers a practice-oriented approach to authentic leadership development, drawing on the work of Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012). Berkovich says that most existing approaches to development are concerned with didactics, which deal with know-how and a concern for curriculum. He stresses the need for pedagogy, which “deals with the learning interactions that occur in the context of how meaning is co-constructed” (2014 p.249). He insists that authentic leader development not focus “on program didactics, which are based on a technical-functionalist perspective, but on dialogical pedagogy that address the interactions” (2014 p.258). Drawing on Martin Buber (1965) and dialogical philosophy, Berkovich (2014) emphasises the role that relationship plays in development, claiming that too much attention has been given to the content of development initiatives and not enough to the relationship between the learner and facilitator, despite its centrality.

Writing specifically about authentic leadership development Berkovich (2014) emphasises four ideas from dialogical philosophy that are significant for how authentic leadership is developed. First, the self is seen to be non-coherent (Ford 2006) because people’s essence is influenced by others and “bound up with communication” (Jaspers, 1957 p.79). This echoes existentialist concepts of people being embedded in society. Second, people discover meaning in interpersonal interactions, epitomised by Jaspers comment “it is only in communication that I come to myself” (1957 p.53). Berkovich states “individuals discover meaning in interpersonal interactions, and the risk of self-deception is reduced as the confirmation of self-authenticity becomes dyadic in nature” (2014 p.249). Antecedents of this idea are found in conceptualisations of authenticity.
(Erickson, 1995) that emphasise the importance of relationship. Third the “obligation to respond to other individuals” is what motivates ethics rather than abstract moral norms. Fourth, dialogical philosophy views authenticity as a “life journey of becoming” rather than a fixed and definite destination. Thus Berkovich views “authenticity as emergent in communication and not as an a priori characteristic of individuals” (2014 p.258) hence the relationship between facilitators and learners is a potentially rich source of learning for authentic leaders. This has implications for how leadership is developed by prioritising how individuals make meaning through communication. This study incorporates Berkovich’s ideas from dialogical philosophy through attention to the quality of interaction in interviews.

Berkovich draws on Buber's (1965) work about genuine dialogue that highlights candour, inclusion, confirmation and presentness (Johannesen 2000, Zauderer, 2000). Candour refers to direct and sincere communication rather than impression management, inclusion refers to a genuine desire to see and understand the other person, confirmation refers to the creation of a respectful space and presentness refers to full commitment and engagement to attend to the other in the moment. From these four assumptions about genuine dialogue, Berkovich identifies eight inter-related components that facilitate authentic leadership development through attention to the quality of dialogue and interaction between facilitator and the learner. These are: “self-exposure, open-mindedness, empathy, care, respect, critical thinking, contact and mutuality” (Berkovich, 2014 p.251). Whilst authentic leadership development based on dialogical pedagogy helps people to clarify what is important for them, it may not always be in the interests of organizations if individuals decide to move as a result of becoming clearer and more authentic through their discussions. The notion of dialogue is particularly relevant for this study, since it aims to find out what leaders can learn about leadership through an interview, which is a specific form of dialogue. This will be elucidated further in the methodology section.

This section has outlined that despite the extensive use of structured programs and experience to develop leadership these approaches are less relevant to
developing leadership at an intrapersonal level as they tend to focus on individual skill development or organisational development rather than encouraging leaders to understand how they make meaning. Furthermore these approaches have been criticised because it can be difficult to transfer learning from programs or experience to the work-place and because they are costly and resource-intensive. A novel approach to authentic leadership development is proposed by Berkovich (2014) who suggests that the overlooked relationship between facilitator and learner is a potentially rich source of developing authentic leaders. Particular attention to Buber’s (1965) imperatives for genuine dialogue: candour, inclusion, confirmation and presentness are recommended to foster the context for authentic leadership development.

2.12 What Develops in Development?

Understanding what develops in development is essential to design learning interventions in practice and to design research studies to advance theory. Leadership development is broadly underpinned by adult learning theory (andragogy), which is based on a system of six assumptions articulated by Knowles at various times between 1975 and 1990. As these assumptions are so ubiquitous they are summarised here:

1. The need to know: Adults need to now why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it.
2. Self-Concept: Adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own decisions, for their own lives.
3. The role of the learners’ experiences: Greater emphasis in adult education is placed on individualisation of teaching and learning strategies.
4. Readiness to learn: As a person matures his readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his social roles.
5. Orientation to learning: Adults are motivated to learning (that) will help them perform tasks or deal with problems that they confront in life.
6. Motivation to learn: The most potent motivators are internal pressures (the desire for increased job satisfaction, self-esteem, quality of life) (Knowles et al., 2015 pp.63-67).

These assumptions may seem largely self-evident now as they have been integrated into the norms of leadership development but they were
revolutionary when introduced. They continue to be relevant today, for example, entreaties to personalise leadership development (Petriglieri et al., 2011) reflect Knowles’ third assumption.

Even within adult learning there are various perspectives and approaches to learning, which emphasise different aspects of development hence it is important to be clear about the perspective adopted. Merriam and Caffarella (2007) have categorised learning into five schools identifying their distinguishing perspectives and acknowledging overlaps between them. Their approach is comprehensive, has been positively reviewed (McKenna, 1992) and used by other scholars (Sadler-Smith, 2006; Swanson, 2001; Swanson and Holton, 2001), hence their categorisation is used in this thesis. The five main schools of learning theory are behavioural, cognitivist, humanist, social learning and constructivist. Each of these approaches to learning and development can be useful and they are often combined in practice but each school differs in relation to the purpose of learning, how people learn, the focus of development and the role of the learning facilitator.

Before reviewing the constructivist approach that this study adopts, it is relevant to make clear the broad distinction that exists in the leadership development literature between the skill-based behaviourist approach and the mental-model based cognitive or constructivist approaches. Hogan and Warrenfeltz contrast behaviourist and cognitive learning traditions in their domain model (outlined in section on levels of analysis) and suggest that “skills concern what people do, conceptual structures concern why they do it, and why they do it the way that they do” (2003 p.83). They underscore the importance of the intrapersonal domain for leadership learning, which focuses on how executives make meaning:

the most important lessons that executives can learn are twofold: (1) evaluating the mental models that they hold regarding their capabilities and others’ expectations of their performance; and (2) how these mental models are expressed in overt or behavioural terms (which is social skill) (2003 p.76).
Kaiser and Kaplan concur claiming that the “deeper work of executive development” concerns intrapersonal skills which may be harder to develop but are fundamental for the development of the other levels and “may also provide a competitive advantage” (2006 p.464). They further assert:

Assumptions get you into trouble when you forget that they are assumptions and instead take them to be facts. The learning opportunity occurs when tacit beliefs are recognized as assumptions rather than self-evident truths; they then become open to disconfirmation. There’s no point testing the validity of something one holds to be true. Learning to distinguish between facts and assumptions breaks the seal of self-limiting ways of interpreting the environment that contain a person (2006 p.478).

The requirement for leaders to overcome self-limiting aspects of mental models has been a proposition in the leadership development literature for some years (Hackman and Wageman, 2007; Sternberg, 2007). Yet there is often a pull towards skill-based development in practice perhaps, in part, because it is easier to explain, evaluate and quantify for those concerned with return on investment.

Processes that examine meaning-making and mental models are typically cognitivist (Shuell, 1986) or constructivist (Kegan, 2000; Kegan, 2009) and see development as a process of expanding the ability of leaders to make meaning and articulate and examine their mental models. This study adopts a constructivist approach in an attempt to advance theory through focusing on the meaning-making of leaders through attention to metaphor.

Mental models and meaning-making are, by nature, invisible and out of conscious awareness, hence potentially harder to access, understand or develop (Hackman and Wageman, 2007; Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003). Yet these inner processes are vastly consequential as “leaders may be unaware of the degree to which their models are shaping their leadership behaviours” (Hackman and Wageman, 2007 p.46). How can people, including those in leadership roles, become aware of their mental models? This is a question at the heart of what develops in leadership development as noted by Day (2012 p.123) who criticises the ubiquity of competency models as an “overly simplistic assumption that what
changes in leadership development solely involves the building of specific and observable skills and competences.” He suggests that leader development needs to be more aligned with adult learning processes that encourage exploration of the deeper work of “mental models” and identity, asserting that research in these areas will advance leadership development theory (Day, 2012 p.123). The development of mental models has been termed “key to leadership development” (Johnson, 2008 p.85) yet it is not obvious how to unlock this key. This study aims to contribute to unlocking this key through attention to leaders’ inner worlds of metaphor. As metaphor is considered to be essential to cognition (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) it is proposed that focusing leaders’ attention to their naturally occurring metaphors will enable them to understand their mental models and implicit everyday theories of leadership, contributing to resolving this central question in what develops in leadership development.

One potential avenue for understanding the inner processes of leaders is implicit leadership theory (ILT) (Schyns and Meindl, 2005), which are everyday images in the minds of people about leadership. Rather than a theory derived externally, ILT’s are the internal mental representations of what people think leadership is. The term was introduced by Eden and Leviatan (1975), deduced from implicit personality theories. ILT's have been likened to stereotypes (Schneider, 1973) as they serve to explain and predict behaviour (Schyns and Schilling, 2011). ILT’s are claimed to develop in childhood (Antonakis and Dalgas, 2009; Ayman-Nolley and Ayman, 2005) be stable over time (Epitropaki and Martin, 2004) and have both individual and social aspects to them (House and Aditya, 1997). As ILT’s operate out of awareness it is unlikely that people are aware of the images they hold and how these influence their perception of leadership.

Recent research suggests that exploring ILT’s can develop authentic leaders (Nichols and Erakovich, 2013). Schyns et al. (2011) claim that surfacing ILT’s can assist leaders to develop self and social awareness as well as clarify identity, improve motivation and increase their development and behavioural range. Schyns et al. (2011) and DeRue and Ashford (2010) highlight the social and relational value of bringing into awareness the implicit models by which people
conceptualise leadership as this can activate a more explicit negotiation of leadership. This is important in organisations in which leadership is not prescribed by position but is seen increasingly as a relational and social process in which leader and follower identities are dynamic, mutually re-enforcing, socially constructed and subject to a process of claiming and granting influenced by ILT’s.

This section has shown that what develops in leadership development is a critical question that is underpinned in general by adult learning theory and specifically by the learning approach adopted. The useful categorisation of Merriam and Caffarella (2007) was introduced to illuminate the broad differences between the five schools before the key differences between the behaviourist and cognitivist and constructivist schools that pervade much leadership development practice were highlighted. These differences emphasise skill development or inner mental processes respectively. Attention has been drawn in particular to how the mental processes of meaning-making resulting in mental models or ILT’s can illuminate development.

2.13 Constructive-Developmental Approach to Meaning-Making

Whilst there are some overlaps between cognitive and constructivist approaches as they both emphasise the importance of mental processes to learning, this study adopts a constructivist-developmental approach because this foregrounds the social construction of reality and emphasises how people make sense of their own experience and imbue it with personal meaning. Furthermore the role of the learning facilitator differs: in cognitivist approaches, the role is to structure the learning activity whereas in a constructivist approach it is to “facilitate and negotiate meaning-making with the learner” (Merriam et al., 2007 p.296). There are several approaches to constructivist learning including the seminal work of Freire (1970; 1973) and Mezirow (1990; 1995; 2000), however this study adopts the work of developmental psychologist Robert Kegan (1982; 1994; 2001; 2009), which builds on Mezirow’s transformative learning. I have adopted Kegan’s constructive-developmental approach for three reasons. First, McCauley
et al. (2006) suggest that Kegan’s constructive-developmental theory could be a particularly useful approach to advance understanding of leadership and in particular ILT. Second, the theory focuses on meaning-making across the life-span. This focuses equally meaning-making said to be vital to leadership (Drath and Paulus, 1994; Smircich and Morgan, 1982) and a life-span perspective, which is useful to understand how people develop at different stages in their lives and careers. Third, it is built on the psychological foundations of Piaget’s genetic epistemology that explains how people develop cognitively. Piaget’s theory continues to be useful (Gilmore and Durkin, 2001). Kegan expanded Piaget’s theory to include: (1) the ways adults construct and interpret their experiences, (2) consideration of emotion as well as cognition, (3) the inner experience of development as well as external manifestations and (4) how the social context affects development. These important additions are relevant for this study as they focus explicitly on the inner experience of meaning-making whilst also considering the interface between self and society which echoes the existentialists pre-occupation with how individuals create their own sense of meaning without succumbing to the sedative effects of socialisation. This section reviews three aspects of constructive-development theory: the epistemological foundations of how people make meaning, the lifespan perspective of development and how the theory contributes to understanding leadership and especially ILT.

Kegan’s (1982; 1994; 2000; 2009) research is distinctive in drawing on the broad traditions of: existential-phenomenology (Martin Buber, Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers), psychoanalysis (Erik Erikson, Donald Winnicott and John Bowlby), constructive development (George Herbert Mead, John Dewey and Jean Piaget) and transformational learning which Kegan described as the “genius” of Mezirow (Kegan, 2009 p.41). Following Mezirow’s (1975) work on frames of reference as habits of mind and points of view, Kegan differentiates between ‘forms’ of knowledge. In-form-ational learning adds to an existing reservoir of knowledge within a frame of reference whilst trans-form-ational learning changes the frame itself and therefore changes the epistemology or how people know. Stressing that both forms of knowing are important, Kegan emphasised
epistemology and lifespan, hence the name, ‘constructive-developmental’ theory. Two epistemological processes are at the heart of development – meaning-forming and the meta-process of how meaning is reformed over time. Fundamental to his theory is what he calls the subject-object relationship. Knowledge that is objective can be reviewed, controlled, integrated with other perspectives and reflected upon because “we have” objective knowledge. However subjective knowledge is ‘what has us’ or what “we “are”’ because we are so fused and identified with our subjective thinking and feeling. He says development is:

the gradual process by which what was “subject” in our knowing becomes “object”. When a way of knowing moves from a place where we are “had by it” (captive of it) to a place where we have it”, and can be in relationship to it, the form of our knowing has become more complex, more expansive (Kegan, 2009 p.47).

This perspective on how people make meaning is fundamental for this study that aims to understand how leaders makes sense of their own constructions of leadership.

The influence of life-span development theories (Erikson, 1978; Kohlberg, 1969; Loevinger, 1976) is evident in Kegan’s insistence that meaning-making is a life-long process that evolves through more complex levels over time. Kegan says five distinctly different patterns of meaning-making are evident over the life-span. He referred to these variously as stages, orders of consciousness, ways of knowing and levels of development that progress sequentially with each later stage incorporating earlier stages that can be reflected upon. The stages are: the impulsive mind of young children, the instrumental mind of children through adolescence and the three subsequent stages of adulthood; the socialised mind, the self-authoring mind and the self-transforming mind. His research suggests that 58% of the population is below the self-authoring mind (Kegan and Lahey, 2010) which could be a challenge for leaders if they are operating from a socialised mind that is dependent on the expectations of others. As Kegan recognised that people may spend as much time in transition as in any particular stage his writing focuses as much on the transition between the adult stages and
the "challenges, achievements, and costs of moving from one way of making meaning to another" (McCauley et al., 2006 p.636).

Like the existentialists, Kegan conceptualises meaning-making as a life-long process that views people as embedded in culture. Claiming that there is not an absolute distinction between the individual and the social he says “development is intrinsically about the continual settling and resettling of this very distinction” (Kegan, 1982 p.115). He says that the development process is fundamentally:

A shift away from being “made up by” the values and expectations of one’s surround” (family, friends, community, culture) that get uncritically internalized and with which one becomes identified, toward developing an internal authority that makes choices about those external values and expectations according to one’s own self-authored belief system. (Kegan, 2009 p.47).

Like Erickson's (1995) claim that authenticity is more necessary as the world becomes more complex, Kegan proposed that the “complexification of mind” does not simply add or substitute knowledge but evolves to become increasingly able to reflect on itself and its own epistemologies (2009 p.47). Relating meaning-making to the idea of mental complexity and increasingly pluralistic perspectives, Kegan says the socialised mind is adapted to deal with a traditional world characterised by stable and homogenous definitions of how to live. As the world gets more complex, in his language as traditional ways of life give way to modern society, characterised by “ever proliferating pluralism, multiplicity, and competition for our loyalty” the demands of life require a self-authoring mind to deal with the multiple “claims that bombard us from all directions” (2009 p.51). Finally he suggests that a self-transforming mind is not “captive” of its own theories and is able to “embrace contradictory systems simultaneously” (2009 p.51) although he notes that this complexity is rarely reached. These stages are provided in his complete framework which identifies the cognitive, interpersonal and intrapersonal developments and are summarised in everyday terms thus:
1. Socialising Mind – shaped by definitions of significant others. The self is loyal to those with whom it is identified.
2. Self-Authoring Mind - generates its own authority and voice to take a stance.
3. Self-Transforming Mind - can review the limits of its own beliefs and contradictions and is wary of any one stance recognising this is only one of many discourses.

With its origins in education, Kegan's work has been used to consider how it can enhance teaching (Novicevic et al., 2013), how it can inform environments for leader development (Ghosh et al., 2013), and how self-authorship can be developed in learning, which Baxter Magolda says is “the ability to reflect upon one’s beliefs, organize one’s thoughts and feelings in the context of, but separate from, the thoughts and feelings of others, and literally make up one’s own mind.” (2001 p.6). Constructive-developmental theory has also contributed to understanding leadership, for example, how the stage of development affects leader performance (Harris, 2005) and how the strengths and weaknesses of managers are functions of personal meaning (Drath, 1990). McCauley et al. (2006) draw on Drath’s (2001) work on understanding leadership through Kegan’s frame and suggest that constructive-developmental theory could be particularly useful for understanding ILT as both focus on people’s ways of understanding. They claim the three stages of socialised, self-authoring and self-transformational stages will impact ILT and suggest that constructive-developmental theory might contribute to further understanding about ILT and “how they develop or become more complex over time”. For those in leadership roles, self-authorship and mental agility are important, whether it be the agility to attend to competing demands and stakeholders or the ability to interrogate and understand one’s own internal world, hence Kegan's (1982; 1994; 2000) constructive-developmental theory is useful to understand how leaders create their own meaning in socialised, self-authoring or even self-transforming ways.

2.14 Summary of Authentic Leader Development

The above sections have outlined the nature of leadership development as a diverse, emerging field that differentiates between leader and leadership
development. It is big business attracting significant investment by organisations (Lamoureux, 2007; O’Leonard and Krider, 2014) and is mainly led by practitioners (2012). Learning and development have been explained and differentiated according to Sadler-Smith (2006). The specific development of authentic leadership has been discussed with reference to genuine dialogue. (Berkovich, 2014). This emphasises the nature and quality of relationship rather than focusing on curriculum, which has typically been the pre-occupation of structured interventions. Based on the foundations of adult learning what develops in development varies according to the learning theory adopted. Merriam and Caffarella’s (2007) taxonomy of five schools is suggested as a useful way to differentiate between behaviourist, cognitivist, social, humanist and constructivist developmental theories. This study adopts Kegan’s constructive-developmental theory as it foregrounds meaning-making through the lifespan. The Chapter has critically reviewed the theory including how it has contributed to understanding leadership and ILT’s. This is particularly exciting for this study that aims to understand what leaders can learn if they attend to their own conceptualisations (ILT) of leadership.

2.15 Summary of Chapter Two

Chapter Two has reviewed the contested nature of leadership due to debates between whether leaders are born or made, whether leadership is socially constructed, whether leadership theories are normative or situational and the levels of analysis at which it is studied. Table 2-1 has provided a synthesis of key leadership theories to situate authentic leadership theory in context before introducing authentic leadership theory, a review of its key tenets and a critique of the theory. Foundational to authentic leadership and central to this study are the concepts of authenticity and self-awareness, which have been reviewed in some depth with reference to the philosophical and existential origins of authenticity. This study draws on the work of Kernis and Goldman’s (2006) multi-component conceptualisation of authenticity that foregrounds the importance of self-awareness and Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012) radical
authenticity that returns authenticity to its existential roots and emphasises the need for people to make their own meaning.

The chapter then turned to how leadership is developed, broadly describing the nature of development (Day, 2012) including the importance of clarity about philosophies of education (Beatty et al., 2009) and approaches to learning and development (Sadler-Smith, 2006). The chapter reviewed Berkovich’s (2014) approach to dialogical learning, based on Buber’s concept of I-Thou relationships to describe how leaders develop their own meaning through communication. This approach to developing authentic leaders emphasises the relationship between facilitator and learner, which has implications for what and how leaders learn. The question of what develops in development is fundamental for understanding what leaders might learn and has been addressed to situate this study in a constructivist approach to learning that emphasises the importance of mental models, ILT and meaning-making. The chapter concluded with a review of Kegan’s (1982; 1994; 2000; 2009) constructive-developmental approach to learning, which is adopted for this study because of its emphasis on how meaning is made, its life-span approach and its relevance for exploring ILT and leadership.
3 Meaning and Metaphor

Chapter Three examines the central role of metaphor in this study as part of meaning-making and as a way to access and understand inner models including the implicit leadership theories that leaders use to make sense of and navigate the world. The chapter first outlines leadership's brief to manage meaning (Smircich and Morgan, 1982) as this links with constructivist-developmental learning theories of how people understand and expand their meaning-making capacities (discussed in the previous chapter). This is followed by a review of how metaphor has been conceptualised before elaborating key elements of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) concerning the experiential nature of metaphor and how metaphor creates a synthesis between the objectivist and subjectivist modes of knowing. A summary of how metaphor has been conceptualised in social science research is provided and a framework to understand the focus, form and modalities of metaphor contextualises the use of metaphor in this study. The chapter then provides an introduction to Clean Language as a theory and method to elicit and explore naturally occurring metaphors. Five key properties of metaphor are outlined before the chapter concludes with outlining the process through which metaphors are transformed into models to illustrate how knowledge is created and refined. This links two ideas in the management literature, one is tacit ways of knowing such as mental models or ILT’s and the other is metaphor. This link is important for this study because it describes processes by which people make sense of their experience using metaphors, models and ILT’s that influence the way they think and act. It is proposed that surfacing metaphors is a way for leaders to understand their own mental models and ILT’s and thereby develop awareness of their own conceptualisations of leadership.

3.1 Leadership’s Role to Manage Meaning

In a seminal article Smircich and Morgan (1982) asserted that leadership involves framing and defining reality and managing meaning. This assertion built
on the socially constructed nature of leadership and was crucial in articulating
the link between leadership and meaning. Smircich and Morgan claim that
framing experience provides a basis for action through “articulating and defining
what has previously remained implicit or unsaid, by inventing images and
meanings that provide a focus for new attention, and by consolidating,
confronting, or changing prevailing wisdom” (1982 p.258). Referencing Pfeffer's
declaration that leadership involves symbolic action and the construction of
“shared beliefs and meanings” (1981 p.28) and the emphasis of Pondy, Frost,
Morgan and Dandridge (1982) on organisational symbolism (including the use of
language, myths and images) Smircich and Morgan claim that leaders give
meaning “through words and images, symbolic actions and gestures” (1982
p.261). Furthermore they claimed this symbolic framing is as important to the
task of leadership as the more instrumental aspects of managing. Their article
suggests that understanding the way meaning in organisations “is created,
sustained, and changed provides a powerful means of understanding the
fundamental nature of leadership as a social process” (p.261). Their influence
has been widespread. For example, Astley and Zammuto see the role of business
leaders as “meaning makers” (1992 p.450) and Parry (2008) suggests that
metaphors are an essential part of how leaders make sense and provide meaning
in organisations. Smircich and Morgan’s (1982) focus on leadership’s task as the
management of meaning has several implications. Firstly, the need to pay
attention to how meaning is created through language, symbols and metaphors.
Secondly how leaders’ inner worlds comprising metaphors, mental models and
ILT's inform how they make meaning and thirdly the privileged position of
leaders' to define reality and frame meaning.

3.2 Metaphor - An Introduction

Metaphor has been studied for thousands of years in philosophy and has been
used with theory building in domains as diverse as science (Mayer, 1993),
mathematics (Núñez, 2008), psychology (Bruner and Fleisher Feldman, 1990;
Leary, 1994; Leary, 1994), education (Petrie and Oshlag, 1993) and
organisational studies (Cornelissen et al., 2008; Grant and Oswick, 1996; Morgan,
1986). For comprehensive coverage of metaphor in general refer to Gibbs (2008)
and for metaphor in organisations see Grant and Oswick (1996). The following provides an outline of the antecedents of metaphor in organisational research in order to contextualise the approach taken to metaphor in this study which views metaphor as ubiquitous, frequently overlooked and with real implications for how we act in the world.

The term metaphor comes from the Greek word metapherein, meaning to transfer or carry over (meta = beyond, over + pherein = to bring). This sense of carrying over is evident in Lakoff and Johnson's definition of the essence of metaphor as “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (1980 p.5). This definition suggests that metaphor is an active way of understanding and experiencing and that metaphor is more than a purely verbal description of one thing in terms of another. However, metaphor was largely considered the preserve of literary scholars until the late 19th century (McGlone, 2007), denounced as a stylistic embellishment of language (Davidson, 1978) and dismissed by philosophers such as Hobbes and Locke for obscuring truth. Metaphor is often considered part of figurative language yet it is much more pervasive and important than this linguistic denotation suggests. As the sub-title of James Geary's book implies, metaphor lives “a secret life” (2012) and is pervasive in language according Cameron (2008).

Dating back thousands of years, Aristotle thought metaphor was a sign of genius and of linguistic mastery and whilst he proposed that “it is from metaphor that we can best get hold of something fresh” (1924) he considered it too ornamental for serious discourse such as philosophy or science. His opinion was influential for thousands of years in two key areas: first metaphor has been viewed mainly as ornamental language not relevant for scientific studies as it is deemed too vague and second the comparison view of metaphor has been prevalent (McGlone, 2007). In fact these two views reinforce one another. In the comparison view metaphor describes one thing as something else making an explicit analogy between two things highlighting the similarity of perception between the two. In this sense metaphor’s role is to find the shared aspect of the source and target concepts and to highlight comparison to make the “familiar more familiar” (Oswick et al., 2002 p.295). Comparison theories tend to overlook
differences between the source and target concepts as these would get in the way of the analogy. Comparison theory is often associated with an objectivist philosophy, which sees any similarities described through metaphor as inherent in the similarities themselves rather than created through people's experience of them. The increasing evidence from cognitive science has challenged the comparison model and suggests that metaphor does not simply compare one thing with another but that metaphor creates new emergent understanding (Fauconnier and Turner, 1998; Gibbs, 1992).

Breal’s (1899) assertion that metaphor is an ubiquitous part of language and not simply ornamentation was a significant departure from the long-held Aristotelian view of metaphor. Embracing Breal's view of metaphor as ubiquitous to language, Richards (1936) introduced the now commonplace terminology of the vehicle (for the term used metaphorically), the tenor or topic (for the term to which it is applied) and the ground for the meaning of the metaphor. His work was then built on by philosopher Max Black (1962) who suggested an alternative to the comparison view of metaphor which he considered too simplistic. His interaction view contends that metaphors are understood not simply at the surface meaning of words but at the deeper level of similarity in conceptual structure, by viewing the topic ‘in terms of’ the vehicle, beyond the obvious comparison so that new meaning can emerge. Since Black there has been interest in how metaphoric meanings are created from the interaction of vehicle and topic e.g. Cornelissen (2006; 2005) and increasing attention to the ubiquity of metaphor in diverse domains. One of the most influential theories of metaphor is conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) which is reviewed due to its centrality in metaphor discourse and its importance to this study.

3.3 Metaphors We Live By - Conceptual Metaphor Theory

In 1980, cognitive linguist, George Lakoff and philosopher, Mark Johnson published “Metaphors We Live By” a book that was to become central in discourses about metaphor. Lawler (1983) called their book a “milestone” (p.205) for questioning and challenging traditional approaches to metaphor
research. It has become a classic text cited more than 41,902 times¹ and has established conceptual metaphor theory, (CMT) epitomised in their claim, “Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980 p.3). Their work emphasises the experiential nature of metaphor, the embodied mind, the importance of language and metaphor for understanding reality and guiding action and the objective-subjective myths. CMT is fundamental to this study because it highlights that metaphor is one of the ways in which people construct their social reality and make meaning. Importantly CMT claims that metaphor has consequences not only in terms of what and how people think but also in terms of what they do. Due to its importance to this study four main claims are critically reviewed. These claims are (1) that our conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical, (2) that metaphors are based on an embodied experience of the world, (3) that metaphors structure meaning and (4) that metaphor unites reason and imagination in rational imagination.

The first claim of CMT is that metaphors are omnipresent in life not simply in language but also in thought and action. Lakoff and Johnson say “our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, ... the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor” (1980 p.3). Acknowledging that humans are not generally aware of their cognition, they suggest that language offers a way to understand conceptual systems because language is “based on the same conceptual system we use in thinking and acting” (p.3). As metaphor structures thought they claim it also defines “our everyday realities” (1980 p.5), shaping perception and action which suggests that studying metaphors is a way to understand how they influence action.

A criticism of their theory comes from the Pragglejaz Group (2007). This is a group of metaphor scholars from various disciplines who used the first letter of their first names to create the name Pragglejaz. This group says that CMT takes for granted which expressions are metaphorical and does not take note of

metaphorical expressions of people in natural discourse. Kövecses (2008) concurs with the criticism but claims that it does not refute the validity of CMT suggesting that CMT concerns the decontextualized supra-individual level of analysis rather than the more specific individual level of concern to the Pragglejaz Group. Furthermore Kövecses (2008) suggests that the two approaches can be complementary as CMT may provide broad categories of metaphor for organising the individual metaphors used in discourse.

Lakoff and Johnson’s second claim is that metaphors are experientially based, “rooted in physical and cultural experience” (1980 p.18) rather than simple comparisons to objective reality. They stress the “centrality of the body in structuring experience and the importance of that structure in understanding” (p.181). They emphasise orientational metaphors reflect that the body is located physically in space with an orientation such as “up-down, in-out, central-peripheral, active-passive, etc.” (p.24). Furthermore, they observed that these spatial orientations are found across many cultures but how these concepts are oriented depends on the culture. Claiming many fundamental concepts are expressed as orientational metaphors they give the example of UP: “GOOD IS UP, HAPPY IS UP, HEALTH IS UP, ALIVE IS UP, CONTROL IS UP, STATUS IS UP” (1980 p.18, capitals in original). UP as a metaphor is a consequence of humans holding their bodies up when alert, feeling well, successful or in control. An everyday example is ‘I’m feeling good, I stood up for myself today’. Metaphors that stem from people’s embodied experience are based in cultural and physical reality and are fundamental to how people make sense of being in the world. Building on their conception of embodied cognition, Schnall (2014) has looked for evidence of basic metaphors and tentatively suggests three – verticality (up/down), container (in/out) and distance (near/far). These metaphors are all based on the body as she claims,

Verticality provides a source domain to distinguish between good and bad entities in multiple contexts... The body as a container with a clear boundary is implicit in the conceptualisation of many social and emotional processes; and spatial distance contrasts things and people that are close from those that are distant and remote (p.227).
In addition to orientational metaphors, Lakoff and Johnson suggest that ontological metaphors stem from experiences with physical objects (including bodies as containers) to understand “events, activities, emotions, ideas etc. as entities and substances” (1980 p.25). These metaphors are so prevalent in life that most people do not even notice they are metaphors especially as their typical function is to identify, refer or quantify. An example of a metaphor to identify a cause is: “The pressure of his responsibilities caused his breakdown” (1980 p.25).

A criticism of CMT concerns whether embodiment can simultaneously account for cultural variation and universality (Rakova, 2002). Kövecses (2008) argues this criticism does not invalidate CMT but proposes that embodiment should be not viewed mechanically but seen as a more differentiated term with several components any of which can be emphasised by different cultures (p.177).

Lakoff and Johnson’s third claim is that metaphors structure experience through providing coherent “multidimensional gestalts” (1980 p.77) by which one activity is partially understood in terms of another. Abstract concepts such as time, leadership, knowledge, love, and control are understood in terms of what they call “natural domains of experience” (1980 p.118) such as our bodies, interactions with the physical environment and with other people. Thus bodies, orientations, objects, food, buildings – found in the physical world are often used as overall gestalts of experience to understand a more abstract term. When there is a good fit between understanding one thing in terms of another they claim “there is a reverberation down through the network of entailments that awakens and connects our memories... and serves as a possible guide for future” (1980 p.140). It is these reverberations that link whole systems of understanding that “sanction actions, justify inferences and help us set goals” (1980 p.141). Therefore the structuring of experience comes not simply from the similarity between images but the similarity in the underlying structure of the concepts. In addition to this structuring of experience, Lakoff and Johnson claim that because metaphors create partial understanding between domains, there is room for new knowledge to be created through novel metaphors. When these new metaphors
are incorporated into conceptual systems, new ways of seeing and acting are made possible. This can be true for individuals and for groups or societies as they say “much cultural change arises from the introduction of new metaphorical concepts and the loss of old ones” (1980 p.145).

Another criticism of CMT from Rakova (2002) is how the theory can account for universality of metaphors and cultural variation simultaneously. Kövecses suggests that this criticism is resolved if metaphor speakers are considered to be “under two competing pressures: the pressure of universal embodiment and that of local context” (2008 p.182). One consequence of the experiential nature of metaphor is that metaphors will hold different meaning for different individuals, partly based on culture and partly based on individual experience. Lakoff and Johnson’s assertion that “no metaphor can ever be comprehended or even adequately represented independently of its experiential basis” (1980 p.19) reinforces that study of metaphor needs to be contextualised and that meanings will vary based on an individual’s experience and cultural grounding.

Their fourth claim outlined here concerns the myths of objectivism and subjectivism, which Lakoff and Johnson identify and outline. Summarising the two myths, they suggest, “Objectivism takes as its allies scientific truth, rationality, precision, fairness and impartiality. Subjectivism takes as its allies the emotions, intuitive insight, imagination, humaneness, art, and a higher truth” (1980 p.191). They reject both myths but recognise that objectivism “involves categorization, entailment, and inference” and that subjectivism involves imagination, which sees one thing in terms of another and conclude that metaphor is “imaginative rationality” (1980 p.193). The imaginative part is based on categories of everyday thought that are predominately metaphorical and rationality is based on reasoning involving “metaphorical entailments and inferences” (p.193). They suggest an “experientialist synthesis” (p.192) between the two is created which suggests that objectivism is never as neutral as it purports to be as it is based on interaction with the world mediated by metaphorical conceptual systems and that subjectivism is more rational than it purports to be as it is based in conceptual systems that are influenced by our
Lakoff and Johnson’s work has been fundamental to the study of metaphor. As outlined above there are some criticisms of the theory which can be summarised as three key points. Firstly critics claim the supra-individual level of conceptual metaphors is incompatible with more idiosyncratic individual metaphors. Secondly critics claim there is a potential contradiction in embodied metaphor that attempts to account for universality and cultural variation simultaneously. Thirdly critics questions whether metaphors are universally shaped or are contextually specific. These criticisms have been systematically addressed by Kövecses (2008) to deepen CMT to make it a “more flexible and open” theory (p.182). CMT theory has been extremely influential in a range of disciplines including: linguistics (Steen, 1999; 2009; 2011; 2015), psychology (Leary, 1994; 1994; 1994), cognition (Landau et al., 2010; 2014), organisation theory (Cornelissen, 2006; Cornelissen and Kafouros, 2008; 2008), theory construction (Weick, 1989) and sensemaking (Weick, 1995). This section has examined the emergence of metaphor as a concept within social science and the groundbreaking CMT of Lakoff and Johnson, which underpins vast amounts of research including this study. The following section examines the role of metaphor in organisational research.

3.4 Metaphor in Organisational Research

Over the last three decades metaphor has been used to understand organisations (Cassell and Lee, 2012; Cornelissen, 2006; Grant and Oswick, 1996; Marshak, 2003; Morgan, 1986), leadership (Alvesson and Spicer, 2011; Oberlechner and Mayer-Schönberger, 2003), sensemaking (Cassell and Bishop, 2014; Patriotta and Brown, 2011; Weick et al., 2005), strategy (Bürgi and Roos, 2003; Oliver and Roos, 2007; Roos et al., 2004) and research (Lloyd, 2011; Tosey et al., 2014). Viewing metaphor as generating social reality (Morgan, 1986) sets metaphor in a social constructionist frame with multiple opinions about its utility in research. Its advocates suggest that it offers new ways of seeing and framing experience and that it can generate new knowledge (Barrett and Cooperrider, 1990; Ortony,
Its detractors claim that it is vague, unscientific and overly subjective (Alvesson, 1990; Tinker, 1986; Tsoukas, 1991). However, its ability to bring together reasoning with imagination explains why metaphor plays such an enduring role in thought and communication (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Weick, 1989). Morgan makes a useful distinction between the use of metaphor as an ontological process and as an epistemological process. As part of ontology - being in the world Morgan states, “metaphors aren’t optional; they are inevitable” (Morgan, 1996 p.229) for people use them to make sense of their interaction and experience with the world. It is in the epistemological domain that there is much academic debate about what constitutes ‘real’ knowledge and how this is acquired. This is frequently presented as the debate between quantitative research and qualitative research. Rather than believe that one way is right and the other wrong, it is more useful to recognise that metaphor creates partial truths, which can generate new knowledge but also keep certain aspects of that knowledge hidden from view. Recognising that metaphor is partial and biased might help people to recognise that their frames upon the world are also partial and biased and to consciously look for the aspects they might automatically overlook. In this sense metaphor encourages us to “embrace paradox and contradiction” (Morgan, 1996 p.239) and to resolve the subjective-objective debate as described by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) above.

A bewildering array of approaches to working with metaphor exists but a useful frame for making sense of how metaphor is used within organisational research is provided by Cornelissen, Oswick, Christensen and Phillips (2008). This frame is used in this study because it differentiates between the focus (projecting or eliciting), form (decontextualized or contextualised) and modality (mono or multimodal) of metaphor. These perspectives are outlined in the following section to situate this study as an elicited, contextual, multi-modal approach to understand the role of metaphor in leaders’ sensemaking. This picks up Cornelissen et al.’s (2008) challenge to use more elicited, contextual and multi-modal metaphor in organisational research.
3.5 Elicited, Contextual, Multi-Modal Approach to Metaphor

This section reviews Cornelissen et al.’s (2008) guide to using metaphors in organisational research that differentiates between the focus, form and modality of metaphor. The focus of metaphor differentiates between whether metaphors are “imposed’ or ‘projected’ onto organisation reality” or whether they “naturally surface within the talk and sensemaking of individuals and can be identified or ‘elicited’ by researchers” (Cornelissen et al., 2008 p.8). Other scholars have referred to this distinction as deductive for those metaphors imposed and inductive for those that naturally surface (Grant and Oswick, 1996; Palmer and Dunford, 1996). Most metaphor research has been deductive with researchers generating metaphors that have then been applied to organisational phenomena. Examples include change processes (Akin and Palmer, 2000), communication (Putnam et al., 1996), theory construction (Cornelissen, 2006), Morgan’s (1986), eight metaphors for organisations (organism, machine, brain, culture, political system, psychic prison, change and instrument of domination), and Alvesson and Spicer's (2011) six metaphors for leaders (saint, gardener, buddy, commander, cyborg, bully).

By contrast, the elicitation approach involves “identifying metaphors in the context of people's language use and examining their uses, meanings and impacts... to identify the symbolic and interpretive uses of metaphors in people’s sensemaking” (Cornelissen et al., 2008 p.10). There are far fewer examples of this approach, and therefore Cornelissen et al. recommend more research to understand local meanings of metaphor. Cassell and Lee (2012) further divide the elicitation approach into two categories, those purposefully elicited by the researcher and those where metaphors in naturally occurring talk are already available such as in speeches or reports. Their study joins a number of others which have reviewed existing documents for metaphors, such as analysis of root metaphors in Jack Welch's speeches (Amernic et al., 2007) and metaphors in management discourse on downsizing (Dunford and Palmer, 1996). Much less research has purposefully elicited metaphors from organizational actors. Two exceptions are Heracleous and Jacobs (2008) elicitation of strategy metaphors.
and Tosey et al.’s (2014) elicitation of work-life balance metaphors. This study aims to address the gap in organisational research for purposefully eliciting metaphors from leaders.

The second dimension is the form of metaphor. This differentiates between cognitive linguistic approaches that abstract meanings “across speakers and contexts of language use” decontextualising metaphors and discursive approaches to metaphor that emphasise “locally-specific uses and meanings of metaphors” contextualising them (Cornelissen et al., 2008 p.11). Whilst the decontextualised and contextualised approaches are “a basic distinction” in the study of metaphors they are not mutually exclusive and can be combined in research (Cornelissen et al., 2008 p.11). The classic works of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Morgan (1986) and the majority of other theorists adopt a decontextualized approach seeking a shared understanding of metaphors across different speakers and contexts. There are far fewer studies that have adopted the contextualised approach which considers the local meanings of metaphor. Notable exceptions are Gioia et al.’s (1994) study on sensemaking, Heracleous and Jacobs (2008) work on developing embodied metaphors for strategy and Tosey et al.’s (2014) study on metaphors for work-life balance. This study picks up Cornelissen et al.’s call for contextualised metaphor research in “different organizational contexts” (2008 p.15) by examining the metaphors of 30 business leaders.

A third distinction concerns the modality of metaphor, i.e. whether metaphor is represented verbally, non-verbally through gestures, in images, sounds, in constructed symbols or other modalities. Verbal metaphor is dominant in organisational research, captured in Oswick et al.’s comment that although metaphors provide “many ways of thinking” there seems to be “only one way of thinking about metaphors” (2002 p.301). This study adopts a multi-modal approach to metaphor elicitation and therefore now reviews some key discussions and considerations about multi-modal approaches to metaphor.
Building on Gardner’s work of multiple intelligences (1993; 2011), Bürgi and Roos (2003) suggest that it is useful to get beyond the verbal and mathematic intelligence which dominates most education systems and organisations to incorporate other ways of knowing including metaphors from different modalities. A small number of studies are sensitive to how knowledge is represented in different modalities (Worren et al., 2002) and move beyond the verbal to adopt embodied or visual metaphors, and are discussed below.

Integrating embodied cognition (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) and the body’s essential role in how “existence is experienced and expressed” (Jacobs and Heracleous, 2006 p.213) can stimulate creative thinking and sensemaking by involving the body in the construction of physical objects. The construction of embodied metaphors using toy construction materials has been advocated for constructing organisational identity (Oliver and Roos, 2007), for crafting strategy (Heracleous and Jacobs, 2008) and for identity work (Gauntlett, 2007). These latter approaches draw on the concept of “Serious Play” introduced by Roos and Victor (1999) as a response to calls for more integrative and imaginative approaches to strategy that literally encourage people to put together what they know. Gauntlett claims these embodied creations enable people to apply their “playful or creative attention to the act of making something symbolic or metaphorical, and then reflect on it” (2007 p.3). Whilst embodied creations offer exciting additional dimensions to verbal metaphor, it is not used in this study, which aims to understand the naturally occurring metaphors of leaders through CL elicitation without wanting to introduce physical elements that might not correspond with participants’ responses. However, the study does complement verbal metaphor with pictorial metaphor.

Images are ubiquitous in life and are at the heart of metaphor by making visible or comprehensible something that is more abstract. Visuals including diagrams, charts, maps, pictures, drawings, visual metaphors, doodles and photographs convey a lot of data succinctly with depth and clarity, as Bürgi and Roos say a picture “aggregates information into depictions and patterns, but simplifies it” (2003 p.71). Recognising that meaning is contextual and open to modification,
the power of images is in their “inherent ambiguity” to “convey different meanings for different people” (Thorpe and Cornelissen, 2002 p.67). This ambiguity enables images to simultaneously represent, construct and explore a territory (Jacobs and Heracleous, 2006; Weick, 1990). Furthermore, images enable meaning to be constructed in situ, provide “tools for thinking” and “capture the unique indefiniteness of both managerial activity and managerial views” (Thorpe and Cornelissen, 2002 p.80). Drawings or maps are particularly useful for representing visually large quantities of information, spatial relations between territories and ideas (Weick, 1990) and can function as a reference, a point of negotiation in organisations and prompt reflection (Jacobs and Heracleous, 2006). As images are seen as relatively non-threatening (Schyns et al., 2013; Thorpe and Cornelissen, 2002) they can encourage people to convey their inner world in a safe manner. Images have been used to facilitate emotional expression during a change process (Barner, 2008), and to explore strategy (Bürgi and Roos, 2003), career transitions (Barner, 2011), leadership (Lindsey, 2010) and implicit leadership theories (Schyns et al., 2013). This study adds to this body of work by depicting leadership through elicited verbal and pictorial metaphors.

The embodied nature of metaphor extends to gestures, which communicate spontaneously, add to the impact of information (Cienki, 1998) and provide “another window to understand how we structure concepts” (Cienki and Müller, 2008 p.493). As metaphor is not restricted to speech (Cienki and Müller, 2008) it is useful to incorporate the study of gesture into research about metaphor as a complement to language use. However, working with gestures entails a number of challenges as they are not organised into acknowledged patterns like words or other symbols, they often involve movement which makes them more complex to capture or label and there are issues of translation from the gesture to its description in words. Cognisant of these challenges, this study acknowledges the metaphorical salience of gesture and pays attention to participants’ gestures during the elicitation of their metaphors.
This section has reviewed Cornelissen et al.’s (2008) three dimensions of focus, form and modality to contextualise the use of elicited, contextualised and multi-model metaphor in this study. Having established the focus, form and modality adopted in this study the following section considers how Clean Language can elicit metaphors.

3.6 Eliciting Naturally Occurring Metaphor through Clean Language

As this study aims to address a gap in the literature for purposefully eliciting metaphor (Cornelissen et al., 2008) a method for doing so is necessary. The method adopted is Clean Language (CL) because (1) it is an approach to questioning that facilitates a personal understanding of the metaphorical domain, (2) it explicitly validates the participants’ experience and (3) it limits the influence of the researcher’s assumptions through the use of specific ‘Clean’ questions (Lawley and Tompkins, 2000). Building on definitions of CL by originator David Grove (1989) (for use in the therapeutic world) and by Tosey et al (2014) (for interviewing), Clean Language is defined as an approach to questioning that brackets the questioner’s assumptions to facilitate exploration of a person’s inner world, which can be accessed through naturally occurring metaphors. This definition highlights that the questioner limits the introduction of content that does not originate from the client/interviewee in order to facilitate exploration of their inner world of metaphor.

CL is compatible with a phenomenological study as both are concerned with personal understanding of experience, validating the interviewee’s experience and the bracketing of the interviewer’s assumptions. These three dimensions of CL are reviewed to illustrate why it is an apt method for eliciting metaphor. As CL is used to gather data in interviews the four components relevant to interviewing (syntax, clean questions, attention to non-verbal metaphors and vocal qualities) are provided in the following chapter on Research Methodology.

CL originated through the work of psychologist David Grove who realised that clients often expressed their worlds in metaphor and that the less he interpreted their worlds and the more he directed the client’s attention to their own
metaphors, the quicker they resolved difficult memories (Grove and Panzer, 1989). His therapeutic work was modelled by psychotherapists Penny Tompkins and James Lawley (2000) who codified and extended CL and have been central in establishing its use with a broader population. Despite its psychotherapeutic origins, CL is now offered to a wide-ranging public through publically available courses and is used in coaching (Way, 2013), group work (Walker, 2014), education (McCracken, 2016), and management research (Tosey et al., 2014).

The first reason that CL is a relevant method to elicit and explore metaphors in naturally occurring talk is its attention to the personal meaning of metaphor, which can be expressed multi-modally in words, gestures, sounds or other means. This corresponds to Cornelissen et al.’s (2008) focus, form and modality of metaphor. David Grove, in pioneering this approach, paid particular attention to the very personal meaning of metaphor rather than staying with the more general-level and commonly accepted associations of metaphor and symbol. Grove claimed that CL is information-centred which respects that information is sourced in a number of different places: semantically, somatically, spatially, and temporally and “is rich in metaphor, imagery, and symbols” (1998 p.28). The importance of being information centred is that this places attention on the client’s internal mental model so that, through facilitation, they will know more about these models and how they do things in the ‘real’ world. As CL provides a method to elicit and explore the personal meaning of metaphor multi-modally it is considered apt for this study.

The second reason that CL is a relevant method for eliciting participant metaphors is because it honours and validates the individual's experience. Relying on naturally occurring metaphors and through a fidelity to participants’ own words CL provides a means to explore the idiosyncratic and often surprising nature of metaphors. As the aim of CL is self-discovery there is no interpretation of the metaphors from the CL interviewer. David Grove was very clear that the process is one of exploration and transformation and not interpretation. This is important for this study that aims to find out what leaders can learn from an exploration of their inner worlds, which emphasises their own discovery rather
than researcher-led interpretation. Due to the care with which questions are formulated and asked, James Lawley and Penny Tompkins, claim “Clean Language both validates the client’s experience and facilitates the 'bringing into form' or 'giving life to' symbolic information normally out of everyday awareness” (2000 p.1).

The third reason that CL is appropriate for eliciting participants’ metaphors in this study is that it encourages the bracketing of the interviewers assumptions so that they can direct attention the participant’s attention to their inner world. This bracketing of assumptions, similar to epoché in phenomenology, makes CL particularly relevant for this phenomenological study. The aim of the CL interviewer is to work with their client from the client's perspective with minimal introduction of content that does not originate from the client. This involves the interviewer bracketing assumptions, replicating the participant’s words, vocal qualities and gestures to stay with the participant's experience of their inner world, which may be embodied in gestures, pauses in speech and emotions as much as in obvious linguistic metaphors.

This section has reviewed the choice of CL as a method to elicit naturally occurring metaphors. From its psychotherapeutic origins, CL is now used in a wide variety of applications and has been pioneered as a qualitative research methodology (Tosey et al., 2014). CL is a suitable choice for eliciting metaphors in this study because it offers a way to elicit and explore the personal meaning of participant’s naturally occurring metaphors. Furthermore metaphor elicited through CL responds to suggestions to “stay as close as possible to the life-world” of people (Cornelissen et al., 2008 p.16). As metaphor is so central to this study the following section identifies the properties of metaphor building on Ortony's (1975; 1993) extensive work.

3.7 Properties of Metaphor

Metaphors serve multiple functions including: filling gaps in language for phenomena that do not have adequate terms, expressing emotion and humour, cultivating intimacy by creating a sense of community, modelling and rendering
something memorable (Goatly, 2011). Furthermore Tietze et al. (2003) suggests they are invaluable for coping with large amounts of information, for offering a flexible framework for understanding, for dealing with ambiguity and for simplifying complex issues. Scholars have developed several ways of depicting metaphors, for example, live or dead, strong or weak, deep or surface (Pinto, 2016). For example on this continuum live metaphors require a context in order to understand them (Fraser, 1993) whereas dead metaphors have become so familiar that they are used literally (Tsoukas, 1991), strong metaphors have compact vivid images and resonate leading to further exploration (Black, 1993) whereas weak metaphors are “neither emphatic nor resonant” (Black, 1993, p.26), deep metaphors capture the essence of phenomena (Schön, 1979), whereas surface metaphors are more superficial simplifications (Oswick and Grant, 1996). Building on Ortony’s extensive work on metaphor and thought, Table 3-1 outlines five key properties of metaphor, which indicate why metaphors are well placed to illuminate the inner world.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inexpressibility</strong></td>
<td>Illuminates “something vague, unknown or hidden”</td>
<td>Ortony, 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vivid</strong></td>
<td>Vibrant, distinctive picture</td>
<td>Ortony, 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compact</strong></td>
<td>Memorable information in precise and vague language</td>
<td>Ortony, 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specifies and Constrains</strong></td>
<td>Both descriptive about experience AND prescriptive about action</td>
<td>Lawley &amp; Tompkins, 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Depth</strong></td>
<td>Enduring ways of perceiving, similar to Jung’s idea of archetypes</td>
<td>Zaltman &amp; Zaltman, 2008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.7.1 Inexpressibility

Inexpressibility illuminates “something vague, unknown or hidden” (Sticht, 1993 p.62). This could apply to abstract concepts, inner worlds and emotions that are deemed difficult to articulate. Metaphor helps understand “intangible emotional experiences” (Kovecses, 2000 p.191) and abstract phenomena like leadership
As many words used in management are abstract and conceptual they are illuminated by metaphor such as strategy (Bürgi and Roos, 2003), identity (Jacobs et al., 2013; Nyberg and Sveningsson, 2014), change processes (Marshak, 1993) and change agents (Cassell and Lee, 2012). By using metaphor to borrow from more familiar domains, ideas, feelings, experiences and sensations that may be less easy to articulate can be expressed.

Oberlechner & Mayer-Schönberger suggest, “metaphors may contribute to a better and more concrete grasp of leadership and the actions of leaders... Metaphors provide us with a more differentiated appreciation of different conceptions of leadership” (2003 p.161). Most research with metaphor has been applied to organisations rather than leadership as Parry states “little attempt has been made to look specifically at the links between metaphors and leadership” (2008 p.7). Some exceptions are deductive metaphors which have illuminated archetypes of leaders through comparison to fine art (Lindsey, 2010), the kind of leader needed for a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) environment (Alejandro and Yolanda, 2015) and leaders (Alvesson and Spicer, 2011). This study aims to fill a gap in the literature to elicit metaphors for leadership, which responds to Parry’s implicit invitation for work to link metaphor with leadership.

3.7.2 Vivid

Metaphors are able to paint a vivid picture of abstract concepts, experience and emotional states that might otherwise be difficult to visualise. Metaphor works by reducing the “complexity of experience” or abstract concepts “to a few simple dimensions” and images that are easy to visualise and recall (Bürgi and Roos, 2003 p.75). Geary concurs, claiming that metaphors place images “within the range of our mental vision objects not actually visible to our sight” (2012 loc.857). To illustrate this he quotes Addison who claimed, “the test of a true metaphor is whether or not there is sufficient detail for it to be painted” (Addison, 1712 Quoted in Geary, 2012, loc.851).
Seeing in pictures relates to things in the present moment, as a whole, non-verbally and non-rationally, seeing overall patterns and structuring things holistically (Edwards, 2001). These descriptors can be applied to the vivid quality of metaphor that is simultaneously intense, striking, non-rational and holistic. Metaphors arise intuitively and are non-rational, meaning that they do not have to make sense in a typical factual or rational manner. The unexpected can emerge in metaphor and the unexpected often creates and leaves lasting vivid images. The unexpected occurs through highlighting novel associations by “jumbling together the abstract with the concrete, the physical with the psychological, the like with the unlike” leaving vivid impressions (Geary, 2012 p.2).

3.7.3 Compact

Metaphor is the “precise use of vague language” (Battino, 2005 p.2). The precision conveys the essence of an idea through language that is vague enough to let the mind wander and explore implications that would be confused or closed off by adding more language to the metaphor. In this sense, metaphor is similar to fables and parables, which impart wisdom through a succinct fictional story. Metaphors are able to be so compact because they replicate people’s inner knowledge acting as “mirrors reflecting our inner images of self, life, and others” (Kopp, 1995 p.xiii). Furthermore, groups are able to support the same direction for different reasons in organisations due to metaphors’ inherent compactness and precise use of vague language (Astley and Zammuto, 1992).

3.7.4 Specifies and Constrains

Lawley and Tomkins (2000) add a fourth property of metaphor to Ortony’s inexpressibility, vividness and compactness claiming this is the property that most affects people’s lives. They say metaphor both specifies and constrains ways of thinking that has implications for action. This resonates with Lakoff and Johnson’s claims that metaphors “govern our everyday functioning” (1980 p.3). It is this property that is vital to my research about the metaphors leaders use - for within their metaphors are both descriptions of what they do as well as the
prescriptions for what they ‘should do’ according to their own mental models. It is precisely because metaphors have this ability to both explain experience and commend or even command action that they have an influence far more pervasive than being simply vivid, compact expressions of more abstract thoughts or feelings. Lawley and Tompkins were introduced to the idea that “the models of the world” that each person creates are idiosyncratic and used “to generate behaviour” by the originators of Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Richard Bandler and John Grinder (1975 p.7). Lawley and Tomkins extended this idea to autogenic metaphors, reasoning that metaphor is a mini model (personal correspondence with James Lawley). They suggest, therefore, that paying attention to naturally occurring metaphors highlights how people perceive and experience the world and how metaphor can specify and constrain action.

3.7.5 Depth

Similar to Jung’s (1954) idea of archetypes which he stated were inherent in mankind’s abiding patterns, Zaltman and Zaltman propose that “deep metaphors are enduring ways of perceiving things, making sense of what we encounter, and guiding our subsequent actions” (2008 loc.188). Like other theorists of metaphor they state that metaphors are influenced by the culture in which people grow up to create and re-present the world with which we interact. Metaphors are deep for two reasons; firstly because they are largely unconscious, consequently people are seldom aware of their impact. Secondly they capture “human universals… found in nearly all societies”, which Zaltman and Zaltman claim result in people all over the world using “the same relatively few deep metaphors” (2008 loc.199). Suggesting that metaphors exist at three levels, surface metaphors, metaphor themes and deep metaphors, Zaltman and Zaltman have identified seven deep metaphors that are fundamental categories of thought. Claimed to be universal for how people understand and react to the world, the seven deep metaphors are; balance, transformation, journey, container, connection, resource and control.

This section has identified the key properties of metaphor: inexpressibility, vividness, compactness, specify and constrain and depth to demonstrate why
metaphor is such an enduring and significant part of how people communicate. The following section identifies the relationship between metaphor and mental models.

### 3.8 From Metaphor to Mental Models

Mental models, like metaphor, are “deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and take action” (Senge, 1994 p.8). Mental models including implicit leadership theories are schema that are mostly beyond conscious awareness, used as mental representations of the world and are central to theories by which people “represent the world and interact with it through symbols” (Carley and Palmquist, 1992). They are powerful heuristics because they affect how people see and shape the world through deeply held internal images of how the world works. Yet Senge maintains that these images can limit people to “familiar ways of thinking and acting” if they are not aware of their inner models nor the effects they can have on behaviour (1994 p.203). Recognising that all models are simplifications of the world, it is when models are tacit and unexamined that they can cause problems. For example, if leaders do not examine their models they can “limit an organisation’s range of actions to what is familiar” (Senge, 1994 p.187). Yet because these inner models or implicit leadership theories are hard to see, Senge suggests leaders may need the help of another person to bring the models into the open and explore their world-views. Without this exploration inner models are taken to be facts and not recognised as assumptions that benefit from examination. There is, however, little in the literature about how to surface and articulate leaders’ mental models. One exception comes from Carley and Palmquist’s (1992) principles on extracting, representing and analysing mental models are useful. They claim:

1. Mental models are internal representations
2. Language is the key to understanding mental models, that is, mental models can be represented linguistically and those representations can be based on linguistic accounts
3. Mental models can be represented as networks of concepts
(4) The meaning of a concept for an individual is embedded in its relations to other concepts in the individual’s mental model and

(5) The social meaning of a concept is not defined in a universal sense but rather through the intersection of individuals’ mental models (Carley and Palmquist, 1992 p.602).

They build on Stryker’s observation that people respond to the world through symbols that “have meaning, are cues to behaviour and organize behaviour” (1980 p.56) to suggest that people’s language provides a window to their mental models. Carley and Palmquist’s principles provide an excellent base for this study, which builds on their claims and approach but focuses specifically on the role of naturally occurring metaphors elicited through CL, based on the principle of modelling. In Lawley and Tompkins words, “modelling is the methodology, metaphor the medium and Clean Language the means” (2000 p.1).

Like Carley and Palmquist (1992) and Lawley and Tompkins (2000), Karl Pribram (1969), a neurosurgeon and psychologist known for his pioneering work on the brain, claims that metaphor and analogical reasoning are essential to developing empirical models be it in brain science or other domains. The process starts with gathering insight from metaphor. At this stage some similarities between different domains are noticed but the focus is typically quite broad and general. The second stage involves analogical reasoning, which aims to “trim” the metaphor by comparing the similarities and differences between the two domains. Noting that analogical reasoning can be implicit, Pribram maintains it is “one of the most powerful tools for innovative thought” (1990 p.97) as it enables new perspectives to be gained from one domain to another. The third and final stage involves transforming the metaphor into a model that can be shared and tested more broadly. Pribram (1990 p.98) acknowledges the scheme between “metaphorical insight, reasoned analogy and empirical modelling” is simple but he gives ample evidence from brain science to suggest that it is a “straightforward and accurate way” for people to understand themselves. This process is similar to the domains interaction model of metaphor proposed by Cornelissen who proposes that metaphor is “an
interactive process of "seeing as" or "conceiving as" which generates emergent meaning (2005 p.756).

Hill and Levenhagen (1995) outline a similar process for how metaphor stems from intuitive understanding and transforms into mental models. Figure 3-1 illustrates the three steps of their framework. The first step is emotive, vaguely felt tacit beliefs (Polyani, 1966). Typically these intuitive beliefs have not been articulated but are shaped by culture, context, previous experience and language. The second step is the articulation of these beliefs typically in metaphor which is the “first developments of models philosophically, psychologically and sociologically” (Hill and Levenhagen, 1995 p.1062). The third step is the refinement of the metaphor to a more formal, precise model, which is typically context-specific and reflected in written procedures.

![Figure 3-1 Mental Model Development Process](Source: Hill and Levenhagen, 1995, p.1060 – Used with Permission)

This visual representation of the transformation from inner intuitive models through metaphors to mental models summarises the conceptual scheme outlined by Pribram and provides a useful foundation for this study. Noting that metaphor is inherently paradoxical as it says one thing in terms of another, Hill and Levenhagen emphasise the benefits of metaphor for making sense of ambiguous environments in flux. They claim that metaphor offers a flexible framework for creating understanding due to its inherent ambiguity, which
enables a coalescence of meaning around the metaphor. Their study concerned entrepreneurs who “operate at the edge” of what they know, in “under-organized systems” trying to shape a “new order” in which established mental models may not have been developed (Hill and Levenhagen, 1995 p.1067). This description of operating in the unknown is an apt description of leaders who also make sense of unknown situations and deal with ambiguous, equivocal environments.

3.9 Summary of Chapter Three

This chapter has argued that metaphor is fundamental to thought, language and meaning-making and is indispensible for leaders to manage meaning (Smircich and Morgan, 1982). Furthermore attention to metaphor develops awareness of how the inner world of mental models and implicit leadership theories affect leaders’ outer words and actions (Marshak et al., 2000). Metaphor has been used since Aristotle in theory building in diverse domains (Gibbs, 2008; Grant and Oswick, 1996; Ortony, 1993) and is ubiquitous to how people make sense of the world. Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) CMT marked a turning point in conceptualising metaphor and so its key arguments have been discussed in this chapter. These arguments emphasise metaphor’s experiential nature, its ability to create a synthesis between the objective and the subjective and to structure experience through understanding one thing in terms of another.

The use of metaphor in organisational research has been described and Cornelissen et al.’s (2008) framework has been introduced as a useful way to consider the focus, form and modality of metaphor. The use of elicited, contextual and multi-modal metaphor in this study responds to calls for this approach to metaphor in diverse organisations. Clean Language (Lawley and Tompkins, 2000) has been defined and introduced as a method to elicit metaphor with the minimal introduction of content from the outside, rendering metaphors faithful to participants. The chapter highlighted five properties of metaphor: inexpressibility, vivid, compact, specify and constrain and depth to illustrate why metaphor is well placed to illuminate the inner world. Finally the chapter concluded by demonstrating the important but under-researched
relationship between metaphors and models to illustrate how tacit knowledge can be made more visible and accessible.
4 Research Methodology

This chapter reports on the research methodology in order to address my research question and arrive at my conclusions. The chapter comments on the variety of philosophical and methodological approaches and the difficulty of “labelling” qualitative research (Symon and Cassell, 2004 p.2). Next, the purpose of the study, the research proposition and research question are made clear. Following the “research onion” proposed by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016 p.124) the research philosophy, approach, strategy, choice, time horizon are described. I make clear decisions about the heterogeneous purposive sample, how participants were identified for the study and approached as well as demographic characteristics of the sample. Methods for data collection via interview and drawing are detailed followed by an overview of how data were analysed for the study. Issues of access and trust for elite participants are outlined and the chapter concludes with a discussion of ethics and the researcher role and reflexivity.

4.1 Qualitative Research - Defining the Field

Definitions of research methods and practice are debated within academe and especially in management studies due to the number of different approaches used and the multi-disciplinary nature of management (Watson, 1997). Key proponents of qualitative research Cassell and Symon (2004 p.1) state that whilst qualitative research is a “convenient label” it is “very problematic” for several reasons. Firstly, whilst quantitative research is generally underpinned by positivist assumptions, which provide a common foundation and measure of quality, qualitative research can be underpinned by many epistemological positions, which can lead to a splintering of the field and lack of agreement of what constitutes quality. A second problem is that without a common gold standard against which to judge the quality of qualitative research the field is left open to anyone who claims to undertake qualitative research. A third problem is the marginalised or alternate position that qualitative research holds in
comparison with the traditional position of quantitative research. Cassell and Symon (2004) claim the problem is not that qualitative research is less rigorous than quantitative research but that its practice tends to be compared to the norm of quantitative research especially by academic epistemological gatekeepers.

In a review of the role and status of qualitative methods in management research Cassell, Symon, Buehring and Johnson note a number of issues not least that “high quality research is associated with quantification” (2006 p.301). This can relegate qualitative research to being a prelude to the ‘real’ quantitative research. Furthermore they suggest the diversity of approaches and methods in qualitative research can lead to a “patchy” field. This patchiness necessitates greater education and training about differences in the field. Moreover, they stress the need for relevant assessment criteria for evaluating the contribution of qualitative research in management. Thirty years ago Lincoln and Guba (1986) suggested that different paradigms require different evaluation systems. They proposed that naturalistic (qualitative) studies use the criteria of trustworthiness and authenticity rather than the traditional criteria of natural science: validity, reliability, consistency and objectivity. Subsequent to their much-cited work, scholars have continued to propose various criteria for assessing qualitative research e.g. (Johnson et al., 2006; Yardley, 2000). However, Schwandt suggests that it is not to criteria that researchers should look to justify the quality of their research but to “the practices, consequences and outcomes of” their “ways of deliberating” (1996 p.70). This deliberation on theoretical and personal preferences and reflection about the researcher’s role in the research process has been called ‘reflexivity’ and attracted significant attention from management scholars (Bryman and Cassell, 2006; Cunliffe, 2003; Cunliffe and Easterby-Smith, 2016; Cunliffe and Jun, 2005; Holland, 1999). Holland claims that whilst there are many definitions, “reflexivity is shaped by metaphors, thought styles” (1999 p.473). Noting Morgan’s work on metaphor in organisations, he suggests that metaphors provide “pathways of understanding leading to a metatheoretical position” (1999 p.471). This is a noteworthy connection to this study. The process of learning about oneself as a researcher through reflexive practice “illuminates deeper, richer meanings about personal,
theoretical, ethical, and epistemological aspects of the research question” (Kleinsasser, 2000 p.155) and helps uncover assumptions. This is a position advocated by Cassell and Symon's (2004) tireless quest to elevate qualitative research through education and through a focus on building reflexive practice into the world of management research (Cassell et al., 2009). Throughout this chapter on research methods, I aim to make clear my assumptions in line with Cunliffe's suggestion to become a “self-conscious and self-questioning being” (2005 p.236-7).

4.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose this study is to find out what leaders could learn about their own models of leadership and development through an exploration of their naturally occurring metaphors. The study is exploratory in nature responding to Hackman and Wageman's claim that “leaders may be unaware of the degree to which their models are shaping their leadership behaviours” (2007 p.46).

4.3 Research Proposition

As stated in Chapter One, the proposition of this research is that when those in leadership roles reveal, explore and connect with their inner metaphorical worlds they access greater understanding of their construction of leadership and greater awareness about their internal frames and external actions including the implications for themselves, the people and organisations they lead. It is further proposed that this kind of self-exploration can lead to greater authenticity enabling those in leadership roles to be true to themselves instead of driven by external pressures and external models. This proposition is based on concepts of authenticity (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012; Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Erickson, 1995; Kernis and Goldman, 2006) and wholeness (Jung, 1967) in which individuals integrate visible and invisible strengths and weaknesses as well as conscious and unconscious aspects. It is based on directing attention to the metaphoric and symbolic domain, which holds deep data and encourages leaders to “open up new and previously unthought possibilities for consideration” (Chia, 1996 p.144).
4.4 Research Question

Following the purpose and proposition, this research seeks to answer the question:

What can leaders learn about their leadership and development from an exploration of their inner worlds through metaphor?

This question contains several elements. First, the question seeks to understand ‘what’, if anything, leaders learn from an exploration of their own conceptualisations of leadership through their naturally occurring metaphors. Second the question seeks to understand ‘how’ leaders learn through this process. This picks up Johnson’s (2008) claim that leaders’ mental models are key to understanding leadership development whilst addressing the scant attention that has been paid to understanding mental models. Third the question seeks to understand the salient metaphors that leaders use to conceptualise their leadership to see if these are different to the deductive metaphors used by scholars (Alvesson and Spicer, 2011). The seven research objectives that underpin the question are outlined in Chapter One (section on Purpose and Research Question).

Bryman states that there is often a dilemma in qualitative research about being clear enough to make a start through reference to literature that bestows credibility and provides “a rationale for an investigation” and being open enough to be surprised by what emerges through “a commitment to getting at the perspective of those one studies through an open-ended research approach that contaminates the topic as little as possible, on the other” (2004 p.749). I intend to address this delicate balance by following Oberlechner and Mayer-Schönberger’s proposal that: “Examining metaphors may help leaders reflect on how they implicitly construct leadership” (2003 p.161), hence my grounding this study in the literatures of authentic leadership and metaphor. I pick up Oberlechner and Mayer-Schönberger’s challenge to look for evidence “that different metaphors generate different understandings and conceptualisations of leadership” (2003 p.172) by turning to leaders’ own metaphors for leadership
and aiming to contaminate their words as little as possible through using CL. But more than mere conceptualisation, I seek to understand the personal interpretation and implications of leadership and its development held in naturally occurring metaphor using authentic leadership theory as a foundation for exploring how leadership can be developed at the intrapersonal level.

4.5 Research Design

Management research has “widening boundaries, a multiparadigmatic profile and methodological inventiveness” (Buchanan and Bryman, 2007 p.483) which makes it a complex area and imperative to make clear research design decisions. Research design is shaped by multiple factors including epistemological beliefs, aims of the study, the discourse within which the study is located, norms within management research and ethical and pragmatic considerations. The importance of clarifying assumptions and choices includes the need to be intellectually responsible and rigorous, to defend methodological choices and to be reflexive in approaching the research. Saunders et al. (2016) urge researchers to consider theoretical choices in order to defend them in relation to the alternatives that could have been taken as a way to become aware of assumptions that are often taken-for-granted. These arguments are echoed in Cassell and Symon’s call for a more “reflexive discipline” that requires researchers to reflect on choices about research methods and “their views on the nature of reality and knowledge” (2004 p.6). Johnson and Duberley forcefully state that “poor research practices” result from researchers’ abdication of their “intellectual responsibility” (2003 p.1280). Thus management research practice calls for a reflexive attitude to examine the taken-for-granted assumptions about the way the world works. This mirrors the focus of this study to examine leaders’ taken-for-granted assumptions. Thus for both theoretical reasons and the demands of my own research it is essential to review the choices I have made.

With the explicit focus of this study on metaphor, it is perhaps unsurprising that I have found the metaphor of the “research onion” (Saunders et al., 2016 p.124) to be very helpful in examining the assumptions and choices I am making (Figure 4-1). Not only is the ‘research onion’ visual and therefore easy to see the aspects
which might otherwise be overlooked, but just as with a real onion there are layers to ‘peel back’ in order to understand why specific choices have been made based on certain assumptions, beliefs and values. Following the logic presented in “the research onion” of research philosophy, approach, strategy, choices, time horizons and data collection techniques and procedures I clarify the assumptions and choices made in this study.

![The Research Onion](source:Saunders et al., 2016, p.124 – Used with Permission)

**4.6 Research Philosophy**

The importance of being clear about research philosophy is central to discussions about qualitative research (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003; Saunders et al., 2009; Symon and Cassell, 2012). Qualitative research is itself characterised by four underlying principles (Lee, 1999):
1. qualitative research occurs in natural settings.
2. qualitative data derive from the participant's perspective.
3. qualitative research designs are flexible (i.e. reflexive).
4. instrumentation, observation methods, and modes of analysis are not standard (1999 p.22).

Based on a comparison of the research philosophies of positivism, realism, interpretivism and pragmatism in business and management research (Saunders et al., 2016) this study adopts an interpretivist philosophy which is concerned with subjective meanings, acknowledges that the values of the researcher impact the study and sees reality as socially constructed. An interpretivist philosophy is particularly suitable to understand “participants' unique perceptions, assumptions, prejudgements, presuppositions, and connections to their social worlds,” (Lee, 1999 p.40) and is apposite for this study that aims to surface and explore leaders' conceptualisations of leadership.

The relevance of being clear about this position is vital, as there has been a long-standing debate within management research about whether positivist, measurable and externally observable quantitative techniques or interpretivist, subjective, socially constructed qualitative methods are most suitable in relation to the aims of the research (Buchanan and Bryman, 2011; Lee and Cassell, 2013; Prasad and Prasad, 2002). This debate tends to polarise the two positions in opposition to each other and proponents of each method typically highlight the advantages of their chosen method and refute the validity of the other which is eloquently captured in Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) objectivist-subjectivist myths (see section on Metaphors We Live By - Conceptual Metaphor Theory in Chapter Three). Research philosophy impacts three fundamental questions concerning the nature of reality, the nature of knowledge and the role of values discussed next.

4.6.1 **Ontology - The Nature of Reality**

Ontology refers to the nature of reality. As illustrated in Chapter Two, leadership research has increasingly moved from an objectivist perspective where reality exists as something independent of social actors (Crotty, 1998) to a more interpretivist perspective in which the meaning of events is critically important.
Viewing reality as socially constructed and open to multiple perspectives I adopt an interpretivist view of ontology. This interpretivist view resonates with the purpose of this study to discover the different meaning that leaders construe about leadership and how these subjective meanings frame reality. Hence my ontological view reflects an interpretivist philosophy.

4.6.2 Epistemology - What is Acceptable Knowledge?

What is considered acceptable knowledge, who gets to decide what is acceptable and how it ‘measures up’ are crucial questions. There are many discourses within academia about what is acceptable knowledge (Cassell and Symon, 2004; Johnson and Duberley, 2000) which revolve around three key epistemological questions: (1) theories about truth (2) how knowledge is acquired and (3) the relationship between the researcher and the researched. The first question concerns a difference between natural science, which regards truth as objective and social science, which regards truth as socially constructed. The second question differentiates between deductive approaches (typical in the natural sciences) that use logic to state and test hypotheses and inductive approaches (often used in interpretive) research that look for patterns. The third question concerns how much research is affected by the values of the researcher and is discussed below in the section on axiology. As the subjective view of knowledge or interpretivism is so critical to this research, I briefly highlight its foundation from its “two intellectual traditions: phenomenology and symbolic interactionism” (Saunders et al., 2009 p.137).

4.6.3 Phenomenology

Husserl, a German mathematician and philosopher, is considered the Father of Phenomenology (1982). He broke with scientific positivistic tradition and engaged in a systematic reflection of subjective experience of people’s ordinary “lived-world” or “lebenswelt” in order to uncover the essence of a phenomenon. Phenomenology is concerned with first-person accounts of their experiences in order to understand what a phenomenon is like. Phenomenology claims that people are often only vaguely aware of their experience and typically live
automatically and that reflection brings things into view for conscious consideration (Giorgi, 1985; Moustakas, 1994). Husserl's phenomenology was influential for many subsequent phenomenologists Heidegger (1962), Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Alfred Schutz (1967). As a research philosophy phenomenology is an interpretive inquiry that seeks “an in-depth understanding of the nature and meaning of everyday experience” (Gibson and Hanes, 2003 p.182) and “offers a complex method for understanding complex experience” (Conklin, 2007 p.276). The value of first person accounts, which are the essence of phenomenological research, is increasingly recognised in research (Finlay, 2014; Giorgi, 2006; Tosey, 2011; Tosey and Mathison, 2010; van Manen, 2007; Varela, 1997). However, positivists, who seek to understand knowledge in a more objective manner, critique these subjective first person accounts.

4.6.4 Symbolic Interactionism

The other major intellectual tradition that informs interpretivism is symbolic interactionism articulated by Herbert Blumer (1969), who developed and articulated the original ideas of George Herbert Mead (1934). Blumer was a staunch critic of positivist methods and a proponent of reality being socially constructed. The central idea of symbolic interactionism is that reality is created within the social domain in interaction with others. For Blumer the key features of social interactionism are:

(1) People act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to them,
(2) the meaning of such things arises out of the social interaction that a person has with others and society and
(3) these meanings are modified through an interpretative process.

Phenomenology and symbolic interactionism are based on a belief that subjective meanings are a valid form of knowledge, which fits the purpose of this study to understand leaders’ ‘lived experience’.

4.6.5 Axiology - The Role of Values

Axiology is the philosophical study of values. In natural sciences phenomena are
seen as independent and unaffected by the researcher and so research is seen as value free. However, in social science the relationship between the researcher and researched is more interactive and the role of the researcher’s values is increasingly acknowledged and visible in interpretivist research. Arguing that values are essential, John Heron (1996) claims that they “become more fully revealed as behaviour becomes more and more authentic” (1999 p.335). Incorporating and revealing personal values underpins this study both for participants to connect with their own authentic leadership through making their own meaning (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012; Gardner et al., 2005; Sparrowe, 2005) and for me as researcher.

This research has been a personal search for authenticity navigating the norms of academia and my own subjective ways of knowing. Wanting my research to have validity, impact and credibility, I initially looked to justify and make credible my work in the scientific tradition, yet as I have voyaged amongst qualitative research and the literature on reflexivity, authenticity and metaphor, I feel that I have come home to myself, to my values of undertaking an up close and personal perspective of the inner worlds of leaders. This is not a large-scale impersonal study but a depth perspective on the symbolic world of leaders. As I have become more comfortable with valuing my values of subjective experience and have found precedents for this in the literature (Rod, 2011), I have become more comfortable with having these values inform the research design. One inspirational source for making clear how my values inform the research comes from Carl Jung, whose “understanding of humanity grew directly out of his understanding of himself” (Stevens, 1994 p.2).

4.7 Research Approach - Inductive

The next layer of the “research onion” is the approach to acquiring knowledge. There is a choice to be made between deductive, inductive and abductive approaches. This study adopts an inductive approach, which typically starts with collecting data to explore patterns in phenomena as a way to build a theory. Inductive approaches move from the specific to the general, from data to description and aim to understand the meaning that people attach to events.
Induction does not aim to test hypotheses or identify if something is valid or invalid but rather aims to identify how probable it is that a conclusion is true, which has led philosopher, Karl Popper (1959) to criticise induction. Resonant with an inductive approach, the aim in this study is to provide rich accounts of how leaders describe their own ideas of reality. Snape and Spencer differentiate inductive and deductive approaches saying; “inductive processes involve using evidence as the genesis of a conclusion; deductive processes use evidence in support of a conclusion” (2003 p.14). Verification or falsification tends to fit within deductive approaches and the positivistic paradigm, which inclines towards objectively known truth. Abductive approaches represent an iterative style that moves between collecting data to explore and identify theory, which is then further tested by collecting additional data. This approach is frequently used in management research (Saunders et al., 2016). In practice it is possible to use different approaches in combination, but what is important is that the research approach is compatible with the research philosophy and strategy.

4.8 Research Choice - Multi-Method Qualitative Study

Various choices exist for gathering data – including mono methods which use one data collection technique and relevant analysis procedures, multi-methods which combine data collection techniques and corresponding data analysis procedures from either a quantitative or qualitative perspective or mixed methods which combine data collection and analysis techniques from quantitative and qualitative perspectives (Saunders et al., 2016). This study’s choice is multi-method combining qualitative data collection techniques of interviews and participant drawings.

The decision to use multiple methods by incorporating drawings into this study was made for several reasons, not least that multiple methods can enhance the ability to answer the research question (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003) in a creative fashion (Saunders et al., 2016). These reasons for using drawings are addressed in detail in the forthcoming section on Drawings as part of how data were collected, however it is useful to highlight in this section on ‘research choice’ the key justifications for the inclusion of drawings. The use of drawings
follows suggestions that arts-based approaches to leader development complement rational verbal knowledge (Taylor and Ladkin, 2009). Scholars have also suggested that drawings can aid reflection (Bryans and Mavin, 2006), which it is theorised could be a useful way for leaders to learn about their leadership, which supports the key aim of this research. Furthermore, although metaphors are expressed multi-modally in words, visual images, gestures etc. the majority of work with metaphors in organisations has privileged verbal metaphors (Oswick et al., 2002) leading to a paucity of multi-modal metaphor in organisational research (Cornelissen et al., 2008). This study aims to address this lack of multi-modal metaphor by asking leaders to express their metaphors verbally and pictorially. Additionally, this study seeks to extend Schyns et al. (2013) work on using drawings to elicit implicit leadership theories. Finally, drawing is an integral part of Clean Language practice and it is a natural ‘conclusion’ to an interview to ask participants to draw what they know following the interview. The use of interviews and drawings are addressed in detail in sections on data collection.

4.9 Research Strategy - Phenomenology

Research strategy is the next layer of the “research onion” and comprises many strategies in qualitative research including inter alia surveys, case studies, action research, grounded theory, ethnography and phenomenology. Comprehensive reviews of the diversity of various qualitative methods can be found in Cassell and Symon (2004) and Saunders et al. (2016). Useful comparisons of qualitative methods that I considered for this study are provided by Starks and Trinidad (2007) (phenomenology, discourse analysis and grounded theory) and Creswell (2013) (narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case studies). It is not my intention to review each of these domains or methods but rather to acknowledge the range available.

The approach adopted for this study is phenomenological because this enables a close understanding of the lived experiences and meaning for people involved in the chosen phenomenon. A phenomenological approach helps answer my research question about what leaders can learn about their leadership through
understanding their experience of leadership and the meaning they attach to it through generating thick descriptions. Moreover a phenomenological approach enables a broad understanding of the essence of leadership through studying the experience of several leaders. Results of phenomenological studies typically are not generalizable beyond the sample, although findings from phenomenological studies can inform a wide range of topics leading to further exploration.

Phenomenology is both a philosophy and a qualitative research method that aims to describe “the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences” (Creswell, 2013) p.57. Phenomenology developed as a challenge to the dominant scientific views of the time and according to Stewart and Mickunas (1990) it rests on four philosophical perspectives: (1) a return to the traditional tasks of philosophy as a search for wisdom, (2) a philosophy without presuppositions through suspending judgement, (called epoché by Husserl), (3) the ‘intentionality of consciousness’ which means that consciousness is always directed toward an object, (4) rejection of the subject-object dichotomy, which is a consequence of the intentionality of consciousness that claims the reality of an object is perceived within the meaning of the experience of the individual. There are philosophical and processual differences between key proponents of phenomenology e.g.: Heidegger (1962), Merleau-Ponty (1962), Gadamer (1975), van Manen (1990) and Moustakas (1994), but phenomenology aims to discover the essence of phenomena in a nuanced thoughtful manner. This study draws on the general philosophical principles of phenomenology as described above and van Manen’s (1984) suggestions for writing about phenomenological studies but adopts Moustakas (1994) transcendental or psychological phenomenology as this foregrounds participants’ descriptions with minimal interpretation from the researcher.

4.9.1 Major Components of Phenomenological Research

Phenomenology is a broad philosophy and strategy for research with varying methods however Creswell (2013) provides an orientation to this research strategy and notes five major steps involved in phenomenological research. The first step in a phenomenological study is determining if the research is best
suited to a phenomenological approach. Creswell suggests that a phenomenological approach is useful to understand the views of several people’s experience of a phenomenon to develop a deep understanding, which reflects the purpose of this study. The second step is to understand the philosophical assumptions of phenomenology as identified in the previous section. Step three is to bracket out a priori knowledge and experience in order to attend as fully as possible to participants, which I have undertaken using CL, explicated in the following section. The fourth step is to collect data from participants usually through in-depth interviewing although art, poetry and music may also be used (van Manen, 1990). For this study in-depth interviews have been supplemented by participant-created drawings to access metaphors multi-modally (see section on modality of metaphors in Chapter Three). The fifth step is data analysis, which entails going through the data to highlight significant statements that indicate how participants experienced the phenomenon. This is called “horizontalisation” by Moustakas. Clusters of meaning are then developed and used to write a textural description of what the participants experienced and a structural description of how the participants experienced the phenomenon. The final stage is to write a composite description - the essence of the experience which describes “what it is like for someone to experience” the phenomenon (Polkinghorne, 1989 p.46). The specific steps involved in data analysis are covered in the section on techniques and procedures later in the chapter.

4.9.2 Époché - Bracketing Through Clean Language

Part of the phenomenological approach advocated by Husserl is époché a Greek term (ἐποχή epokhē) meaning ‘suspension’, achieved by a temporary bracketing of experience in order to see things afresh. The question of bracketing is an essential feature of phenomenological research (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). Bracketing has been contested by the existentialists (Heidegger, 1962; Merleau-Ponty, 1962) who declared it to be “unteenable” (LeVasseur, 2003 p.416) because people are already ‘thrown’ into the world and therefore unable to bracket their experience of it. LeVasseur has explored the problem of bracketing in phenomenology and follows Boyd’s (1989) suggestion that bracketing is not an “elimination of preconceived ideas” which is impossible but, “rather, a temporary
suspension of prior beliefs so that other perspectives and questions can emerge” (LeVasseur, 2003 p.416). She suggests that this view provides a potential bridge between the existential phenomenologists and others. She claims bracketing is most usefully regarded as a state of curiosity that unsettles ingrained patterns of thinking similar to Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) description of bracketing as astonishment. This temporary nature of bracketing resonates with Moustakas’ description of bracketing to perceive things “freshly as if for the first time” (1994 p.34) and suggestions that researchers’ suspend their views and judgements “in order for new insights to emerge” (Tosey and Mathison, 2010 p.76). Despite philosophical and methodological differences about bracketing it is useful for researchers to engage in the reflexive process of recognising and setting aside their “a priori knowledge and assumptions, with the analytic goal of attending to the participants’ accounts with an open mind” (Starks and Brown Trinidad, 2007 p.1376).

Moustakas (1994) advocates that epoché is the first stage of the phenomenological reduction process that enables the researcher to set aside their own views in order to be present to those of the participants. Moerer-Urdahl and Creswell (2004 p.22) illustrate how they achieved epoché in their study of a leadership mentoring program by clearing their mind, reflectively meditating and contemplating until they “felt a sense of closure” and were “able to concentrate fully” on the participants without their “own habits of thinking, feeling and seeing” affecting their ability to listen fully to the participants. Whilst their description sounds plausible, I know from eighteen years as a practicing coach that good intentions not to influence do not always translate into good practice, therefore in addition to my desire to be as receptive to the participants as possible, bracketing in this study was sought through facilitating interviews with Clean Language (CL).

CL minimises the influence of the external world on the inner world of the participant (termed ‘client’ in CL literature) by staying as faithful to their description of experience as possible. The facilitator/interviewer does influence the process by orienting “the client’s attention to an aspect of their perception” and sending “the client on a quest for self-knowledge” (Lawley and Tompkins,
yet in order to do this, the facilitator/interviewer brackets their own perceptions to enable the participant to find out as much as possible about their inner world by limiting external distractions. CL addresses the challenge of epoché in phenomenological interviewing (Tosey and Mathison, 2010) by minimising the influence of the facilitator on the participant in four ways. (1) Precision in replicating the participant’s experience through words, tone, gestures and non-verbals. (2) Clean questions and syntax minimise the introduction of metaphors, assumptions or framing that do not come from the participant which encourages the participant to stay with their own experience. (3) Limited eye contact frees the participant from attending to the facilitator and frees them to explore their metaphors. (4) Focus on the participant’s inner world channels their attention to revealing and exploring it, rather than explaining it.

Tosey et al. claim the use of CL in research interviews “resembles the practice of bracketing in phenomenology” (2014 p.633) and suggest that CL is particularly useful for phenomenological interviews that intend to “explore subjective experience and produce authentic understanding of the interviewee’s world” (p.640). They acknowledge, like many phenomenological writers, that it is never possible to be fully ‘clean’ (which is itself a metaphor) but suggest that aspiring to be as clean as possible offers the greatest possibility of eliciting and exploring the inner world of an interviewee by “remaining authentic to the interviewee’s own metaphors” (Tosey et al., 2014 p.641). Having described the phenomenological strategy for this study, I review the next layer of the research onion – the time horizons.

4.10 Time Horizons - A Longitudinal Study

The penultimate layer of the “research onion” according to Saunders et al. (2016 p.124) is the time horizon, which determines whether the study is cross-sectional and provides a snapshot in time of a phenomenon or is longitudinal and provides a perspective over time. Whilst more convenient to undertake a cross-sectional study, this research provides a perspective of leaders’ development over time and is longitudinal which Saunders et al. (2016) suggest is appropriate for understanding development. In total there were six contact
points with participants over eighteen months. The first was the initial contact asking whether leaders would be interested in participating in the study. The second was the first interview conducted face-to-face, the third was sending the transcript and drawings to the participant for review, the fourth was the second interview also conducted face-to-face to see what, if anything, leaders had learned. The fifth step was sending leaders the essence of their interview and inviting any comments and the sixth was contacting them to see what if anything they valued in the essence, which prompted responses via email, telephone and some face-to-face meetings. The ‘re-presentation’ of drawings in interview two and the synthesis of the ‘Essences’ reminded participants of their reflections and triggered additional meaning making. As the study evolved the time-horizon extended from the planned first four steps to the six steps, which I deemed necessary to ensure rigour and trustworthiness (see Figure 4-2).

Before addressing how data were collected and analysed (the central part of the Research Onion) it is useful to describe the sample including theoretical and practical decisions and considerations about access, trust and details about the characteristics of the sample.

4.11 Identifying and Inviting Participants to the Study

One of the questions to address early in the study was the nature, number and characteristics of participants. As this phenomenological study is concerned with the lived experience of leaders and what they can learn about their leadership and development from an exploration of their metaphors, first person accounts were necessary. This required people in leadership roles who would be open to surfacing and exploring their conceptualisations of leadership and their lived
experience. It also needed a level of trust for leaders to be willing to disclose their inner thoughts and experiences. Hence selection of participants for the research included theoretical principles about sampling in order to obtain quality data (Cassell and Symon, 2004; Saunders, 2012; Saunders and Townsend, 2016) and practical considerations about trust and gaining access to senior leaders (Mikecz, 2012; Welch et al., 2002). Within management research, characterised by a broad range of disciplinary, epistemological, ontological assumptions and methodological pluralism, it is particularly important to be clear about the number and characteristics of participants, how they were chosen (Alvesson and Ashcraft, 2012) and acknowledge any bias in sampling. Saunders and Townsend (2016) note that precision about samples is often missing, and urge researchers to make sampling decisions explicit to enable research to be understood, assessed and potentially transferred to other settings. Theoretical considerations that influence the size of the sample include the scope of the study, the nature of the topic, the quality of the data and the study design. The scope of the study concerns how broadly or narrowly it is focused. Broad studies tend to need larger samples than those more narrowly focused. The scope of this study is exploratory in nature but clearly focused to understand the conceptualisations and lived experience of leaders and what they can learn from this exploration, which could suggest a smaller sample size. However the nature of the topic is far from obvious as it seeks to explore the conceptualisations of leaders that might lie out of consciousness, hidden even to the leaders. When a topic is “difficult to grab”, Morse (2000 p. 4) suggests increasing the number of participants although she cautions that larger studies are not necessarily richer. The topic of this study is considered “difficult to grab” as it essentially brings to the surface metaphors and implicit leadership theories that are not usually visible. The quality of data is an important factor that affects sample size and research results. If participants are experienced in the topic of interest, articulate, able and willing to dedicate time to the research the data provided are more likely to be rich requiring fewer participants in order to reach saturation. Having met the leaders involved in this study on a leadership development programme, I knew they are experienced and articulate, but I was uncertain how
available they would be for the study which suggests increasing the size of the sample to ensure the quality of the data.

4.11.1 Considerations for the Sample

I have chosen a purposive sample for this study. Purposive samples are appropriate for exploratory studies that aim to identify key themes with participants who are difficult to reach (Saunders, 2012). This type of non-probability sample relies on the judgment of the researcher to make decisions related to theoretical and practical questions about the research and is used when it is not important to make statistical inferences about the research population (Saunders, 2012). This purposive sample is heterogeneous. A heterogeneous sample is useful to discover key themes and is based on a group with diverse characteristics. The sample is heterogeneous in terms of gender, age, nationality, role, level of leadership responsibility and industry sector. This heterogeneous sample follows suggestions to operationalize authentic leadership development with people in diverse organisational settings (Nichols and Erakovich, 2013) and recommendations to study metaphor that “identifies patterns and meanings of metaphor in different organizational contexts” with “top managers” (Cornelissen et al., 2008 p.15)

To avoid a hierarchical view of leaders defined as only those at the top of the organisation, I aimed to work with people who represented “a diagonal slice” (Saunders, 2012 p.42) of leadership in organisations. By this I mean leadership from the highest level of Chief Executive Officer and Board membership, to executive team members, senior leaders of business units and regions and those people undertaking leadership roles for the first time. I have used the following categories: Top Executives (leading the organisation e.g. CEO’s and Board Members), Senior Management (leading functions or business units) Middle Management (leading key work streams or projects), and First-Time Leaders (leading teams). These categories broadly correspond with literature about levels of management in organisations for example the Centre for Creative Leadership’s five levels of leading self, others, managers, a function and the organisation (see CCL website http://www.ccl.org/Leadership/index.aspx) and
Charan et al.’s work on leadership passages (2011). This sample therefore provides a ‘diagonal slice’ of male and female leaders from board members through to first-time leaders across diverse organizational contexts affording a rich data-set.

There are few guidelines for how many people to involve in phenomenological samples and what advice there is varies from author to author. Two reference points for phenomenological studies are Creswell who suggests a heterogeneous group may comprise between 10-15 people and Polkinghorne (1989) who suggests interviewing between five and 25 people. Saunders (2012) has collated available information for interviews, which is presented in Table 4-1. This shows that sample sizes vary depending on the research strategy and depending on whether the population is homogenous or heterogeneous:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Study</th>
<th>Minimum Sample Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semi structure/in-depth interviews</td>
<td>5-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnographic</td>
<td>35-36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounded theory</td>
<td>20-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering a homogenous population</td>
<td>4-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering a heterogeneous population</td>
<td>12-30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study comprises 30 leaders, which is at the higher end of the recommended norm for a phenomenological study therefore providing a robust sample. This follows recommendations for phenomenological studies (Creswell, 2013; Morse, 2000), for interviews (Brinkman and Kvald, 2015) and for heterogeneous populations (Saunders, 2012).

4.11.2 Gaining Access and Trust in the Sample

The practical questions that I considered were how to select and get access to practising leaders who would provide quality data and afford time to the study. Mindful of the contentious definitions of leadership (as reviewed in Chapter
Two) I decided to approach people in leadership roles who had previously attended a leadership development program. These people were identified as leaders by their organisations, which had invested in their development so I was not deciding who was and who was not classified a leader but working with people who were seen as leaders by their organisations. Furthermore, as my research question was inspired by working with practising leaders who wished to learn more about their own leadership I was keen to pursue this question with this population.

Access is an important issue in qualitative research in general and of particular importance in interviewing business executives who typify Welch et al.’s (2002) definition of an elite interviewee. Elite business interviewees are defined as having high status, occupying a middle or senior position, having access to a broad network with international exposure, which describes the leaders in this study. In addition to issues concerning access with elites, Welch et al. (2002) say it is important to manage the power asymmetry and assess the degree of openness in interviews. Mikecz adds that “gaining access to elites is hard enough; gaining their trust and building rapport with them is even more difficult” (2012 p.482). Cognisant of these issues, negotiating access to leaders was an essential part of the research design.

As access is a key concern in the literature especially for elite participants and as the study was pioneering a novel method of leader development I decided to approach leaders whom I had met in my professional role as executive coach in a European business school. This gave me prior knowledge about their background which Mikecz suggests “can positively influence success” and diminish the status differential between elite participants and a researcher (2012 p.483). Prior relationships can afford access that might otherwise be unavailable; however, they can make interviews more complex as both parties navigate their identities during the interview (Garton and Copland, 2010). I consider the advantages of the prior relationship outweigh any possible disadvantages. For example, I felt it would help gain access and enhance trust with a senior group of international business leaders and that it would improve
validity, which is a measure of how much the researcher gains access to a participant’s knowledge and experience. Through my previous relationship I was able to access leaders from the highest level in well-known global organisations, for example, Global Chief Executive Officers (CEO) and Board members, through senior leaders in roles of Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Chief Information Officer (CIO), Chief Operations Officer (COO), Vice President Human Resources (VP HR) to mid-level leaders with direction over regions or business units.

The asymmetries of power can be a concern in interviewing elites (Mikecz, 2012; Welch et al., 2002) who are often seen as having more power than the interviewer (Thomas, 1993). The prior relationship helped to balance power in this study through reciprocal recognition of our respective professional roles. Participants were leaders in international organisations and I was an executive coach at a top-ranked business school. Having met these people I was less likely to conflate the person with their role or position in the organization, nor be overwhelmed by their seniority, which can be problematic.

As the exploration of metaphor and the use of CL are atypical in the day-to-day worlds of practising managers, I anticipated that a prior relationship and a prior developmental experience would lessen apprehension and enable the richest data to emerge. Furthermore I thought it was important that participants had previous leadership development experience so they understood the general nature of development and had a reasonable basis to decide whether or not to participate in this study. CL is a method of exploration that can take people deeply and quickly into their inner worlds. This depth can be surprising and may be considered as revealing especially at the beginning of the exploration when trying to articulate assumptions that may never have been expressed. From my work as an executive coach I know how important a sense of safety is for personal exploration and how delicate it can be to establish. In exploration of their inner worlds people can experience themselves as less articulate than usual, which could be a challenging experience especially for leaders who may consider themselves as powerful communicators. There was no precedent about possible effects of CL as a research interview with a leadership population. The
one prior study on work-life balance (Tosey et al., 2014) did not suggest any problems with the methodology, however, I erred on the side of caution by choosing to invite people with whom I had a prior relationship in the belief that they would be more willing to explore. I also thought our prior relationship might encourage them to be more honest about the efficacy of the approach than people with whom I had no previous relationship.

4.11.3 Practical Considerations for the Sample

Scholars have noted that qualitative research samples can be time intensive and data heavy and are therefore determined by considerations of time and budget restraints as well as methodological objectives. As part of these practical considerations I chose to hold face-to-face interviews in three geographic locations; Switzerland (where I live), the UK (where the University is based) and the Netherlands (where I had access to a number of senior level leaders), therefore I sought to interview people who were based in these locations or travelled frequently to them. This decision to include three locations enriches the study through enabling a wider variety of leaders to be included than if I had restricted the study to one location. It did mean that travel time and costs were higher but I felt the breadth and quality of data was worth the extra time and expense. As a result of practical and theoretical considerations to create a suitably diverse sample in terms of gender, age, nationality, levels of leadership and diversity of organisations I identified a list of 35 people to approach. These were men and women who had attended a leadership programme at the European business school and with whom I had worked as group coach. After gaining permission from the business school to approach these people, I contacted them by email to ask if they would be interested in participating in the research. The email (see Appendix 2) highlighted the research purpose, the method of using CL interviews, an estimate of the time requirement, an assurance of confidentiality and a request for a research release agreement for those who agreed to be involved. In total 30 people agreed to participate in the research. Of the five who declined to be involved either they did not wish to be involved, were too busy, or their location had changed making involvement too problematic. This is a relatively high response rate and I surmise the prior
relationship was one factor that contributed to this and another was that participants saw involvement as potentially useful for them.

4.12 The Sample

The study finally involved a purposive sample of 30 people in leadership roles. Key characteristics of the sample are presented and summarised in Table 4-2 and detailed in the following sections.

4.12.1 Participant Pseudonyms

Each participant was accorded a three-letter pseudonym as an amalgam of letters from their name to provide anonymity and confidentiality but also to preserve their legal, ethnic and gendered identities. Naming participants with numbers or pseudonyms is common practice in qualitative research, even “ubiquitous and rarely examined” (Lahman et al., 2015 p.450). However, the issue of naming participants has received scant attention in the literature (Hurst, 2008), despite it being rife with methodological, ethical and political dilemmas (Guenther, 2009). It is therefore important to pay attention to the power of naming participants (Guenther, 2009) including issues of ethnicity, gender, honouring the real identity and legal name of participants and researcher reflexivity (Lahman et al., 2015). In keeping with a phenomenological approach to this study, pseudonyms were chosen rather than numbers as I was unwilling to reduce a person to a number. Furthermore, like Hurst (2008), I was reluctant to ‘rename’ participants, as this felt like taking away their identity and not congruent with the nature of this study. Furthermore, the pseudonyms enabled the participants to recognise themselves when they engaged in member checking and I could more easily identify the person with their metaphors than if I used numbers.
Table 4-2 Characteristics of Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Industry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WOMEN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANG</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Vice President Sales</td>
<td>Recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIL</td>
<td>Azerbaijani</td>
<td>Chief Operations Officer</td>
<td>Retail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDM</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Executive Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUL</td>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>Legal Counsel</td>
<td>Humanitarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JEN</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Vice President Commercial Operations</td>
<td>Insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOS</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Divisional Director</td>
<td>Executive Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAT</td>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>Director Marketing</td>
<td>Computer Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAT</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>Vice President Human Resources</td>
<td>Power Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Chief Financial Officer</td>
<td>Pharmaceutical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAR</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Sales Manager</td>
<td>Industrial Manufacturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAN</td>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>Associate Director</td>
<td>Think Tank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARJ</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>Senior Vice President Human Resources</td>
<td>Pharmaceutical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHT</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Financial Director</td>
<td>Recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHB</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Head Technology</td>
<td>Wind Turbines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHK</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Chief Operating Officer</td>
<td>Investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERC</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Director International Sales</td>
<td>Recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERV</td>
<td>Belgian</td>
<td>Chief Operating Officer</td>
<td>Real Estate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERG</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>Vice President Commercial Operations</td>
<td>Aerospace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRC</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>General Manager</td>
<td>Banking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOR</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>Commercial Director</td>
<td>Packaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAN</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>Global Chief Operating Officer</td>
<td>Heavy Lifting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KET</td>
<td>Norwegian</td>
<td>Chief Operations Officer</td>
<td>Shipping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAR</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>Chief Operations Officer</td>
<td>Real Estate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAT</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Vice President Information Technology</td>
<td>Airlines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVR</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Corporate Compliance</td>
<td>Food Manufacturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RVS</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>Research Director</td>
<td>Chemical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAN</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>European Chief Operating Officer</td>
<td>Heavy Lifting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIM</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Chief Financial Officer</td>
<td>Recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOB</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Chief Information Officer</td>
<td>Optical Instruments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAL</td>
<td>Omani</td>
<td>Trader</td>
<td>Investment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.12.2 Gender

The sample comprised nineteen men (63%) and eleven women (37%). Based on data available for the business school at which I work this is broadly similar to
the proportions of participants attending business schools for leadership development.

4.12.3 Nationality

The sample contained fifteen nationalities as follows; seven Dutch (23%), five British (17%), three French (10%), three American (10%), two German (7%) plus one person (3%) each from Azerbaijan, Belgium, Mexico, Norway, Oman, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden and Turkey. Eight of the participants were native English speakers (24%) and conducted the interview in their Mother tongue. However, 22 (76%) of the participants conducted the interview in their second language. These people were fluent in English, use it as their business language and had attended a leadership development programme in English.

Indicative of this international group, eleven people in the sample live and work outside their country of origin. It was striking that all of the nine people who live and work in Switzerland came from other nationalities (Azerbaijani, British, French, Mexican, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish). Hence despite having Switzerland as one interview site there are no Swiss represented in the study. This says something about the nature of Switzerland with 25% of its population coming from abroad. It also highlights the mix of nationalities typically found in corporate headquarters, including those involved in this study.

4.12.4 Age

Participants ranged in age from 32 to 62. The majority, eight (54%), were between 41 and 50. Six (20%) were aged between 30 and 40 and six (20%) between 51 and 60 with two (7%) 60 or older. Based on information about participants attending leadership programs at the business school, this is typical of the leadership populations attending at business school with the majority of participants between their late 30’s and early 50’s.

4.12.5 Level of Leadership

The study contains four (13%) top executives – CEO’s and Executive committee members, ten (33%) senior management – leading functions, thirteen (43%)
middle management – leading key work streams or projects and three (10%) first time leaders – leading teams. There are two pairs of participants who have a reporting relationship; a regional CFO and a country CFO and a regional CEO and a global CEO. All four of these participants are male. These people were deliberately included to see similarities and differences in people who have a reporting relationship.

4.12.6 Industry Sector

The range of organisations and industries that participants come from is particularly diverse. Most of the organisations are well known and many are leaders in their industry. Industries range from services such as recruitment, banking and investment, real estate, executive education, through pharmaceutical, food manufacturing, heavy lifting, shipping, power technology and humanitarian organisations.

Having identified theoretical and practical considerations for the sample and provided detailed data about the sample, the chapter now reviews techniques and procedures for data collection and analysis followed by ethical decisions made for this study.

4.13 Technique and Procedures – Data Collection

The central layer of the “research onion” concerns data collection and analysis. The following sections describe the rationale for using in-depth interviews for collecting data, the epistemological foundation for interviews, assessing quality in interviews and the use of CL in interviews. These sections are followed by an example of an interview. After this the rationale for using drawings in this multi-method study is explicated followed by an explanation of how participants were introduced to the task of drawing.

4.13.1 In-Depth Interviews

In order to answer the research question from a phenomenological perspective the study used interviews to identify and explore leaders’ metaphors
supplemented by drawings of their metaphors. Kvale describes an interview as an inter-change of views between two people about a common topic in which the interviewer determines the purpose and structure to co-create with the interviewee a “construction site for knowledge” (2007 p.7). In this “construction site” interviews can reveal “how individuals construct the meaning and significance of their situations” (Stewart, 1982 p.73) so they are particularly valid for this study that aims to discover how leaders make meaning. As this study takes a phenomenological approach to understanding “the very personal” nature of data and the “fine distinctions and variations in experience across individuals” (Conklin, 2007 p.277) in-depth interviews are considered the most effective technique for data collection (Creswell, 2013). Interviews are particularly widely used in phenomenological studies as they offer the means to “get beyond a surface understanding of human phenomena” (Kvale, 1983 p.194).

Interviwing is, according to King and Horrocks (2010), the most common qualitative method in organisational research and enjoys a distinguished history in social science (Kvale, 2007) as it has been used in the development of a number of important theories, e.g. psychoanalysis (Freud, 1938) and child development (Piaget, 1954; 1969). As interviews have become so common there is a deceptive simplicity to them which has attracted considerable discussion including: types of interview (Saunders et al., 2009), contexts for interviews (education, the workplace, journalistic), types of interviewees including elites (Mikecz, 2012; Odendahl and Shaw, 2011; Welch et al., 2002), the conduct of interviews (Kvale, 1996; 2007), issues concerning elicitation (Johnson and Weller, 2011; Tosey et al., 2014) as well as how interviews contribute to reflexive understanding (Haynes, 2006) and development of researcher identity (Bryman and Cassell, 2006; Cassell et al., 2009). These are important issues that this section addresses as follows: first epistemological foundations of the interviews are clarified as this impacts issues of conduct and quality, then questions of quality are addressed, followed by the use of CL to facilitate the elicitation of metaphor. A detailed example to illustrate the intricacies of CL interviewing is included.
4.13.2 Epistemological Foundation of Interviews

Researchers are urged to consider their epistemological position in interviewing (Roulston, 2010) to strengthen the relationship between “philosophy, theory and method” (Alvesson, 2003 p.13). Making explicit the assumptions of two dominant approaches to interviews; Neo-positivist and Romantic, Alvesson has explicated their underlying metaphors respectively as “an instrument, to be used as effectively as possible in the hands of the more or less capable researcher”, and “a human encounter encouraging the interviewee to reveal his or her authentic experiences” (2003 p.18). He counsels that interviews cannot be treated solely as instruments for data collection but need to be seen as a social context in which language is used not only to reflect reality but also to constitute it. Moreover, he urges researchers to move beyond the either-or dichotomy represented by the Neo-positivist and Romantic metaphors to consider other metaphors including viewing interviews as sites for establishing a story through sensemaking, identity work, impression management, political action, construction of interviewees' world and power plays of discourse that influence particular constructions of the world (Alvesson, 2003). These metaphors call for more nuanced understandings of “interview-as-technique-for-getting-data” or “interview-as-a-human-encounter-leading-to-in-depth-shared-understanding” (Alvesson, 2003 p.31). This nuanced perspective is useful and has influenced Roulston’s more recent typology of qualitative interviews (Neo-positive, Romantic, Constructionist, Postmodern, Transformative (therapeutic and critical) and Decolonizing). Interviews in this study broadly fit with her description of a Neo-positivist epistemology that enquires into participants’ “beliefs, perspectives, opinions, and attitudes” to ask “what are participants experiences in relation to x?” (Roulston, 2010 p.205). This assumes that participants are able to “access interior and exterior states and describe these accurately through language” and that it is possible to minimise the influence of the researcher on the participants through asking “non-leading questions” (Roulston, 2010 p.205). This fits with the purpose of this study to understand leaders' inner worlds and with the use of CL to minimise interviewer interference.
Roulston’s typology is useful in providing guidelines for how to ensure quality for different conceptualisations of interviews and provides a sense of security for a novice researcher, yet there is something about categorising this research in the Neo-positivist approach that does not sit right. Whilst the Neo-positivist conception summarises well my approach to interviews the label feels too categorical and reminiscent of an objectivist epistemology not fitting for this study. To avoid categorical positions I follow Alvesson’s suggestion to employ metaphors to become more “pragmatically reflexive” by incorporating different perspectives to see an interview as a “socially, linguistically, and subjectively rich and complex situation” (2003 p.31).

My approach to interviews is akin to ‘Guided Introspection’. Introspection enables people to see, discover, reflect, reveal and understand themselves and stems from the etymology meaning “to look into, look at, examine, observe attentively” (Harper, 2001-2017). Similar to reflection, introspection has the connotation of examining one’s own mental and emotional states. ‘Guided Introspection’ also incorporates the role of the interviewer as a guide, informed by the etymology of guide, meaning to ‘show the way”, “lead, direct, conduct”, (Harper, 2001-2017). Yet this guide minimises their influence in the participants’ inner world and enables and encourages meaning-making through directing attention rather than joining in conversation. The term combines guiding and introspection to make explicit the roles of interviewer and interviewee. In interviews facilitated by CL both the interviewer and interviewee guide and are guided and both are involved in introspection often referred to as musing in CL terminology. There are certain similarities between ‘Guided Introspection’ and the Neo-Positivist conceptualisation as both assume that interviewees are able to access and describe their authentic inner and outer experiences in language and that influence can be minimised through sensitive interviewing from an interviewer who pays attention to how questions are asked and sequenced. However, unlike the Neo-positivist approach, I do not aim to discover a context free ‘truth’. Whilst ‘Guided Introspection’ suggests that rapport is important so that participants feel safe and are willing to be guided around their inner thoughts, I have aimed to minimise conversational interviewing, often used in
the Romantic approach, and to establish rapport through presence and directing attention. Furthermore, ‘Guided Introspection’ acknowledges that the interview may give rise to sensemaking, identity work or other issues identified by Alvesson (2003) as part of the socially constructed context and the constitutive role of language.

Being mindful of the calls to consider epistemology to link “philosophy, theory and method” (Alvesson, 2003 p.13) and to be reflexive about my choices as a researcher, this section has reviewed the epistemology I have adopted for these interviews. Embracing Alvesson’s call to use multiple metaphors to move from the interview as tool or interview as human encounter, I suggest ‘Guided Introspection’ as apt for the approach taken to interviews in this study. This brings together eliciting data authentic to the participants and viewing the interview as a human encounter, which may prompt identity work and meaning-making. I believe this approach is compatible with my adoption of Moustakas’ (1994) transcendental phenomenology, which requires researchers to bracket their assumptions, whilst facilitating the expression of personal experiences and meaning.

4.13.3 Quality in Interviews

As interviews are based on many different epistemological perspectives (Alvesson, 2003) there is no agreement about the terms used to denote quality, which include validity (Kvale, 1996) and credibility and thoroughness (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). Roulston (2010) summarises four common methodological concerns about quality in interviews from different epistemological perspectives. The first concern is that the use of interview data is appropriate to inform the research questions. Interviews are chosen to inform the research question of this study because, with drawings, they are the most pertinent method to access what leaders learn through their inner exploration. Roulston’s second concern is that interviewers ask questions effectively to elicit quality data. Interviews can become “muddy” (Lippke and Tanggaard, 2014 p.136) or fail (Jacobsson and Åkerström, 2013) if interviewers are ineffective. As the interviewer in this study, I took several precautions to ask questions effectively including drawing on
experience in roles as a researcher in a business school and as an experienced executive coach which helped me to bracket my own perspectives to focus attention on participants. In addition, I met with CL expert James Lawley in May 2013 to check the interview protocol was as ‘clean’ as possible and to ensure that I was asking questions cleanly. In addition I piloted the interview protocol by having James interview me. This gave me an inside out perspective on what it was like to be interviewed with the CL questions which enabled me to be on “the receiving end” (Bryman and Cassell, 2006 p.45) of my own research to experience personally what might come to light in the context of the interview situation and to become aware of my patterns. The reflexive implications of this are discussed in the section on researcher ethics and reflexivity. Roulston’s third concern is that quality is addressed in research design, analysis and representation of findings. The research onion (Saunders et al., 2016) has been helpful to ensure a systematic quality check at each stage of the study from being clear about the epistemological stance, research design, methodology, sample, and data collection and analysis. Roulston’s fourth concern is that the methods and strategies used to demonstrate quality are consistent with the theoretical underpinnings of the study. I have undertaken six steps to assure quality that correspond with Roulston’s (2010) recommendations for a Neo-Positivist approach, which, as explained in the previous section, is foundational for the interviewing approach. These steps are: (1) using a combination of interviews and drawings to collect data following concerns about over-reliance on interviews (Walford, 2007), (2) using a purposive sample of thirty participants to gain many perspectives of the phenomena of leadership and its development, (3) undertaking two interviews with each participant to gather sufficient data, (4) checking transcripts and findings with participants to confirm accuracy of interview data and findings, (5) minimising bias in the interviews through the use of CL to bracket my assumptions, and (6) making my research process transparent, which responds to suggestions that interviews are considered as interactional sites (Potter and Hepburn, 2005), which necessitates making explicit the interview setup and interviewer’s role in the generation of data.

In addition to addressing Roulston’s four concerns for qualitative interviews this
study assesses interview data against four of Kvale’s (1996) six criteria for judging interview quality in the following chapter. These criteria are:

1. The extent of spontaneous, rich, specific, and relevant answers from the interviewee
2. The shorter the interviewer’s questions and the longer the subjects’ answers, the better.
3. The degree to which the interviewer follows up and clarifies the meanings of the relevant aspects of the answers.
4. The ideal interview is to a large extent interpreted throughout.
5. The interviewer attempts to verify his or her interpretations of the subjects’ answers in the course of the interview.
6. The interview is ‘self-communicating’ – it is a story contained in itself that hardly requires much extra descriptions and explanations. (Kvale, 1996 p.145)

The first, second, third and sixth criteria are useful to check interview data for this study that aims to elicit the data for the benefit of the participant’s learning rather than for the understanding of the interviewer. Consistent with CL principles a modification was made to the third criterion so that it concerns the degree to which the interviewer follows up and clarifies the meaning of the answers for the participant. The fourth and fifth criteria are not relevant to this study, which does not aim to interpret the data during the interview but to surface and explore them.

One final way in which I have attempted to address quality in this study is through applying the CL principles that Tosey et al. (2014) suggest for qualitative research. Using a sample of six managers they demonstrated how CL could be used not only as an interviewing method but also as a way to “enhance rigour and authenticity of interview-based qualitative research more widely” (2014 p.641). They suggest three increasing levels of CL in interview-based research, presented in Table 4-3. The most basic level is as an approach to asking questions, the second level is a way to elicit interviewee-generated metaphors and the third level is a coherent research strategy based on ‘clean principles’ (Tosey et al., 2014 p.641).
Table 4-3 Progressive Levels of Clean Language in Interview-Based Research

(Tosey et al. 2014, p.641)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A questioning technique</td>
<td>CL questions incorporated into any qualitative interview in order to enhance the quality (authenticity) of interview data by minimizing the introduction of the researcher's metaphors and constructs. Comparable to conversational use of CL in everyday settings (e.g. in education, business).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A method of eliciting interviewee-generated metaphors</td>
<td>The central purpose of the interview is metaphor elicitation. CL questions are used tactically in order to elicit metaphors and metaphoric material. Comparable to exploration of an interviewee's mental models, e.g. through repertory grid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A coherent research strategy based on 'clean' principles</td>
<td>The purpose of the interview is to elicit and model the interviewee's 'metaphor landscape', highlighting connections and relationships between metaphors as well as the metaphors themselves. CL principles guide the entire research process including formulating the research questions and eliciting interviewees' detailed metaphor landscapes (i.e. 'modelling') as an explicit purpose of the study. Comparable to facilitated reflection, e.g. as in executive coaching, but without pursuing intentional change.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.13.4 Clean Language Conducted Interviews

CL is a way of asking questions to direct attention to the inner world of a person “to facilitate them to use their metaphors and symbols for self-discovery and self-development” (Lawley and Tompkins, 2000 p.3) without introducing the assumptions of the person asking questions. This approach appears to offer much promise to meet the most commonly stated objective on leadership development programs at a top European business school for leaders “to understand myself” (as described in Chapter One) because it helps direct attention to the leader’s own conceptualisations of leadership. Furthermore, CL is compatible with phenomenology as both inquire into the individual experience. Conklin says that phenomenology “offers a portal of insight into the individual and idiosyncratic” (2007 p.276) which is similar to Grove’s description of how people use “idiosyncratic” language to describe experiences.
and inner realities” (1989 p.3) with their own symbols and metaphors. This study suggests that CL offers a way to reveal rich personal accounts as well as providing a useful discipline to prevent contamination of data from the interviewer through contributing to époché, a key tenet of phenomenology (Husserl, 1982; LeVasseur, 2003; Moustakas, 1994). This section outlines the key functions and aspects of CL and how these contribute to the elicitation and exploration of participants’ metaphors and to the bracketing of researchers’ assumptions.

According to key proponents of CL, Lawley and Tomkins (2000 p.52), the function of CL is:

- To acknowledge the client’s experience exactly as they describe it.
- To orientate the client’s attention to an aspect of their perception.
- To send the client on a quest for self-knowledge.

Recognising that all language directs attention not only through the words used but by “presuppositions, voice qualities and nonverbal aspects” (Lawley and Tompkins, 2000 p.292) they claim CL has four “essential components”: syntax, clean questions, attention to nonverbal metaphors, and vocal qualities (2000 p.53). These four components are outlined to indicate how CL works to realise the above purpose and are summarised at the end of this section in Table 4-4.

Syntax is the way that words are combined and it is used in a rather unusual way in CL with the purpose to acknowledge the participant’s description before inviting them to attend to a particular aspect of their symbolic world. The full CL Syntax is: “And [client’s words]. And when/as [client’s words], [clean question]?” (Lawley and Tompkins, 2000 p.53 bold in original). A shortened version of the syntax can also be used, starting with ‘And’ and then asking a clean question. The syntax starts with ‘And’ to acknowledge and validate the person and their symbolic representations and keeps the focus on an exploration of the person’s world from their perspective. Lawley and Tompkins suggest that the role of syntax is two-fold; it keeps attention on the participant’s symbolic world and it acts as a discipline to keep the facilitator’s language clean. Syntax helps the participant to have their experience acknowledged by joining their precise
words with a clean question.

Clean questions direct attention to an aspect of the participant's perception. Questions are clean because they use participant’s words, nonverbals and the logic of their metaphors, thus honouring the way the person experiences the world. They are also clean because they help the facilitator to bracket their assumptions and only introduce “universal metaphors of form, space, and time” (Lawley and Tompkins, 2000 p.77). This study suggests that clean questions help create data authentic to participants as they provide a means of bracketing researcher’s assumptions, a key feature of phenomenological research, which has hitherto been described in rather vague ways in management research (Moerer-Urdahl and Creswell, 2004). Modelling David Grove’s work, Lawley and Tompkins realised that he used nine questions 80% of the time, leading them to call them the ‘basic clean questions’. Of the nine basic questions, they distinguish between five developing questions that are used initially to identify and locate symbols in space and four moving time questions that are subsequently used to enquire about sequence once symbols are identified and located. These questions are presented in Table 4-4 with a summary of Grove’s Clean Language.

In order to direct attention and send a client on a search for self-knowledge a facilitator needs to be creating a model of the inner world of their participant as their participant describes it, without overlaying their own model of the world. A CL facilitator has to manage many aspects in order to do this: listening, remembering participants’ words, gestures and nonverbals, directing attention through clean questions, creating a model of the participant’s model whilst musing about it and remaining highly respectful of the participant’s space, words, gestures and models. By doing all of this a facilitator is able to send someone on a quest for self-knowledge based on their own symbolic perception. This highly respectful way of working recognises that the individual knows more about their inner world than anyone else and through directing attention to that world they can be sent on a quest for self-knowledge.

Grove (1989) suggests that when attention is paid to the voice quality, including speed, rhythm, tone and consistent delivery, clean questions are more effective.
When a facilitator matches the participant’s speaking qualities, slows down to give the participant time to think and delivers questions in a consistent way that values all aspects of the participant’s symbolic world equally it facilitates a sense of “implicit acceptance, curiosity and wonder” (Lawley and Tompkins, 2000 p.80) conducive to discovery. Commenting on the importance of creating a sense of acceptance for the exploration of symbolic worlds Lawley and Tompkins state “Clients may be surprised at what you ask, but not by the way you ask it” (2000 p.80). Instilling this sense of acceptance and curiosity is imperative for participants to feel safe so they can concentrate on exploring their inner world. This is similar to Carl Rogers’ (1961) claim that unconditional positive regard is essential to facilitate individuals to access their own resources for self-understanding and acceptance which has been acknowledged to be beneficial for self-discovery (Wilkins, 2000).

Nonverbal metaphors can be expressed through the body, postures, gestures, sounds, lines of sight or even expressed in objects. Lawley and Tompkins differentiate between nonverbal metaphors as expressions of the body and material or imaginative metaphors that are indicated in perceptual space and they claim that all of these nonverbal metaphors contain a wealth of information. These nonverbal metaphors can be questioned in a similar way to verbal metaphors although it can take some skill, courage and sensitivity for a facilitator to do this and the questioning may surprise participants. Lawley and Tompkins caution that embodied metaphors and perceptual space are very intimate and entreat facilitators to remember the purpose is for participants “to become self-aware not self-conscious” (2000 p.98).

Syntax, clean questions, voice quality and attention to nonverbal metaphors combine in CL which is used to explore inner symbolic worlds that Grove, called “metaphor landscapes” (Lawley and Tompkins, 2000 p.17) comprising the internal imagery, symbols, metaphors, feelings, thoughts, sounds, songs, words and gestures of a person.

This section has outlined the key functions and aspects of CL and how they contribute to directing attention whilst also bracketing the inquirer’s
assumptions. As a result of this directing attention and bracketing, CL can facilitate self-discovery in multiple contexts including interviews (Tosey et al., 2014). The key aspects of CL are summarised in Table 4-4 to conclude this section.

Table 4-4 Summary of David Grove’s Clean Language

*(Lawley and Tompkins, 2000, p.282)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Summary of David Grove’s Clean Language</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Function of Clean Language</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To acknowledge the client’s experience exactly as they describe it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To orientate the client’s attention to an aspect of their perception.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To send the client on a quest for self-knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Four Components of Clean Language</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FULL SYNTAX</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>And</strong> [client’s words/nonverbals].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>And when/as</strong> [client’s words/nonverbals].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>clean question</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VOCAL QUALITIES</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When using client generated words, match <em>the way</em> they speak those words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When using therapist-generated words, s-l-o-w d-o-w-n your speed of delivery and use a consistent, rhythmic, poetic and curious tonality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NONVERBALS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference the client’s <em>nonverbal metaphors</em>, either by replicating, gesturing to, or looking at a body expression; or by replicating a nonverbal sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference the client’s <em>perceptual space</em>, with hand gestures, head movements and looks that are congruent with the client’s perspective of the location of their material and imaginative symbols.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CLEAN QUESTIONS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BASIC DEVELOPING QUESTIONS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IDENTIFYING</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>And is there anything else about</strong> [client’s words]?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>And what kind of</strong> [client’s words] <em>is that</em> [client’s words]?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONVERTING</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>And that’s</strong> [client’s words] <em>like what</em>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>And where is</strong> [client’s words]?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>And whereabouts</strong> [client’s words]?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LOCATING</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MOVING TIME QUESTIONS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FORWARD</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>And then what happens?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>And what happens next?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BACK</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>And what happens just before</strong> [client’s words]?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>And where could</strong> [client’s words] <em>come from</em>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.13.5 Interview Protocol

To address the research question of what leaders can learn about their leadership and development two interviews were conducted with participants. The first was to elicit their metaphors for leadership and the second was to find out what they might learn from this exploration. An interview protocol was established for interview one to respond to Hackman and Wageman’s (2007) claim that leaders may not be aware of how their inner images and models shape their behaviour. The interview protocol was comprised of two sections, the first to elicit leaders' implicit leadership theories and the second to elicit participants' experience of becoming, being and developing as a leader. Attention was given throughout to leaders' use of metaphor.

Adopting a clean approach to research, CL was used to develop the protocol and to follow up the questions in the interviews. An initial concern I faced was how to introduce a subject in interviews facilitated with CL as the introduction of ‘content’ that does not originate from the participant is typically avoided in CL. However, discussions with the Expert Clean Language team clarified that questions designed to elicit responses to a specific topic are ‘contextually clean’. This recognises that they are not part of the basic CL questions, that they intentionally introduce a topic but they do so in as neutral and non-leading way as possible.

The following four questions, devised to be as clean as possible, were asked to elicit participants' implicit leadership theories (ILT). These questions respond to calls for work on ILT with a broad management population (Nichols and Erakovich, 2013):

1. What is leadership?
2. What makes a good leader?
3. When is it important to lead?
4. Are there times when is it important not to lead?

The second part of the protocol enquired into leaders' personal experience of becoming, being and developing as a leader. Questions that inquire into the
experience of participants are typical for a phenomenological study. Effectively this sought to elicit responses about participants' personal experience of being a leader, the kind of leader they currently are and their development. As there was a logical flow between being a leader and developing as a leader questions followed the sequence from first leadership experiences, through current experiences to the leader they wished to become. The questions were:

1. What was your first experience of being a leader?
2. What kind of leader are you now?
3. When you are leading at your best, that’s like what?
4. What kind of leader would others say you are?
5. What has contributed to you becoming the leader you are?
6. What kind of leader would you like to become?
7. Is there anything that needs to happen to become that leader?

The protocol for the second interview was designed to find out what participants had learnt from the first interview, the drawing and the transcript and was crucial for answering the research question of what and how leaders learnt from the interview, the drawing and the transcript. This aimed to understand the role of words and drawings in their experience. The second interview started by asking about what participants had noticed about the interview, the drawing and the transcript to take the participants’ back to the first interview as neutrally as possible. Then participants were asked what, if anything, they valued about the interview, the drawing and the transcript. Questions were then asked what, if anything, participants had learnt about their leadership and development. Participants were asked to describe and draw the process before concluding with a final question to ensure that they had an opportunity to share anything they wished that was not covered in the previous questions. The exact questions are:

1a. Is there anything that you noticed about the interview?
   1b. The drawing?
   1c. The transcript?
2a. What value, if any, did you get out of the interview?
   2b. The drawing?
   2c. The transcript?
3. Is there anything that you have learned about your leadership from this process – the interview, the transcript and the drawing(s)?
4. Is there anything that you have learned about your development from this process - the interview, the transcript and the drawing?
5. Can you please describe and draw the process?
6. And is there anything else that you would like to comment about?

Both interviews used contextually clean questions to elicit visual data to complement verbal metaphors with drawn metaphors. This is detailed in the section concerning drawings.

4.13.6 Example of Clean Language Interview

In order to provide an example of how Clean Language was used in the interview, the following 4-page extract illustrates how TIM responded to the first question “What is leadership?” from the interview one protocol. The extract shows the interviewer’s interventions, followed by TIM’s responses. The following mark-up code, (CC, C, √, ML, SL, O), inserted after the interviewer’s initial, indicates the type of intervention that was made based on a Cleanness Rating Scale. This mark-up code highlights the following six categories of intervention. Contextually Clean Questions (CC), which are questions that introduce the research topic in as clean a manner as possible. Clean Questions (C) inquire into the participant’s material without introducing any other content. Clean Repeats (√) simply repeat the interviewee’s material without asking a question. Mildly Leading (ML) interventions deviate slightly from the participant’s exact words or imply an answer but are still within the participant’s logic. Strongly Leading (SL) interventions lead the participant to answer in a particular way. Other (O) are expressions that encourage the participant to continue or respond to questions raised by the participant. The mark-up key and the implications of this rating of the interviewer's interventions are explained in detail in chapter five but it is introduced here to illustrate how CL was used in interviews.

H: CC  Okay, so what is leadership?
T:  Leadership. Well, the first thing that springs into my mind when I say leadership is followers. And that – obviously in order to lead you need to have people to take with you. And
then so I say take with you, that means you must be going on a journey somewhere, so it’s – leadership is I would say the ability to take people from one place to another and have those – I’m thinking as well – I’m doing this all out loud, you know, are you – when you’re a leader you’re influencing them, but you want them to go where you want them to go, or do you want them to go where the group should go. And I suppose that comes from within you as a leader, your assessment of what the outcome is I suppose ultimately comes back to if you are the leader you see the way you want to go and the way you want to go might be where the group decided to go I suppose. But it’s that ability to take people on a journey from one place to another, whether that be through a work project or a company strategy, it’s that, so it is the – I now am remembering my B school stuff, if that’s ability to have a vision.

H: O

You don’t have to read from a book (Both laugh)

T:

As I’m saying it, it comes back and it makes a bit more sense. It’s to have a vision, to communicate that vision, and to take people with you on that to meet that vision, or have a strategy to meet that vision and communicate that strategy. So that is leadership and there are lots of different ways that you do that.

H: C

And when leadership is going on a journey from one place to another, what kind of journey is that journey?

T:

So not talking about – so I mean I’m not going to say it’s a project or a place that you’re going to or a strategy or whatever. The type of journey, if the question is around is that a comfortable journey for the passengers or a smooth journey or a bumpy journey. I guess as a leader you are trying to make that journey, I suppose I mean a journey depends on what you’ve got in the way, but it’s navigating the landscape of the journey and making sure you get to the end destination with the best possible outcome.

H: C

Okay, and it’s navigating the landscape and getting to the end destination. And is there anything else about navigating the landscape?

T:

Yeah. Sorry, I’ve now got in my mind bloody Moses.

H: √

Moses? Okay.

T:

Because I’ve now gone down this route. Yeah, I mean the journey that you can take people on through leadership, it can be a journey of discovery, of yourself, or the people. But the landscape that you’re navigating there’s going to be lots of different challenges that come along the way and you’re just
trying to overcome those and work your way through it, either
to achieve – I mean it depends what kind of leader you are, but
either to achieve your – we can still debate over what your
desired outcome is. If you go into great leaders like (xxx) or –
they had a mad ideology that was very much for them – well,
maybe they thought it was for the good of their people, I don’t
know. But you are trying to get over the obstacles that are in
your way to reach your desired outcome. Whether your
desired outcome is for you personally or you’ve got the
empathic bone that depending on your philosophy, I guess.

H: √
Okay, and so navigating the landscape, it's like when the
journey – can be one of discovery or yourself or the people, and
it's about dealing with the challenges along the way and getting
over the obstacles to get to the desired outcome.

T:  
Mm-hm.

H: C  
Okay. And when you take people with you on that journey, is
there anything else about taking people with you?

T:  
When I’m thinking take people with me, my thought when you
ask that question now is am I leaving people behind? Or are
you leading against an opposing force? Sorry, taking people on
a …

H: C  
You said – I asked you is there anything else about taking
people with you when you take them from one place to
another.

T:  
Yeah. Sorry, I’m just trying to get back to that. Yeah, I mean
you’ve got to take people with you, I say take people with you
that’s more about convincing them that the journey’s the right
thing for them.

H: C  
And how do you do that?

T:  
Well, that is – you have to be clear on – so this is back to your
vision, you have to be clear on where it is you want to go, why
you want to get there. And once you’re clear with that in
yourself and you have that self-belief, it’s then about how you
communicate that and how you sell that or buy that from the
people you want to take there because obviously when you’re
leading or there’s a journey or a place that you’re trying to get
to, if we’re sticking with these metaphors, you need to have
people to come with you otherwise it’s a pretty lonely
leadership journey.

H: ML  
Yes, that’s true.
T: Yeah, so you need to – you need to create that desire within the people you need to come with you.

H: CC And you need to create the desire in those people that you need to come with you. And when you create that desire and you convince them that the journey is right for them, is there anything else about all of that related to leadership?

T: Yeah, well, I mean that’s the hardest bit is convincing – well, again, I mean this is whether you think you can train leadership or whether you think it’s naturally within people and it’s questionable. So I think sometimes when you ask somebody what leadership is they don’t know it because they just do it. And maybe other people are able to articulate it a different way because they’re trying to be it, and so they’re trying the characteristics of a leaders, so how do you create that desire and people would talk about charisma. People talk about clarity of vision, self-belief, communication.

H: ML And when you have that clarity of vision because you said you need to be clear on where it is you want to go and why you want to go there. When you have that clarity, where is that clarity of vision?

T: Clarity of vision is in the leader.

H: C Inside the leader? Where do you have clarity of vision?

T: Well, you may have got that clarity of vision from external – and sometimes I think that might be generated internally, sometimes it’s external. Sometimes the leader can sense the desire of the group to go from A to B but seizes upon that – seize is a strong word, but takes that up and knows that they can rally the collective to make it work rather than it being lots of people not necessarily collaborating to achieve something. That they can rally – they can awaken the feelings within people. They can be the focal point, the energy point or whatever, but it – yeah – I guess it’s within them from external.

H: C And when it’s within them from the external, whereabouts within them is it, that clarity of vision?

T: I think if you really want people to follow you it has to come from the heart. I’ll debate where the emotion of the heart is in your body, whether it’s in your stomach or in your heart.

H: O Okay.

T: But, you know, that gut feeling, it comes from – yeah, and then you rationalise it.
Okay, so it comes from the heart and then you rationalise it, and that's where that clarity of vision comes from?

Yeah.

It's within the leader. It might have an external source, but it comes from within, from the heart.

Yes.

Yeah. Okay.

And that's where you get the strength from to project that back outwards.

Yeah.

Yeah. I mean I suppose what fuels that is the group.

And that's then fuelled by the group?

Yeah. It is – as I started off, you need followers, so a leader is nothing without his army or men or whatever, so how does the leader is getting fed both from their inner battery and from the solar they get back from the team.

Mm-hm.

Of the drive, you know, that's the energy that I guess people crave, that's the energy I enjoy most.

The energy from within and from the external.

I'm not saying that necessarily it's great to go from A to B because you wanted to get to B and that's partly what it's about, but the energy you get from taking the people is just as important to a leader.

Okay. And that energy there that you get from taking the people with you, is there a relationship between that energy and then going on that journey? Is that the fuel, you talked about the fuel, is that the fuel...

Yeah. That's fuel and momentum.

This example illustrates how TIM's implicit leadership theory was elicited through asking a contextually clean question followed by clean questions and clean repeats based on his responses. The extract is typical of the interviews in
terms of the relative balance of clean questions (7), clean repeats (6) and the small number of mildly leading interventions (2). Further detail about how data were analysed for their cleanness and how the full interview was reduced to its metaphorical ‘Essence’ is addressed in Chapter Five. However what is also noteworthy with this extract is how TIM moves from his business school-informed thinking about leadership to his own more personal, metaphorical thinking. This movement from initially answering based on learned responses to considering their own responses was typical for most participants. Typical also of the data as a whole, is the length of participant responses relative to the questions.

4.14 Drawings

This study combines visual data from drawings with the verbal data from interviews to provide complementary ways of seeing and meaning-making. The decision to incorporate drawing into the study follows four recommendations, which are described next. This section concludes with introducing the exact way that participants were requested to draw following the interview.

The first recommendation calls for more arts-based approaches to leadership development (Adler, 2006; Bagnoli, 2009; Garavan et al., 2015; Katz-Buonincontro and Phillips, 2011; Sutherland, 2013; Taylor and Ladkin, 2009). The second suggests that visual techniques kindle contemplative processes to develop awareness and reflexivity (Bryans and Mavin, 2006) and to make the implicit explicit such as implicit leadership theories (Schyns et al., 2011; Schyns et al., 2013). The third calls for more multi-modal studies of metaphor (Cornelissen et al., 2008). The fourth is the practice of drawing in CL to enable further musing about metaphors (Lawley and Tompkins, 2000).

Adler makes a strong case for integrating the arts into leadership development, citing trends about the increasingly complex and connected global environment, in which business has significant power and responsibility to create “viable solutions that society needs” by turning “to the arts” (2006 p.490). Adler claims
that the challenge for companies is to create the conditions for innovation that relies on artistic skills. This motivates business to seek inspiration from the arts. Adler’s arguments resonate with Weick’s concerns about the limits of rationality and logic in management education. Rationality and logic are relevant for a world that is stable and predictable but Weick claims that it is imagination and improvisation that are more suited to the “unstable, unknowable and unpredictable” nature of the modern world and it is these qualities that enable people “to solve problems and enact their potential” (Weick, 2007 p.15).

Following Adler’s argument to combine arts and business, Taylor and Ladkin (2009) suggest that arts-based methods in leader development integrate creativity, emotions and tacit embodied knowing with the more traditional managerial tools of logic and rationale. They identify four processes that underlie the contribution of arts-based methods to leadership development: (1) the transfer of artistic skills to business, (2) projective techniques that aid the revelation of inner schemas, (3) the illustration of the essence of something “revealing the depths and connections that more propositional and linear development” does not, and (4) making things which can promote a deep holistic sense of being (2009 p.56). They suggest arts-based methods encourage embodied reflection and broaden leaders’ sensemaking to encompass “more complex and nuanced understanding” (Taylor and Ladkin, 2009 p.65). This study follows their suggestion to understand how these arts-based methods operate in practice by focusing on leaders’ drawings to illustrate the essence of leadership.

Arts-based methods are forms of presentational knowledge that is primarily concerned with meaning, includes drawings, imagery, metaphor and poetry (Heron and Reason, 2001) and provides a different way of making sense than language. Drawing is a powerful way of sensemaking that is fundamentally different but comparably complex to verbal reasoning (Bogen, 1969). According to Chodorow (1997), the precedent for working with images can be traced to Jung who claimed that “images have a life of their own” and “develop according to their own logic” providing that “conscious reason does not interfere” (Jung, 1970 p.145). Following this line of thought, Weber and Mitchell claim that
drawings “can express that which is not easily put into words: the ineffable, the elusive, the not-yet-thought-through, the subconscious” (1995 p.34).

However, despite their promise, drawings have not been used as widely in management studies as in other disciplines like psychology and anthropology (Kearney and Hyle, 2004). Drawings are an important source of data that complement verbal reports, can surface feelings and emotions and act as a source of triangulation of data (Kearney and Hyle, 2004). Due to their vividness and inherent ambiguity drawings help leaders to explain their views and “consider multiple frames of references” (Thorpe and Cornelissen, 2002 p.68). As drawings rely on lived experience they are used in phenomenological studies (van Manen, 1990). Mannay argues drawings can help researchers to bracket their preconceptions particularly when their experience is similar to their participants (2010). The use of drawings in this study is consistent with phenomenological precedents and offers an alternate way for participants to understand the essence of their leadership.

This study uses drawings as a way to illuminate “latent constructs” (Stiles, 2004 p.138) and aid self-awareness (Romanowska et al., 2014). Bryans and Mavin advocate drawings as a means to explore personal constructs by giving expression to emotional and unconscious aspects that might otherwise be difficult “to voice” (2006 p.117). This can help people become aware of their perspectives and through critical examination of these perspectives contributes to their reflexivity (Symon and Cassell, 2004). When drawings are seen as playful and fun they can be a non-threatening way to facilitate transformational learning as they “disarm resistance” (Schyns et al., 2013 p.15) and can be a starting point for reflection about implicitly held images of leadership.

This study acknowledges the multi-modal nature of metaphor (Cornelissen et al., 2008; Forceville, 2008; Gauntlett, 2007) and uses drawings to complement metaphors expressed verbally, thereby responding to calls for more multi-modal work with metaphor in management studies (Bürgi and Roos, 2003; Cornelissen et al., 2008; Oliver and Roos, 2007; Oswick et al., 2002). Despite the expression of metaphors in multiple forms – verbal, visual, embodied – most work in
management studies has been mono-modal, focusing on the verbal nature of metaphors as discussed in Chapter Three. CL recognises the multi-modal nature of metaphors and drawing is integral to its practice. Drawings create “a physical symbolic representation” (Lawley and Tompkins, 2000 p.16) which enable further exploration through musing. This builds on Carl Jung’s realisation that “the individuation process” is made concrete when the inner symbolic world is made external (1962 p.252). It is therefore a natural conclusion to the elicitation of metaphor through CL interviews to ask participants to draw their metaphors.

Following these four recommendations to incorporate arts-based methods in leader development processes, participants were asked to draw their metaphors for leadership following interview one and to draw the development process following interview two. It was helpful to set expectations at the outset that drawing is integral to the process and central to the exploration of metaphors and to provide reassurance that drawing skills are not important. These expectations were set initially in the letter of invitation to the study – see Appendix 2 and also re-iterated at the start of the interview. As coloured pencils and paper are more reminiscent of kindergarten than the executive office, I found it helpful to adopt a confident manner and make a clean request when asking leaders to draw. Following the first interview participants were asked to draw by the statement, “Now take all the time you want and please draw what you know now about your leadership.” A similar phrase was used to ask participants to draw after interview two, “Now take all the time you want and please draw the process”. Following these requests, I gave participants the space to get on with drawing, many times leaving the room for a short period. The clean approach enabled participants to respond to the request to draw in their own way. Using a confident approach acted as a way to normalise and ‘hold’ the participants and myself as interviewer in the unusual request to ask senior leaders to draw pictures. Doubt or hesitation on my part could easily transfer to the participant and potentially send an unintentional message that drawing is silly, less significant than words or optional. It was also useful to give an approximate period of time for the drawing e.g. 10 minutes, that is long enough...
for people to “get into it” but not so long that they start over-thinking or become anxious about the quality of the drawing. Furthermore it is suggested that introducing the drawing exercise after the interview that surfaced leaders’ images may have facilitated the task. A broad selection of the drawings produced by participants is presented in chapters five and six, which present the data from interviews one and two respectively.

This section has described why this study uses drawings based on four arguments: integrating arts-based methods into leader development, using drawings to aid reflection, adopting a multi-modal approach to metaphor and as an integral part of CL practice. Furthermore, drawings are pertinent for a phenomenological study (van Manen, 2007). It has also provided the exact way that participants were requested to draw following the interview.

4.15 Interview Logistics and Timing

This section reports on the logistics of conducting interviews between October 2013 and June 2014 with a group of thirty business people, from fifteen nationalities based in seven countries. This section covers the locations of interviews and the amount of time between interviews. This level of detail is often missing in qualitative studies but Saunders and Townsend suggest that it is useful for ensuring quality (2016).

4.15.1 Time for Interviews

Scheduling interviews with senior, busy executives was a major task in itself especially when being mindful of international travel time and costs. It was possible to conduct a maximum of two interviews per day, in part due to practical logistics of travelling to different destinations but also because I wanted to leave a margin in case participants’ agendas changed (Mikecz, 2012). Maintaining and directing attention in the interviewing process was extremely tiring and I would not have been able to do justice to more than two interviews per day. Initially I assumed that I was tired because I was unused to interviewing and to such an intense use of CL but as the number of interviews progressed I realised that the process of directing attention is tiring as participants also
commented on how tired they were after the interview. Perhaps this should be unsurprising given what the mindfulness literature says about the effort needed to maintain attention (Brown and Ryan, 2003; Dane, 2011; Weick and Putnam, 2006).

4.15.2 Interview Locations

Interviews were held in ten locations in four countries: Zurich (2), Geneva (3), Vevey (1) and Lausanne (8) in Switzerland, Weybridge (2), London (4) and Gatwick (1) in the UK, Amsterdam (5) and Utrecht (2) in the Netherlands and Lyon (1) in France plus one interview conducted by telephone.

The second interview was planned to occur between four and twelve weeks after interview one, which is typical for follow up activities on executive leadership programs in business schools as it enables leaders to notice the impact of development once they are back at work. Table 4-5 shows the actual time-lapsed between interviews, which varied significantly between 4-8 weeks and 30 weeks for one participant who was sent on a short term assignment abroad. The amount of time between interviews was largely a function of the busy schedules of participants but was also influenced by practical budgetary considerations in arranging meetings in locations outside Switzerland. Contrary to my concern about too much time elapsing between interviews, participants did not seem concerned about this and several of them commented that they appreciated the time to reflect and to observe themselves in action. I was concerned that participants would have difficulty recalling the interview if too much time elapsed. My concern underestimated how well the majority of participants were well able to recall the experience because of the very personal nature of the interview and the drawing.
Table 4-5 Number of Weeks Between Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Weeks Between Interviews</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>30</td>
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4.16 A Note on Transcription

Much of the literature suggests transcribing interviews oneself as a way to get close to the data. However, having transcribed two interviews (my own to evaluate the protocol and one that I undertook as a test case shortly afterwards), I decided that I would have the interviews professionally transcribed as I simply did not have the typing speed to transcribe myself especially being a mature student with a family, work and 60 interviews involved in the PhD. I did listen to the audio recording of each interview at least twice, once immediately after the interview to ensure that the recording had worked and to make notes and then again whilst reading the professionally produced transcript to check for any inconsistencies. One inconsistency I picked up through this checking process was that the professionally produced transcript did not always include the CL syntax which starts questions with ‘and’ to bridge between what the interviewee said and the clean question. As part of immersion in the data I amended this to ensure the fidelity of the interview was conveyed in the transcript. I report it as an example of the detail and care that I took in the transcription process and as a caveat to future studies that use transcription services for CL facilitated data. Following this comprehensive description of the techniques and procedures for data collection and analysis I now focus on how data were analysed in the study.

4.17 Techniques and Procedures for Data Analysis

This section reviews the procedures adopted to analyse the data. There are four influences on the data analysis procedures; phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994),
as this study seeks to find out the essence of leaders’ experience; Clean Language (Tosey et al., 2014) as metaphors were purposefully elicited using CL principles; metaphor analysis as the data elicited were multi-modal metaphors (Cassell and Lee, 2012) and visual techniques (Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2000) as drawings were elicited as part of data collection in both interviews. These four influences are outlined before an overview of the data analysis procedures is provided. Detailed procedures for analysis of data from interviews one and two are provided respectively in Chapters Five and Six based on different analysis processes for different purposes.

There is a reluctance for phenomenological researchers to be prescriptive about steps involved in collection or analysis of data as, according to Hycner (1985), imposing a method on phenomena would compromise the integrity of them. Furthermore, there is no common approach to phenomenological methods and many phenomenologists incorporate or adapt from other approaches e.g. Creswell’s adaptation of Moustakas (2013) and Moustakas adaptations of Stevick, Colaizzi and Keen or VanKaam (1994). I have adopted a transcendental phenomenological approach (Moustakas, 1994) because it foregrounds the meaning making of research participants rather than the analysis of the researcher, which is pertinent to my research question. Moreover, this approach was chosen as it is based on principles of dialogical research which emphasises the importance of dialogue between people of equal levels to illuminate aspects of life hitherto unquestioned (Beck, 1994). Furthermore Moustakas, drawing on Giorgi (1985) and Colaizzi (1978), provides systematic steps for data analysis which I have applied to the analysis of data from interview two.

Clean Language principles for interview-based research have underpinned and guided this entire study (Tosey et al., 2014). These principles have been reviewed in the section on ‘Quality in Interviews and summarised in Table 4-3. I suggest these CL principles support a phenomenological approach through providing a method for researchers to ‘achieve’ époché by using ‘clean’ questions to minimise the introduction of extraneous material from the interviewer.
Accounts of metaphor elicitation in the management literature are sparse. Moreover there are few examples of metaphor analysis that describe the processes used to analyse metaphors. Two notable exceptions are Oberlechner, Slunecko and Kronberger (2004) and Cassell and Lee (2012). These authors articulate the processes they have used to analyse metaphors and have been informative to the approach taken to analyse the metaphors that were elicited in interview one.

Finally, this study draws on literatures about visual methods (Rose, 2016). As previously noted drawings are not widely used in management studies and even the few studies that have focused on images (Bryans and Mavin, 2006; Garavan et al., 2015; McKenzie and van Winkelen, 2011) have not provided details of how visual data are analysed. Congruent with the transcendental phenomenological approach adopted in this study, visual data are not ‘analysed’ but they are clustered and commented on. It is worth noting that even this clustering and commenting could come from different methodological foundations that, according to Rose (2016), include content analysis, semiology, psychoanalysis and discourse analysis. This commentary draws on a visual semiotics approach, originated by Barthes (1967) as this acknowledges layers of meaning. One layer of meaning is denotation, which describes ‘what’ is being depicted, a second layer of meaning is connotation that describes the ideas “expressed through what is represented, and through the way in which it is represented” (Leeuwen, 2000 p.94).

Table 4-6 provides an overview of the data analysis for the research project as a whole.
Table 4-6 Overview of Data Collection and Analysis in the Study

**Overview of Data Collection and Analysis**  
*(Based on 2 interviews with 30 participants)*

**For Overall Research Study**  
Research process guided by principles of transcendental phenomenology to create rich accounts of experience and by principles of Clean Language to elicit and analyse metaphor.

Expert Clean Language team created to review overall research study and create processes for working with metaphor including reviewing ‘cleanness’ of interview questions, ‘clean’ rating of interviews and identifying metaphor ‘Essences’.

---

**Interview 1**

**Within Interviews**

1. Purposely elicit naturally occurring metaphors of leaders in interviews conducted with Clean Language to minimise contamination of data by interviewer

2. Purposely elicit participant drawings with Clean Language to access multi-modal metaphors

3. Transcribe interviews and review verbal and visual data

4. Create and apply process to check ‘cleanness’ of interviews (see Chapter 5 for detail)

5. Create and apply process to establish inter-rater agreement for the identification of metaphors in a transcript (see Chapter 5 for detail)

6. Distil all transcribed interviews to their metaphoric Essence

**Across Interviews**

7. Identify the key metaphors across Essences (see Chapter 5 for detail)

---

**Interview 2**

**Within Interviews**

1. Purposely and cleanly elicit participants’ responses to what they learnt in interview 1

2. Purposely and cleanly elicit participants’ drawings of the process

3. Transcribe interviews and review verbal and visual data

**Across Interviews**

4. Extract significant statements per interview per question to identify significant experience (see Chapter 6 for detail)

5. Review significant statements to identify themes per question, based on iterative constant comparison (see Chapter 6 for detail)

6. Create composite model of participants’ experience (see Chapter 6 for detail)

7. Incorporate metaphors, themes and drawings to provide rich written description of the phenomenon of learning from leaders’ inner world through metaphor

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Expanded tables are available in Chapters Five and Six to provide more detail about how data from interview one and two were analysed respectively.
Commentary on drawings is also addressed in these subsequent chapters. The Table frames the overall study with principles of transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) and CL (Tosey et al., 2014). Furthermore, the Table differentiates between analysis conducted within interviews and analysis conducted across interviews. The Table shows seven major steps for collecting and analysing data in interview one, based principally on CL principles (Tosey et al., 2014) and metaphor analysis in management literature (Cassell and Lee, 2012; Oberlechner et al., 2004). These steps are expanded in Chapter Five. Table 4-6 then makes clear seven major steps for collecting and analysing data in interview two, based on principles of transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). These steps are expanded in Chapter Six to provide greater detail about how the key themes of experience were distinguished.

4.18 Research Ethics

Ethics pervade all aspects of research and include principles to do no harm, obtaining informed consent from participants, protection of privacy, conduct in the interview and consequences of the research (Holt, 2012; Lincoln and Guba, 1989; Saunders et al., 2009). This section outlines the ethical considerations taken for this study, which include seeking approval from the Surrey ethics committee, interaction with participants including information about the study, obtaining informed consent and ensuring confidentiality and researcher’s ethics and reflexivity.

Seeking approval from the University ethics committee, called “procedural ethics” by Guillemin and Gillam (2004 p.262) is an important step early in the research process to ensure that the study conforms to ethical standards. This study does not fall into any of the categories specified by the University of Surrey as requiring specific ethical approval nevertheless I sought clarification of this from the University ethics committee. The Ethics Committee Member confirmed that this study did not need special ethical approval (See Appendix 1). One possible ethical consideration in this study was the personal nature of the interviews, which focused on leaders’ metaphors, however as the metaphors
were not deeply personal in the sense of exploring sensitive issues they were unlikely to cause offence. Furthermore I had tested the use of CL in pilot studies and none of the eight interviewees in this pilot study experienced any discomfort with CL nor did they express any concern; on the contrary, participants found the opportunity to step back from daily business refreshing and insightful. In addition to clarifying ethical considerations with the University of Surrey, I also obtained all necessary permissions from the business school to approach past participants for this study.

Conducting research ethically does not only involve procedural ethics but entails ethical behaviour towards participants in the study. This involves the principle of causing no harm to participants, informing people of the overall purpose of the research, so they can decide whether to be involved and if in agreement can understand what their involvement entails in terms of data required and time involved. Clarification about access, use of data and assurances of confidentiality are essential to obtain informed consent for participation. I contacted potential participants by email (see Appendix 2) to ascertain their interest in participation in the study and informed them of the purpose of the study in a neutral way so as not to unduly influence them. This email made clear the request to partake in two interviews and to draw at the end of each interview, briefly outlined CL, estimated the time involvement necessary and offered to talk to potential participants about any questions or concerns. If people agreed to participate in the study a ‘research confidentiality and release agreement’ was signed by the participant and researcher to clarify expectations and agreements and as a precautionary measure in case of unforeseen disputes (See Appendix 3). This agreement confirmed that participation was voluntary, that interviews would be recorded and transcribed, that data would be kept confidential and used in an anonymous, respectful and ethical manner and used for the PhD and possible future publications. In this study ethical conduct continued through the collection of data, responsible use of email correspondence with participants, appropriate conduct in interviews, lawful processing of personal data in line with the Data Protection Act 1998 and anonymised reporting of data through
giving a three-letter pseudonym to each participant to maintain assurances of confidentiality to participants.

4.19 Researcher Ethics and Reflexivity

In addition to ethical concerns with how to approach and treat participants, Guillemin and Gillam suggest that researchers pay attention to “ethics in practice” (2004 p.264). The latter is not covered by checklists of procedures to follow but depends on the researcher’s ability to recognise, think through and respond appropriately to “ethically important moments” (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004 p.273). Adopting reflexivity helps researchers to critically reflect on their role in the production of knowledge and examine how their behaviour and interactions with participants affect the research (Bryman and Cassell, 2006; Cunliffe, 2003; Cunliffe, 2004; Cunliffe and Easterby-Smith, 2016; Cunliffe and Jun, 2005; Hewitt, 2007; Hibbert et al., 2014). Moreover, reflexivity can alert researchers to ethical tensions that can arise (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004).

I have attempted to take a reflexive stance to this study throughout the process, although I acknowledge the “partial, tentative (and) provisional” nature of this complex and problematic endeavour (Finlay, 2002 p.542). This reflexivity has involved becoming aware of my own implicit ways of knowing so that they do not unduly influence the design of the study or the collection or analysis of data. This is particularly crucial in phenomenological studies to enable the bracketing of pre-understandings to enable the researcher to “come to grips with the significance of the phenomenological research question” (van Manen, 1990 p.46). Early in the research process, I wrote my subjective motivations for undertaking the PhD, which centred on the dichotomy between subjective and objective knowledge. That writing process was cathartic for me and offered a reflexive perspective about the motivations for this study. Furthermore, as discussed in the section on Quality in Interviews, I have worked with James Lawley, a recognized expert in CL, to become aware of my own beliefs and pre-suppositions through being interviewed by him using the protocol designed for this study. This was an invaluable experience through which I became aware of my tendency to split things into dilemmas. Knowing this helped to bracket the
tendency to see duality when interviewing others. This epitomises a reflexive approach by examining “fundamental assumptions, values, and ways of interacting where we question our core beliefs and our understanding” (Cunliffe and Jun, 2005 p.229).

As an interview is an interpersonal exchange involving reciprocal influence it is important to establish rapport whilst also acknowledging various factors that influence the relationship between researcher and participants such as age, gender, social status, appearance, professional role, environment and power (Richards and Emslie, 2000). These factors were considered in identifying participants for the study (see section on Sample) concerning relative power balance, status and professional role. The personal characteristics, ethics, experience, vocal qualities, self-awareness and conduct of the researcher impacts qualitative studies (Finlay, 2002). Researchers, therefore, are called to be reflexive about their role (Cassell et al., 2009; Cassell and Symon, 2004) and manage their own internal processes and external behaviour in order to create the optimal conditions for the interview. Without adequate sensitivity, openness to ambiguity and the unexpected as well as the ability to respond to unexpected shifts in the interview the researcher might miss subtle but important data, especially if it does not correspond with their own internal conceptualisations.

I believe that I have the experience and personal awareness to manage the interpersonal relationship of the interview and avoid distracting behaviour due to my educational and professional background (as outlined in Chapter One). Working with senior executives as an executive coach for eighteen years in a world-class business school has provided significant experience in dealing with the unexpected in face-to-face situations as well as regular feedback about how I interact with people. This is not to suggest that I could not improve, but it does suggest that my professional role combined with the use of CL in interviews, which brackets interviewer assumptions, provides safeguards for creating a sensitive environment for participants to explore their inner worlds.
4.20 Summary of Chapter Four

This chapter has outlined the research methodology for this study, which contributes to understanding what leaders can learn about their leadership through adopting an inductive approach to exploring the naturally occurring metaphors and implicit leadership theories of 30 international business leaders. Using the "research onion" of Saunders et al. (2016 p.124) the chapter has reviewed my interpretivist research philosophy including ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions. Using an inductive approach, the research has adopted a phenomenological strategy to understand the lived experiences of practising leaders. This multi-method study includes CL facilitated interviews to elicit leaders’ naturally occurring multi-modal metaphors in a longitudinal time horizon that entailed six contact points with participants over eighteen months.

Theoretical and practical considerations for the sample have been examined including the appropriate size of the purposive heterogeneous sample and issues of gaining access to and trust of participants. Details of the sample of eleven women and nineteen men from fifteen nationalities and diverse industry backgrounds were explained to make explicit characteristics of the sample which are summarised in Table 4-2.

The chapter has summarised data collection techniques and decisions in some depth. This includes the epistemological basis for interviews and how their quality can be assessed with reference to four of Kvale’s (1996) six criteria and Tosey et al.’s (2014) progressive levels of CL in qualitative research, outlined in Table 4-3. As interviews used CL to facilitate the elicitation of metaphor, four essential components of CL have been explicated (syntax, clean questions, voice quality, non-verbals). The philosophy and principles of CL are summarised in Table 4-4. An extract from an interview is included to provide transparency of the interview process using CL. As the study used a multi-modal approach to metaphor, drawings are incorporated into the design and the chapter discusses the integration of arts-based methods in leader development and the use of
images to aid reflexivity and elicit implicit assumptions. Following the data collection procedures the practicalities and logistics of interviews were outlined to make clear issues concerning timing, locations and transcription.

Data analysis procedures were explained to ensure transparency and are synthesised for the study as a whole in Table 4-6. These procedures draw on principles of transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994), Clean Language (Tosey et al., 2014), metaphor analysis (Cassell and Lee, 2012) with reference to commenting on drawings from a semiotic perspective (Leeuwen, 2000). Specific details about data analysis are included in the following two chapters that present and analyse the data from interview one and interview two respectively.

The chapter concluded with considerations of ethics, including approval from the University ethics committee, interaction and transparency with participants and researcher ethics and reflexivity. The chapter has aimed to be as transparent as possible about research decisions and choices in order to create a credible and justified methodological frame for the study.
5 Essence of Leadership

The purpose of this chapter is to present the verbal and pictorial data from interview one including the salient metaphors of leadership described by the thirty participants in the study. The following chapter provides data from interview two concerning what participants learnt through exploration of their metaphors. Chapter Seven discusses the findings from both Chapters Five and Six. All quotes in these three chapters are verbatim from the interviews and are identified by each participant’s three-letter pseudonym. Likewise, drawings are re-produced in black and white or in colour faithful to how they were created by participants.

This chapter starts with an overview of the data collected, and then describes the process for data analysis. Three processes for analysing data are explained in this chapter (1) rating the cleanness of data, (2) distilling the metaphorical ‘Essence’ of interviews and (3) identifying the key metaphors from across the interviews. The first two processes (assessing cleanness of data elicited in this study and distilling the metaphorical ‘Essence’ of a transcript) were specifically created in consultation with the Expert Clean Language team. The third process of identifying key metaphor themes follows established approaches to metaphor analysis in management studies (Cassell and Lee, 2012; Oberlechner et al., 2004).

The chapter provides an example of TIM’s ‘Essence’ and drawings elicited in interview one. This continues from the extract of the interview provided in Chapter Five to make clear the process of distilling an interview transcript to a succinct ‘Essence’ of leadership. Following this the ten key recurring metaphors for leadership are presented from across the 30 participants ‘Essences’ and drawings. The chapter concludes with some preliminary observations about the data, reserving discussion of the data for Chapter Seven.
5.1 Data from Interview One

Interviews took place between October 1, 2013 and 21, March 2014. A significant quantity of qualitative data was collected in interview one - 43 hours of audio data, 296,918 words and 38 drawings. On average interviews lasted nearly an hour and a half producing an average of 10,645 words per participant.

5.2 Data Analysis for Interview One

The process for analysis of data from interview one is based on Clean Principles (Tosey et al., 2014) and metaphor analysis in management research (Cassell and Lee, 2012; Oberlechner et al., 2004). Table 5-1 provides the ten steps taken to collect and analyse the data from interview one and is expanded from the overview provided in Table 4-6 in Chapter Four. Table 5-1 includes the steps of collecting data ‘cleanly’ as this is an important part of this study that required specific attention to the ‘clean’ set-up of the interview process. The Table then shows how data were analysed within individual interviews to check the ‘cleanliness’ of data as well as to establish a process for identifying the ‘Essence’ of metaphorical content. Finally the Table details how key metaphor themes were identified from across the 30 interviews. This involved four steps (1) the initial identification of key metaphors in the Essences; (2) identification of key metaphors in the drawings; (3) elaboration and collapsing of the metaphor clusters; and (4) producing the final list of metaphor categories illustrated with verbatim quotes and drawings.
# Data Collection and Analysis from Interview One

## Data Collection

1. Review ‘cleanness’ of interview questions to elicit participants’ metaphors while minimising assumptions in interview questions
   - Check interview protocol through being interviewed by CL expert to ‘live’ the experience of being interviewed
   - Check interview protocol with one participant to identify any challenges with target sample

2. Purposely elicit naturally occurring metaphors of participants in interviews conducted with Clean Language to maximise authenticity of participant data and minimise introduction of extraneous content by interviewer

## Data Analysis within Individual Interviews

3. **Transcribe data**
   - Read transcripts whilst listening to audio-recording to check for accuracy of transcription.
   - Review each interview to absorb the entire data-set

4. **Check ‘cleanness’ of interviews** to authenticate data from participants.
   - ‘Cleanness’ checked against rating scale of 6 categories created in consultation with Expert Clean Language team: Contextually Clean, Clean Question, Clean Repeat, Mildly Leading, Strongly Leading, Other
   - Conduct rating of 3 interviews by CL expert to confirm level of ‘cleanness’
   - Rate remaining 27 interviews

5. **Create Process to establish the Metaphor ‘Essence’** of interviews.
   - Analyse 3 transcripts independently by Expert Clean Language team and author to establish inter-rater agreement for the identification of metaphors

6. **Distil Metaphor ‘Essence’** of all transcribed interviews

## Data Analysis Across All 30 Interviews

7. **Identify the key metaphors in each ‘Essence’** to establish preliminary clusters
   - Clusters based on repetition and reformulation of metaphors
   - Note any exceptions or difficult-to-allocate metaphors
   - Allocate preliminary names to clusters of metaphors

8. **Identify the key metaphors in drawings** – based on principles for step 7 – by checking and comparing with Essence

9. **Settle the metaphorical clusters**
   - Reread the Essences and review the drawings to elaborate/collapse the metaphorical clusters and their content moving and removing examples as necessary
   - Define “prevalence” criteria to identify a key metaphor
   - Refine names for clusters of key metaphors to settle metaphor categories

10. **Synthesise metaphor categories** through illustrative verbatim metaphors and drawings
5.3 Cleanness of Interview Data

With the care taken to elicit data as cleanly as possible, it was important to understand how clean the data were. As part of my clean research strategy the Expert Clean Language team discussed the use of a rating scale to assess the ‘cleanness’ of data. I asked CL expert James Lawley to review a sample of the interviews to assess how clean they were. The 3 interviews submitted were selected to reflect the ratio of male and female interviewees and the ratio of native and non-native English speakers. Furthermore these three interviews offered distinct metaphors (spatial, energy and target). The review was undertaken after all interviews were completed and was based on the rating scale drawn up for the purposes of research and described in Table 5-2.

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<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Contextually Clean</td>
<td>Questions developed for the interview protocol that relate to the exploration of the topic for example, “when was your first experience of being a leader?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Clean Question</td>
<td>Asks a question of the participant’s material without introducing any other material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Clean Repeat</td>
<td>Repeats the participant’s material without introducing any other material nor asking a question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ML</td>
<td>Mildly Leading</td>
<td>Questions that are phrased in such a way as to imply an answer or introduce new words but that are within the logic of the participant’s landscape. Words such as ‘right,’ ‘great’ can be used to encourage the participant to continue but should be used with caution as they can imply a judgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SL</td>
<td>Strongly Leading</td>
<td>These are questions or statements that lead the client to answer in a particular way or introduce material not used by the participant or introduce opinions from the interviewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Typically these are words such as ok, aha, mmmhhm that encourage the participant to continue and indicate the interviewer is paying attention. Other statements might also be response to questions that the participant raises in the interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cleanness rating tallied the frequency that the six categories outlined above were used and demonstrated this as a percentage figure. The results are
summarised in Table 5-3 and, according to James' expert opinion, were excellent, conforming to "a high standard of Clean Language" (Personal Communication, March 6, 2015). This was very encouraging and comparable to the high standards in the Tosey et al. study which "was considered to have set a benchmark" (2014 p.11).

Table 5-3 Expert Clean Rating of Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RATING CATEGORY</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>NAT Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>TIM Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>JAN Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>TOTAL Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clean repeat, no overt question</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextually Clean</td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mildly Leading</td>
<td>ML</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly leading</td>
<td>SL</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>78</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>140</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>122</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>340</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following this expert rating, I proceeded to rate the other 27 interviews for cleanness. To do this I read each transcript and starting from the beginning of the interview, gave each interviewer intervention a consecutive number and followed the mark-up code of Table 5-2 (CC, C, ✓, ML, SL, O). This approach enabled a tally of the total number of interventions as well as a count of the frequency of each type of intervention. Having marked up the transcripts, I printed them out, reread them and confirmed the rating, then counted the frequency of each category and calculated the percentages. It was a time-consuming process but enabled me to assess and enhance confidence in the cleanness of the data.

Analysis of the 30 interviews showed that 2792 interventions were made in the interviews. From the total 2792 interventions 2268 were clean interventions; either 'Clean Questions', 'Clean Repeats' or 'Contextually Clean' which represents 81% of the interviews. Of the remaining 19%, 9% were 'Other' comments; 10% of the interviews were 'Mildy Leading' and only 1.5% 'Strongly Leading'. In
addition to my own rating of the interviews, the figures for all interviews are very close to James Lawley's expert review of the three interviews, so I believe I can legitimately claim that the interviews were conducted cleanly. Following this validation of the cleanliness of interview data, the next step in data analysis was to distil the metaphors from each transcript.

### 5.4 The Essence of Metaphor

Gibbs (2010) claims that a fundamental issue in metaphor research is transparency about the process by which metaphors are identified. He questions whether the identification of metaphor should rely on the intuitions of individual metaphor analysts or on more objective replicable procedures and notes that relatively few approaches have explicitly articulated how a metaphor is identified. Notable exceptions from discourse analysis are the Pragglejaz group’s Metaphor Identification Process (Steen et al., 2010) and Cameron’s discourse analysis approach to metaphor (Cameron et al., 2009). Examples of clear processes for metaphor identification and analysis in management studies are rare. An example of transparency comes from Cassell and Lee’s (2012) explanation of their eight-step processes for identifying and analysing metaphor. Building on their example and in response to Gibbs’ (2010) concern I developed a process to identify metaphor in each transcript with the Expert Clean Language team rather than rely on my own intuitions.

The process to identify the metaphors was initiated by the author in discussions with CL expert, James Lawley and her principal supervisor, trained in CL, as part of the on-going methodological and ‘clean’ check-points of the research. This team of three metaphor analysts agreed to independently review a transcript to identify the core metaphors of an interview and to share and discuss results. This process entailed highlighting a participant’s metaphors, eliminating repetition to create a coherent account of the interviewee’s essential metaphors – using their own words. Words or phrases were considered to be metaphorical if they made no literal sense but described one thing in terms of another (Allan, 2007). This process involved scaling the interview transcript from an average of 10,000 words to approximately 700 to produce the essence of each person’s leadership.
There was agreement that the essence of the transcript, would by nature, represent the complexity of the metaphors and at the same time would be concise. Guided by James Lawley’s expert experience, we agreed to have the ‘Essence’ visible on one page. This was a ‘best guess’ at the estimated length of the ‘Essence’ with the benefit of the physicality of a page to guide the distillation process. The process of distilling the essence of metaphor, which is iterative and bottom up, was as follows:

5.4.1 Essence of Metaphor Process

1. Familiarise with the data by reading through transcript.
2. Highlight metaphors - words, small phrases (not sentences/paragraphs). Language was identified as metaphorical if it described one thing in terms of something else. This initial pass through the data aims to reduce the transcript to approximately 10% of its original length.
3. Read the emerging essence and identify core metaphors (typically no more than 5 or 6)
4. Reread the transcript with a critical eye to ensure nothing is missed & look for evidence of the core metaphors. Examples of evidence are whether metaphors are re-iterated through the transcript and whether they are represented in the drawing. It is possible that different metaphors emerge through different parts of the transcript and the drawings.
5. Know what to leave out e.g. examples, stories.
6. Look for a ‘predictive quality’ with the metaphors e.g. do the metaphors illuminate how the person is likely to behave and could they illuminate what motivates this person?
7. Is there internal coherence between the metaphors?
8. Do metaphors relate to each other? And if so, how? E.g. what is the metaphorical landscape?
9. Following consideration of points 5-8, further reduce each essence to 500 words or fewer to obtain a coherent concise description and to eliminate repetitive elements.
10. Check with the interviewee whether the essence is representative.
The process to identify the ‘Essence’ requires a delicate balance between being faithful to the core aspects of the participants’ experience and words and the ability to cut the non-essential that obscures the core metaphors. This is the value added by the researcher to take the interview as a whole and to distil the core inherent ‘Essence’ of the leader’s perspective. The wrestling with what to put in and what to leave out is part of the process and requires the researcher to bracket their own assumptions and take a clean approach to distilling the ‘Essence’, just as they took a clean approach to eliciting the metaphors in the first place. This is a time-consuming process taking at least a day per participant’s data with some of the transcripts being more straightforward to distil into ‘Essences’ than others. For example, I found it harder to distil the ‘Essence’ of the transcripts that contained very rich metaphorical language. I was not alone in reflections about variance in the amount of time necessary for the process; James Lawley commented that the same process could vary significantly in terms of time (personal communication).

This process was trialled with one transcript and the results shared and discussed through a Skype meeting of the three metaphor analysts. There was significant similarity concerning the metaphors identified in the transcript as shown in Table 5-4, which compares the three researchers’ review of TIM’s transcript.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIM</th>
<th>HMCL</th>
<th>JL</th>
<th>PT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Journey</td>
<td>Journey</td>
<td>Journey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>power</td>
<td>Power struggle</td>
<td>System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passion bubble like</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Passion bubble like</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This process of reviewing a transcript, sharing and discussing the results was repeated for two other participants, chosen because they presented very different metaphorical landscapes. There was significant consensus between the three metaphor analysts for the second and third participants; therefore, I
continued to develop the ‘Essences’ for the remaining twenty-seven participants alone with the option to check in with the other analysts if necessary. This attention to distilling the metaphorical ‘Essence’ from each interview responds to Gibbs call for transparency in metaphor identification. Furthermore the meticulous attention to participants’ own metaphors corresponds to Husserl’s emphasis on “absolutely faithful description... keeping at a distance all interpretations” (1931 p.262).

In addition to the care taken to distil the ‘Essence’, I decided to contact the participant to ask for feedback on whether the ‘Essence’ was representative of them and useful. I sent the three ‘Essences’ produced by the expert Clean Language Team to TIM and followed up by a face-to-face meeting. He confirmed that the ‘Essences’ were each similar to one another and representative of him. He shared an example of how he had embodied one of his key metaphors recently in a big global re-organisation and realised that he was doing exactly what he had described in the interview. This additional step in the research proved to be very useful in shaping the subsequent presentation of the ‘Essences’ and illustrates how the relationship between author and participants facilitated an on-going dialogue about the research that went beyond the involvement initially agreed.

5.4.2  Example of Essence of Leadership

This section provides the ‘Essence’ of leadership for TIM reduced to 500 words or fewer using his exact words and his two drawings of leadership as a journey (Figure 5-1) and leadership as energy system (Figure 5-2). As this study follows phenomenological principles to describe rather than analyse the essence of experience (Husserl, 1931; Moustakas, 1994) the exact metaphors and words of leaders are used.
Leadership is taking people from one place to another on a journey – Navigating the landscape to overcome different challenges to reach your desired outcome. I have to believe in the journey. The first step in making people believe is believing yourself. Clarity of vision, passion, desire comes from within, bubble-like, rising from the stomach, a fluttering heart and an acute sense in your mind and it feels right and your head is reconfirming the emotional feeling that’s come up through your body. The passion comes from the heart, you think it through and when you hit on it, you have the adrenaline rush, which is bubbles through my body and then a reconfirmation with my head that this is it. You back it up to rationalise to calm all of this down.

The energy of the people is fuel and momentum. The energy you get from taking people with you is important. The leader is both getting fed from their inner battery and from the solar they get back from the team. People beaming back at me... so they’re holding me up in some sort of light. I get my energy from the team not from the end goal – it’s the reconfirmation that I’m doing it right. It’s energy like adrenaline, a proper buzz – tears in the eyes stuff. “We did it” - you don’t get much better than that. When you work your way up through an organisation you feed of your leaders and get the power from them and they’re the solar power and they charge you up. And when you get to a certain stage you have to look within and find the battery. You have to create the environment where people can shine themselves, to think about solutions themselves and then they create the battery power themselves, (confidence and ability) and that’s a great buzz for me to see that.

Push forward consistently - like children, let them play and learn and not overly punish them, make environment safe to make mistakes. Make the boundaries clear – this is safe to play, to take risks but not when on the road. You have to give them development because that’s what motivates them to stick with you.

An immense self-belief in head – “yes you can”. Constant undertone of leading but important to give opportunity to others to take the reins. Leadership as a bit of a power struggle - have to have the upper hand – a bit male gorilla but if you are not winning the one-on-one tussles in the jungle you would be usurped. (427 words)
Figure 5-1 Taking People on a Journey - TIM

Figure 5-2 Energy Comes from the Battery Pack and Solar Power - TIM
5.4.3 Reflection on Essences

TIM’s ‘Essence’ shows two main metaphors for his mental model of leadership – a journey and an energy system – plus two additional metaphors of creating a safe place to play and leadership as a bit of a power struggle. His ‘Essence’ encapsulates his understanding of leadership and what it means to him to be a leader. Once the research questions, non-metaphorical words and repetitions are removed from the 10,135 words of the original interview, the 427-word ‘Essence’ highlights TIM’s metaphors about leadership, illuminating his implicit leadership theory. This is significant not only for him to be able to reflect on how he thinks about and enacts leadership but also for how he considers his development, based on these metaphors.

The distillation of ‘Essences’ provides a phenomenological description of the thirty leaders’ views of leadership as a preliminary step in answering the research question of what leaders learnt from an exploration of their inner world. Several observations can be made about the ‘Essences’ that are relevant for making sense of these data. First, it is important to note that these metaphorical ‘Essences’ of leadership are phenomenological (Husserl, 1982; Moustakas, 1994) and not ‘essentialist’ in a positivist sense. This difference is crucial as essentialist approaches imply an underlying or unchanging nature – a view that has been criticised by social constructivist scholars (Fairhurst, 2011; Grint, 2000). These phenomenological ‘Essences’ provide a window into the inner world of how leaders make meaning about leadership through their own words. Second it has been possible to elicit metaphors for all participants using CL and, due to rigorous checks concerning the elicitation and distillation of these metaphors, I have confidence that they are authentic to participants. Third each participant’s ‘Essence’ is distinct and unique, based on their inner world of metaphor. This highlights that while there are overt similarities between metaphors (for example journey or energy) the detail is idiosyncratic and needs to be elicited in order for the ‘Essence’ to be valid for an individual. The idiosyncratic nature of the metaphors elicited in this study is apparent in the ‘Essences’ and accompanying drawings. Fourth the ‘Essences’ are complex and
holistic involving relationships between aspects. However, they are not neat and tidy ‘final products’ but rather a distillation of participants’ thoughts elicited in a broad-ranging interview. I explored relationships between aspects of participants’ metaphors as these arose in the interviews; however, I did not set out to establish relationships between all aspects. These ‘Essences’ present the underlying metaphors of participants’ implicit leadership theories rather than complete models (see section on relationship between metaphors and models, Chapter Three). Fifth it is possible to reduce participants’ metaphors to a one-page ‘Essence’ using a rigorous process and the discipline of CL by keeping to the person’s own words. This one page ‘Essence’ was useful for participants to see their own thoughts succinctly to enable further reflection of their leadership. Finally the individual nature of each person’s metaphors in their ‘Essence’ is likely to have implications for their leadership development that is discussed in Chapter Seven.

Having spent considerable time and energy to create the process to distil the ‘Essences’ and to complete this for all 30 participants, I faced a dilemma of what to include in this final thesis. I considered how many ‘Essences’ to include, eventually deciding to focus on one and to describe the process for arriving at the ‘Essence’ to illustrate the ‘clean’ approach to working with data and develop confidence about the quality and validity of the ‘Essences’, which has implications for further analysis of the data. Whilst the ‘Essences’ and drawings are succinct and fascinating in their diversity, I decided not to include all 30 in the thesis. ‘Essences’ were highly individual, comparable in richness and combined with drawings, provided, to my knowledge, the first multi-modal metaphors of leadership elicited from practising leaders; hence these data can create a platform for future research.

My fifth research objective is to synthesise the key metaphors from across leader’s ‘Essences’ and drawings (as described in Chapter One). This objective seeks to show the range of metaphors used by leaders to describe leadership and the nuances they use to describe these metaphors. Both the range and the idiosyncratic expression of these metaphors is important to understand how
elicited metaphors might differ from deductive metaphors used about leadership. The range of metaphors is relevant to leaders in the study who were curious about other metaphors for leadership; however it is also highly relevant to leadership development professionals and metaphor scholars in understanding the elicited metaphors of practising leaders (Fairhurst, 2011). The following section details how key metaphors were identified from across the Essences and drawings.

5.5 Identifying Key Metaphors from Essences and Drawings

The thirty ‘Essences’ were reviewed inductively to identify categories of metaphors. This inductive approach meant that I had no pre-conceived categories and let the categories emerge from the ‘Essences’. Having had a selection of transcripts reviewed by two expert metaphor analysts as part of the process to create the ‘Essences’, I had established a form of inter-rater reliability into the process and therefore had confidence that I was capable of selecting the key metaphors from across these ‘Essences’. Drawing on clear descriptions of the establishment of themes in qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and the establishment of metaphorical categories (Cassell and Lee, 2012; Oberlechner et al., 2004), I adopted the steps outlined in Table 5.1 to identify, cluster, settle and synthesise the metaphorical categories. Similar to the approach taken by Oberlechner, Slunceko and Kronberger, I established a list of metaphorical statements from the ‘Essences’ and then sorted these into clusters based on “shared metaphoric roots” (2004 p.138). These initial clusters were then elaborated or reduced to ‘settle’ metaphor categories. The category name was refined and finally the metaphor categories were synthesised along with illustrative verbatim metaphors and drawings. Recurring metaphors in the Essences were ‘journey’, ‘visualising the future’, ‘energy’, ‘balance’, ‘connection’, ‘self-reflection’, ‘creating the environment’, ‘giving space’, ‘puzzling things out’ and ‘catalysing change’.

In addition to reviewing the 30 ‘Essences’, I also reviewed the drawings for key metaphors (Step 8 in Table 5.1). All thirty participants produced a drawing after the interview. Some participants were initially reluctant to draw, as they claimed
not to have drawn since kindergarten and protested that their drawings would not be ‘good’. However, offering paper and coloured pencils and leaving space for the participants to draw resulted in thirty-eight drawings. Most were relatively quickly sketched in 5 - 10 minutes, but some like that of NAT or GDM were more elaborately produced. Despite the initial hesitation from some participants, most were pleased with their handicraft and expressed satisfaction that the drawing reflected an important element of the interview.

Whilst most people produced one drawing, five participants (TIM, DIL, SAR, SAN, GOR) drew two and one participant, KET, drew five pictures. For each of these six participants one of their drawings illustrated the interactive element of leadership such as a journey (TIM, SAR, DIL, GOR), a network (SAN) or an orchestra (KET). The other drawing illustrated more personal reflections about their own leadership, such as the energy needed for the journey (TIM), the inner eye and strong hands that keeps a leader authentic (DIL), the strategic mind-set of the chess player (SAR), the spider in the web, able to move and interact with his network (SAN), the cracking challenges together by eating an elephant by the tail (GOR) and the changes in perspective brought about by consideration of what lies beneath the iceberg (KET). Drawings were sorted according to the main metaphor drawn and described verbally. Many of the drawings contain multiple symbols to depict different parts of the overall metaphorical world of participants.

### 5.6 Key Metaphors from across Essences and Drawings

The key metaphors identified in the ‘Essences’ and drawings are summarised in Table 5-5. They are then presented sequentially illustrated by one or two drawings and examples of participants' idiosyncratic expression of these metaphors. I have used the term 'key metaphor' as exploring mental models is said to be “key” to leadership development (Johnson, 2008). Furthermore, key was a very vivid metaphor described in the study as being important to unlock the unknown.
Table 5.1 Key Metaphors of Leadership in Essences and Drawings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metaphor</th>
<th>Included in Metaphor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journey</td>
<td>Directions, guidance, destinations, choosing path, overcoming obstacles, moving forward. Plus the journey of becoming a leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualising the Future</td>
<td>Targets, a clear point of arrival, a game of chess, shaping the future, clarity of vision. The sun as a symbol of success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>Fuel and momentum, unlocking energy of people. Positive and negative energy that can fire up or burn-out, emotions as motivation and fuel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>Alignment between taking risk and taking care, long-term and short-term, people and business, reward and penalty, encouragement and discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection</td>
<td>With self, with another person, with a team and with a network – e.g. orchestra. Building trust, belonging and confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Reflection</td>
<td>Self-belief, work-in-progress, managing the ego, being the example, weight of responsibility, managing own limits, shields of self-protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating the Environment</td>
<td>Providing safety and a space that is comfortable, stretches people and stimulates creativity. Being approachable and open but taking responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving Space</td>
<td>For others to grow, play, act, decide, express themselves and take authority. Giving space to self to recuperate and reflect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puzzling Things Out</td>
<td>A strategic mind-set, a chess game, solving problems with others and dealing with obstacles. Showing up when things are difficult and a process of escalation for dealing with challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalysing Change</td>
<td>Agility, dealing with unchartered territory, encouraging people to change and take responsibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6.1 Journey

Many participants used the journey metaphor to describe starting points, destinations, direction, movement, obstacles, paths and ambience. Eight participants drew a journey (TIM, ERC, ERV, SAM, DIL, CHK, SAR, GOR), six of whom drew the journey leading a group of people from one point to another, usually depicting obstacles, a path, rest points and a shining sun representing the goal (see Figure 5.3 for an illustrative drawing of the journey metaphor).
Differences in age and seniority are apparent in two journey metaphors. CHK’s journey depicts multiple stages of moving through life with groups of people, and ERV drew the lonely journey of a senior leader, driving through the desert, which has a long perspective (See Figure 5-4). These depictions are from two of the most senior members of the sample, both over 50 years old. The drawings have a longer perspective than other journey metaphors (TIM, ERC, SAM) that illustrate one particular stretch of a journey with a much shorter time horizon shown in the picture.

Words used to describe aspects of the journey include; “drive”, “driven”, “drivers seat”, “ride”, “motorbike”, “car”, “move”, “movement”, “move on”, “forward”, “first step”, “next step”, “small steps”, “step by step”, “steps to go forward”, “take a step”. Direction is a key part of a journey and is depicted by words such as “align”, “compass”, “conductor”, “conduit”, “crossroad”, “follow”, “path”, “right” “track”, “road”, “sail”, “ship” “captain”, “steer”, “navigate”, “way”. Journeys tend to have destinations, which were variously described as “dreams”, “destiny”, “ambitions”, “goals”, “targets” and “finishing lines”.

Figure 5-3 Taking People on a Journey - SAM
The journey metaphor is articulated in the following examples:

Take people on a journey with me. Drive them to success. A seat in the car in that journey together (ERC)

Shouldn’t give orders & stand by the side-lines. The path to success is fairly lonely road. A guy riding a motorbike through the desert. Knows he has to drive in that direction but partly drives into the unknown & is alone. (ERV)

5.6.2 Visualising the Future

A common theme was being able to see clearly a picture of the future. This included terms such as “photograph”, “scan”, “see a way forward”, “clarity”, “helicopter”, “perspective”, “shed light in a tunnel”, “visualise”, “vision”, “without needing to turn round to see”, “a view”, “a perspective” and “being able to see clearly”, “having clear goals” and “sparkling targets”. Related to seeing were metaphors concerning the future, variously described as “unknown”, “uncharted territory”, “being in the dark” and the “horizon”. The metaphor of a
chess game was used by two female participants to indicate a “helicopter view” which is illustrated in VAN’s description and drawing (Figure 5-5) and described as:

You need to see your whole game. Need a helicopter view. A leader will collect all pieces of information from various sides to get the helicopter view. Need people to believe in that vision & work towards that. (VAN)

Figure 5-5 A Clear Finish Line in the Chess Game - VAN

Related to being able to see a picture of the future was the theme of success described as “adding value”, “having a contribution”, “making a difference”, “managing performance”, “setting clear expectations”, “getting results”, “a good day”, “having a key for success”, “shining” and “the sun”. The sun was present in thirteen drawings, often explicitly named as the embodiment of success.

MAT’s “painting a picture of what good looks like tomorrow” (Figure 5-6) is a particularly vivid description of this theme of seeing/showing a positive picture of an unknown future.
Examples of visualising the future are:

Make clear the total picture. Shed light in the tunnel. Time to set new horizons. (ERG)

A good leader connects the dots, sees the picture. An ability to read the game and others very well - like predicting the future. (JOS)

You’ve painted the big picture you now need other people to translate that into something specific. I need to understand what the next thing is. It’s all about picture the vision. Show people the picture on the (jigsaw) box & they’ll work out what pieces go where. (MAT)

5.6.3 Energy

Energy was referenced by many participants often as a fuel or resource for taking action, or as an emotional internal state. Words used in relation to energy
were “a fire inside me”, “refuelling”, “costing”, “positive”, “negative”, “pumped up” and “forceful”. Feelings were also related to energy – “enjoy the moment”, “being happy”, “having fun”, “the Yes moment”, “satisfying”, “doubt”, “worry”, “fear”, “vulnerable”. ARJ’s drawing illustrates the importance of emotions to “take people on board” through combining a heart and a face with the words “I love life” (Figure 5-7):

![ARJ's drawing](image)

**Figure 5-7 Emotions Engage People - ARJ**

The following verbatim examples illustrate this metaphor:

- We’re forceful. It’s a lot of energy; it refuels itself so everyone runs in the same direction. Confidence grows; the direction’s right & there might be even more difficult goals to achieve when you are together. (CHB)

- Unlock energy so people can see their activities & energy in end results. (ERV)

- It pumps me up with very creative energy, then I want to do more. I feel this creative juice pouring out & I see the buy in, it jells everyone & my enthusiasm spreads. It would just flow out of me. When I am brimming
with confidence & energy, it's all sunshine coming out. When the darkness is there, the energy is blocked so you're just pulling yourself back. (GUL)

Energy is an explicit metaphor in four drawings (TIM, JEN, CHB, ARJ) and is illustrated in Figure 5-8 for CHB’s metaphor of using energy to fire up other people rather than getting burnt out by doing too much himself.

Figure 5-8 Using Energy to Fire up Other People – CHB

5.6.4 Balance

Balance was referred to by many leaders although it was only explicit in the drawings of ANG (see Figure 5-9) balancing small change and gold bars and in CHT’s leader ‘ship’.

Balance was referred to in terms such as “alignment”, “both-and”, “a fine balance”, “dynamic oscillation”, “negative-positive”, “proactive-reactive”, “push-pull”, “long term-short term”, “two sides of the same coin” and “yin and yang”.

172
Examples of balance from the Essences are:

Fine balance between driving & sensitivity. To drive & nurture. Two sides of same coin. Leadership not as basic as two sided. Credibility is balancing trust in others & adding value as leader. Balancing between being their Mum & ensuring they see the mistake. (ANG)

When you are rowing and you're not aligned it's a really bumpy ride. When you're pulling with the same power and you are balanced... it feels great and with less effort because you are all aligned. (CHR)

Good & bad news, Long & Short term. Business & well-being (ERC)

You need to combine two things - not too much on a high level and not too much down to earth. (OLV)

Short-term and the long-term consistency - the track needs to be consistent. Continuous nurturing of two sides, two sets of agendas (RVS)

\[5.6.5\] **Connection**

Connection, belonging and making time for people were significant themes illustrated by words such as “bring together”, “interact”, “combine”, “something
in it for everyone”, “in common”, “together”, “relate”, “join forces”, “make time for people”, “sensitive and tuned in”, “a sports team”, “touch” and “connect the dots”. Metaphors of “children”, “family” and “wolf packs” were used to depict strong connection. A word search of the Essences revealed that ‘people’ was the most used word (204 examples in the 30 Essences) showing the centrality of people, in the minds of the leaders in this sample. Examples from the Essences include:

Take the time for the people. Interact with all different layers. Need buy-in of the people. Connecting and bringing the right people together. (SAN)

Leader should not be in a tower where people feel they cannot talk with him. You need to embark people so they feel part of the team joining to something. Motivated, on board - engaged & committed. People feel happy, part of a group, belonging to something with team spirit. (SAM)

Relating to people is paying attention. Connection with people is having your radar on & sensing who is this person. You use all your senses, pay attention, like watching sci-fi. Looking for connection point or warning sign. If I gain trust I can ask for anything after that. It’s a safety net. Relationships - investing in and taking out like a bank & you build these relationships. (NAT)

It’s a connection, a conversation, trust, the ability to experiment, take risks, make mistakes. Connected to yourself and with others, like being in love. It's all about the connection & energy. (IOS)

Many participants talked about connection and five people drew metaphors of connection at different levels of analysis. A wedding ring was a symbol of a strong connection and trust with oneself (PAT); a pair of people happily walking together depicts connection at the interpersonal level (OVR); keeping people connected with no one left out showed the importance of managing connection within a group (WAL). Two senior leaders, a COO and a CEO drew connection at the organisational level of analysis - the orchestra conductor connected to the whole group of musicians (KET) and a Christmas tree with all members of the organization connected through a network (SAN). Three of these metaphors for connection at intrapersonal, interpersonal and organisation levels are illustrated in the following drawings:
5.6.6 Self-Reflection

Participants reflected on themselves, their own behaviour and how they represent an “example” to show the way in terms of “direction”, “boundaries” and “responsibility”. Words used to describe self-reflection were: “aligning
behaviour and the story”, “living up to their own rules”, their behaviour being taken as a “boundary”, “rolling up their sleeves”, “showing the way”, “being a role model”. There was also a theme of being “work-in-progress”, “dropped into the saddle”, “a blank piece of paper”, and “stretching leadership capacities like yoga”. References to self included “being alone”, “always leading”, “24/7”, “being authentic”, “managing their ego”, “leadership coming from within” and that it “looks easier from the outside”. Related to being the example was the attention leaders received for being in the focus and “in the spotlight”.

Examples of metaphors about the self include:

Your behaviour needs to be consistent in a stressful situation. Leading by example never stops & has to be credible. The way I behave is something people will take as a boundary. (RVS)

Want to be role model, showing there is a way to overcome obstacles, to inspire, build on strengths. (NAT)

Good leader is consistent like raising your son walks the talk and sticks to their views. Should be good example - like a Father because every Father wants to be a good role model that your baby's looking up to. (GOR)

Seven participants explicitly drew self-reflective metaphors. For example, being in sport drive (FRC), a self-reflection mirror (TOB), a shield of self-protection (RVS), polarities of love and meditation (JOS), strong arms and internal eye to keep authentic (DIL) and a good-day, bad-day and before and after drawings of being the repair man (KET). Figure 5-13 shows DIL's drawing shows how a “leader need(s) to understand their internal world” with “one eye close to the heart” and “two strong arms in the head as a good force” to acknowledge and accept themselves.
GOR, drew the cocktail of experience for becoming a leader with the different influences and experiences across time that shape a leader outlining how different people influence development at different steps along the way (Figure 5-14). He illustrated how leaders develop by cherry picking habits from others and learning what not to do through punches on the nose.
5.6.7 Creating the Environment

Creating the environment includes responsibility to make it “safe”, “encouraging people out of their comfort zone” but “not dropping people under the bus”, “making it ok to make mistakes”, but “essential to take risks”.

NAT's drawing illustrates the safety net that enables people to take risks and move out of their comfort zone (Figure 5-15).

![Safety Nets Enable People to Try Things - NAT](image)

Figure 5-15 Safety Nets Enable People to Try Things - NAT

Metaphors from the Essences include:

Make the boundaries, structure, processes. A steady ship in a rough sea. A safe spot a solid & robust anchor you can rely on. One constant in the game with a lot of variables. (TOB)

You have to create the environment where people can shine themselves, then they create the battery power themselves (confidence & ability). (TIM)
Leader puts safety net in place & allows people to make mistakes. (MAT)

Build your own culture. Create environment where people feel safe. Transparency hugely important. Build self-confidence. (FRN)

5.6.8 Giving Space

This key metaphor is similar to 'Creating the Environment' but focuses on leaders stepping back, giving space to encourage others to try new things and grow. In almost every interview, leaders spoke about giving people space in phrases like the following: “giving people room” or “space”, “letting go”, “backing off” and “stepping back” to give autonomy and independence. This giving space was linked to encouraging people to “take responsibility”, “grow and develop”, “stimulate thinking for themselves” and encourage “creativity” and “agility”.

Examples of this prevalent metaphor are:

You can suffocate people, so I can't be overbearing or too directional. They've got to go on their own journey to own a process. It's a stand back from me. The challenge is to let go and let them go on their own journeys. (CHR)

Leadership is sometimes stepping back & just let things go. Stepping back is granting authority to another. It requires self-confidence to do that. (CHB)

Time I pull myself back to give people the scope and the place to grow. (GUL)

An obligation to lead at all times, but sometimes that means just getting out of the way & letting others take over. It's a goose thing, sometimes you have a goose in the front & then sometimes she gets out of the way & lets the last one take over. Getting out of the way is an absence of managerial oversight and a stated confidence. Like your children. Give people enough autonomy that they don't feel they are being led all the time, although they know you're there if needed. (JEN)

Figure 5-16 shows KET's drawing shows the difference between a “good day” when he has given space to others to develop, puts on “good music and enjoys a “good day feeling” and a bad day when he has not done this.
5.6.9 Puzzling Out

Participants talked about dealing with the unknown, challenges, problems and obstacles. Multiple metaphors were used to describe how participants knew how to deal with these but a common theme in these metaphors was dealing piece-by-piece, hence the category name of puzzling out, which was used as a direct metaphor by several participants. Expressions of this puzzling out metaphor include; “figuring things out”, being like “a chess player” “knowing which moves to make”, “guessing”, “following a gut feeling” or “intuition”, “cracking things together”, “giving people the box so they can do the puzzle”, “simplifying problems by cutting away the nonsense to find solutions”.

Metaphors from the Essences include:

When you have a big problem the best way to eat an elephant is to do it piece-by-piece. (GOR)

The most important thing in a jigsaw is knowing what the picture’s supposed to look like. So get the box out show people the picture and they’ll work out what pieces go where. Sometimes you have to give people little seeds of how to tackle the problem, but don’t do the jigsaw for them. (MAT)

Two drawings illustrated the chess player (SAR and VAN), several drawings highlighted obstacles on a journey and one illustrated the way to solve problems
is by eating the elephant by the tail (GOR). This is shown in Figure 5-17 not only as it represents the idea of how to solve a puzzle but the drawing is illustrative of the improbable and imaginative world of metaphor.

Figure 5-17 Simplifying Problems - Eating The Elephant Piece By Piece – GOR
5.6.10 Catalyst

A catalyst brings about change and is expressed as “being agile”, “challenging people to go the extra mile”, “think outside of the box”, “creativity”, “a door to different things”, “fluid”, “leeway to different approaches”, “getting out of the primordial soup”, “process”, “a switch” and “a key”. It is the opposite of “carving things in stone” or “stagnation”. It relies on an open mind, “curiosity, like a newborn”, “listening” and “a sense of dissatisfaction with how things are”.

Several participants drew a catalyst in their drawings including a key to open new doors and experiences (MAR). Water was used to depict catalysing change including balancing on a wave as an example of agility (ERG), crossing a rocky beach of obstacles and a difficult environment to get to the cool enticing water (GUL), the iceberg which brings a completely different perspective (KET) and Figure 5-18 which shows white horses leading forward momentum (GDM).

Figure 5-18 White Horses Charge Ahead and Catalyse Change - GDM
Examples of catalyst from the Essences include:

A view as to how things are going to change. Things aren't static. As soon as you are top of whatever, it will change, like a chess player. If you do the same thing for too long you become stagnant. (SAR)

Communicate with people how it looks on the other side. Without this you will stay in the same bubble & stagnate there. (PAT)

Constantly have to change your play to stay ahead. You might have to change the players. If someone is not performing put them on the bench. Be positive about future in difficult times. (JAN)

5.6.11 Combination of Key Metaphors for Leadership

The above sections illustrate with words and drawings the ten key metaphors of leaders in this study. Whilst the drawings above typically illustrate the essence of a key metaphor, there are some drawings that illustrate several key metaphors. For example ERG’s drawing (Figure 5-19) illustrates multiple metaphors; balance, being agile (catalysing change), visualising success, unlocking energy, leading by example (self-reflection) and creating the environment through the message “making mistakes is ok”.

Figure 5-19 Drawing Illustrating Several Key Metaphors for Leadership - ERG
5.7 Experiences of Being a Leader

Having provided the ten key metaphors used by participants, two further findings from interview one are worthy of mention before concluding the chapter. One concerns leaders’ first experience of being a leader and the other concerns leaders’ descriptions of leading at their best.

5.7.1 First Experience of Being a Leader

One of the most surprising findings of the study was the marked difference between men and women’s first experience of being a leader. Twelve out nineteen men said their first experience of being a leader was in childhood typically between the ages of eight and fifteen and included experiences like being Captain of a football team or Scout troop or singled out for their sports, musical or educational prowess. From an early age many of the male participants in the study felt identified with a leadership role, as they had been singled out, seen and validated in childhood experiences. ARJ’s comment is typical of many of the responses from male participants: “Eight or nine years old, I played guitar and I was selected to play solo in a group - it was marvellous, I was in front of an audience so it was pretty much I’m selected and I can lead this and I get people with me.” The remainder of the men identified their first job as being the first experience of being a leader for whom most had a positive experience and only two felt “thrown out in the deep end” (KET). Notable about responses from the male participants was the positive association that almost all men had with their first experience of being a leader.

Women’s first experience of being a leader was different in terms of when they identified their first leadership experience and the feeling associated with this experience. Four of the eleven women talked about their first experience of being a leader in childhood, two of whom were excellent students (NAT and GUL), one excelled in sport (JOS) and one had a leadership role as the eldest child in a large family (PAT). Comments from those who excelled at school or sport were similar to comments from male participants about a sense of assured belonging for example: NAT said, “I’d say maybe seven (years old)... I knew I was
one of the leaders. I was one of the best students, I was tall, I played sports, you just feel confident in the group.” However, PAT had a difficult experience of being a leader: “I had the energy of leading my brothers and sisters, colleagues at school, but my self-esteem sometimes was stopping me. It is something I’m carrying still, I get blocked and I see my limitations.” Seven of the eleven women identified that their first formal job was their earliest experience of being a leader. For VAN this was a positive experience: “very easy … and pleasant, knowing where I wanted to go, for DIL a “calm and safe experience” but for GDM it was “horrendous and heart-breaking” and for ANG “it was not easy… my first hard knocks lesson”.

Two notable differences emerge from these data. The first is that almost twice as many men as women identified their first leadership experience as occurring in childhood. The second is that almost half the women had difficult experiences in their first role as a leader. This study did not set out to examine gender differences but there are clear implications for leader identity and development in terms of self-concept and leader identity discussed in Chapter Seven.

5.7.2 Leading at Best

In contrast to the differences between male and female participants’ first experience of being a leader, data concerning how leaders described leading at their best coalesced around positive feelings and a sense that leading was natural, easy or automatic. For example, participants described leading at their best as the “yes moment” (SAR), “exhilarating like skiing downhill” (NAT), “that feeling – the good day feeling” (KET) or “feeling great to pull with the same power” (CHT). Participants spoke of “excitement”, “fun” “confidence”, “fulfilment”, “acceptance,” “happiness”, “freedom” and energy” when leading at their best. Participants described leading at their best as “being in my element” (WAL), “natural” (JAN), “when things go automatic” (FRC), “I’m doing absolutely nothing” (MAR) or “I don’t have to bang the drum” (MAT). When leading at their best, participants described that the people who worked with them “know what their role is… and are excited” (ANG), “buy in” (CHB), “feel supported … and know what is expected” (JEN), “pull with the same power” (CHT) “on the journey
that they’ve bought into” (MAT). This enables leaders to “sit back a minute” (SAR) and “enjoy the moment”, and “think about what is further ahead... and plan the next journey” (MAR).

One participant (FRC) drew his image of leading at his best as being in Sport drive, including the accompanying key of what each gear means (Figure 5-20).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P = Parking</th>
<th>Keep doing what you’re doing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R = Reverse</td>
<td>Bad leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Like fear leading to diminishing returns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>And employee engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = Neutral</td>
<td>No leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It can go anywhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D = Drive</td>
<td>Leadership with drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clear goals, enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S = Sport-drive</td>
<td>High performance, People excel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High employee engagement, lots of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creativity and entrepreneurship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 5-20 Leading at My Best is like Being in Sport Drive - FRC](image)

This metaphor synthesises the notions described by many leaders of things going automatically, people knowing what to do, performing well and being engaged and motivated. The metaphor for FRC of leading at his best being in Sport drive is congruent with his more comprehensive metaphor of creating an environment where people can perform.

### 5.8 Summary of Chapter Five

This chapter has described the key characteristics of the data from interview one and made clear the way that data were analysed. The steps of data analysis, shown in Table 5-1, involved three processes. The first two processes were
conducted within each interview to verify the ‘cleanness’ of data and to identify the metaphors in each transcript. The third process was conducted across 30 Essences and drawings to identify, cluster and synthesise key metaphors.

Following Tosey et al. (2014), this study has checked the ‘cleanness’ of interview data against a rating scale designed to check cleanness (see Table 5-2). Following an expert rating of three interviews, which confirmed a high level of ‘cleanness’ for data (Table 5-3), the remaining 27 interviews were rated by the author. Data were found to be extremely clean with 81% of interview interventions being Contextually Clean, a Clean Question or a Clean Repeat and only 1.5% of interventions Strongly Leading.

Responding to calls for transparency of metaphor identification by Gibbs (2010), a process was devised with the Expert Clean Language Team to identify metaphors in a transcript. The process, explained in detail in the section on Essence of Metaphor Process, was trialled with 3 interviews and following a high level of inter-rater agreement was applied to all transcribed interviews. This resulted in the ‘Essence’ of metaphor of 30 leaders. An example of TIM’s ‘Essence’ and drawings illustrates the metaphorical content of a leader’s implicit leadership theory. Furthermore this example shows how an interview of approximately 10,000 words can be distilled to fewer than 500 words when all interview questions, non-metaphorical material and repetition are removed using a careful process and the CL principle of using only participant’s own words.

A number of observations about these ‘Essences’ have been made that include the phenomenological and socially constructed nature of these ‘Essences’ that provide a window into how leaders make meaning about leadership; the distinctive and idiosyncratic nature of the ‘Essences’ as well as their complexity involving metaphorical relationships. Moreover, this study shows that is possible to elicit metaphors from all participants and to distil these to a concise ‘Essence’ that is useful to leaders, not only for reflecting about their leadership but also for considering their development.
The third data analysis process was applied to all 30 'Essences' and the drawings of participants to identify, cluster, and synthesise ten recurring key metaphors (presented in Table 5-5). They were then illustrated with verbatim comments and drawings. These ten recurring metaphors include journey, visualising the future, energy, balance, connection, self-reflection, creating the environment, giving space, puzzling out and catalyst. These key metaphors, elicited from leaders, provide a broad range that is more idiosyncratic than metaphors of leaders found in the literature (Alvesson and Spicer, 2011). This is discussed further in Chapter Seven.

The chapter concluded with two observations about the data from interview one concerning differences between men’s and women’s first experience of being a leader and similarities between men’s and women’s descriptions of leading at their best. Whilst the study did not set out to examine gender differences, these findings are noteworthy for the possible impact on leaders’ development.
6 Leaders' Learning

The purpose of this chapter is to present an analysis of the verbal and pictorial data from interview two concerning how leaders experienced the process of exploration and what they learnt about their leadership and development. The phenomenon illuminated by these data is how leaders develop self-awareness through exploring their naturally occurring metaphor with minimal intrusion from the outside. The analysis of these data enhances understanding of this phenomenon to answer the research question; ‘what can leaders learn about their leadership and development from an exploration of their inner worlds through metaphor?’

The chapter starts with an overview of the data collected in interview two. The process used to analyse the data is then explained to make clear how the essential themes of the experience were arrived at. According to phenomenological methods (Moustakas, 1994) these themes were synthesised to illustrate how they fit together to describe the overall experience of learning about leadership and development from an exploration of leaders' metaphors. The chapter then reports on leaders' experience of exploring their metaphors, which involved qualities of openness, comfort in the relationship, subtle guidance that triggers leaders' own views and surfacing and exploring their metaphors. These qualities were named “a journey through my own mind” (PAT) (or variations thereof) that resulted in leaders breaking out of their own “habits of thinking” (ARJ). Following this, the themes of how leaders became aware and what they learnt about their leadership; clarity through metaphor, confirmation and choice are discussed. The final part of the research question, what leaders learnt about their development is addressed under the themes: attention to their own development, awareness and affirmation and what next? As it is important in phenomenological studies to note “individual variations” which “are important counterpoints to the general theme” (Hycner, 1985 p.293) the chapter reports on those leaders who did not learn anything about their leadership or
their development and for whom the process had a level of “discomfort”. The chapter concludes with a synthesis of the key findings.

6.1 Overview of Data from Interview Two

Interview two collected a large quantity of qualitative data, both verbal and pictorial, in order to answer the research question. These data comprised 30 hours of audio data, 309 pages of transcript and 29 drawings. One person, embarrassed at his drawing skills, refused to draw the process but was willing to verbally describe it in the face-to-face interview. On average interviews lasted 60 minutes with a median of 10 pages or 5572 words of written data per participant.

As detailed in Chapter Five, interviews were held between four and thirty weeks after the first interview. Interviews were held in ten locations in four countries: Zurich (2), Geneva (4), Vevey (1) and Lausanne (7) in Switzerland, Weybridge (2), London (3) and Gatwick (1) in the UK, Amsterdam (4) and Utrecht (2) in the Netherlands and Lyon (1) in France. Follow-up interviews were conducted by telephone with a female senior Vice President in the USA and with a male German participant who were unable to return to Switzerland as anticipated plus one interview was organised by corporate video conference connecting the London office to which I, the interviewer, travelled and the US office where the participant was based.

6.2 Data Analysis Process

As described in the research methods chapter I have applied and translated Moustakas (1994) approach to data analysis for this study. Modifying Stevick (1971), Colaizzi (1993) and Keen’s (1975) methods of analysis of phenomenological data, Moustakas lists the steps to analyse a transcribed interview (1994 p.121-122). Table 6-1 describes Moustakas steps (in bold) and shows my application of these steps to this study (in italics).
# Table 6-1 Data Analysis Process for Interview Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATA ELICITED PER PARTICIPANT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Using a phenomenological approach obtain a full description of the experience (relevant for steps 1-3)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview conducted based on interview protocol to ascertain what, if anything participants learned from the exploration of their metaphors in interview one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing 2 requested with CL &quot;Now take all the time you want and please draw the process&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>From the verbatim transcripts complete the following steps:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcribe each interview thoroughly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check transcripts for accuracy by reading with notes from interview whilst listening to the audio-recording</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATA ANALYSED ACROSS 30 PARTICIPANTS PER QUESTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STEPS 3-8 REPEATED FOR EACH OF 9 QUESTIONS OF INTERVIEW 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Consider each statement with respect to significance for description of the experience</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-read all interview data to get a sense of the whole and the significance of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review drawings with interview data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Record all relevant statements. (Remembering each statement has equal value - Horizontalisation)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to each transcript and extract all significant statements verbatim per participant per question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <strong>List each non-repetitive, non-overlapping statement. These are the invariant horizons or meaning units of the experience</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review each statement to check it is necessary to understand the experience and delete any repetitive expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review drawings to see if/how they link to the invariant qualities of the experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. <strong>Relate and cluster the invariant meaning units into themes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the significant statements identify the distinctive themes per question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster these distinctive themes labelled by verbatim comments of participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. <strong>Synthesise the invariant meaning units and themes into a description of the textures of the experience. Include verbatim comments</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validate themes by checking they are expressed verbatim in transcripts or that they are compatible with the transcripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review drawings to identify and settle themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. <strong>Reflect on textural description. Through imaginative variation, construct a description of the structures of the experience</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflect on the themes to identify how they fit together to describe the overall experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review drawings for sequence of experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. <strong>Construct a composite description of the meanings and ‘Essences’ of the experience integrating all descriptions into a universal description of the experience representing the group as a whole</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construct a composite universal model of the experience using the essential underlying elements that account for the experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawings illustrate parts and the whole of the experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Moustakas  
* Cairns-Lee
The following section presents the composite structural model and an overview of the themes identified for each part of the model.

### 6.3 Composite Structural Model of Experience

The components of the composite structural model were identified in response to the questions of what and how leaders learnt about their leadership. These components, synthesised from the themes identified in data analysis, are (1) the experience of exploration, (2) becoming aware, (3) outcome of awareness for leadership, (4) outcome of awareness for development. The outcomes of leadership and development have some similarities but they are detailed separately to identify differences in order to answer the research question. These components are combined to present a composite structural model of leaders’ experience of learning about their leadership and development through exploration of their inner worlds, illustrated in Figure 6-1. The model denotes the learning process through time in the shape of an arrow from left to right.

The following sections elaborate in sequence how leaders experienced the process of exploration, how they became aware of their leadership and what they learnt about their leadership and their development. Due to the quantity of data in this study one or two selective verbatim comments and drawings are used as illustrations of themes.
Figure 6-1 Composite Structural Model of the Exploration of Leadership and Development Through Metaphor
6.4 How Leaders Experienced the Process of Exploration

The first part of the composite model comprises four components that accounted for the experience of exploration. These four components are illustrated in Figure 6-2 and include openness, comfort in the relationship, subtle guidance that triggers leaders’ own views and surfacing and exploring metaphors. These four components were identified through analysing data for the questions about what leaders noticed about the interview, the transcript and the drawing; what, if anything, they valued about the interview, the transcript and the drawing; and how they experienced the process. Verbatim comments from participants to each of these questions were collated, clustered and synthesised. Each individual component is labelled verbatim from participants. Participant drawings of the process, elicited in interview two, corroborated themes identified in the verbal data and provide vivid illustrations and synthesis of these components.

![Figure 6-2 Experience of Exploration](image)

These components are presented in the order that, according to leaders, encouraged exploration. For example, openness was essential for leaders to respond to the invitation to participate in the research and to be open-minded about exploring their inner world. Comfort in the relationship provided leaders with a feeling that they were accepted and not judged which encouraged them to
risk surfacing and exploring their metaphors. This comfort was important, as many leaders were conscious of the bizarre nature of their metaphors. Subtle guidance, including the structure of the interview, the questions and space to think out loud with minimal interference from the interviewer, triggered leaders to think deeply about their own views. Consideration of their own views, led to the surfacing and exploration of metaphors which provided fresh perspectives and breaking out of thinking habits. The overall experience of exploration was described as “a journey through my mind” (PAT) that lead to “developing and deepening oneself” (MAR).

6.4.1 Openness

The first component is openness. This relates to leaders’ acceptance of the invitation to participate in the research, their attitude to the exploration, the open-ended nature of the interview and the open-minded approach of the interviewer.

Openness was a starting point for the process with leaders viewing participation in the research as an opportunity for themselves to reflect as exemplified in CHT's comment, “very happy to take part and engage in the process because I recognise only good can come from this for me”. Some leaders such as FRC were “surprised by the invitation” and asked “Why me?” but said they were “pleased” and acknowledged, “it made me feel good.” Others were open to participate even if they saw their involvement as primarily of benefit to the research, for example CHK commented:

Initially I saw this as your development – your PhD but the upside for me is being more mindful or thoughtful and so-called better leader in my team. I view that as an opportunity.

Openness was essential for leaders to explore their inner worlds, which for most was an unusual experience. It was unusual because leaders admitted they rarely make the time to stop and think about their leadership, despite being in leadership roles. For example, CEO JAN said, “I don't allow myself to do that enough... it’s very good to think about why you are doing certain things and ...
what is the source of your belief”. It was also an unusual experience because leaders were not used to turning their attention inward as TIM commented, “I spend my time listening to others but not so much listening to myself”.

Participants commented on the open-ended nature of the interview calling it an “open-ended journey” (PAT) for which they acknowledged it is helpful to be “open-minded” (CHB). Several leaders drew images of journeys to describe the process, which illustrates the idea of exploration without a predefined destination as described by CHB and illustrated in Figure 6-3:

This is a very well prepared journey where you invite someone who is a bit chaotic to participate in the journey. When you are on a journey, it will lead somewhere. I am not sure where it will lead so it is good to be open-minded about that.

Figure 6-3 Being Open-Minded about an Open-Ended Journey - CHB

JOS likens “the journey” to “the Wizard of Oz and the yellow brick road” that “triggers thoughts as you go” (see Figure 6-4). She says that “the process itself is quite powerful because you are not looking for an end result, you’re not looking for an ‘answer’, you pick them up characters and metaphors along the way – like the tin man and the lion”. She says the structure of the yellow brick road helps the discovery process and whilst she does not know where it is all going “it’s good I’m off to meet the wizard of my mind”. 
Concurring with the sense of an open-ended journey, ERV noted that it took a while for him to accept that the interviewer was so open to whatever he said:

The process is a bit open-ended – there are no right answers, no wrong ones either... It took a while for me to accept that you weren’t looking for specific answers that you were so open to whatever I had to say – that’s rather unusual.

Some participants found the approach too open (OVR), which led to frustration and participants reporting that they did not learn anything. This is discussed in the individual variation Nothing. Openness comprised leaders’ openness in accepting the invitation to participate in the research and in their approach to exploring their inner worlds. The process was experienced as open-ended with no prescriptive answers or destinations and leaders experienced the interviewer open to whatever they wanted to express.

### 6.4.2 Comfort in the Relationship

The second component was comfort in the relationship between participants and interviewer. Participants felt accepted and supported in the interview and experienced genuine interest from the interviewer to what they said. Participants expressed that feeling accepted was essential to them opening up
and sharing their inner world of metaphor. ERC's comment is indicative of this sentiment of comfort:

I've enjoyed the process, I feel comfortable and proud. Comfortable that I don't feel judged – remember what I told you about a previous experience, where I was judged for my drawing. Comfortable with what I have said – that I could respond without preparing the answers, comfortable having reviewed what I said and comfortable with you.

MAR concurs with these comments: “I felt comfortable in the interview, Knowing you definitely helped as I did not feel guarded in any way and I think that was important because some of the things I said sounded rather ridiculous.”

Several people admitted feeling uncomfortable before the interview because they were apprehensive and did not know what to expect. CHK's comment is typical of leaders at all levels and ages:

Before the interview, even though I'm comfortable with you I still had apprehension... like what are we going to cover and how hard is the can opener going to flip open my brain and expose things.

In addition to general feelings of apprehension some participants were uncomfortable to discuss the subject of leadership, feeling they did not have “any clear view on the subject” (GOR). Through the discussion GOR became aware that he had “quite firm views or pillars on which my leadership rests.” Yet like many others he disclosed:

Your questions have forced me to think along lines that I am not used to. If it was the first time that I met you when we started this I would have been more uptight... that interaction we had has been helpful to open the lid even more.

At times participants felt exposed in sharing their thoughts or irritated by the questions. GDM's comment, “It does feel exposing and I feel a bit foolish going off into my fantasies” is typical of leaders’ experience. Also typical is ERG’s comment, “half-way through I got a little annoyed with you as you were repeating what I was saying. This forced me to go deeper and deeper.” With feelings of exposure, annoyance and foolishness comfort in the relationship was
vital for participants to feel supported to expose and explore the “crazy” images of their minds without feeling judged (DIL).

Two drawings and descriptions are noteworthy illustrations of comfort in the relationship. For GUL “the process started as something business-like ... and turned into something very personal” through her “positive experience” of the relationship. She described the process as “intensive, open and genuine” and felt “like I made a friend” and “gained insight” that was “unexpected”. Her drawing in Figure 6-5 depicts this sense of ease with two characters comfortable and happy in discussion in “a lovely garden with all sorts of flowers and roses”.

![Figure 6-5 Comfort in the Relationship - GUL](image)

GUL’s sense of increasing comfort in the relationship is characteristic of the experience of participants more generally and is echoed in ANG’s description and drawing (Figure 6-6) about how the relationship evolved during the interview to encourage deep insight. The relatively long quote is included as it provides an excellent synthesises this component of comfort in the relationship.

At the beginning even though we know each other a bit, I was definitely aware of it being an interview. I think I put my interview hat on – what
are the right answers? How to be articulate, provide something worthwhile? I can laugh now, but if I am honest I had those thoughts. So it was you asking the questions, setting the context and me providing some answers, second-guessing whether I was providing what you wanted.

Then as I relaxed into a feeling of not being judged, of realising that you were genuinely interested in what I thought, no matter how crazy the words sounded and exploring the fine balance of driving and sensitivity, which are fundamental to motivation, fundamental to working with people I became more intrigued by my own thoughts and less self-critical. I guess I was absorbed. And being absorbed in the conversation (more a monologue!!) the distance between you and me blurred – not that I felt distant at the beginning but I was less aware of the roles interviewer-interviewee – maybe that’s it. So there was a comfort in the relationship that freed me up to explore my thoughts and develop a curiosity and understanding of myself. I began to realise certain things and make sense in my head of this topic.

Finally, I envisage us as being merged – like trusted thinking partners, personally invested in the conversation, enabling deep insights. The way I draw the process is that our initials merge to provide AHA’s!! I think the trust is really important – some of the things I said were confidential, I was working things out with you as a witness and struggling with what I thought, so feeling your discretion, your support your subtle guidance was really helpful. I could not have done this on my own.

Figure 6-6 Comfort in the Relationship Freed Me up to Explore - ANG
Comfort in the relationship was essential for participants to reveal and explore their thoughts because putting things into words was “challenging.” As CHB said “I couldn’t believe how difficult it is to think about leadership, even though I am in a leadership position”.

6.4.3 Subtle Guidance Triggers Own Views

The third component that was important for participants was “the subtle guidance” (ANG) that triggered them to pay attention to their own views. The subtle guidance comprised four elements: the structure of the process, the questions, the fact that leaders had to think out loud and the limited interference from the interviewer. Without this subtle guidance, many leaders said they would not have taken the time to “drill down” into their own views and would not have experienced the depth of reflection (GOR, KET).

6.4.3.1 Structure of Process

Participants typically noticed the structure after the interview when reading the transcript rather than during the interview for example, MAR commented,

> It was more structured than I thought, during I didn’t feel it to be so structured, but afterwards and especially reading the transcript I realised it was actually quite structured but with space to play!

PAT’s comment that it “was not easy to notice” the structure during the interview as “I was really inspired by the conversation, which went really deep” implies leaders were absorbed by their exploration of their inner worlds. On reflection leaders noticed that the structure came from: “you were saying what I said and skilfully turning it into a question and following up, then it helped me to expand and elaborate on it” (GUL).

6.4.3.2 Questions

The questions kept participants “focused” (WAL), “in my own stuff” (ERG) and “triggered” (FRC), “forced” (GOR) and “challenged” (JAN) leaders to think. WAL’s comment is characteristic of leaders’ experience: “The questions are really
simple but are damn difficult to answer”. Most participants appreciated the value of answering the “drilling” questions as they gained new perspectives:

When I try to answer these drilling questions I come to realize things that I haven’t thought about myself before I tried to answer your question. (GOR)

However, OVR did not appreciate the nature of the questions as they put too much attention on him:

It is not natural digging, digging, digging trying to surface things from me. You wanted to give the space to me to define things themselves. To be honest, am I interested to find out something about myself yes, but more so to find things out about you.

Other participants acknowledged some discomfort with the questions describing them as a “raw test” (CHK) or sitting “in the hot seat” “with a very bright spotlight” that is “rather hot – your questions make me think, make me work” (ERV). This image of being under the spotlight is evident in CHK’s drawing in Figure 6-7:

![Figure 6-7 A Spotlight Makes Me Think - CH]
Whilst participants noted the initial discomfort of being made to think most moved past this as expressed by TIM in this quote:

> It’s very uncomfortable not to get feedback in the conversation. It does make it quite an uncomfortable experience until you get into it and then you go, this is the way it is and I completely get the purpose of it because I otherwise would talk about stuff that I thought you wanted me to talk about.

### 6.4.3.3 Thinking Out Loud

Many participants noticed that having to think out loud was an important part of their sense-making that helped to “crystallise something” (GUL). Characteristic of many leaders, JAN differentiates thinking out loud as “being taken by the hand on a journey” from sitting in a room and thinking alone. Furthermore, he explains that thinking out loud is different from just talking:

> You’re forced to think. I had to go deep so it’s not that I sit here and just talk. After that interview, physically I felt that I had delivered a performance. It was tiring but in a good way.

His comment about being tired was re-iterated by others and was also experienced by me, the interviewer. Thinking out loud was helpful for many participants as illustrated in TOB’s comment:

> Really helpful to have the time and space to listen to myself. That’s what it felt like. I don’t mean to be rude, but the way you asked the questions, gave the impression that I was really with myself and just thinking out loud.

TIM’s drawing of the process of swimming in his own thoughts in Figure 6-8 illustrates this theme of thinking out loud that TIM and ERC both called “think tank time”:
6.4.3.4 Limited External Interference

The other aspect that participants noticed about the subtle guidance was the limited interference from the outside. As MAR noted: "It was really helpful to think out loud, with such little interruption and some gentle guidance. I mean how often does that happen in life? Like never!" KET claimed that it is essential for leaders “to take time out and think through how they do things” which he said “the interview really helped to do that – to think through how I do things with no interruption.” SAM also appreciated the guiding “without influencing”:

It was a very open discussion. You have the proper way of guiding the interview without influencing because I read the transcript and I see that your questions were more open, picking one word that I was saying to clarify so I didn’t have the feeling you tried to guide me in one direction.

A description and drawing from SAN summarises these components of subtle guidance (structure questions, thinking out loud and limited external interference) and how these triggers his own views. His drawing (Figure 6-9) of the process shows the five steps of (1) interview one, (2) drawing, (3) receiving the transcript, (4) interview two and (5) drawing two. He describes the process as “iterative” that “step-by-step you’re getting deeper”:

You really dive in and get deeper and deeper. I don’t know where it ends... First you’re quite open, you start a discussion … open to what is coming and then after discussion you’re getting deeper in, you start to
draw and that’s what I mean with this getting more involved in the questions or in the subject. You get focus; the picture is getting narrower so for me it should also be more clear to explain, more structured in my mind. I have guidance to give good answers so for me the answers become more clear the further we are in the process. So it narrows down. It helps you drill down in your mind so this is focus for me. As you narrow down you get more focus - the shape represents focus. And there is no right answer, I have a strong sense of that from you and I appreciate that freedom to focus the way I need to focus not the way someone else wants me to. And I end up with a clear picture - my clear picture that I can use elsewhere. And that also helps me to be consistent in my messages.

Figure 6-9 Subtle Guidance with Freedom Results in a Clear Picture - SAN

The subtle guidance that triggers participants’ own views has four elements: structure, questions, thinking out loud and limited the introduction of external content. This subtle guidance put attention on participants’ own thoughts through repeating their own words and metaphors and exploring these further with CL questions, through encouraging participants to think out loud and through the interviewer bracketing their own suppositions which limited the introduction of external content which enabled participants to surface and process their own views.
6.4.4  Surface and Explore Metaphors

The fourth component that participants noticed about the process was the surfacing and exploration of metaphors that enabled them to see in new ways or to gain clarity about their perspectives. Several participants noticed that as they relaxed into the interview and let go of concerns about whether what they said was useful, appropriate or meeting expectations of the interviewer the more “pictures just come up by themselves” (DIL).

Despite their experience and seniority, several leaders noticed they had to let go of seeking reassurance or approval from the interviewer. As WAL notes,

I had to stop looking to you for agreement or approval, I realised I was wanting this which surprised me – I think I saw you as the expert and it took a little while for me to tap into my own experience. Once I did it was really good – easier, so that is something to think about.

TOB had similar reflections:

Felt unsure initially as I wanted some signs from you that you agreed with me which you didn't give - that forced me to listen to myself, to see what I thought without influence from the outside and actually I found that really great to have that conversation, prompted by you but with myself about how I lead and what impact this has.

These comments illustrate that there seems to be a threshold that participants need to pass in order to relax into being able to really consider their own thoughts. This threshold involves letting go of external validation or approval which also seems to involve letting go of feelings of embarrassment or exposure as NAT's comments illustrate. At the beginning as she struggled to express her thoughts she felt “almost embarrassed”. Yet as the interview progressed she

was using metaphors left and right!” and “enjoying my answers more and more towards the end. The metaphors prompted me to laugh a lot. So I felt increasingly relaxed and enjoyed the experience.
This was a common experience that once participants stopped looking for approval and became absorbed by their own thoughts, they were able to access and explore their metaphors. They were able to note the “craziness” of their metaphors, but still appreciate the sense-making the images brought as DIL commented, “I said some crazy things but they made sense to me and I liked just hearing what goes on in my head”. DIL comments that the metaphors and pictures are in her head and that the process of talking brings them to the surface for her to explore:

By talking the pictures and metaphors come by themselves so then I discover when I listen to those pictures and metaphors. What I like is that this is free – the pictures are floating in my head when I am talking. I don’t have to make them up; don’t have to force them to come. She continues that she appreciates the freedom to explore these pictures “without a map or directions – it is free-flow. We do it together because of course you are guiding but very gently – not being forceful but gently encouraging the exploration of the pictures.”

As participants surfaced and explored their metaphors they became intrigued by their own thoughts and as ARJ said broke “out of your own habits of thinking”. Congruent with his essence of leadership of riding a big wave (Figure 5-19 in Chapter Five) ERG says the surfacing of metaphors is:

Like something coming up from below the surface. A bit like looking under the waves and seeing bubbles coming up with thoughts in them that I can now see. Perhaps the bubbles are like oxygen, bring new air, new perspectives that I need.

Sceptical at the outset of the research whether as a “numbers guy” he used metaphors, CFO CHT”s drawing illustrates how the process not only accesses and surfaces metaphors that exist at “a different level of awareness – more depth” but how participants describe the experience of exploration in metaphor. Describing his drawing CHT says:
This fishing guy is going really deep below the fish and finding the treasure right at the bottom of the ocean and that’s Davy Jones’ locker, he’s found the real gold deep down. It’s the same as this final image, the cave, entering a big dark cave and illuminating a very dark place that’s not seen light for a while. So this process is a type of awakening for me and I’m glad I shone the light on it because if I don’t, it’s wasted treasure.

CHT’s drawing in Figure 6-10 and description highlights the association of depth with the surfacing of metaphors characteristic of most leaders’ descriptions. His drawing illustrates that reaching “different levels of awareness” requires a deliberate and patient search to illuminate treasure by “fishing” or “shining a light” on places that are not normally visited. Deliberate attention and patience are important to surface and explore metaphors that frequently lie beneath the surface of people’s awareness.

![Figure 6-10 Surfacings and Exploring Metaphors Illuminates Thoughts - CHT](image)

This concludes the presentation of the first part of the composite structural model that describes the experience of exploration. The four components
openness, comfort in the relationship, subtle guidance that triggers own views and the surfacing and exploration of metaphors were derived from following the steps of data analysis described in Table 6-1. The components have been presented using verbatim comments and drawings from participants to describe the invariant elements of the experience of exploration.

6.5 Becoming Aware of Leadership

Whilst the study asked what, if anything, participants had learnt about their leadership and what, if anything, participants had learnt about their development as two questions, the data revealed that participants first became aware of their own leadership and then considered the outcomes of this awareness for their leadership and their development. The theme of becoming aware emerged strongly through identifying the invariant qualities of the experience of what leaders learnt about their leadership and development (Steps 3-8) in Table 6-1. Hence this chapter reports first on how participants became aware and then what they learnt. This section illustrates the central part of the composite model – Becoming Aware of Own Leadership that is represented in Figure 6-11.

![Figure 6-11 Becoming Aware of Own Leadership](image)

Participants spoke in various ways of becoming aware of their leadership. They used expressions such as “pondering”, “working through”, “exploring”, “reflecting”, “going back to my own nature”, developing “a solid understanding of my leadership” and seeing the leadership “journey I've been on”. A closer inspection of how participants spoke about becoming aware highlights that they
frequently used the words “realising”, “reminding” and “recognising” to name their insights. Moreover, several participants drew images of these “realisations” (GDM), “reminders” (CHK, JEN) and “recognitions” (ERC). These are all ways that participants in the study came to know more about their leadership yet the three phrases indicate different ways of becoming aware. A realisation relates to a novel insight, a reminder indicates recollecting thoughts from previous experiences and recognition highlights the acceptance of thoughts and acknowledging inner wisdom about leadership rather than looking externally for a sense of validation.

6.5.1 Realising

Participants had realisations about their thinking, their behaviour, their development and about leadership in general. For example, they realised the impact of their behaviour: the need for “more thinking before talking” (ARJ), how “energy can be productive or negative” (CHB), a “capability to make complex situations simple” (ERC) and being aware of how they “behave in general” (PAT). They also realised the need for “further development” (DIL), “the effects of negative energy at work” (GUL), “their own thinking patterns” (NAT) and “unconscious bias” (SAR). Realisations about leadership more generally include: “it’s two sides” (CHK), that “there are no right or wrongs” (GOR) and that “leadership is not impossible” (SAR).

A common element in this theme of realising is noticing something novel as exemplified in phrases like “it really struck me” (CHK), “that is new for me” (GOR), “Sometimes I think I don’t really realise myself” (JAN). The following comment from GUL elaborates this sense of realising something new:

The energy of the people around me impacts me more than I think. I like the mission of the organisation but not the negative impact of people around me – I didn’t realise how much this is affecting me before now.

GUL realises that thinking about her experience of leadership has helped her to “sharpen awareness” about how important living by values is to her. Continuing
to reflect she ‘realises’ that she is adversely impacted by the energy of people around her, which is a source of stress.

GOR’s comment illustrates not only the novelty of a realisation but also how enjoyable it can be:

I realise I have an opinion on leadership and I like it and that is new for me to realise that. It also makes a fuzzy concept much more real. I have realised there are no right or wrong answers.

Surprise is another element evident in the theme realising as exemplified by phrases such as, “It caught me by surprise” (NAT), “Wow, that’s a pretty impressive realisation” (GDM), “I am aware of my own tool-box and unconscious blockages – wow!” (SAR). NAT reports on being surprised as she re-read her own words in the transcript before she realised that what she read was indeed how she thought: “I was reading and going, “Really?” and then realised I thought that way. It caught me by surprise.”

The element of surprise was exemplified by the quote from GDM:

Less is more probably... It’s cutting through all those structures that I have created for professional and survival purposes and accessing that more intuitive creative core. So now my core and my touchstone and my well are beneath a cave roof and the cave roof is all that constructed intelligence and the core is connected to that like a stalactite and is also connected to the well but I don’t draw from that well enough. Wow, that’s a pretty impressive realisation.

GDM drew this “impressive realisation” (Figure 6-12) that also illustrates her process of exploration, which gets through outer layers to the essential core.
WAL’s realisation illustrates that as leaders thought about their leadership they came to understand things in a different way:

One thing’s for sure, what I picture in my head might not be actual reality, that’s something I’ve realised... I have this romantic idea of how my leadership is but it might not be actual reality.

This kind of realisation that he is not acting according to his own ideas is “tough” for him and he continues with a further realisation about what he has to do to progress his leadership. Whilst this might be useful information, his phrase this “is a bit annoying” highlight that not all realisations are welcome:

I’ve realised now my job is more to lead, which is a bit annoying because I always want to do something. I have to move from trading to managing the trading team.

The theme of becoming aware through realising involves becoming aware of something and is associated with novelty, surprise or re-appraisal. The phrases
“I’m realising” or “I have realised” were frequently used by leaders and realisations had a direct and effortless quality. When leaders consciously attended to themselves they were able to access these realisations directly and spontaneously.

6.5.2 Reminding

Reminders include “remembering”, “recollecting” or “re-considering” something previously known. Etymologically the prefix “re means “back to the original place; again, anew, once more” (the Online Etymology Dictionary http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=re). Hence remind means to put back in mind, recollect means to recover knowledge of something and reconsider means to consider or look closely at something again. This theme refers to turning back to knowledge that leaders may have forgotten, which is different from the theme of realising that is associated with novelty or recognising that is associated with acceptance.

Participants were reminded about “what got you here in the first place and what your skills are that enable you to be in this position” (CHT) and “to remember and cherish examples of successes” (ERC). Others reconsidered “influences from long ago which still have a strong grip” (DIL), and experienced “a reinforcement of my preference” (VAN). Participants’ reminders related predominantly to themselves – to their “skills” (CHT), their “successes” (ERC), and “a reinforcement” of their style (VAN) however, two of the leaders, CHK and MAT were reminded about the importance of how they interacted with their teams.

A number of leaders appreciated remembering what had got them to their current position as CHT says:

It’s good to be reminded why you got here in the first place and what your skills are that enable you to be in this position. That’s nice to go over those and reaffirm those because if you don’t, you can get a bit lost and you can question yourself. It’s nice to go back and look at that and it’s nice to look at the development points as well and to remind yourself of those because otherwise, they will always be there.
CHT’s comment highlights how the act of remembering skills that got him to where he is helps him not to get lost whilst also remembering the development points that need attention. CHT’s reminder has an implicit balance between affirming his strengths and recalling his development needs. This balance is consistent with metaphors of alignment and a balanced boat evident in his essence of leadership elicited in interview one.

ERC also emphasises the importance of remembering skills that helped him to be successful. The importance of remembering successes was particularly significant to ERC having recently undertaken an international assignment that was less successful than the rest of his career and caused him to question his leadership capabilities:

What I have learnt or what it has helped me with is to write down examples of successes and remember them. You need to cherish your successes and also your failures. It’s sometimes easier to remember the failures. It’s not that easy to remember the successes. So what I wrote down here, I took examples of times and positions and great moments that were to me successful times so I cherish that because when I read them again, then I remember.

ERC highlights that it can be difficult to remember successes, especially after a difficult experience, and so remembering successes is to be cherished. Cherished is not a common word in business English and so its use is particularly striking. Perhaps as a Francophone, ERC accesses the French origins of the word ‘cher’, ‘cherir’ meaning to treat with affection. Whatever the actual origins of the word, cherish conveys a sense of holding something special, which is what ERC had been reminded of and written down as examples.

On a rather different note, by reflecting on her leadership metaphor of a Lioness, JOS was reminded not to be a victim saying: “The lioness reminds me not to be a victim. Lions cannot be victims.” Being a victim implies helplessness or a passive acceptance of a situation and so JOS’ powerful leadership metaphor from interview one of a Lioness provides an apt counterbalance to being a victim and reminded JOS to “create choices and options” in her current environment. The
polarity evident between victim and actively creating choices is congruent with JOS essence of leadership in which she talked about the Lioness being between two polarities.

A variation on the theme of reminding is the idea of reinforcement stated by VAN, whose comments indicate that the reinforcement strengthened what she already knew about her style:

It wasn’t anything new but was a reinforcement of my preference. When I am in a leading position, I prefer this chess player style, I prefer to understand what pieces of information do I have available and then make a decision based on that… So it wasn’t new, I knew it already.

MAT was reminded of the need to pay attention to his role of developing others through encouraging them to explore their boundaries. Recalling the importance of this in his own development and recognising that he is now in the position to help others he said:

You’ve got to have somebody encourage you to explore your boundaries. It reminded me of how important that is and how it is my job to help people in my team explore their boundaries, to provide the nudge and the safety net.

Two of the participants, both in their fifties, differentiated between a reminder and learning indicating that for these more mature, experienced leaders learning might come in the form of a reminder and perhaps less in terms of something novel. For example, CHK who has been through many corporate leadership development programmes, highlights that this is not only a reminder but a “re-reminder” to be “more mindful of the individuals on the team in conjunction with the tasks we have, mindful of their growth, their needs, like the care and watering of a plant or your children” to create “a good cohesive heterogeneous team”. CHK illustrated working with his team as a family or wolf pack as a reminder of one of the most salient metaphors he leads by in Figure 6-13:
Reminders illustrate that participants became aware through awakening previous knowledge or experiences to rekindle self-awareness. People forget important things and need the opportunity to remember, refresh and remind themselves of what they knew.

### 6.5.3 Recognising

Recognising was a third way that participants became aware of their leadership. Recognition implies acknowledgement and validation and is often synonymous with acceptance. Participants recognised what they “think” (ARJ), their “own style of leadership” (CHT and DIL), how they “authorised” themselves to lead (ERC), their “strengths” (JOS), the “changes” they have been through (KET), the “leadership journey” they have been on (SAN and CHT) and their “role” (ERC and WAL).
An example about recognising the role of recognition itself comes from MAR, who reflects on his desire for recognition from others stating that he is an “achievement junkie addicted to the feeling of success and recognition”. He recognises that he needs to be able to provide recognition to himself in order to be content which he acknowledges is “a pretty huge thing to know”:

I want recognition from others, that I am good, better, and the best. I’m an achievement junkie, addicted to the feeling of success and the recognition. It’s like a football player that is moved up a league. Is he proving himself in the next league or is he enjoying the game? Can he do both? If so how to get that balance? My description of hell is the same thing day in day out so I crave the challenge but I also want to be content, to know what is enough. That will only come from an internal recognition and being content with who I am and what I do. That’s a pretty huge thing to know.

MAR’s learning about recognition is very significant offering him an alternative to being compulsively attached to proving himself in order to gain recognition from others by being able to recognise himself, which he intuits will bring him a sense of contentment.

The following example from CHT illustrates how he recognises his leadership journey and how this process helps him to move along this journey to the next level:

I recognise I’m on a journey and I want to be better than I was yesterday and five years ago so I want to be on my journey. This (conversation) helps me to go on that journey, to move myself to the next level and not flat-line.

He continues that recognising his own leadership was significant learning for him. In interview one he described his metaphor for leadership as an eight-person rowboat and drew a simple image to depict this metaphor (Figure 6-14). Between the first and second interview he thought further about his leader ‘ship’ and specified what the eight oars represented and made a second drawing that identified his eight oars of leader ‘ship’ (see Figure 6-15). CHT said that “Recognising my leader ‘ship’ and creating my eight oars for that leader ‘ship’ as a guide for me to know what I think” and lead by in practice was a key learning from the process.
A synonym of recognition is acceptance that indicates acknowledgement or affirmation. Increasing acceptance of one’s own capacities suggests a shift towards more confidence in self as illustrated by several participants. For example ERC said:

I accept I’m the boss and I think it took me some time to reach that level. I see leading as a very valuable position. I think it brings a lot to people and it brings a lot to me also but it’s extremely exposed, very exposed and there’s a high risk linked to it and I’m not sure I’ve always wanted to take that high risk.
DIL also commented on her increasing acceptance for her leadership, “I have been thinking about my nature since our talk. I am also getting into acceptance for the way I lead.”

The theme of recognition pertains to how participants learnt through acknowledging their own perspectives and thoughts to accept their inner wisdom about leadership, rather than looking externally for a sense of validation.
This section has elaborated the central part of the composite model of how participants became aware of their leadership. Through following the steps of data analysis outlined in Table 6-1 three components of becoming aware were identified; “realising” that involved novel thoughts, “reminding” that involved recollecting or remembering previous experience and “recognising” that involved acceptance of leaders’ own views of leadership.

6.6 **What did Leaders Learn about their Leadership?**

This section explicates what participants learnt about their leadership. The three themes of clarity through metaphor, confirmation and choice were identified in response to the question of ‘is there anything that you have learnt about your leadership from this process – the interview, the transcript and the drawing?’ The invariant constituents of all participants’ responses were collated, clustered and synthesised for this question according to data analysis steps described in Table 6-1. Following this synthesis, the clustered themes were named using verbatim labels and then identified how they fit together. This process involved drawing the themes to see them visually to understand how they described the experience of learning about leadership. These themes comprise the third major section of the composite model ‘outcomes of awareness’ and are the penultimate column of the composite model. The three themes are re-presented in Figure 6-16.

![Figure 6-16 Outcomes of Awareness - Learning About Leadership](image)

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220
6.6.1 Clarity through Metaphor

Participants described how metaphor made “things clearer and easier to understand” (TOB). Summarising the essence of many comments about how metaphors aid clarity ARJ said:

Metaphors can be very powerful because with one simple thing you can explain it and boom people get the message. A metaphor is such a visible thing you can use it anywhere to make things clear to get everybody to understand.

Prior to interview one most participants acknowledged that they might not notice metaphor in everyday speech. Through the process of exploration, many realised just how widespread and useful metaphor is, as TOB exclaimed, “The power of metaphors. I never realised just how much we use them.” Several leaders were sceptical at the outset of the study whether they used metaphor, including CHT whose reflection indicates his recognition of how much he uses metaphor in his thinking and also how much he liked his journey metaphor and its various entailments:

I guess I don’t normally consider if I’m using a metaphor or not. We use metaphors to structure our thoughts and to give shape to our thoughts like the journey so it does create that framework for you. I guess I just don’t see them as metaphors but I’m using them! I am because you’ve got them there, the word ‘journey’ however many times ... I do like the concept of a journey and going somewhere, it’s the journey not the destination and it’s the experiences. I like the idea of that and I like the idea of exploring. I like the idea of change, just want to be moving all the time. (CHT)

Participants recognised that they use metaphors that bring clarity to their thinking:

You think it is all clear in your head until you say something out loud, and then you question is that really what I think? When you use a picture they make things much easier to talk about and to understand (TOB).

In a similar vein VAN highlights that using the chess metaphor helped her to understand more fully her leadership and to:
Articulate the do’s and the don’ts, to figure out this style of the chess player. To weigh up what I would find acceptable, or what I wouldn’t agree to. So that also became clearer or more on the front of my thoughts rather than deep down.

Her comment about becoming clearer “on the front of her thoughts” is typical of how participants expressed gaining clarity by bringing images to the front or the surface of their thoughts.

An example of how participants developed understanding through metaphors comes from JEN, who said that one of her reflections from interview one was “around being inclusive and the value of suspending judgement.” Having considered the need to suspend judgement in order to live up to her value of being inclusive she then expands this idea of suspending judgement through referring to “the picture that came to mind for me” which was “like you’re running, we’re all going so fast all the time and it’s like a rubber band is pulling you back”. She describes a rubber band around her that slows her down and helps her not to jump to conclusions and assumptions so fast. With this rubber band in place she is able to slow down enough to suspend her thinking to enable her to consider other ideas and judgements. Following her metaphorical reflections she said, “I never thought about … using a metaphor as a means of more effective noticing”. JEN drew her image of suspending judgement as a “reminder” of her learning and also as a way to capture her experience of the process – see Figure 6-17.
Even though participants acknowledged that they might not recognise the ubiquity of metaphors in daily speech, many said how much they liked their metaphors, which brought clarity to their conceptions of leadership. Some examples include the leader ‘ship’ for CHT, a family for CHK, a lioness for JOS, the reciprocal energy system for TIM, the big wave for ERG, the lonely cowboy for ERV, the chess player for SAR and VAN and many roads leading to Rome for ARJ. The following reflection from MAT is particularly interesting as he links three different metaphors that he has used as three inter-related elements in his inner metaphorical world.

You could probably chunk those metaphors up in to three different categories. You’ve got the train and the journey, the movement thing, that’s one area. You’ve got painting the picture. I talked about doing a jigsaw and needing to see the box. I think you could group those together and say that’s a different set of ideas. The final one would be around the belief, the passion, the belonging. In my head, those three things are related but they are all planets moving around each other. They exist in their own right but in my head, they are actually related. ... Yes, three
different inter-related ideas about leadership. Nothing new from inside my head – but clearly articulated and visible as three inter-related elements that make up my view of leadership that I can share more easily now. (MAT)

As he shares in the last sentence these metaphors are not new to MAT, they were already “inside” his head but now they are clearly articulated and visible they are easier to share. Having thoughts clear is important for leaders who are responsible for motivating others as illustrated by ARJ’s comment:

Sometimes as a leader you fail in sharing your views with others because either you’re not clear enough or your ideas have not matured enough. But if you’re aware of that, you can also work with that. That is something that helps - having my thoughts clear and mature.

Participants appreciated the opportunity “to move leadership from an abstract idea to give me a chance to say what I believe” (SAR) and noted how metaphor made their thinking of leadership much less abstract, more visual and more personally meaningful. Five participants drew how the process encouraged increasing clarity. The drawings consisted of a series of steps – typically three (ERC and SAR) or four (KET and SAN) that illustrated “confusion” in the beginning as leaders were trying to think and describe what leadership meant to them or trying to work out how they fit with prescribed models. Following the confusion was a period of working things out for themselves through their own metaphors, to become clearer about their own views of leadership. This is illustrated in SAR's drawing by the expressions “for me it is” or “I think”. The drawings then show a sense of direction for example, a compass in KET's (Figure 6-18) or the satisfaction of discovering one’s own toolbox and the door to one's own leadership, rather than relying on prescribed formulas (SAR) (Figure 6-19). Furthermore some drawings (ERC and KET) suggest that the process will have continuing effects or be repeated in the future – depicted by Σ (the Sigma sign) in KET’s drawing. ERC’s drawing depicts how his increasing clarity through the journey metaphor nurtures his leadership, represented as a tree whose trunk grows with the attention he gives.
Clarity through metaphor is an important theme of what participants learnt. Participants acknowledged how little they had noticed their metaphors prior to interview one and yet how valuable it was to surface and explore their metaphors, as this helped to translate leadership from an abstract idea to being
personally meaningful. Metaphor was an essential element in moving from confusion to a sense of clarity.

6.6.2 Confirmation

Confirmation describes a sense of self-validation, legitimation or authentication of self. Participants articulated a sense of confirmation as being “on the right way” (ERC) or “on the right track” (FRC and SAN). The metaphor of being on the right track or the right way is congruent with metaphor of journey used in interview one. Used to confirm these participants’ sense of self, the right track metaphor illustrates how metaphorical inner worlds are coherently organised systems of entailments, in this case journeys, paths, tracks and driving. For example, ERC comments:

When I see what I do now and how I drive the people and take them with me on this journey, I’m there, meaning I’m on the right way for me to be successful and I’m on the right way for them to follow me.

This is completely congruent with his essence of leadership of driving people and taking them with him on a journey to success symbolised by the sun, illustrated in his drawing following interview one in Figure 6-20.

FRC’s “confirmation that I am on the right track, do many things to create a safe environment and stimulate my people to develop” is congruent with his metaphor of leading at his best being in sport drive as illustrated by his drawing of interview one in Figure 5-20.
Other participants noted the validation - a synonym for confirmation - they experienced from articulating and reviewing their thoughts about leadership. For example, MAT’s sense that “it was very validating, an affirmation... to realise my thinking is consistent and that it makes sense” contrasts the struggle that several participants experienced with articulating their thinking about leadership. Whilst thinking participants frequently hesitated, repeated themselves and circled around concepts, as they stumbled to make sense of their own thoughts.

TIM gained a sense of confidence after questioning whether his views of leadership were ethical or Machiavellian, dark and self-promoting. This inner questioning resulted in a sense of confidence about his views. The idea of “weighing up my own thoughts” of leadership was echoed by VAN, who said:

This is refreshing – gives a sense of confirmation that what I am doing is ok, good even. And I like that. It is very different to trying to adjust to all the feedback I have received – that can just be exhausting... I like my own words about my own style – that is validating.
It is through this conscious engagement with one’s own thoughts as expressed by TIM and VAN that a robust sense of self-validation occurs. This self-making gives a sense of satisfaction as evident in TIM’s expression “great!” and VAN’s “I like that” and is particularly clear in SAN’s comments about reading his transcript:

I still support my story. I really liked what I read and I also enjoyed that I read things, which I regularly tell to other people. I have some examples, which really are mine and I was glad to read it and identify the metaphors I use. It made me feel good.

There is a strong sense of self in these comments e.g. “my story”, “this is my view” and “my own style”. Furthermore there is a sense of satisfaction or pride – that comes through in phrases like “I really liked what I read”, “really … mine” and “what I am doing is ok, good even.”

The theme of confirmation provides self-affirmation, a sense of satisfaction in one’s own cognition and a sense of trust to know one’s mind. If leaders gain a sense of awareness of their leadership through realisations, reminders and recognition and clarity through consideration of their own metaphor, confirmation brings a sense of trust in these cognitions to guide behaviour.

6.6.3 Choice

Choice includes the power to decide, select between options and determine one’s own course. Being able to choose for oneself rather than unwittingly follow is an important aspect of authenticity as it enables people to approach experiences creatively and autonomously rather than using prescribed models. Participants highlighted the need to decide what they want and “to make a decision” (ANG), to “create choices and options” (JOS), and also to know how to “pick your battles” (ERV).

Two leaders were in challenging work situations and the acknowledgement of being able to make a choice was important learning from the process. As ANG said:
I have to decide what I want to do and what's important to me and then just work around it. I have learnt I need to make a decision about this current situation, which is weighing me down.

ANG had been feeling increasingly unhappy with her boss's behaviour. Professionally the boss was successful but had a personal record for inappropriate behaviour that made it difficult for ANG to respect her. Following the second interview ANG recognised that she had a choice about what to do and said, “I have learnt I need to make a decision about this current situation, which is weighing me down”.

JOS also faced a challenging situation at work and through reminding herself “not to be victim” she focused on creating “choices and options.” The learning for both women was to get in touch with the choices they had rather than suffer in a professional situation they did not agree with. Recognition of their choices also related to their metaphors for leadership as both women drew a balance of two aspects. For ANG this was her balance scale showing gold bars and small change (Figure 5-9) and for JOS this was a Lioness in the savannah between the polarities of connection and aloneness.

For others, like DIL, the ability to make a choice was prompted through reconsidering early influences in her life. For example in interview one she said, “Leadership is a journey. It is serious, focused which gets results.” DIL realised that her attitude to taking things seriously was largely due to her Mother’s influence to study hard and take things seriously. This had served her well and helped her to become successful but was leaving little space for her enjoyment of work and life. Her reconsideration of her inherited self-schema of taking life seriously enabled her to see: “I have a choice of what to focus on in my nature like the enjoyment and put aside the negative for a bit. That's what I have learnt to make that choice.” It was through reviewing her interpretive framework that DIL became aware of the choices she had.

Another example of choice comes from ERV who continued to reflect on his leadership after interview one and discussed a number of questions he had with
a respected peer. In itself this illustrates how the process prompted reflections that continued beyond the interviews. From his conversation he concluded:

You can care as much as you want but you will never be able to impact each and every one so pick your battles and fight those fights where you really think it’s going to make a difference. Don’t be as arrogant as to think you’re going to make a difference for everyone all the time. What I sometimes need to do more is just let go, don’t get involved too much.

The choice for ERV to let go and pick the battles that would make the most difference suggests a shift from an automatic reaction to try to “impact each and every one” to a more selective choice rather than believing that he should “make a difference for everyone all the time”. Furthermore being more conscious about which battles to fight will give ERV more capacity to focus on his Board responsibilities and thereby enable him to step up to the next level.

SAN also spoke to the theme of needing to be more choiceful about when to get involved. Recognising his “pitfall” to be over-involved he said:

You asked are there any times when it’s important not to lead. I was a little bit ashamed, as I really need to step back a bit more. I can be over-involved.

Intellectually he understands that stepping back is useful for encouraging others to step up, for him to have space to have an overview of the situation and time to think, but he is embarrassed to realise that he is over-involved. Like ERV the challenge of choice for SAN is to operate self-restraint in not doing something – not being there for everyone, or not being involved with everything. Just as the choice to do something requires a conscious decision, the choice not to do something also requires a conscious decision to stop operating on autopilot.

The theme of choice relates to participants making conscious decisions about where to focus their energy, what direction to take or how to create choices and options in life. Recognising and making choices constitutes an expression of self-authorship as individuals decide for themselves standing apart from the
expectations of others to make their own decisions informed by their own thinking.

6.7 What did Leaders Learn about their Development?

This section details what emerged in response to the question “What, if anything, have you learnt about your development?” Themes were identified in response to this question across all participants following the steps for data analysis in Table 6-1. The data reveals three themes: (1) ‘attention to own development’, (2) ‘awareness and affirmation’ and (3) ‘next steps?’ These themes explicate the final column of the composite model (see Figure 6-21). There are similarities to what participants learnt about their leadership, however the themes are detailed separately to elaborate the insight that participants had about their development. These emphasise the importance of attention to continued growth.

6.7.1 Attention to Own Development

Participants reflected on the importance of paying attention to their own development and how the process had provided a “valuable excuse” and “a useful reminder” to “reflect and talk about leadership” and development (GOR). Participants identified various aspects of development worthy of further attention: “needing support to continue to develop” (ANG), wondering which
developmental “direction” to take (DIL), “the utility of having time to think” (GOR), the “ongoing growth as a leader” (NAT and TIM), thinking about “what’s needed at a turning point in a career” (RVS) and personalities who have “helped development through challenge and empowerment” (TOB). Three of the men over 50 years old also talked about the importance of continuing to learn and how the process acted as a reminder for that (CHK, ERV, KET). The theme attention to own development has two elements; (1) the reminder for leaders to be attentive to their own leadership and (2) leaders’ attitude to taking responsibility for their development.

The first element of ‘attention to own development’ concerns participants’ emphasis on the need for constant adaptation, an open-mind to accept new ideas and the desire to learn to put “things in perspective” (ERV). This necessitates an attention to development in order to grow “as a person and a leader” (NAT), which is summarised succinctly by MAT, “If you want to develop as a leader, you want to tune your skills.” Describing the sentiments of many leaders, MAT said, “it is very easy to get bogged down in the day job” and highlighted that “like a journey, this thing (development) is not stationary”. For him, as for many others, the process was “a reminder” “to take time” to reflect and put attention on his own development to “fine-tune” his leadership.

Characteristic of participants’ increased awareness to attend to their own development, TIM said, “it’s a continuous development journey” ... “we’re always on constant development, it never ends” because:

You have to always adapt and evolve to serve the people because different people will want that in a different way and the next generation will want that in a different way.

Development for TIM is about being able to respond effectively to the people so that he is able to remain an effective leader for them and serve them, through which he gains their love. This reciprocity of him being attentive to the people so that they will continue to love him as the driver for his development is congruent with his essence of leadership as a reciprocal energy system (see Figure 5.2, Chapter Four).
CHK, referring to himself as “an old dog” of 57, claimed, “You are never too old to learn” and maintained that development doesn’t get old but is “refreshing”. He drew an analogy between leadership development experiences with annual cycles in the church to recognise that “re-reminders” can promote novel ways of seeing:

Occasionally I have these head drills, mind-depths, no different than some very good priest or nun who’s 60 years into their career. On a particular Sunday, they wake up and say wow, how about that, this is the 9000th time I’ve heard that but I appreciate something new about it. So I’m re-reminded that I drifted away from that aspect. I’m appreciative of this. Why am I so lucky to get this chance to re-remember things?

The second element in the theme ‘attitude to own development’ is participants’ acknowledgement of the need to take a more active role in their development. Participants recognised the need to take ownership for setting developmental goals and taking the initiative for their development, which is summarised by ANG:

When I think about my own development, I’ve been very passive around that. Waiting for others to present it to me, expecting the company to give that to me. I should just take a more active role in doing that... From a leadership development standpoint, it’s something you need to set goals for yourself, like your own self-performance appraisal, how am I performing against the things I want to work on.

The idea of taking ownership for development is echoed by DIL:

I need to do more of this sort of thing and initiate my development myself. It is not obvious day-to-day, year-to-year what to do though but this helps in making things clearer, more obvious about taking the initiative to set the direction for my own development.

Participants may not feel they have the time, willingness or state of mind to manage their own development as NAT makes clear. Recognising the need for on-going growth as a leader, she asserts that she needs “stability in my life, financial or personal” in order to “put attention on” development:
They are not primitive but your basic needs have to be met and when I feel myself not disturbed by these other forces trying to rattle my cage, yeah – I can develop.

This theme attention to own development highlights how participants were reminded to be attentive to their development and to take responsibility to evolve as a leader, to adapt to the needs of their people and to make time for reflection about their leadership and development.

6.7.2 **Awareness and Affirmation**

This theme highlights a balance between awareness of aspects to improve and affirmation of practices that work well.

Participants became aware of “proving” oneself (FRC), the need to make use of “external resources” (GUL), relinquishing “the pressure to perform” (MAR), “involving people more” (OVR), “not reacting so fast” (PAT), knowing where “outlets” are (SAR). Others referred to appreciating the importance of self-awareness (MAR) or self-reflection (MAT). The following example from PAT is an example of self-modelling. It illustrates how her reflection that her development lies in not needing to react so fast led her to question the implications of doing so and consider where this need for fast reactions came from:

I don't need to react so fast. What would happen if I don't react so fast? Probably nothing. What do I cause by reacting so fast to things? Probably I don't take time to notice. This need for fast reactions probably comes from my Father, who always wanted fast reactions, so I am very reactive and sometimes that is not so helpful. It is better to ask where or how I could help rather than jumping into action without thinking about it.

An example of both awareness and affirmation comes from MAR who says:

Yes! It is about self-awareness. It doesn't matter how many courses I take, being able to reflect about myself is vital. You can learn skills in courses, but few really help you to consider yourself like this has. I want "gold" all round in job, family, marriage. It is never gonna stop until I am personally satisfied with what I have, with who I am. This is a huge insight from this conversation.
Following his identification for “gold all round”, MAR realises that his development lies in gaining a sense of self-affirmation:

I need to recognise myself and what I do instead of craving it from others. I can find a sense of peace when I no longer feel the pressure to perform, excel – I can enjoy. I can visualise that peace. It is like lying on a beach, content not pushing, challenging, performing, excelling, just being – that is peace. I need to remind myself of that and recognise it.

The theme of affirmation highlights what participants valued and appreciated about themselves. CHT makes a particularly compelling case for the importance of self-affirmation claiming that this “personal status report” is as important for continuing his leadership journey as focusing on areas for improvement. Affirmation of his beliefs and practices of leadership is important for him to know what works well and what he will continue to do and also creates a solid foundation for his continuing journey.

That’s what I like about this, that I don’t just focus on those development areas but I do go back over the reaffirmation of what’s good about my style as well. It’s good to put that to front of mind again and not have it lost, lost in my mind and then lost in my working practice because it is something we shape.

This self-affirmation is also extremely important for ERC, who experienced a sense of confirmation for his leadership of being “on the right track” but also for his development as he recognised that he is leading:

I got this confirmation, I am leading, I am leading!” ... “It’s a movement in myself that has started and that is keeping on. A movement to confirm what I do and still be open to question things and think through things, but that confirmation that I am leading is pretty important.

Noticeable in these comments is the balance between affirming good practices and being open to noticing development needs. This is also evident in VAN’s comments that whilst there is room to continue to develop, she values herself more:

reinforce what I thought was valuable for me to keep and to develop... there’s more that I value about myself that resonates with me that I would
not compromise independently of the feedback I’m getting because sometimes I am over-responsive to other people’s feedback.

She further reflects that her initial desire had been to prepare for the interview by “reading different things on leadership” as she “wanted to be helpful” and “evidence-based”. However she realises that her development lies in affirming her own leadership through her lovely phrase, listening to the internal evidence:

Maybe that is helpful every once in a while to listen to the internal evidence rather than the external. That is important for my development to listen to myself rather than look outside for references.

The theme ‘awareness and affirmation’ has shown how leaders developed awareness of aspects of their leadership they may wish to modify but also how they noticed aspects that they appreciated and affirmed through undertaking their own “status report”.

6.7.3 Next Steps?

Attention to their own development enabled participants to identify potential aspects of their leadership to modify which can be considered the first steps in further development. Similar to how participants recognised choice in their learning about leadership, they recognised what they could do for their development. The ‘Next steps?’ theme describes participants’ intention to develop their leadership but the question mark indicates participants’ questioning of the most effective steps for development and growth.

Leaders articulated that next steps involved “more thinking before I start talking” (ARJ), seeking “feedback from people” (MAT), “to let go more” (GDM), “getting back in touch with people” (NAT), “a reminder to keep checking assumptions” (JEN), to “coach people to find the first step” (OVR) and to “get out of my head” and “stay in my heart” (GUL). Having become “much more aware” about his leadership FRC gave his transcript to one of his team members to ask whether she thought it was accurate “or just a story” as a check whether what he thought was apparent in his behaviour. In a similar vein MAT said:
This process makes ... me quite confident to get that feedback from people even if there's a harsh reality that they throw at me because I can return to something like this process and say, I'm not all bad. I'm doing something right, even if you say you wish I could change something. So going through this, it made me want to know what people think about my leadership.

Several participants were particularly taken with how metaphors and images aid understanding and said that their development involved incorporating more visuals in their work. For example, JOS said, “visuals are very powerful... I’m using visuals for two or three initiatives across the organisation... to get to the power of depth and character that images illustrate so much better than two dimensional words.” Another example of incorporating visuals comes from CEO SAN who shared that after the first interview he had a cartoonist draw five images to illustrate the company strategy to make it accessible to all personnel. These five images were prominently displayed in the corporate offices when I went for interview two.

Significant in this theme of ‘next steps?’ was the need to step back and leave space for others. Four male participants – two CEO’s and two first time team leaders recognised their development entailed stepping back to allow other people to step up. CEO ERV realised that not playing everyone’s saviour was important to his people’s development and would be useful to give him more space for his Board responsibilities. Similarly, CEO SAN, reflected that whilst it is a challenge for him to step back there are benefits for him and his team when he does so:

I can then leave the meetings without actions and only having to follow up. I am often expected to come up with opinions and by taking a step back I leave the question on the table to trigger them to start thinking and feel it like an invitation to speak up.

The theme of stepping back and encouraging others to take more responsibility was also articulated by WAL, a trader moving into a role of managing the trading team. He realised that part of his development is stepping back in order to step up to the to next level, which is something his manager has been encouraging
him to do. However, he acknowledged this is something he is only just beginning to accept through this process of exploring his own views and metaphors of leadership. Similarly CHB had recently gained responsibility for a bigger team and was unsure whether he is being “over-supportive” to his team. Giving more space to others are evident in comments from PAT about not “reacting so fast”, from ARJ about “thinking more before talking” and KET about not being the one “everything depends on”.

The metaphor stepping back was used by almost half the sample in interview one to indicate the need to relinquish some responsibility and encourage others to take it up so it is unsurprising that stepping back is identified as key for participants’ development. The theme seems to pertain particularly to those making leadership transitions such as leaders in a large role for a short period of time or those transitioning to take on more responsibilities.

This section has illustrated how participants responded to the question of what they learnt about their development and detailed the three themes of ‘attention to own development’, ‘awareness and affirmation’ and ‘next steps?’ The following section explicates the individual variant of nothing.

6.8 Individual Variation - Nothing

Three of the participants reported that they did not learn anything about their leadership – two men, OVR and RVS and one woman, SAM. This variation is important as phenomenological studies do not seek “consistency and uniformity” but to understand a complex subject through the ways in which participants’ “make meaning” (van Manen, 1990 p.34). A common factor these three leaders cited for not learning anything was the lack of exchange. SAM said it was difficult to learn anything if she perceived the process as “one-way” as she needs “feedback, exchange to sense the value of discussion.” She said:

If it is one-way only, listening to my words, it’s not enough because I know in my heart what I think. I know how I act with people and I have a
strong sense of value so I am really centred in my beliefs and I try to act that way.

OVR had a similar desire for exchange:

This was not an interview in my opinion. An interview is an exchange between two people in which you may exchange opinions including divergent opinions. On your side it was very neutral – you were trying to surface metaphors which I do not use very much and that I deliberately avoided in this interview. If something is not in my ‘pillars’ I do not participate.

These comments highlight that the space provided by the CL questions, which keeps attention on the interviewee was not appreciated by all leaders and that these three leaders wanted more exchange or feedback to learn. Illustrating the process by a blank piece of paper, OVR said:

You gave a lot of freedom, a lot of space... too much for me... The process is like a blank sheet to be written on, to be defined as you like with many dimensions. It is extremely broad – maybe for some people this is great, for others like me I need some limit.

The lack of limits was frustrating for OVR who added, "It is not natural digging, digging, digging trying to surface things from me."

RVS provides an insight into a possible cause of the discomfort, which stems from a sense of not feeling in control and feeling stupid through the questioning of his thoughts:

That's just a level of discomfort, not with you, not with the interview, not with the topic, more in general situations. You can’t be wrong otherwise you're stupid and you don’t want to be stupid. You want to be in control of the situation.

RVS drew his shields of protection to illustrate what happens when he does not feel in control.
His drawing (Figure 6-22) captured his experience of himself in the process of being somewhat closed, which he contrasted in his drawing to how he experiences himself with family and friends or with others. His drawing was a useful reflection for him about how he interacts when uncertain.

SAM also highlighted that being in the midst of a professional transition was challenging and might have made her “demanding” of “having exchange, feedback”. SAM received calls during the interview about a job offer after twelve years with the same organisation, which she described as “something like a divorce”. As the job offer was made during the interview for which I had travelled to France her professional transition came to dominate the interview, as she made clear:

I was in a very busy period, not an easy one so I did not think really about my leadership. And when you are in a transition period, for me it’s not a comfortable situation so you don’t think.
She acknowledged that not being “fully in the process” had a significant impact on the outcome despite the process providing “a good atmosphere” and “exchange in the sense of listening”.

As interviewer these were the three most challenging interviews. The interruptions mentioned by SAM happened for different reasons with RVS and were clearly challenging for the participants but unsettling for the process as a whole and for me as interviewer. The disruptions made it challenging to gain attention let alone direct attention. The interviews with RVS and OVR were the most challenging to elicit metaphor as both men used very literal language, were serious in their demeanour and I found myself less skilled in the interview, perhaps trying too hard to stay with my methodology – to remain clean – which may have got in the way of establishing a more conducive rapport as identified by OVR:

You were stressed at the beginning. I was stressed. I could feel it. We were not completely relaxed. I had the feeling you were trying to scrutinize me... you were in your methodology – very clean and very straight in your boots. What happened? I became more rigid and was not willing to play.

I highlight this not as a criticism of them, but as a reflection of how even the ‘same process’ conducted by the same interviewer can have significantly different effects on both interviewee and interviewer resulting in significantly different outcomes.

Unlike RVS and OVR who both gained reflections about their development, SAM said she learnt nothing about her development from the process. This is consistent with her view that she had not learnt anything about her leadership. She reiterates that the lack of exchange meant that the exercise did not bring a lot because “it was my own words, it was my thinking and for me, developing is having an exchange, having feedback”. Recognising that the questions were “to guide me to continue to discuss” she did not feel that any of the questions “could make me think why I would say that because it is my belief and my thinking.” For SAM the role of feedback is to challenge her “to think about certain points.” She reiterates that her transition was like “a period where you are divorcing or in a
period where you are facing a lot” which she suggests could be a reason that she had not learnt anything about her development.

SAM is not completely alone in questioning whether she learnt anything about development, as RVS and CHB were also sceptical whether they had learnt anything although they continued to think out loud about their development. It is possible that all three had particular ideas about what development should entail such as feedback (SAM, RVS) and taking “a longer period of time or more formal education” (CHB).

This section has identified the individual variation of nothing experienced by three leaders in relation to learning about their leadership and one leader in relation to development. The section has identified four possible causes for this including (1) the lack of exchange, (2) the discomfort of not feeling in control, (3) feeling stupid as thoughts were questioned and (4) the difficulty of gaining attention due to disruptions in the process.

6.9 Summary of Chapter Six

Chapter Six has detailed what leaders learnt about their leadership and their development. The chapter started with an overview of the data collected and then presented a description of how the data were analysed according to an application of Moustakas (1994) detailed steps of phenomenological analysis. These steps were described in Table 6-1 and have been used to list significant statements to identify the invariant elements of the experience, cluster the these statements into themes, synthesise the themes using verbatim comments from participants. The composite structural model (Figure 6-1) shows the four resulting components; (1) the experience of exploration, (2) becoming aware, (3) outcomes of awareness for leadership and (4) outcomes of awareness for development.

The chapter then systematically described the components of the composite structural model, using verbatim comments and drawings from participants. The
first component, experience of exploration included four themes: (1) openness, (2) comfort in the relationship, (3) subtle guidance that triggers own views and (4) surfacing and exploring metaphors. The subtle guidance was comprised of four sub-themes; the structure of the interview, the clean questions, thinking out loud and limited interference from the outside. The second component of the composite structural model, becoming aware described how leaders became aware of their leadership through realising, remembering and recognising their own views. The third component of the composite structural model described the outcome of awareness for learning about leadership. Three themes were described; clarity through metaphor, confirmation that leaders were “on the right track” and recognition of choice. The final section of the composite model concerns the outcome of awareness for development. Three themes have been discussed; attention to own development, awareness and affirmation and what next?

Common across all themes is that leaders’ learning was prompted by attention to their naturally occurring metaphors. The individual variation nothing experienced by three leaders was analysed with particular attention to the lack of exchange that these people experienced. The implications of these findings for this study are considered in the following chapter.
7 Contributions and Discussion

7.1 Introduction to Chapter

Chapter Seven draws on literature cited concerning authenticity, authentic leader development, metaphor, implicit leadership theory and Clean Language to discuss the findings and contributions from this study. The seven findings and contributions are grouped into four sections that correspond to the composite structural model presented in Chapter Six (Figure 6-1), to identify (1) participants’ experience of the exploration of their inner worlds including their experience of the relationship and the surfacing and exploration of metaphors, (2) their experience of becoming aware, (3) participants learning about their leadership and (4) participants learning about their development. The findings are summarised in Table 7-1 and then discussed sequentially followed by a discussion of the practical implications. I have chosen to present and discuss the findings sequentially in order to do justice to each finding, although the practice of participants’ learning was much more dynamic, intertwined and messy than this sequential presentation suggests. I consider trustworthiness of the findings along with what I have learnt through this process in the final chapter.
**Table 7-1 Findings and Contributions From This Study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>Contribution to Theory</th>
<th>Implications for Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Relationship That Supports And Guides 'Cleanly' Illuminates The Inner World.</strong></td>
<td>Contributes to the development of authentic leaders through relationship (Berkovich, 2014; Sparrowe, 2005). Also contributes to understanding the nature of support in leader development (Day and Dragni, 2015).</td>
<td>Clean principles and questions direct attention to inner models with minimal interference (Lawley and Tompkins, 2000) and could be incorporated into future research studies and into facilitating leaders to understand their inner models.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2. Leaders Make Meaning Through Surfacing and Exploring Metaphors.</strong></td>
<td>Supports theories by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) that the conceptual system is largely hidden but can be brought into awareness through metaphor. Contributes to authentic leader development by making object what was subject (Kegan, 1982; 1994) through metaphors.</td>
<td>The elicitation of metaphors is suggested to be a practical method for examining leaders’ mental models, which is a critical concern for the development of leaders (Johnson, 2008).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Elicited Metaphors Illuminate Diverse Conceptualisations of Leadership.</strong></td>
<td>Contributes to understanding how different metaphors provide different conceptualisations of leadership (Oberlechner and Mayer-Schönberger, 2003) which are more varied than the deductive metaphors used to describe leadership (Alvesson and Spicer, 2011).</td>
<td>The diversity of metaphors for leadership needs to be taken into account in research and practice in the development of authentic leaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Essence Revealed in Drawings.</strong></td>
<td>Contributes to a multi-modal exploration of metaphor, currently under-represented in the management literature (Cornelissen et al., 2008) and to arts-based approaches to leader development (Schyns et al., 2013; Taylor and Ladkin, 2009).</td>
<td>As drawing is complementary to verbal description and reveals leaders’ tacit knowledge, it is recommended to incorporate drawings into approaches to leader development.</td>
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<td>Finding</td>
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<td>Contribution to Theory</td>
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<td>Implications for Practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Becoming Aware</td>
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<td>5. Leaders Become Aware Through Realising, Remembering and Recognising</td>
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<td>Contributes to understanding how self-awareness occurs in leader development, currently a gap in literature on authentic leadership (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Gardner et al., 2005) and authenticity (Kernis and Goldman, 2006) by illuminating how frames of reference are elaborated, expanded or transformed (Mezirow, 1997).</td>
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<td>Attention to realising, reminding and recognising is important for linking self-reflection to self-awareness and for understanding ways that leaders expand or change their frames of reference and become more self-authoring.</td>
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<td>What Leaders Learn About Leadership</td>
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<td>Supports the centrality of self-awareness and adaptability to leader development (Hall, 2004) and contributes to a central question in authentic leader development about how leaders’ develop self-clarity and self-certainty (Gardner et al., 2005).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attention to leaders’ own views rather than external models builds clarity and confirmation that is important for leaders to act in accordance with their inner beliefs. This suggests continued personalisation of leader development.</td>
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<td>What Leaders Learn About Development</td>
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<td>7. Leader Development is a Journey of Becoming Rather Than A Fixed Destination.</td>
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<td>Contributes to unpacking the development construct describing the growth process (Day and Lance, 2004) by differentiating between the journey metaphor for the external process of development and the growth metaphor for the internal process of maturation.</td>
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<td>Attention to both development of leadership skills and growth as a person has implications for how leader development is conceptualised and evaluated. Including both development and growth is necessary for the development of authentic leaders.</td>
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7.2 Finding 1: Relationship that Supports and Guides ‘Cleanly’ Illuminates the Inner World

“The range of what we think and do is limited by what we fail to notice. And because we fail to notice that we fail to notice, There is little we can do to change; Until we notice how failing to notice shapes our thoughts and deeds.”

Attributed to R.D. Laing in Goleman (1985 p.24)

7.2.1 Contribution and Discussion

This study contributes to understanding the importance of relationship to support and ‘cleanly’ guide exploration of the inner world. This adds to literature that emphasises the importance of relationship for the development of authenticity (Erickson, 1995; Kernis, 2003) and the development of authentic leaders (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012; Berkovich, 2014; Shamir and Eilam, 2005) by illuminating how relationship provides both comfort and “subtle guidance” to explore the (often unfamiliar) inner world. Chapter Six highlighted how participants experienced the process of exploration through openness, comfort in the relationship, subtle guidance that triggers their own views and the surfacing and exploration of metaphors. Furthermore the four components of subtle guidance, structure, questions, thinking out loud and limited interference from the outside were explicated to show how this guidance triggers leaders’ own views. Two aspects of this finding about the importance of relationship for exploration of the inner world are particularly worthy of discussion in terms of how they contribute to existing literature: support and ‘clean’ guidance.

Intrapersonal development consists of examining assumptions (Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003; Kaiser and Kaplan, 2006) and meaning-making perspectives (Kegan, 2009) that guide behaviour; however, as these are usually out of awareness, development can be a conundrum because people cannot see what they cannot see. And as people cannot see what they cannot see, support is useful to examining mental models and assumptions yet there is limited guidance about how this support is provided. Kaiser and Kaplan, proponents of
intrapersonal development, view the facilitator’s role as providing “a structure and facilitat(ing) a process” (2006 p.474) and they make four suggestions that are useful foundations for working with the inner world: competence with psychological principles, responsiveness to the learner including voluntary participation and confidentiality, knowing professional limits and not making “interpretations of the individual’s behalf” (p.474). Findings from this study add to their recommendations by emphasising the importance of relationship to illuminate the inner world through providing comfort and subtle ‘clean’ guidance in the task of exploration.

In interviews, I paid particular attention to both the method of interviewing cleanly and the quality of the relationship not only as a ‘technique’ to elicit data as cleanly as possible but also as a way of acknowledging the impact of the relationship in creating a holding environment in which leaders could construct their own meaning. This attention to the relationship sought to address criticisms that authentic leadership theory is over-fascinated with techniques and neglects the effect of the quality of the interaction between the facilitator and the individual (Berkovich, 2014). Attention to the relationship echoes Carl Rogers caveat: “What you say is important, but what you are in the relationship is much more important” (Quoted in Heppner et al., 1984 p.14). Attention to relationship is paramount in therapy (Rogers, 1961; Rogers, 1980) and coaching (Gatling and Harrah, 2014; Kilburg, 2000; Quick and Macik-Frey, 2004) but under-theorised in leader development, which tends to focus on programmes of development or workplace experiences as vehicles for learning and has overlooked the role of mental models in learning (Day, 2012). Research that pays attention to how relationship helps or hinders development is therefore timely.

The relationship was experienced as non-judgemental and accepting, which gave “comfort” (ANG) as participants struggled to articulate their thoughts. This comforting acceptance combined with “little interruption” (OVR) freed up participants to explore their own thoughts about their leadership. This comfort can be considered a form of safe “holding environment” which is essential for “evolution” (Kegan, 1982 p. 116). This holding environment or “interpersonal
holding” (Petriglieri et al., 2011 p.441) provides a reliable psychological space in which a person is acknowledged exactly as they are and ‘held’ in their psychological evolution.

Whilst the importance of a holding environment in leadership development has been recognised (Petriglieri et al., 2011), this study suggests that a holding environment is particularly important in the exploration of inner worlds and the development of authenticity which is an uncertain task (Sartre, 1956). As authenticity is relational involving “openness and truthfulness in one’s close relationships”, Kernis claims it is essential that individuals “recognise and trust in the validity of their inner world” (2003 p.15). However, he cautions that if children have their inner worlds contradicted and rejected by parents and authority figures it can lead them to dismiss their inner experiences in deference to the authority figure. This may set up a cycle of dependence on authority for approval and dismissal of the validity of an individual’s inner world. This study has explicitly focused on the inner worlds of leaders to see what they learn and findings indicate that leaders may lose touch with and confidence in their inner world when their desire to say what they assume is required takes over. This suggests they may need to ‘relearn’ to trust it if they are to become authentic leaders who can “trust their inner experiences to guide their behaviours” (Kernis and Goldman, 2006 p.294). The study further highlights that learning to attend to the inner world took some effort for several of the leaders, perhaps because as Kernis suggests these leaders were not experienced in recognising and validating their inner world. It is suggested that an accepting relationship provides comfort by validating the individual’s inner world and by doing so encourages individuals to notice, explore and accept their inner world.

This study shows that the comforting relationship was important for four reasons. Firstly, it is important to meet, accept and ‘hold’ the varied emotions that participants experienced in exploring their inner world including “apprehension” and feeling self-conscious for example “exposed” and a “bit foolish” (GDM). Secondly, it is important to validate the contents of the inner world and by doing so signal that inner experiences are valid and important
rather than “crazy” and “silly”. Thirdly it is important to keep track of the meandering nature of participants’ thinking and direct attention to keep them focused on their own meaning-making. Fourthly the comforting nature of the relationship is important to counter participants’ self-criticism about “rambling”, their lack of drawing skills and getting lost in thought. The relationship ‘held’ and accepted emotions and frustrations, kept track of participants’ thinking and directed attention inward to encourage them to continue exploring, rather than give up if they became frustrated with and critical of their inner world. Whilst literature about self and identity has long recognised that self-definition is “complex, difficult and uncertain” (Baumeister, 1987 p.174), less attention has been paid to how individuals can be supported in this complex task. This study reveals the importance of comfort in relationship to support the process of meaning-making and adds to literature that emphasises the importance of relationship in the development of authenticity (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012; Berkovich, 2014). Furthermore it contributes to understanding the nature of support in leader development (Day and Dragoni, 2015) by suggesting the importance of relationship as accepting and providing comfort, yet also directing attention cleanly to encourage leaders to explore their mental models.

Participants’ comments such as “I think much more with you than I would on my own” suggest that reflecting on inner worlds is not easy for people to do on their own and that what leaders learn is influenced by interaction. The subtle guidance comprising the structure, questions, thinking out loud and limited interference from the outside drew from ‘clean’ principles. CL facilitates meaning-making by directing attention but not being directive, by accepting individual’s words but sending them on a search for further information, by encouraging people to discover their own answers rather than ‘the answer’ and by the surprising depth which is reached relatively quickly by working from the participant’s perspective. Directing attention ‘cleanly’ is informed by the participant’s verbal and non-verbal metaphors in order for them to find out more about their inner models. In this sense it is not directive towards an external goal but is informed by the participants’ inner world which provides a
structure to guide the interview hence participants’ description of the guidance as “subtle”.

Subtle guidance was communicated through the use of CL syntax ‘And’, which signals acceptance of what has been said and encourages participants to continue or add information thereby deepening understanding of their inner world. As the word ‘And’ implies connection to what has previously been said as well as creating space for what comes next, its use conveys to the participant “this whole interaction is to be conducted from your perspective” (Lawley and Tompkins, 2000 p.59). This syntax plus the use of participants’ exact words and metaphors (verbal and non-verbal) and the matching of their vocal quality with slow pace and “tonality of implicit acceptance, curiosity and wonder” (Lawley and Tompkins, 2000 p.80) are the hallmarks of CL that create an atmosphere of acceptance and inquisitiveness. I suggest the “comfort” felt by many participants was created by this acceptance and inquisitiveness in which they were fully acknowledged, and their words and non-verbal gestures were used as the point of departure for further exploration. Participants attest to feeling accepted and fully engaged in their own exploration: “I was so involved and excited to talk about these pictures I forgot you were there” (PAT). Furthermore, participants appreciated the “freedom to focus the way I need to focus not the way someone else wants me to” (SAN). Comments about “freedom” to explore indicate that participants were not only accepted and sent on a journey to find out more about their models but were able to create their own meaning, rather than searching for ‘the right’ answer.

A surprising finding for me was how many participants acknowledged having to let go of a desire to say what they thought I wanted to hear in the interview before they could really consider their own sense of leadership. This is an example of the “Theyness” that Heidegger (1962) speaks of or what Kegan terms the “socialized mind” (1994 p.314) which is the pull to conform to perceived norms rather than make one’s own meaning. As leaders settled into the interview, let go of feeling a need to satisfy some imagined requirement of the research and gained comfort from the relationship, they became engaged in
creating their own meaning and became more self-authoring. Building on Kegan's idea of self authorship as “the mental making of an ... explicit system of belief” (1994 p.91), Baxter Magdola claims that self-authorship requires listening to and cultivating the internal voice. She suggests that listening to the internal voice involves edging out the power of external authorities to make space for the development of the “internal voice” (2009 p.324). However she notes that this internal voice is often “fragile” and needs cultivating so that beliefs and self-views, are moved “inside oneself” (2009 p.325). As participants searched for their own meaning, the fragility of their internal voices was apparent, described derogatively as “ramblings” (TIM) or “all over the place” (GUL). The fragility of the internal voice could be an impediment to creating one’s own meaning unless the voice is acknowledged and nurtured in a safe environment. The interview provided a space for leaders to listen to and cultivate their internal voice through providing subtle guidance to maintain attention on participants’ own metaphors with minimal interference from the interviewer. Leaders spoke of the “comfort” they experienced, as they were encouraged to attend to their inner metaphorical worlds and cultivate their internal voices and their own meaning.

7.2.2 Implications

An implication from this finding is the value of paying attention to the nature of relationship in developing authenticity in leaders. Relationship provides not only the possibility to “narrate oneself” (Sparrowe, 2005 p.436) and consider life-stories (Shamir and Eilam, 2005) but also provides comfort in the face of unsettling emotions in the difficult task of self-definition and through accepting the inner world just as it is. Furthermore an accepting relationship can counter self-criticism as individuals stumble to make meaning. Perhaps most importantly a relationship that is accepting and curious about the inner world encourages people to (re) acquaint themselves with their inner life and to validate their inner experience, which is a prerequisite for the development of authentic leaders (Kernis and Goldman, 2006).

A further important implication is that clean principles and questions direct and maintain attention on the inner world with the utmost respect and minimal
interference which facilitates exploration (Lawley and Tompkins, 2000). This facilitates leaders to learn about themselves by encouraging them to articulate and clarify their self-views; hence it is suggested that clean principles could be used in future research and in authentic leader development initiatives. This implies that developing skills in CL for researchers and for leadership developers is an important pre-requisite for working with the inner worlds of leaders and metaphor. A number of excellent resources are available on-line including the site of James Lawley and Penny Tompkins (http://www.cleanlanguage.co.uk/) who are now offering an on-line course in Clean Language.

7.3 Finding 2: Leaders Make Meaning through Surfacing and Exploring Metaphors

“Our tendency toward idiosyncratic self-reflection, our discovery of metaphor, symbol, analogy, and abstraction, and that unnameable yearning that so typifies our nature, express our desire for meaning”

James Hollis, (2005 p.7)

7.3.1 Contribution and Discussion

The elicitation and examination of metaphors in this study contributes to understanding how leaders can generate their own meaning and enhance their authenticity. This corresponds to Algera and Lips-Wiersma's (2012) imperative for authentic leaders to make their own meaning, and suggests a practical means for them to do so by surfacing and examining their metaphors and implicit leadership theories. Furthermore, the finding that verbal and pictorial metaphors make tacit assumptions visible corresponds to making object what was subject (Kegan, 1982) and contributes to literature about gestalt approaches to leader development which are based on the premise that learning takes place when implicit beliefs are made visible (Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003; Johnson, 2008; Kaiser and Kaplan, 2006).
All leaders in this study used metaphors to make meaning about their leadership and development and through attention to these metaphors became aware of their views and implicit models. This is significant because, to my knowledge, this is the first study to attempt to elicit metaphors from a sample of practising leaders. The findings are encouraging because they empirically support theories by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Fauconnier and Turner (2002) that people use metaphor to understand and navigate the world. Furthermore leaders’ tendency to use metaphor automatically and unconsciously also supports theories that the conceptual system is largely hidden and out of awareness. As metaphors “constitute our unreflective common sense” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999 p.13) and shape how people frame experience, surfacing and exploring metaphors provides a way for leaders to become aware of their conceptual system. This finding contributes to understanding how leaders can understand and evaluate their mental models to become aware of how their thinking frames situations and behaviour (Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003). To date there has been scant work linking metaphors and mental models and no empirical studies, to my knowledge, that have examined how the elicitation of metaphors can enhance leaders’ self-awareness.

Metaphors make implicit models visible and therefore open to examination as detailed in Chapter Three. Mezirow recognised this, claiming people have in mind a “set of symbolic models and images which are selected on the basis of past experience and projected onto sensory stimuli, frequently via metaphors to enable us to give coherence to experience” (1994 p.223). Yet despite this acknowledgement of the link between metaphor and models, there has been relatively little attention to illuminating mental models through metaphor. Some studies have highlighted the value of accessing implicit leadership theories in order to develop leaders (Nichols and Erakovich, 2013; Schyns et al., 2013). However neither of these studies clarified how leaders make meaning of their own implicit leadership theories. Nichols and Erakovich (2013) used an online survey of scenarios to explore the effects of ILT on perceived effectiveness of leaders and Schyns et al. (2013) used a drawing exercise to elicit ILT in group.
settings. Furthermore both studies were conducted with students thus somewhat removed from the real-world of practising business leaders.

The elicitation of metaphors in this study encouraged leaders to bring their mental models into awareness and attend to how they make meaning. Once in awareness previously tacit assumptions and mental models could be reviewed as illustrated by ERG’s comment, “The explicit and implicit ways of thinking were in my head already but untapped. The exploration tapped into implicit internal beliefs and potential about who I am as a person and how that shows up when I lead”. This exemplifies what Kegan terms making something object that was previously subject (1982; 1994) which is fundamental to constructivist developmental theory about how people grow and change. Beliefs, mental models and implicit leadership theories that are ‘subject’ are unquestioned and held to be true, hence moving them to become ‘object’ and available for reflection is essential for consciously making meaning and for the development of self-awareness. As Kegan asserts, people “cannot be responsible for, in control of, or reflect upon that which is subject” however, they can “internalize, assimilate, or otherwise operate upon” beliefs that are object (1994 p. 32). When participants surfaced and examined their metaphors, they were able to evaluate their mental models which contributes, arguably, to the development of their self-views (Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003).

7.3.2 Implications

As all participants in the study accessed metaphor to explore their inner world, an implication is to use the elicitation and exploration of metaphor as a fruitful avenue for making object what was subject for leader development. This suggests a practical method for exploring mental models, which is a critical concern for the development of leaders (Johnson, 2008) and for understanding how they make meaning which is central to authentic leader development (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012). The method described in this study suggests a useful way to respectfully support leaders to access their inner world and articulate and explore their metaphors.
Furthermore, authentic leader development could be enhanced by further research concerning the relationship between leaders’ metaphors and their meaning-making.

7.4 Finding 3: Elicited Metaphors Illuminate Diverse Conceptualisations of Leadership

“Metaphors are capable of giving us a new understanding of our experience. Thus they can give new meaning to our pasts, to our daily activity, and to what we know and believe”

Lakoff and Johnson (1980 p.139)

7.4.1 Contribution and Discussion

This study contributes to understanding the variety of metaphors used by practising leaders to describe and make meaning of their leadership. This contributes to illuminating the “prevailing categories of leadership metaphors” that Oberlechner and Mayer-Schönberger (2003 p.171) suggest are necessary to understand leadership at a deep experiential level. This study finds that metaphors elicited from leaders are more numerous and varied than deductive metaphors applied to leaders (Alvesson and Spicer, 2011), which contributes to understanding how different metaphors provide different conceptualisations of leadership (Oberlechner and Mayer-Schönberger, 2003). The study set out to discover what leaders can learn from their metaphors, rather than produce a list of their metaphors, nevertheless it is useful to recognise the range of metaphors used by leaders. Further work would be necessary for a more complete analysis of these metaphors, but two findings are particularly noteworthy: firstly the range of metaphors that leaders used was broader and more varied than metaphors used in leadership studies to date, but nevertheless focused on a significant core of essential key metaphors. Secondly, the war metaphor was largely absent from leaders’ metaphors despite the attention it has garnered in the management literature.
This study shows that leaders use a wide range of metaphors beyond the limited number of deductive metaphors suggested by previous scholars such as managers, priests and artists (Hatch et al., 2006), or saints, gardeners, buddies, commanders, cyborgs or bullies (Alvesson and Spicer, 2011). Chapter Five has indicated the range of metaphors that participants used to define their leadership. These include; journey, visualising the future, energy, balance, connection, self-reflection, creating the environment, giving space, puzzling things out and catalysing change.

Unlike theorists who have suggested single metaphors for leadership, participants used varied and multiple metaphors to frame their leadership. This range and variety of metaphors support the inherent ambiguity in definitions of leadership (Bresnen, 1995). The variety of metaphors supports the assertion that leadership is essentially "phenomenological" (Pfeffer, 1977 p.104), meaning that it is based on the implicit assumptions, beliefs and expectations of leaders. This study shows these assumptions are way more varied than deductive metaphors imply. The elicitation of metaphors illuminates the metaphors used in the actual practice of doing leadership, that Alvesson and Spicer (2011) assert are largely missing from existing studies of leadership. Five metaphors used by participants; journey, connection, balance, connection and catalyst are what Zaltman and Zaltman call deep metaphors that they claim describe the universals of human experience (2008).

This study found relatively few references to war, military metaphors or commanders leading the troops. The idea that leadership requires a tough stance, epitomised by heroic type of leaders who take bold actions as commander of the troops is popular in the business press. Jack Welch is a prime example of this type of tough no-nonsense leader, which is evident in the title of his book - “Jack straight from the gut” (Welch and Byrne, 2001). Academic literature has been similarly fascinated with military metaphors, which emphasise the role of commanders (Alvesson and Spicer, 2011; Amernic et al., 2007; Grint, 2005). Rather than focusing on the military metaphor of war and commanding the troops, participants described the responsibilities, effort and
scrutiny they experienced in leading by example. Participants described the importance of “leading by example”, “being available” and “present,” and being prepared to do “the lonely work” of “heavy lifting” to encourage people to move and change. Many participants spoke of the “responsibility”, even the “burden” they felt to “lead consistently”, demonstrate “the right behaviour and live up to their own rules 24/7”. Furthermore participants recognised that they were being “watched constantly”, that they had to “show the behaviour” they wanted to see including “being authentic”, showing the ability to “admit mistakes” to create a safe environment and recognising that their behaviour was taken as “a boundary”.

7.4.2 Implications

This study makes an initial contribution to understanding the range and diversity of metaphors used by practising leaders. This contributes to understanding how diverse metaphors create different constructions of leadership and how leaders shift between metaphors to make meaning of their role and the task of leadership (Fairhurst, 2011). An implication of this finding is to take the diversity of leadership metaphors into account in future research and in the development of authentic leaders. This suggests the need for an increasing personalisation of leader development initiatives that accounts for the diverse conceptualisations and metaphors of leadership. This implies starting from the ‘inside-out’ by eliciting leaders’ metaphors rather than the current ‘outside-in’ deductive approach of applying researcher metaphors to try to understand leaders. A further implication is that existing metaphors, for example war, may be being over-used. Finally, it is suggested that eliciting and exploring leaders’ metaphors is valuable to prompt greater reflexivity about underlying assumptions that frame how they lead.
7.5 Finding 4: Essence Revealed in Drawings

“When we concentrate on an inner picture and we are careful not to interrupt the natural flow of events, our unconscious will produce a series of images, which make a complete story”

Carl Jung (1977 p.172)

7.5.1 Contribution and Discussion

This multi-modal study elicits both verbal and pictorial metaphors about leadership and development and contributes to the multi-modal exploration of metaphor, which is largely under-represented in the management literature (Cornelissen et al., 2008). Furthermore, the study contributes to arts-based approaches to development (Adler, 2006; Garavan et al., 2015; Taylor and Ladkin, 2009), specifically to using drawings to make “implicit views explicit, thus raising self-awareness” (Schyns et al., 2011 p.402).

This study contributes to the literature about using metaphors and drawings to examine implicit leadership theories but differs from the previous studies as it focuses on leaders’ naturally occurring metaphors to illuminate their implicit leadership theories. Strangely, despite arguments for arts-based approaches to development (Adler, 2006; Garavan et al., 2015; Taylor and Ladkin, 2009), drawing and other forms of presentational knowledge are still relatively underrepresented in the leadership literature. Notable exceptions are the use of fine art prints to examine tacit understanding of leadership (Lindsey, 2010) and a drawing exercise to understand leaders’ implicit leadership theories (Garavan et al., 2015; Schyns et al., 2013). Unlike the Schyns et al. drawing exercise that takes place in a group setting this study focuses on eliciting naturally occurring metaphors for individual leaders. It is theorised that this approach provides more authentic accounts of leaders’ implicit theories and mental models than using pre-existing fine art metaphors or group work to arrive at a composite drawing. Two aspects of drawings are particularly worthy of discussion: their revelation of the essential and the need for care in eliciting and working with drawings with leaders.
7.5.2 Drawings Reveal the Essence of Phenomena

As drawings are capable of depicting a very wide range of subject matter “capture the ineffable” (Bagnoli, 2009 p.548) and are “less formal somehow than words, more playful” (SAR) they complement verbal accounts. Participants found that drawings came “from the inside” (ERG) illustrating their inner world bringing “clarity” and showing “how things are linked together” (GOR). Drawings revealed the essence of participants’ leadership as JAN commented he was “amazed” at how a drawing made “in a couple of minutes could be such a good reflection of what you think”. Furthermore participants liked their drawings for the “vivid” (MAR) way they “crystallised” thinking. This finding corroborates Bürgi and Roos claim that “multi-modal way(s) of representing knowledge” help to “crystallise” understanding (2003 p.74). It also supports calls for increased use of multi-modal approaches to metaphor (Oswick et al., 2002). Furthermore findings that participants’ drawings illustrated the essence of their thinking about leadership concurs with Taylor and Ladkin’s proposal that arts-based approaches can “illustrate essence” as they communicate more directly than words and bypass “intellectual filtering” (2009 p.59). However, unlike Taylor and Ladkin’s suggestions for illustrating essence with external art, literature, improvisational theatre or storytelling, this study contributes to arts-based approaches by understanding how self-generated participant drawings convey the essence of their inner life.

Some participants said that the drawings were very easy to produce as the image was already “drawn through the words” (MAR) so they simply had to “trace” the image onto paper. For these participants the ‘Essence’ of their leadership was elicited from the interview and the metaphor was so clear that the drawing ‘represented’ a reminder or a synthesis of that ‘Essence’. Other participants found drawings “surprising” (PAT) as they provided “another point of view” (ERG) and more “depth” (JOS) than words. For these participants the drawing crystallised something important and supplemented the linguistic exploration, which supports the notion that drawings have the capacity not only to record thought but also to inspire thought (Crilly et al., 2006). Some participants drew images
that they had not explicitly talked about in the interview. This suggests the importance of incorporating drawings in leader development initiatives to complement linguistic modes. As drawings don’t necessarily “happen consciously” (GUL) they make less visible, unconscious forces available for examination. As integrating unconscious forces is important for leader development (Kets de Vries and Korotov, 2007; Petriglieri et al., 2011) the use of drawings can provide a method for doing so.

Participants said that seeing the drawing and musing on its meaning provided further exploration of thoughts through considering their associations and interpretations. This supports the claim that the inherent ambiguity in drawings is one of their benefits (Thorpe and Cornelissen, 2002) and corresponds to Crilly et al.’s suggestion of “graphic ideation” that they claim may improve understanding of a subject through triggering interpretations and thoughts that might “not otherwise have been entertained” (2006 p.345). Furthermore, musing on the meaning of drawings can prevent drawings becoming over-simplified representations of reality (Crilly et al., 2006). This musing encourages leaders to re-examine their thoughts that can refine and expand points of view (Mezirow, 1994) contributing to how leaders make meaning.

Most participants liked their drawings and reported being “very proud” (JOS) of them claiming that the drawings not only “illustrate exactly” (KET) their thoughts but brought back ideas very “vividly” (MAR) and “say everything that we talked about in one image” (PAT). The delight participants expressed about their drawings belies the simplicity of the images and it is theorised that the delight stems from the revelation of the ‘Essence’ of participants’ thinking rather than the artistic talent of the drawings, which was “very basic” (SAM). As GDM shared, “I’m accessing what that (drawing) represents to me and I can’t really not like that because that’s like saying I can’t like the essential aspect of me.” Participants’ delight acts as a salutary reminder to treat the contents of the inner world with the utmost respect even if drawings are extremely simple comprising child-like images.
7.5.3 Treat Images with Care

There is scant literature concerning leaders’ reactions to drawing exercises, however experiences with students (Bagnoli, 2009; Schyns et al., 2013) suggest that people tend to enjoy the task of drawing after some initial resistance to the idea of drawing. This study supports findings from Bagnoli (2009) that participants enjoyed the outcome of their drawings and were often stunned at how clearly the drawings captured something very essential. This suggests that incorporating drawing in leader development initiatives is a useful complement to linguistic metaphor as despite the child-like simplicity of drawings they can capture important elements of leaders’ underlying thoughts and beliefs.

Unlike previous studies that suggested that drawings can be seen as a “fun activity... that can disarm initial resistance” (Schyns et al., 2013 p.15) this study found that many participants did not like the idea of drawing as they were concerned about the quality of their drawing skills or whether they could “translate a fairly reasonable drawing in my head onto paper” (MAT). This initial resistance is possibly related to participants being adult, in senior leadership positions and not considering drawing compatible with their conceptualisation of being a leader. Previous studies suggest that resistance increases as individuals get older; for example Bagnoli found that 13 year olds were not resistant to drawing but that older students were more resistant (2009). Many participants were self-critical of their drawing abilities declaring, “I’m a terrible drawer” (GOR), even if they went on to qualify these disclaimers by saying something like: “No, I think it is quite descriptive of exactly those key words” (ANG). Participants referred to drawings as “childlike” or “what my ten year old would draw” (MAT). A possible explanation for this concern about child-like drawings is suggested by Edwards (2001), who claims that by ten years old language dominates education and leaves little room for the development of drawing hence many children do not learn to draw at school and become their own worst critics. Despite growing up to be highly proficient in several areas, Edwards says people will “produce the same childlike image they were drawing at age ten” because they rely on the symbol system they developed in childhood.
as shortcuts to represent reality (2001 p.70). Suggesting that symbol systems for reading, writing and arithmetic form useful foundations for later development, Edwards claims that childhood drawing symbols can arrest the ability to draw at a later stage, saying:

When confronted with a drawing task, the language mode of the brain comes rushing in with its verbally linked symbols. Then afterward, ironically the left brain is all too ready to supply derogatory words of judgment if the drawing looks childlike or naive (Edwards, 2001 p.88).

It is useful to consider the impact of this arrested development on the use of drawings in leader development and research as both of these ‘grown up’ domains have made relatively little use of drawings (Warren, 2009). The dominance of the language mode is suggested to be a contributory factor for the paucity of arts-based approaches to leader development and to multi-modal studies of metaphor (Cornelissen et al., 2008). The predominance of language might account for the scant attention to drawings in leader development as adults are reticent to draw due to their limited drawing skills (Edwards, 2001) and can have strong reactions to being asked to draw as participants in this study have made clear. Furthermore, educators may be unsure how to frame or incorporate drawing exercises into leadership programmes when drawings are “most often used with children” (Bagnoli, 2009 p.548) and may be seen as childlike. Metaphor scholars have also noted the dominance of verbal metaphors, claiming that “cognition/understanding and verbalization” are considered to be “one and the same” (Bürgi and Roos, 2003 p.70), with Oswick et al. wryly noting the irony that although metaphor presents many ways of thinking there is “only one way of thinking about metaphor” (2002 p.301). With these caveats it is important to frame drawing carefully when working with leaders. Chapter Four outlines the way that drawing was framed in this study.

Despite being overshadowed by the dominant language mode, drawings are a valuable way to convey complex information from a number of perspectives and to express ideas, especially intangible concepts that might be difficult to articulate. However, these findings suggest that care needs to be taken with
eliciting and working with drawings and to consider the “visual literacy” (Crilly et al., 2006 p.358) of people recognising that some people are comfortable and proficient in drawing but for others drawing can be challenging and embarrassing. It is therefore important to think about whether, how and when to introduce drawings into research studies or leader development.

7.5.4 **Implications**

These findings show that drawing complements verbal description and aids leaders to tap into their tacit knowledge and that drawings can provide vivid understanding of abstract concepts. It is suggested that including drawings in leader development practice and research can illustrate the essence of a subject and that musing on drawings can reveal further meaning. Furthermore comments from this study draw attention to an important yet under-represented aspect of the literature about how leaders might feel about being asked to draw. Recognition that drawing is “really personal” (SAM) and illuminates the essence of people’s inner world suggests that it is normal for leaders to feel exposed no matter their actual drawing ability because of the revelation of something deeply personal. Experience from this study suggests that it is helpful to set expectations cleanly and to be aware that because drawings reveal the essence of phenomena they need to be elicited and ‘held’ with care, taking people’s visual literacy into account.

7.6 **Finding 5: Leaders Become Aware through Realising, Remembering and Recognising**

“No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge”

Kahil Gibran (1992 p.74)

7.6.1 **Contribution and Discussion**

Building on Gardner et al.’s (2005) suggestion that self-reflection is linked to self-awareness, this study shows how this link happens through realising,
reminding and recognising. This is important because self-awareness is central in leader development but existing theory is limited in how self-awareness actually occurs (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Gardner et al., 2005). The study shows that as participants surfaced and explored their metaphors they had realisations, were reminded of things they had forgotten and recognised assumptions, which enabled them to examine their frames of reference. Through this exploration they became aware of their own implicit leadership theories, developed clarity about their views and were able to expand, develop or change their meaning-making structures. Realising, reminding and recognising are ways that leaders can become more self-authoring and authentic to their own views, rather than adhering to inherited views from others. This section discusses how participants became aware through realising, remembering and recognising their assumptions, which it is theorised develops self-awareness. The following finding discusses the outcome of this self-awareness for leaders’. Together these two findings contribute to understand how self-awareness occurs in practice for the development of authentic leaders who are deemed to “possess higher levels of self-awareness, self-clarity and self-certainty” (Gardner et al., 2005 p.349).

Realisations, reminders and recognition stemmed from participants tolerating and working through hesitation, “doubt” and “confusion” (SAR) as they articulated their thoughts on leadership. Several illustrated this “doubt” or “confusion” as the starting point of the process of exploration in drawings (Figures 6-18 and 6-19 in Chapter Six). Dewey maintained that all thinking starts with hesitation or doubt (1910) saying that without doubt thoughts simply flow randomly and are unquestioned. The notion of doubt as a starting point for learning is well-accepted by theorists with Schon saying learning starts with “surprise, puzzlement or confusion” (1983 p.68) and Mezirow (1990; 1994; 2000) claiming that disorienting dilemmas prompt questioning of taken-for-granted assumptions. Saying that “doubt fuels the learning process”, Srikantia and Pasmore claim that learning starts with individuals who are prepared to express their doubt and explore alternative views of reality (1996 p.44). However, being doubtful is often equated with indecision, can threaten self-esteem and is risky in organisations especially those that value performance
over learning (Srikantia and Pasmore, 1996). Thus whilst doubt is essential for learning by stimulating the search for a solution and “is the steadying and guiding factor in the entire process of reflection” (Dewey, 1910 p.11) it may be difficult for leaders to express it which means their assumptions are not available for review. Moreover, Kegan (1982) suggests that reviewing assumptions may be painful. This was evident in the study as many participants were self-critical about “rambling” that “could be perceived as dithering or lack of clarity” (CHT) and about being “wordy” (CHK) and “long-winded” (MAT). However, some did recognise that tolerating their stumbling and doubt was useful for the thinking process although neither comfortable nor familiar:

I think it’s a deeper insight by doing it this way. It is rambling, but by doing a ramble and having to speak in and around an area, you get where you want to be eventually... this is my thought process to get to a point. So that’s helpful to call it rambling, it is a positive connotation to get to a clear point, by circling around a question from different perspectives (CHT).

The interview offered a space for participants to express and explore their thoughts and the relationship sustained attention and provided comfort to persist in exploration in the face of doubt. For example JAN said, “I was forced by you to focus, to think”... “You didn’t let me go so if you asked something and I gave my answer and it was not 100% clear, you kept on asking”. This conscious effort to sustain thinking is aligned with descriptions of self-reflection as “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge” (Dewey, 1910 p.7). This description of self-reflection as active and persistent reinforces the importance of relationship for leaders to develop awareness by sustaining thinking when faced with doubt or confusion and to encourage leaders to stay with uncertainty long enough to examine their underlying assumptions. As participants accepted the confusion and sustained attention on their inner models they clarified understanding through realisations (novel insights), reminders of previous knowledge and recognition or acceptance of their own wisdom. It is suggested that realising, reminding and recognising link the process of self-reflection with the ‘outcome’ of self-awareness, moving from doubt and uncertainty to clearer understanding. This movement from
doubt to a clearer understanding, echoes Srikantia and Pasmore’s (1996) claim that both doubt and conviction are necessary for learning as doubt is necessary to spark inquiry and conviction is necessary to experiment.

The realisations, reminders and recognitions that participants experienced in this study appear to correspond broadly to four ways of learning about frames of reference described by Mezirow (1997). Learning in a constructivist frame involves critical reflection on frames of reference that enables assumptions to be reviewed and potentially transformed. The transformation of assumptions can lead to changes in the way people make meaning that can become more complex (Kegan, 1982; 1994; 2000). Frames of reference, comprising cognitive and emotional aspects include “habits of mind”, which are “broad, abstract, orienting, habitual ways of thinking, feeling and acting influenced by assumptions” and “points of view”, which articulate the habit of mind (Mezirow, 1997 p.5-6). Mezirow suggests that learning through critical reflection occurs in four ways; first by elaborating a point of view, second by establishing new points of view, third by transforming a point of view, and fourth by transforming habits of mind that encompass points of view.

Realisations refer to novel insights, for example “Wow! I never realised I knew that” (GDM) and could be indicative of establishing a new point of view, transforming a point of view or possibly transforming a habit of mind. Novelty can be easily missed when individuals or organisations have “habitual ways of thinking and perceiving” (Senge et al., 2004 p.29) that tend to filter out novel experiences from known and expected data. Whilst novel insights may indicate the establishment or transformation of a point of view in this study, they can also indicate the transformation of habits of mind. For example, ARJ called the process one of “discovery, of breaking out of your own habits of thinking”. SAR realised that thinking about leadership as a chess player but dismissing herself as a chess player indicated a “subconscious blocking”.

Several leaders spoke of reminders, for example CHK commented that he could “appreciate something new” from being “re-reminded” of drifting away from his
focus on the team. Reminders emphasise the role of memory, that actively recognises and reconsiders or expands something previously learned, that may result in a new meaning perspective (Mezirow, 1991).

Recognition could indicate a prior step to Mezirow's classification of learning that involves people acknowledging their perspective before elaborating, establishing or transforming points of view. However, recognition could also indicate a transformation of a habit of mind. For example MAR’s recognition that he is “an achievement junkie” who needs to shift his need for recognition from others to himself was “a pretty huge thing to know” and seems indicative of transforming a habit of mind.

These realisations, reminders and recognitions correspond to Mezirow’s classification of how people learn through elaboration, development or transformation of points of view or transformation of habits of mind. In this study, participants became aware as a result of attention directed to the inner word and their tolerance to work through confusion or doubt to realise, recognise or remind themselves of learning about their leadership and development. These realisations, reminders and recognition occur as a result of self-reflection and contribute to self-awareness, which Day and Dragoni (2015) state is an indicator of development.

7.6.2 Implications

An implication for leader development is to pay greater attention to how self-reflection and self-awareness are linked through realisations, reminders and recognitions, which are indicative of ways leaders expand, develop or change frames of reference. Moreover, recognising that reviewing assumptions can be painful (Kegan, 1982) relational approaches to leader development that can hold doubt, sustain thinking and encourage exploration to enable individuals to reconsider their perspectives are essential for learning (Dewey, 1910) and for examining and reframing assumptions (Kegan, 1982).
7.7 Finding 6: Leaders Learn Clarity, Self-Confirmation and Choice

“Who in the world am I? Ah, that’s the great puzzle!”

Lewis Carroll (1975 p.19)

7.7.1 Contribution and Discussion

This study contributes to understanding how leaders can clarify their self-views, by making explicit their implicit leadership theories and gain a sense of self-confirmation and choice. Through attention to naturally occurring metaphors leaders can make implicit thinking explicit enabling them to develop greater clarity and confidence in their own views which contributes to understanding how “self-awareness, self-clarity and self-certainty” (Gardner et al., 2005 p.349) is attained in leaders.

A central indicator of authentic leaders is that they know themselves and their self-views (Fusco et al., 2016; Gardner et al., 2005; Luthans and Avolio, 2003; Shamir and Eilam, 2005) and that this self-clarity is manifested in behaviour (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Various methods have been suggested for developing self-clarity including narrating one’s story (Shamir and Eilam, 2005; Sparrowe, 2005), personal reflective assignments (Eriksen, 2012) and group coaching (Fusco et al., 2016). This study complements previous methods through attention to how leaders make meaning from their naturally occurring metaphors and their experience of being a leader, which draws on suggestions to consider “life stories as a source of self-knowledge and self-concept clarity” (Shamir and Eilam, 2005 p.402). Gardner et al. emphasise an action-oriented rationale for developing self-understanding claiming that it provides leaders with “a firm anchor for their decisions and actions” (2005 p.348). This is useful for bolstering conviction which “provides the courage to follow through” and take action (Srikantia and Pasmore, 1996 p.47). However, a nuanced perspective from Kernis’ work on authenticity suggests that people become more accepting of themselves and “multi-faceted” through self-awareness based on “self-beliefs, self-confidence, self-acceptance, and agency” (2003 p.17). This nuance is
important as it emphasises the importance of self-confidence and self-acceptance and suggests that awareness is just the first step to fostering acceptance and integration of potentially contradictory or undesirable aspects of self. This study provides empirical evidence that affirming their own views anchors leaders in their beliefs and provides self-validation.

Self-confirmation is important for loosening the need for approval from others and developing a leader identity (Day and Dragoni, 2015). As leaders reflected about their leadership and development many used the metaphor of being on the “right track” as a confirmation about what they were doing. The right track provides a sense of certainty and clarity that is vital for “psychological well-being” (Gardner et al., 2005) and was a form of self-confirmation used by participants. This self-confirmation is essential for the development of authenticity and for loosening the need for validation from others, indicative of movement from a socialised mind that is dependent on others to a more self-authorising mind (Kegan, 1994).

At the socialised stage people don’t have an independently constructed sense of self as they are made up by the expectations of those around them and feel torn if there is a conflict between self-views and those of significant others. However at the self-authoring stage people make their own meaning and are self-guided. As participants clarified their own views of leadership through attention to their own metaphors and experience they confirmed their own sense of leadership and became more self-authoring. Being on the right track also helped participants to clarify the direction of their leadership.

As participants became more self-authoring and confident in their own views and behaviour they gained a sense of affirmation and a reduced dependence on external figures. This self-confirmation was obvious in the interview when participants ceased looking to me the interviewer for approval of their responses. It was also apparent in how they reflected on notions of leadership they had inherited from previous authority figures. Most participants said they learnt their leadership from former role models (good and bad). Critically
reviewing their own thoughts about leadership and differentiating them from those they had inherited was useful for confirming their own perspective. Being self-authoring provides more options as people have a more expansive mindset from which to make decisions.

The findings suggest that confirmation and acceptance of self encourages leaders to seek further awareness and development. This is epitomised by ERC’s comment that he experienced “a movement to confirm what I do and still be open to question things and think things through”. Self-confirmation enabled leaders to take stock of progress so far and gave confidence to seek further development, which provided a useful counter-balance to external evaluation through performance appraisals, and 360 feedback as noted in comments in Chapter Six.

Participants also gained clarity and confidence through attending to their own experience of leadership by narrating and examining their stories of becoming a leader. Shamir and Eilam suggest that attention to leaders’ narratives shifts focus from “the development of skills and behavioural styles to an emphasis on leaders’ self-development, and especially to the development of their self-concepts” (2005 p.396). Through considering their first experience of being a leader, through to the kind of leader they are today and the kind of leader they want to become, participants were encouraged to reflect on their own experience of becoming and being a leader. Many participants were surprised that their early experiences of being a leader were such pivotal moments that still resonated in ways they lead today. Through articulating and exploring the origins and destinations of their own leadership participants came to accept their own originality and to recognise how they had become the leader they are today. This finding concurs with Shamir and Eilam’s proposal that authentic leaders are “originals” who have arrived at their own convictions and personal “point of view” through reflection “on the basis of their own personal experiences” rather than imitating others (2005 p.397).
One noteworthy finding from the articulation of participants’ first experience of being a leader was the marked difference between men and women. The majority of men in this study self-identified as a leader since childhood whereas the majority of women only started to identify as a leader later in life. This study did not set out to examine this but there are clear implications for leader identity and development in terms of self-concept. Unlike the majority of men who identified their first experience of being a leader as a positive one that occurred in childhood/adolescence, several female participants described their early experiences of being a leader as difficult; “a Baptism of fire” (JEN), “heart-breaking” (GDM) and “a hard knocks lesson” (ANG). Further work could investigate this phenomenon in relation to the role of disruption in women’s learning of leadership (Stead and Elliott, 2013) and how the dual claims of gender norms that privilege communion and leadership norms that privilege agency impact the identity of women as authentic leaders (Hopkins and O’Neil, 2015). Despite these difficult early experiences of being a leader, female participants also gained a sense of confirmation through exploring their own experiences and metaphors for leadership. As GUL stated; “as a person I felt tried and tested, it felt hard to me...but nevertheless I didn’t stop, I didn’t turn back, I pursued it. I guess I’m somewhere by some standards that’s successful.”

By articulating and examining their metaphors and experiences of becoming a leader, participants developed their own “meaning system” (Kegan, 1982) by which they could make sense of leadership and clarify their own perspectives, consider their leader identity and assess their behaviour as a leader. It is suggested that this exploration of leaders’ own perspectives through their naturally occurring metaphors and experience of becoming a leader offers a method for leaders to clarify their self-concept and identity, which Day and Dragoni assert is critical for leader development (2015). Moreover, it is suggested that the development of clarity and self-confirmation provides a foundation for leaders to behave in concordance with their self-views, and to make choices which is claimed to be a core aspect of authentic leaders (Shamir and Eilam, 2005).
7.7.2 Implications

This finding has implications for developing “self-clarity and self-certainty” - a central concern in authentic leader development (Gardner et al., 2005 p.349). It is suggested that future research focuses on inductive approaches to metaphor, which this study shows to be a productive method to clarify the implicit leadership theories of practising leaders. Exploring implicit leadership theories through metaphor provides a solid base for leaders to clarify their thoughts about leadership. This supports claims that clarity buoys authentic leaders to take action (Gardner et al., 2005), and more importantly it supports claims that authentic leaders are able to accept and affirm themselves (Kernis and Goldman, 2006).

It is also suggested that attention is given to the experience of becoming and being a leader as this encourages leaders to appreciate their own leadership, to differentiate their perspectives from those ‘inherited’ from previous role models and to recognise their own originality which leads to increasing clarity, self-confirmation and self-authoring.

7.8 Finding 7: Leader Development is a Journey of Becoming Rather than a Fixed Destination

“\textit{The ego wishes comfort, security, satiety; the soul demands meaning, struggle, becoming}”

James Hollis (2005 p.71)

7.8.1 Contribution and Discussion

This study supports literature that describes authenticity as a process of becoming rather than a fixed destination (Erickson, 1995; Kernis and Goldman, 2006) and contributes to understanding the development of authentic leaders in two ways. Firstly by differentiating between metaphors for the external process of development as a journey and metaphors for the internal process of
maturation as growth. Secondly the metaphor of a “step back” was prevalent for leaders to develop more complex ways of seeing situations and for them to take ownership for their development. These insights contribute to unpacking the development construct describing the growth process (Day and Lance, 2004) by differentiating between the journey, growth and stepping back metaphors.

Participants talked about development as a “never-ending journey” (ARJ). This journey of development had two discernible components; one entailed developing skills to respond to new situations and the other entailed evolution as a person. Both components view learning as on-going, although participants’ development as a response to new situations tends to have more specific objectives (for example, learning to “get out of my head” (GUL) or learning how to “support individuals differently” (CHB)) but development as evolution involves a conscious effort to develop as a person. Development in terms of responding to new situations and people requires the acquisition of “knowledge, skills and abilities” that Day and Dragoni (2015 p.136) suggest are necessary for effective leadership and are also indicators of leader development. However, development in terms of “growing as a person” (NAT) is a more existential endeavour, not concerned with acquisition of skills in order to perform a task but more a question of becoming. Participants did not view the development of becoming as a fixed process but rather a process of growing into themselves and of moving towards a more nuanced way of thinking and interacting. This supports existential claims of authenticity – of “what it is to be authentically human” that Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012 p.119) state has been largely ignored in leadership theory. The use of both metaphors – journey and growth, support Hall’s claim that leader development entails personal growth as much as the skills of leadership (2004).

7.8.2 Journey and Growth Metaphors

A subtle difference is apparent in this study between metaphors used by participants to describe development as a journey using words such as “direction”, “paths”, “roads” and “travel” and metaphors used to describe the
internal existential journey of growth such as “trees”, “cherry picking” and the “inner touchstone”. This difference relates to the two complementary aspects of development - ‘what’ leaders ‘do’ to develop their leadership and ‘how’ leaders ‘evolve’. When leaders talked about ‘what’ they wanted to do to develop their leadership, they used journey metaphors such as identifying the right path or “the right direction” (DIL) for their development, however when talking about their development as a person, leaders used more natural metaphors such as “evolving”, “becoming” and “growing” (NAT). The words development and growth can be used interchangeably but this study suggests that it is useful to be careful about their use as the underlying processes are described through different metaphors. Development implies a series of planned steps that can have an impact relatively quickly whereas evolution implies a natural process that occurs over a longer period of time.

Participants used journey metaphors to describe their development including: “like a journey, this thing is not stationary” (MAT), wondering “which direction to take my development”, knowing “the right road to take” and “what next?” Whilst some younger leaders talked about moving up to the “next level”, none of the leaders talked about a fixed destination. Participants’ journey metaphors of “paths”, “milestones” and “destinations” reflect that development is perceived to occur in stages. This corresponds to stages in the leadership development literature about leading oneself, leading others and leading organisations (McCauley et al., 2010). The notion of stages is evident in Day and Dragoni’s claim that development “occurs along a single unidirectional dimension in a ladder like fashion” (2015 p.143). This can be problematic for the development of authentic leaders as it implies that there is one direction and dimension that is valuable and ‘should’ be attained. Businesses that have established development programmes directed towards specific learning objectives can be useful for developing leaders’ knowledge and skills and can be experienced as a ‘milestone’ in a leader’s career but they may do little to nurture personal growth. These kinds of programmes can be the antithesis to the development of authentic leaders as this linear view of development overlooks the idiosyncratic and more
intrapersonal nature of growth, which is synonymous with expansion, evolution and maturation.

Metaphors of growth call for more personalised approaches to leader development that can nurture attention to mental models and surface metaphors that influence how people act. The idea of growing as a person empirically supports notions that authenticity is neither inevitable nor a fixed destination (Eriksen, 2012) but an ongoing process of integrating various aspects of the self (Kernis and Goldman, 2006). The acceptance and integration of multiple, even contradictory, aspects into oneself is fundamental to the development of authenticity and is associated with well-being - a feeling of being okay with oneself and not needing to rationalise or defend against possible threats to identity (Kernis and Goldman, 2006). The drawing by GOR (Figure 5-14) illustrates this beautifully with his metaphor of “cherry picking” habits from others suggesting that there is a choice to make about which aspects to integrate and what to discard. Furthermore his metaphor illustrates the embeddedness in society showing the influence of family, friends and colleagues and the need for discernment about what fits the individual and contributes to their growth and what does not and is therefore discarded. Metaphors of growth are more aligned with the existential roots of authenticity that provide a deeper understanding of the human experience (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012). Instead of focusing on the search for new knowledge or skills, growth or becoming encourages people to “develop new ways of being in relationships with themselves and others” which is a continuous conscious evolution (Eriksen, 2012 p.700). As noted by existential scholars the process of becoming oneself takes courage, as there is no development plan and no linear path but a requirement for individuals to author their own lives, which is “a never ending journey” (TIM).

One consequence of this journey of growth concerns how leader development is conceptualised and assessed. Day and Zaccaro (2004 p.386) suggest that “development and performance are not equivalent constructs” but they are often conflated in leadership development with performance used as an indicator of
development. This focus on performance is grounded in behaviourism, which prioritises observable behaviour, development of skills and is developed through 360 feedback, which is used ubiquitously in business school programs and organisations as part of talent management, executive coaching and performance evaluation. The conflation of 360 as a performance management tool and a springboard for leader development makes its use problematic as done poorly it can create disengagement and stress (Nowack and Mashihi, 2012) and is, “at best, a modest intervention” (Nowack, 2009 p.292) but perhaps most significantly its use leads to development being assessed through a behaviourist lens. As Hogan and Warrenfeltz (2003) point out behaviourist and gestalt approaches to development are complementary but there has been relatively little attention to the gestalt models, consequently much development adopts behaviourist measures for assessing learning. The language used to ‘assess’ and ‘evaluate’ learning has behaviourist connotations of providing ‘objective’ ‘observable’ ‘measures’ and ‘return on investment’. Until alternate language is used to understand the growth process, the conundrum of using behaviourist measures to assess the development of internal thinking will remain.

7.8.3 A Step Back

As discussed in Chapter Six, many leaders recognised the need to “take a step back”, “take your foot off the pedal a bit” and “go at a slightly slower pace”(WAL). Participants recognised that stepping back enabled them to think and consider a bigger picture, to view what is on the horizon and so be able to prepare for the future. Moreover, stepping back encouraged others to grow. There are two aspects to this step back: first slowing down in order to think critically rather than reacting to unrelenting demands and second managing energy. The first aspect of stepping back relates to creating space and time to think rather than “rushing between things... with 1000 things on my mind” (CHB). Clearly the pace of work, unrelenting information flow and demands for rapid response can limit leaders’ ability to think. It seems leaders like CHB recognise the danger of busyness however without taking time to step back he and others risk joining the 90% of leaders who are distracted, disengaged or procrastinating (Bruch and Ghoshal, 2002). Contrary to these leaders, “committed, purposeful and
reflective” leaders have “focus” defined as “concentrated attention” and “energy” that fuels “intense personal commitment” (Bruch and Ghoshal, 2002 p.64). Furthermore Bruch and Ghoshal say these leaders take time out to think, prioritise and refuel. Their description of purposeful leaders has similarities to descriptions of authentic leaders as conscious committed people. In this study when participants described development as a step back they were referencing the need to take time to think and focus their attention. Participants realised that they did not make sufficient time to think and appreciated the attention on their own thoughts during the interview calling it “think tank time” (TIM See Figure 6-8). Furthermore ERV appreciated being able to step back to “bring it all together” which recognises the need for more holistic and complex ways of thinking about his world. Day and Lance (2004) claim that developing leadership complexity is essential so that leaders can respond effectively to the increased complexity of the world. Developing complexity of mind is also a key tenet of Kegan’s constructive-developmental theory which emphasises that people develop their own views and make their own meaning rather than depending on the views of others.

The second aspect of stepping back related to leaders managing their energy. Several participants had energy as a core metaphor and appreciated their “positive energy” (SAM) that can be “fuel and momentum” (TIM) but they also realised the negative effects of energy such as its “costs” (CHB), and “the need to cool down to recuperate” their energy (DIL). Unless leaders step back to manage their energy they risk joining the largest group that Bruch and Ghoshal identified of distracted leaders who were “highly energetic but unfocused people who confuse frenetic action with constructive action” (2002 p.67). The recurrent theme of stepping back was significant for leaders in the study to recognise the need for them to let go of some control and authority to enable others to pick up responsibility. Stepping back as a metaphor is coherent with the journey metaphor leaders used to describe their leadership (See Journey section in Chapter Five) and also with the growth metaphor if considered as a pause in the growing season to take stock.
The metaphor stepping back, used by most participants, suggests the need for leaders to take time to reflect. This is well acknowledged in the literature (Karakas et al., 2015), however this study proposes that leaders can reflect in situ at work, by taking a step back to consider their assumptions and metaphors, to become more conscious about their thoughts and actions. Executive coaching may currently partially fulfil this need to step back (Witherspoon, 2014), but most executive coaching has defined performance goals agreed at the outset of an assignment between the individual and the coach and often also with the organisation. The approach suggested by this study adds to current approaches to leader development by guiding leaders in an exploration of their own metaphors and experience to access their own ways of knowing. Taking this step back implies that leaders separate from the pressures of busyness, to acknowledge the benefits of time to think.

### 7.8.4 Implications

An implication for leader development initiatives is to ask leaders to draw and describe their leadership journey so they can identify where they are and what they need in order to both develop and grow recognising these as two interrelated but separate processes. The ubiquity of the metaphor step back in this study suggests that participants recognised the value of making time to think and explore beliefs, thoughts and actions. However, lamentably most participants in this study did not make time to do this. An implication for practice is for leaders to take time out from “goal-directedness and busy-ness” (Goodpaster, 2000 p.196) to have “think tank time” (TIM) and to consider this as leader development. This could allow leaders to consider their developmental journey and the steps they need to take to progress but also to consider their personal growth and maturation. However, unless individual leaders and organisations acknowledge the importance of stopping to think they are unlikely to develop awareness of what they are doing (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012).

### 7.9 Summary of Chapter Seven

This chapter has discussed the findings and contributions of this study, of what leaders can learn by attending to their inner worlds through metaphor. The
seven findings are summarised in Table 7-1 at the beginning of this chapter. They have been clustered into the four sections of the composite structural model introduced in Chapter Six.

The first finding and contribution relates to the importance of the relationship for leaders to learn about themselves. Participants experienced comfort and subtle guidance in the interviews. I propose this was largely related to the clean approach as interviews were conducted from the participants’ perspective using their material as the point of departure for exploration with minimal contamination from the interviewer. CL could be considered as a ‘technique’ for questioning, but more than that it is a way of accepting an individual’s unique way of framing the world, which provides a sense of comfort and acceptance and encourages further exploration.

The second finding and contribution demonstrates how participants made meaning through attending to their own naturally occurring metaphors. The surfacing and exploration of metaphors made participants’ assumptions about leadership visible and open to examination, which contributes to gestalt approaches to development (Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003). Furthermore, metaphor made ‘object’ what had previously been ‘subject’ that Kegan (1982; 1994; 2000; 2009) states is fundamental to developing more a self-authoring mind-set. Through the surfacing of metaphors participants became aware of their implicit leadership theories and their self-views and made their own meaning of leadership.

The third finding and contribution illustrates the variety of metaphors used by practising leaders to make sense of their leadership. This responds to suggestions that different metaphors provide different conceptualisations of leadership (Oberlechner and Mayer-Schönberger, 2003). It also extends the range of metaphors used to describe leadership from the limited number of deductive metaphors. Recurring metaphors in this study include; journey, visualising the future, energy, balance, connection, self-reflection, creating the environment, giving space, puzzling things out and catalysing change.
Significantly the war/commander metaphor often used in accounts of leadership was largely missing but reference to the responsibility of leadership was ubiquitous, described as “24/7” and a “burden”.

The fourth finding and contribution concerns the multi-modal approach to metaphor taken in this study through complementing verbal descriptions with drawings that contributes both to arts-based approaches to leader development and multi-modal metaphor research. Participants found their drawings surprisingly representative of their inner thoughts, crystallising in one vivid image the essence of their thoughts. However, caution needs to be exercised in eliciting and working with leaders’ drawings, which can be very revealing of their inner world. Leaders, therefore, can be resistant to drawing partly due to embarrassment about rudimentary drawing skills but perhaps more importantly because they feel that drawings expose the ‘Essence’ of their thinking.

The fifth finding and contribution concerns how participants became aware through realising, reminding and recognising. This contributes to understanding how self-awareness is developed in practice, which is currently a gap in the authenticity (Kernis and Goldman, 2006) and authentic leader development literature (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012; Gardner et al., 2005). Building on the theories of learning proposed by Dewey (1910) and Mezirow (1990; 2000) this study highlights the importance of hesitation or doubt, which encourages the re-examination of assumptions leading to realisations, reminders and recognition, which are all forms of learning that come from within and are indicative of transforming frames of reference.

The sixth finding and contribution details what participants learnt about self-clarity, self-confirmation and choice. Each participant’s learning was unique to their context, role and level of leadership but overall participants learnt to affirm their leadership, to become more self-authoring and clearer about their views of leadership through attending to their inner world of metaphor. Clarity is fundamental to much theorising about authentic leadership (Shamir and Eilam,
and so this finding is important for understanding how leaders can develop that clarity in practice.

The seventh finding and contribution concerns leaders development, which was described through three metaphors of journey, growth and stepping back. This contributes to discussions of the development of authentic leaders by differentiating between the journey of development and the growth process of maturation. Participants used the prevalent metaphor “step back” to remind themselves of the need to make time to think, to consider their development and to provide space to refuel their energy.

Overall these findings contribute to understanding what leaders can learn when they are facilitated to attend to their inner world and how they make meaning through metaphor. The findings have been reviewed sequentially in order to discuss them clearly yet in practice learning about leadership and development through the exploration of their inner worlds is a dynamic endeavour. The final chapter reviews this overall research study and ends with some personal reflections of the author.
8 Research Implications and Reflections

8.1 Introduction to Chapter

This final chapter brings the thesis to a close with considerations about the trustworthiness of the research, a summary of the study, thoughts about its limitations and areas for future research. Reflections about the research process and my personal experience conclude the chapter. This follows Moustakas’ suggestion that the final chapter of a phenomenological study should provide a summary, implications, limitations, proposal for future studies and “a brief creative close that speaks to the essence of the study and its inspiration to you in terms of the value of the knowledge and future directions of your professional personal life” (1994 p.184).

8.2 Trustworthiness of the Research

Many qualitative researchers (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000) reject traditional quantitative measures of “the troublesome triplets” (Quinton and Smallbone, 2005 p.299) of reliability, validity and generalisation yet there is difficulty in agreeing and consistently applying criteria to assess quality in qualitative research (Cassell et al., 2006). Phenomenological texts (Conklin, 2007; 2012; 2014; Moustakas, 1994) do not provide guidelines for assessing quality and despite Moustakas’ (1994) detailed explanation of the steps involved to conduct transcendental phenomenology, there is no advice on assessing quality. This chapter uses the concepts of trustworthiness and authenticity (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) to ensure quality in this study.

I have taken many steps to ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of this study including member checking and providing thick rich descriptions of leaders’ experience so the findings are presented in their own words, metaphors and images. In total thirty transcripts and thirty ‘Essences’ of leadership were returned to participants who all confirmed that the transcripts and ‘Essences’ were faithful to their experience. Another check to assure the credibility of the
data was initiated through peer review discussions with the Expert Clean Language Team for the creation of data analysis processes for this study. The process for distilling the ‘Essence’ of leadership, described in Chapter Five, was created to establish a reliable method for identifying metaphors in a transcript to establish the ‘Essence’ of leadership for participants. This responds to calls for metaphor analysts to be transparent about their processes (Gibbs, 2008) and to calls for phenomenological accounts to reduce rich descriptions to their essence (Moustakas, 1994). A second peer process was devised with the Expert Clean Language Team for assessing the ‘cleanness’ of data. This was an important step in this study to identify how ‘clean’ or how faithful data were to the participants. Finally, the CL facilitated interviews provided “spontaneous rich ... answers” that correspond to Kvale’s (1996 p.145) criteria for quality interviews. I suggest that CL is a method of assuring quality data by emphasising participant responses and minimising interviewer’s own words.

Guba and Lincoln’s authenticity criteria includes “fairness, ontological authenticity ... and catalytic authenticity” (1994 p.114). In order to be fair I have used participants’ own words to report findings to convey their experiences and metaphors. I have also presented data that includes statements and drawings that were less complementary about the value of the research. Ontological authenticity means that an individual’s conscious experience became more informed, which is the case in this study - as leaders surfaced and learnt about their conceptualisations of leadership they became more self-authoring. This is also true for me as researcher. Catalytic authenticity means that action was stimulated. Leaders took action as a result of their involvement in the study by reflecting on their leadership metaphors beyond the interviews, discussing their thoughts with peers, and in one case sharing their transcript with a colleague to get feedback. I have taken action as a result of this study by publishing two articles based on this research, one in a practitioner journal (Cairns-Lee, 2013) and one in an academic journal (Cairns-Lee, 2015) in order to disseminate early findings to both practitioners and academics. By paying careful attention to the research design and to each step of the process, incorporating member checking, peer review for the establishment of important processes to check the
trustworthiness of data I have done my utmost to ensure that my study is trustworthy and authentic.

8.3 Summary of the Research

The central question of this study is what can leaders learn about their leadership and development from attention to their inner worlds through metaphor? This research is motivated by two recurring questions from practising leaders: how to understand their own leadership and how to develop the strengths and weaknesses of their leadership? Underlying my research question is a concern that too much development in business schools and organisations relies on external frameworks to develop leadership that distracts leaders’ attention from their inner models, held in metaphor. A related concern in the literature is that whilst self-awareness is central to theories of authentic leadership (Gardner et al., 2005) and to development (Day and Dragoni, 2015) little is understood about how it actually develops.

This research has provided a concise review of the contested nature of leadership which is seen as socially constructed and situated in an interpretive discourse that emphasises its contextual nature, the importance of tacit knowledge, embodied experience and the role of symbols and meaning. Leadership theory has evolved from early Great Man theories which focused on traits of heroic leaders to relational conceptions involving “communities of people and conversations” (Cunliffe and Eriksen, 2011 p.1431) which highlight the importance for leaders to make meaning (Kegan, 1982; 1994; 2000) and manage meaning (Smircich and Morgan, 1982). Authentic leadership has arisen as a response to the lamentable loss of confidence in leadership at all levels and types of organisations (Luthans and Avolio, 2003). Much mainstream authentic leadership theory builds on positive psychology to emphasise leadership’s role to build confidence and highlight the moral component of leadership. Authentic leadership underscores the importance of developing self-awareness in leaders so they are able to develop clarity about who they are to anchor their actions in a challenging world (Gardner et al., 2005). However, authentic leadership has been criticised for not accepting the imperfections of people (Ford and Harding,
2011), for adopting a normative approach to creating positive environments (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012) and for under-playing the importance of context on leaders’ ability to be authentic (Liu et al., 2017). Adopting Erickson’s “being true to self-in-relationship” (1995 p.139) and returning to the philosophical and existential roots of authenticity, Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012) stress that conceptions of authenticity need to: adopt a relational perspective, accept that authenticity is not intrinsically ethical and that its attainment is difficult due to the societal pull to conformity. Moreover, and central to this study, is their claim that authenticity requires the creation of one’s own meaning.

Kernis and Goldman’s (2006) multi-component model of authenticity is foundational to much work on authentic leadership and emphasises the importance of self-awareness to the development of authentic leaders. Various approaches have been suggested to develop authentic leaders including examination of life narratives (Shamir and Eilam, 2005; Sparrowe, 2005) and the cultivation of practical reflexivity (Eriksen, 2009) with a central debate concerning whether people can develop self-awareness in isolation or whether others are needed to discover the self. Berkovich (2014) believes that people discover meaning in interaction with others, thus highlighting the importance of relationship and the quality of communication in the development of authenticity.

In order for leaders to understand and be more authentic to their inner models of leadership this study turns to leaders’ language which shapes their assumptions and frames reality (Tietze et al., 2003). The study pays specific attention to leaders’ metaphors, which are fundamental to making meaning and navigating the world (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). This study is based on Conceptual Metaphor Theory that views the conceptual system as fundamentally metaphorical, with metaphors based on an embodied experience of the world that structure meaning and unite reason and imagination in rational imagination (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Furthermore this study shows the link between metaphors and mental models. Mental models are deeply ingrained assumptions
about how people make sense of and interact with the world that are largely hidden from awareness. Implicit leadership theories are specific mental models pertaining to the everyday images that people have about leadership.

Gestalt approaches to development (Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003) suggest that self-awareness can be developed by bringing mental models into awareness. Addressing Cornelissen et al.’s (2008) challenge to undertake more contextual, elicited and multi-modal research, this study purposefully elicits leaders’ metaphors in words and drawings to address the research question of what leaders can learn from exploring their inner worlds. All leaders in the study expressed their thoughts about leadership in verbal metaphor and in drawn images. Each leader’s transcript was carefully reviewed to distil the ‘Essence’ of their leadership in metaphor. The thirty ‘Essences’ and drawings articulate participants’ subjective experience and symbolic expression of leadership and make explicit their implicit leadership theories. This responds to Oberlechner and Mayer’s suggestion that “metaphor analysis opens a window to understanding approaches to leadership on a deeper, experiential level” (2003 p.172).

Findings from the research indicate a variety of metaphors used by practising leaders that are more diverse and idiosyncratic than deductive metaphors. Ten recurring key metaphors were used by leaders; journey, visualising the future, energy, connection, balance, self-reflection, creating the environment, giving space, puzzling things out and catalysing change.

Findings show how leaders experienced the process of exploration with particular emphasis on openness, comfort in the relationship, subtle guidance that triggered their own views and the surfacing and exploration of their metaphors. Findings also indicate what leaders learnt about their leadership and development. A few leaders in the study did not learn anything about their leadership and this is explicated under the theme nothing. The overall themes of leaders’ learning about their leadership and development through metaphor are combined in the composite structural model re-presented in Figure 8-1.
Figure 8-1 Composite Structural Model of The Exploration of Leadership and Development Through Metaphor

KEY

EXPERIENCE OF EXPLORATION

OPENNESS

COMFORT IN RELATIONSHIP

SUBTLE GUIDANCE TRIGGERS OWN VIEWS

SURFACE & EXPLORE METAPHORS

BECOMING AWARE OF OWN LEADERSHIP

REALISING

REMINDING

RECOGNISING

LEADERSHIP

CLARITY THROUGH METAPHOR

CONFIRMATION

CHOICE

FAIRNESS

OUTCOME OF AWARENESS

ATTENTION TO OWN DEVELOPMENT

AWARENESS & AFFIRMATION

WHAT NEXT?
The exploration of inner worlds through metaphor offers a personalised approach to leader development by understanding mental models and making tacit knowledge more explicit and therefore available to examination. This advances thinking about gestalt approaches to development (Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003). Furthermore, leaders’ drawings provided a complementary expression of their inner images of leadership. These drawings contribute to a multi-modal exploration of metaphor, which is currently under-represented in the management literature (Cornelissen et al., 2008). The study found that leaders were facilitated to discover their own meaning through the relationship with the interviewer (Berkovich, 2014) which was experienced as “comfortable” encouraging deeper exploration. Subtle guidance was experienced through the use of Clean Language which minimised the contamination of leaders’ metaphors through bracketing the interviewer’s assumptions and through maintaining attention on the leaders’ own models (Lawley and Tompkins, 2000).

The finding that leaders become aware through attending to their inner metaphors through realising, reminding and recognising contributes to understanding how self-awareness occurs in authentic leader development (Avolio and Gardner, 2005) when leaders reflect on their own models. These realisations, reminders and recognitions are indicative of leaders establishing, elaborating, accepting or transforming their habits of mind.

Findings of how leaders developed clarity, a sense of confirmation and choice through exploring their own metaphors contribute to understanding what develops in leader development (Day and Dragoni, 2015). Furthermore these findings contribute to understanding how authenticity can be developed in leaders through encouraging leaders to make their own meaning and become more self-authoring.

Descriptions of leader development comprise three metaphors; “journey”, “growth” and “step back”. The journey metaphor was typically used to describe what leaders ‘do’ to develop. The “growth” metaphor, however, related to leaders’ internal existential maturation and sense of ‘becoming’. The metaphor
“step back” was used ubiquitously by leaders to indicate a need for space to think and refuel energy. These metaphors contribute to unpacking the development construct and have implications for how leader development is conceptualised and assessed through a gestalt frame.

Overall, this study has shown that through subtle guidance in a relationship, leaders were able to make meaning about their leadership through attending to their inner world of metaphor. This encourages leaders to become more self-authoring (Kegan, 1982), relying more on their own views of leadership than those copied from others thereby making their own meaning and becoming more authentic. As leadership and development were seen as a “never ending journey” it is apt to frame leaders as ‘becoming more authentic’ rather than to frame leaders as arriving at a destination of being authentic.

8.4 Implications of the Research

The research has demonstrated how exploration of naturally occurring metaphor illuminates the inner world and surfaces tacit knowledge making it available for examination, which develops leaders’ self-awareness. This implies that exploration of metaphors provides an avenue for developing mental models that Johnson (2008) argues is key to leadership development. The exploration of multi-modal metaphors offers a way for leaders to bring into awareness the ways they understand and embody leadership (Oberlechner and Mayer-Schönberger, 2003). This contributes to gestalt approaches to learning that focus on “shaping mental models” (Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003 p.76) through providing a method by which to surface, examine and shape mental models. Furthermore as naturally occurring metaphors come from leaders themselves, there tends to be relatively little resistance to their exploration. This could be contrasted with psychometric instruments or 360-feedback, which compare leaders to pre-defined conceptions of leadership and norm groups and emphasise comparison and ‘measuring up’ to external standards. This takes people away from their own authentic ways of leading.
This study has shown that providing subtle guidance through the use of Clean Language questions, syntax and modelling helps a research interviewer (or a development professional) to bracket their own assumptions and to direct attention to the mental model of the leader. The use of Clean Language could benefit research interviewers and development specialists to create a cleaner interaction with leaders enabling them to find out more about their inner worlds by minimising distraction from the outside. There are several implications of using Clean Language; one is the respect that it confers which makes its use particularly useful for coaching, education, leader development as well as research design and interviews. A second implication is that although it takes discipline to learn and humility to recognise how much we often implicitly and unwittingly ‘lead the witness’, Clean Language can lead to deeper understanding on intrapersonal, interpersonal and group levels of communication. Even though the training to become certified as a Clean Language Facilitator entails significant time and attention, interviewers and development specialists could benefit enormously from asking clean questions. Without wanting to minimise the training required to be a proficient Clean Language Facilitator, when sensitively asked the following four clean questions (See Table 8-1) can elicit quality data from the inner world, provided the enquirer also uses the exact words of their interlocutor. These questions represented 69% of all questions asked in interview one of this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>And is there anything else?</th>
<th>There usually is...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>That's like what?</td>
<td>Converts to metaphor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What kind of?</td>
<td>Invites the person to describe in their own words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And how do you know?</td>
<td>Invites the person to consider their epistemological system</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 8.5 Limitations of the Research

In any study there are of course limitations, and this is no exception. Three possible limitations are considered: the prior relationship between participants
and researcher, the effort to become ‘clean’ and the phenomenological nature of the study which limits generalisations to large populations. One possible limitation is that leaders in the study all had a prior relationship with me, which may have favourably coloured their reactions to the interview. Cognisant of the possible drawbacks of undertaking research with people with whom I had a prior relationship I took steps to minimise these which included clear communication about expectations for the research (see Appendix 2), differentiating between my role as executive coach and researcher and asking participants to respond spontaneously to questions in the interview rather than forewarning them of the content (Bryman and Cassell, 2006). The presence of dissenting voices including the invariant theme of nothing in Chapter Six leads me to believe that leaders were honest in their appraisal of the value of eliciting their metaphors but I cannot rule out that they may have wanted to please me and therefore have been more positively inclined to the study than if there had been no prior relationship. However, I do believe that working with these thirty leaders was the right approach as even for these people who knew me becoming more authentic to their own views of leadership was a struggle as quotes in Chapter Six attest.

In order to conduct the interviews ‘cleanly’ I undertook more than 30 days of training in Clean Language, which was an enormous commitment of time, energy and resources. I do believe I have learned enormously from this training and that as a result the interviews are of a different quality and significantly more faithful to the leaders. However, a potential limitation of the study is the effort required to become cleaner in interviewing. One possible avenue for future research is to include some ‘clean’ principles for interviewing in taught courses that could help interviewers to become cleaner by building their awareness and skills in Clean Language. It is also worth noting that training in Clean Language is becoming increasingly available including an on-line course offered by world experts, James Lawley and Penny Tompkins (http://cleanlanguageonline.com).

Despite the enormous quantity of data, this study was phenomenological and therefore not generalizable to larger populations. Whilst the findings might
arguably reach beyond the thirty leaders in the study to illuminate how leaders can develop their meaning-making about leadership through metaphor, more research is necessary to demonstrate this.

8.6 Areas for Future Research

The issues in this thesis have been little researched elsewhere and so there are a number of opportunities to extend the contribution of this thesis. This study has examined what leaders learn through a phenomenological lens and one possibility for future research could be to explore naturally occurring metaphor through other research methods to establish more generalizable theory. It would be useful to explore how people from different contexts (intact teams, people from one nationality, volunteer organisations or Board members) respond to exploration of their leadership through metaphor to identify similarities and differences with the findings from this heterogeneous sample of thirty business leaders.

There is a dearth of studies about naturally occurring metaphors of leaders and I suggest that further inductive research of leadership through metaphor could be useful to understand a range of issues in the literature. These might include the development of authenticity and the themes of development and maturation of leaders. Further research could also build on the link between naturally occurring metaphor and meaning-making to understand how exploration of metaphor can contribute to developing a self-authoring mind-set. This would link further the meaning making work of Kegan (1982; 1994; 2000) with gestalt approaches to development that prioritise mental models (Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003). Building on the combination of verbal and pictorial metaphors, that has been invaluable in this study for illuminating what leaders think about leadership, future studies could adopt a multi-modal approach to understand how leaders make meaning through metaphor. Findings of the benefit of incorporating drawings into this study suggest that whilst multi-modal metaphor presents some challenges in terms of how it is reported and analysed, it is a very fruitful avenue for illuminating a range of subjects in management.
The study did not set out to review differences between men and women’s metaphors but this would be an interesting avenue for further research to understand if certain metaphors are more prevalent in men or women. Furthermore in light of the differences between men and women’s first experience of being a leader further research could systematically address the impact of early experiences of leadership on leaders’ self-concept. This could further research about self-concept which is important to the development of leaders (Day and Dragoni, 2015) and to authentic leadership theory.

There are a number of areas for incorporating CL into future studies, which has been an effective method of directing attention to the inner world and rendering data faithful to participants in this study. For example future studies could explore the effects of CL interviewing on research participants or contrast the contribution of CL with other interviewing methods in ‘achieving’ epoché in phenomenological studies. There also appears to be potential in linking dialogical pedagogy (Berkovich, 2014) and CL to enhance the development of authentic leaders through attention to the relationship and interaction of leaders and facilitators. Furthermore, future studies could use Clean Language to explore the nature of implicit leadership theories more systematically.

8.7 Personal Reflection

“The spirit is never at rest but always engaged in progressive motion, giving itself new form”

Hegel (1977)

I have been inspired by Cunliffe’s (2002) notion of reflexivity as “an active and embodied process” (p. 57) through which tacit knowledge in the form of metaphors can be surfaced. This reflexive practice coming “from within can surface our own assumptions and tacit ideologies, question the limits and constraints we may impose on self and others and explore how we may create possibilities for a more critical practice” (Cunliffe, 2002 p.44). Hence I end my
thesis with a reflexive commentary on my embodied and metaphorically informed learning from within.

‘My journey’ has been long and winding to hone my critical thinking and my writing and I have three reflections. Firstly, ‘my journey’ has been a wander of wonder rather than a straight bolt to a clear finish line. This has meant that I have delved into fascinating literature on vast areas that inform this study including leadership, leader/leadership development, authenticity, authentic leader development, metaphor, visual methods, implicit leadership theories, mental models, research methods and phenomenology. On reflection I could have been more focused and disciplined about thinking critically about literature earlier rather than being fascinated by it. For example, I found the literature on authenticity enthralling and meandered a little too long with the philosophers before coming back to the task at hand. Secondly, doubt seemed to be a persistent companion on this ‘journey’ and I was relieved to find similar concerns and questions articulated by Conklin who asked: “How do I know that I am doing phenomenology right?” (2012 p.308). In moments of uncertainty (and they were legion) the question “is there anything else?” took hold and I have looked for answers ‘out there in the literature’ rather than trusting my own thinking and my own voice. My nature prioritises doubt which “creates the opportunity for deeper understanding through reflective inquiry” (Conklin, 2014 p.126) and the PhD has encouraged me to get in touch with my convictions which enable action (Srikantia and Pasmore, 1996). Finding a balance between doubt and conviction has been delicate but ultimately extremely rewarding. Thirdly, it has taken me a while to learn to write in an academic voice with assurance rather than being too tentative, too journalistic or too abstract.

It seems churlish to complete a study in metaphor without sharing some of my own for the PhD. One is a small three-dimensional ball made of many rubber threads (Figure 8.2). I ‘met’ this little ball during my training in Clean Language with Wendy Sullivan, James Lawley and Penny Tompkins and it came to represent my PhD. Wendy kindly allowed me to keep this small visual metaphor that reminds me that all the threads of the PhD – theory, phenomenological
accounts, drawings, references, layout, structure have to be connected to make the PhD complete. Furthermore as the ball is squidgy, malleable and fits perfectly into the ball of my hand it is excellent for ‘tossing ideas around’, ‘seeing different perspectives’, ‘squeezing out frustrations or thoughts’ or ‘getting my hands around the task at hand’. I would never have imagined that a small blue and green squidgy ball would represent my PhD but such is the improbable nature of metaphor.

![Figure 8-2 An Improbable Metaphor For My PhD](image)

The other metaphor is of creating a mosaic; based on my love of jigsaw puzzles it involves figuring out where each piece fits to create a whole picture. Like the three-dimensional ball, there are many components of the mosaic and each piece has to fit together. Unlike a puzzle there is no picture to follow, rather the image emerges from the careful placing of the individual pieces. In order to do this I need to zoom in to ensure the detail is accurate (check sources, references, links etc.) and zoom out to ensure the overall frame is coherent (check I am answering my research question). Like all metaphors there are parts that are hidden in the mosaic metaphor and that is the painstaking work of placing each piece exactly where it needs to be to create the overall image based on exquisite attention to detail.
I started the PhD as an ‘excuse’ to think more deeply and more broadly. Leadership development has been the focus of my professional life for twenty years and symbols and metaphor have been vital to my understanding of the world for many years and so the combination of the two was very appealing but the boundaries around these domains are deep, wide and imprecise. And so I got my wish to think deeply and broadly and perhaps I got more than I bargained for as I found it challenging to draw the boundaries around the intellectual domains of leadership, learning, leader/ship development, metaphor and visual methods to create a meaningful but manageable study. I am reminded of a quote from Einstein: “education is not the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think” (Frank, 1947 p.185). Not only have I found the PhD process a way to think but also to recognise that my own small contribution to the study of leadership through naturally occurring metaphors is a direct result of trust in my own thought process, guided by a wealth of knowledge from some incredible academic papers and my excellent supervisors.

Overall, I have loved this journey, which has been transitional from one phase of life to another and towards a more self-authoring even self-transforming mind. Working with the thirty leaders has been an absolute privilege and I am grateful to have been granted access to their inner worlds to see leadership through their perspectives, experiences and metaphors. Their metaphors have made us laugh, provided realisations, reminders and recognition of our views of leadership and enabled us to see the world anew. In this journey I have met myself at many junctions; at times hesitant, lost and frustrated, at others creative, confident and jubilant and despite some major challenges along the way, I have persisted. However, this does not feel like an ending but a milestone on the journey; a crossroads to consider next steps and the foundation for more work with the enthralling inner world of metaphors. As many leaders in my study said, once you have achieved a certain part of the journey you start looking again to the horizon for the next steps in the journey of becoming...
9 References

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10 Appendices

10.1 Appendix 1 – Confirmation of Ethical Approval

From: "Eves A Dr (Hosp & Tourism)" <a.eves@surrey.ac.uk>
Subject: RE: Question re Ethical Approval
Date: 26 July, 2013 1:58:22 PM GMT+02:00
To: "Cairns-Lee HM Mrs (PG/R - Surrey Business Schl)" <h.cairns-lee@surrey.ac.uk>

From your explanation, if the questioning is not of a sensitive nature nor likely to cause offence, then I do not think that ethical approval is needed. You can include this e-mail in your dissertation.

Anita Eves

Dr Anita Eves
Reader in Food Management
Subject Group Leader – Hospitality and Food Management

From: Cairns-Lee HM Mrs (PG/R - Surrey Business Schl) [mailto:h.cairns-lee@surrey.ac.uk]
Sent: 25 July 2013 20:06
To: Eves A Dr (Hosp & Tourism)
Cc: Tosey PC Dr (Surrey Business Schl); Sadler-Smith E Prof (Surrey Business Schl); Saunders MNK Prof (Surrey Business Schl)
Subject: Question re Ethical Approval

Dear Dr. Eves,

I am a part-time PhD student in the Surrey School of Business, and I have been advised to seek your guidance on whether there could be a need to apply for ethical approval for my study from the University.

I have discussed this with my supervisors, Dr Paul Tosey and Professor Eugene Sadler-Smith, and with Professor Mark Saunders, Faculty Director of the Postgraduate Research Programmes. My study seems very unlikely to fall into any of the categories specified by the University, the only possible exception appearing to be section c (about research of a deeply personal nature for the target group).

Briefly, my research aims to explore the naturally occurring metaphors and implicit leadership theories of respondents in order to identify implications for their leadership and their own development. The respondents are 25-30 experienced international business leaders who have undergone training in
leadership development in open enrolment programmes at a business school in Switzerland, where I work as an associate. Respondents would be invited to participate in my research on the basis of their interest in their own leadership development. I have obtained all necessary permissions from the business school for this study.

With regard to the method in relation to the university category (c), the research will be conducted through interviews that are personal in the sense that they are focused on each individual leader’s metaphors and implicit theories; however they will not be deeply personal in the sense of exploring any sensitive issues, nor are they likely in any way to cause offence. For example I have conducted a pilot study in which none of the interviewees experienced any discomfort whatsoever, nor did any of them raise any concern; on the contrary, participants found the opportunity to step back from daily business refreshing and beneficial.

I am of course happy to supply any additional information you may need. I would greatly appreciate your guidance on this matter and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Heather Cairns-Lee
10.2 Appendix 2 – Letter of Invitation to Study

Dear X,

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to participate in research that I am undertaking for a PhD. To give you an idea of what would be involved I have highlighted the aim, approximate time involved and expectations below.

Research Aim:
For the research, I am exploring what leaders can learn about their leadership and the implications of their leadership when they explore their own internal models and everyday images of leadership.

The research is based on two interviews. In the first I will ask some questions about your experience of leadership with the aim for you to explore what you know and what you can find out about your own models of leadership, essentially an exploration of your inner world. At the end of the interview I would ask that you draw what you know from the experience. Of course I will provide paper and pens. It is probably helpful to allow an hour and half for this, ideally in a quiet uninterrupted space. The second interview, ideally 4-8 weeks later is to enquire what, if anything you noticed and learned from the interview and the process.

For the interviews I will use a methodology called “Clean Language” which is a way of facilitating people to discover and develop their own metaphors with minimal interference from the outside. I have done 28 days training in this methodology and been certified in it and I find it to be extremely respectful, gentle and yet very illuminating of the inner world.

As the research is for my PhD I will need to complete some protocols including my promise of confidentiality and asking you to sign a research release agreement (attached). I will keep all data confidential through the process.

I hope this gives you enough background for you to decide if you would like to participate in this research, however, if you have any questions please do let me know. If you would be interested in participating in the research it would be most conducive to meet in a quiet office environment and I would be happy to come to your office if that works for you. If you would be interested and willing to participate I wonder if you might indicate some dates and times that would work best for you?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Warmly,

Heather Cairns-Lee
Executive Coach & PhD Researcher, University of Surrey
10.3 Appendix 3 – Research Confidentiality and Release Agreement

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. The process that you have volunteered to take part in involves meetings to evoke and explore your inner landscape in relation to your conceptualisation of leadership. The meetings are likely to last between one and two hours and they will be recorded and transcribed. Full confidentiality and anonymity of all material is assured.

I agree to participate in this research study. I understand the purpose and nature of this study and I am participating voluntarily. As a research participant I accept responsibility for my thoughts, feelings and behaviour. I grant permission for the data to be used in the process of completing a PhD degree, including a written thesis. I understand that although the thesis is confidential, in the event of any future publications any information that might identify me will be disguised. I also understand that all material will be used in a respectful and ethical manner.

I give permission for the interviews to be recorded and I am aware that all recordings will be destroyed on completion of the PhD study.

Name

Address

Telephone Number

E-mail

Signed

Research Participant

Researcher

Heather Cairns-Lee

Date & Place