Followership constructs and behaviours in a complex organisation: A South African perspective

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that the Doctoral thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree PhD: Leadership at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not been submitted by me for a degree at another university.

Mandisa Tumeka Matshoba-Ramuedzisi

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DEDICATION

To my grandparents: uGaba noMaMaduna, and uTshude noMaNyawuza:

You have inspired me to be who I am today. You may no longer be with us, but the encouragement you gave me whilst you still were on this earth has continued to propel me towards all that I wish for with diligence and determination. Your inspiration was further channelled through the parents you birthed for me – uWonga noNtyatyi – who built and moulded me into who I am today.

I am, because you were.

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To my friends and family: The interest you showed in my journey; calling to ask how things are going, serving as an outlet in stressful moments, and encouraging me, is valued in ways I cannot explain. All of this kept me going in some of the darkest moments of this journey up until completion.

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, titled **Followership constructs and behaviours in a complex organisation: A South African perspective**, the researcher aimed to expand on the current literature within the field of followership by providing a complex organisation perspective in the South African public sector. Employing a qualitative approach, the study investigated how employees at a South African metropolitan municipality socially construct their followership. The study focused specifically on follower implicit followership theories (FIFTs) in a complex environment. Interviews were conducted with 27 participants to explore their beliefs about followership, the enactment of their followership, and the factors that contribute to how they enact their followership. The results suggest that followers' self-schemas can be characterised around beliefs that are either self-focused, leader-focused, organisation-focused, or a combination thereof. Findings also indicate that followers can simultaneously hold beliefs that include characteristics that are associated with passive schemas, such as deference to leaders; as well as those that are considered to be proactive, such as challenging leaders and taking initiative. The results further reveal that follower behaviour is influenced more positively by intrinsic individual factors compared to external organisational or leadership factors; whilst the converse is also indicated. In respect of organisational factors, the inherent political nature and rigid structure of the organisation are the primary emerging themes of challenges for enactment of ideal followership. The study concludes that individual followers simultaneously hold beliefs across the continuum of follower self-schemas from passive to proactive; however, the activation of the behaviours across the continuum is dependent on the follower's perception of the appropriate schema in response to the situation or environment.

Key words: followership, follower implicit followership theory, FIFTs, schema

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. Introduction

Leadership has been the subject of numerous studies and articles (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003:359) and attracts the interest and attention of different categories of organisations, be it private, public or non-profit (Nash, 2016:2). It is no surprise that leadership and the research thereof has been of interest to organisations, as "leadership is vital for organisational success" (Kumar & Kaptan, 2007 in Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016:190). Historically, leadership research has had, as its primary focus, the leader; with the follower having been a secondary focus mentioned only in relation to the leader and their behaviour studied in the "context of leaders' development rather than followers'" (Kellerman, 2007:84). The assumption that tended to accompany this research was that followers are all the same (Kellerman, 2007:84), and are "an empty vessel waiting to be led, or even transformed by the leader" (Goffee & Jones, 2001:148 in Shamir, 2007:x). In contrast, the focus subject of followership research is the followers, and their behaviours and perspectives regarding followership (Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera & McGregor, 2010:543).

A focus on followers is important, as in any organisation, more people are followers than leaders, a notion affirmed by Malakyan (2014:6) through his statement that "nearly 80% of people function as followers". From the perspective of Van Vugt, Hogan and Kaiser (2008:189), the fact that there are more followers means there is more to talk about by focusing on them. From an organisational perspective, the reality is that there is an element of leading and an element of following in every role, and the majority of people spend most of their working lives "in following rather than leading roles" (Ciulla, 2003 in Crossman & Crossman, 2011:481). The hierarchical structure of organisations results in the followership elements being fewer the higher up you go and vice versa (Thody, 2003:141). In essence, both leadership and followership are required at every level of the organisation (Hollander, 1992a:71).

The recognition of leadership as an important factor in the success or failure of organisations (Lok & Crawford, 2004:324) has led to various studies that explore the relationship between leadership (more specifically leadership styles) and positive organisational outcomes (Bushra, Usman & Naveed, 2011; Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016; Lok & Crawford, 2004; Lian & Tui, 2012). Whilst such research is important in expanding the understanding of leadership, it is important

to note that leaders are not the only ones that play a significant role in the organisation or the leadership process; there is also the role of followers. It then follows that the leadership discourse needs to include followership, and we should perhaps acknowledge that "leadership cannot be studied apart from followership" (Van Vugt *et al.*, 2008:193).

The study of followership encompasses followership role orientations, context, follower role enactment, follower styles, and social constructions of followership (Carsten, Uhl-Bien & Huang, 2018; Carsten *et al.,* 2010; Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe & Carsten, 2014). Through the study of followership, we have an opportunity to add "descriptions of follower styles and followership behaviors" to expand our understanding of the leadership process (Carsten *et al.,* 2010:543). Kelley (2008:6) reflects that not only is followership allocated its own section in many leadership courses, but that various universities and companies also offer it as a separate course, such as the followership course by Barbara Kellerman at Harvard's Kennedy School.

1.2. Problem statement

Every year, the Auditor-General South Africa (AGSA) releases a report on the audit outcomes of municipalities. Audit outcomes are an indicator of the state of financial management, and as such, "when municipalities are managing their finances well, we believe it shows in the quality of services they provide. The opposite is just as true: poor financial management translates into poor municipal service delivery" (AGSA, 2020:3). The audit reports for the 2018-2019 financial period marked the third consecutive year of regression in outcomes (Ibid.). These outcomes signify the third year of poor service delivery to citizens. Throughout his report, the AGSA mentions leadership as a significant contributor to the failings, and also the successes, of various municipalities. The attribution of outcomes, whether good or bad, to leadership is not uncommon; Meindl, Ehrlich and Dukerich (1985) referred to it as the "romance of leadership". This over-attribution of outcomes to leadership is a stance Kelley (1988:143) posits against when he states that the preoccupation with leadership distracts from the acknowledgement of followership as a dominating factor in organisations, in that most organisation members ultimately report to another. This research seeks to investigate followership in a municipality, which is a complex organisation, with the position that, in considering leadership, it is important to also investigate followership. Leadership in complex organisations is considered to be a major challenge (Denis, Langley & Pineault, 2000:1063), and when considered against the descriptions offered by Webb (2011:228) (Table 1.1),

metropolitan municipalities, in particular, contain the qualities of a complex organisation. Therefore, in trying to better understand leadership in local government, a closer investigation of followership therein is required. This is so since, at times, it is through followership that leaders are empowered to achieve organisational objectives (Uhl-Bien & Pillai, 2007:204).

Followership has its roots planted in follower-centric leadership studies, wherein followers have been acknowledged as an important part of the leadership process, albeit as "recipients or moderators of the leader's influence" (Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2014:83). However, followership research takes this a step further and recognises followers as causal agents of followership outcomes (Uhl-Bien *et al*., 2014:84) with the acknowledgement that they have an impact on the leadership process (Uhl-Bien *et al*., 2014:96). Through their review of followership literature, Uhl-Bien *et al*. (2014:89) concluded that research with followership as a focus area has only recently emerged. Carsten, Uhl-Bien and Griggs (2016:95) also re-iterate a similar view by stating that "compared to leadership, research on followership is just beginning". This demonstrates a field that is emergent, and thus provides opportunity to make a significant contribution to existing literature. A key contribution is that of follower implicit followership theories, an area of followership research that has so far been scarcely researched, as implicit followership theory research has been primarily conducted from the leader's perspective (Sy, 2010; Goswami, Park & Bheer, 2020; Gao & Wu, 2019). Additionally, as evidenced by the referenced texts, most of the research on followership has been conducted by scholars based in North America and Europe. Therefore, there is an opportunity to provide additional perspectives on followership by conducting more research outside of these geographical areas.

1.2.1. Research objectives

The objective of this study was to explore the followership construction in a complex organisation, from a South African local government perspective. This was achieved by conducting the study in a metropolitan municipal organisation that presented with a complex followership structure. The focus was on follower beliefs about followership, the enactment of followership, and the contributing factors to followership enactment. The investigation was from the perspective of followers by investigating followers' implicit theories of followership. The need for expansion of followership literature, more specifically follower implicit followership theories (FIFTs) in complex organisations, is informed by the scarcity of research with that focus. Through the literature reviewed, no study focusing on followership in complex

organisations was identified; neither was there a study focusing on FIFTs in a South African context.

1.2.2. Research questions

The primary research question is: How do employees in a complex organisation construct their followership?

The secondary research questions to be addressed in order to answer the primary research question are:

1. What beliefs about followership do employees at the City hold?
2. How do employees at the City enact their followership?
3. What factors contribute to how employees at the City enact their followership?

1.3. Background of South African local government

Since the advent of democracy in 1994, leadership has been a topic of interest within the South African public sector literature (Mabala, 2006; Mokgolo, Mokgolo & Modiba, 2012; Luthuli, 2009; Kuye & Mafunisa, 2003). Further to being researched, leadership in public sector organisations has been mentioned by not only the government, but also by the Auditor-General South Africa, as the solution to many of the challenges being experienced by, and in, the public sector, and more specifically, local government. The current literature on leadership in the South African public sector takes on a leader-centric perspective (Naidoo, 2010; Luthuli, 2009; Mokgolo *et al.*, 2012). In the reviewed literature on followership, the researcher was unable to find any followership research conducted specifically in the South African public sector. The dearth of followership research, as well as its importance in furthering the understanding of leadership, have both been mentioned by numerous scholars (Hurwitz & Koonce, 2017; Khan, Busari & Abdullah, 2019; Malakyan, 2014; Gao & Wu, 2019). Researchers have opined that leadership cannot "be studied in isolation or with only a small nod to followers" (Baker, 2007:50), but that "followers and followership are essential to leadership" (Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2014:83). The researcher extends this conviction to also apply to the study of leadership in local government; that is, in order to gain a better understanding of leadership in local government, it is important to research followership in local government. Not only does this further the understanding of leadership within the public sector, but it furthers the understanding and knowledge of followership by expanding the context within which it is researched. This research broadens and enriches followership research by conducting a study

in a local government context. The terms, "local government" and "municipality", are used interchangeably throughout the study.

Globally, local governments are under pressure to address various challenges, such as service delivery, poverty alleviation, and community safety, by developing their local areas and improving the calibre of services they provide to their local communities (Reddy, Haque & de Vries, 2008:1). This is even more important in developing countries, of which South Africa is one, where it is of critical importance for local governments to be effective (Haque, 2008:32). The importance of an effective local government in South Africa can be traced to the prominence it is awarded in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, which sets out the three spheres of government: national; provincial; and local.

Local government is the sector of government that is closest to society and local communities. Per section 152 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, local government has the responsibility for the following:

- Provision of democratic and accountable government for local communities;
- Ensuring the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner;
- Promoting social and economic development;
- Promoting a safe and healthy environment; and
- Encouraging the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government.

As can be seen from the above, local government has a crucial role to play in government's interactions with the people of the Republic of South Africa. A further requirement is for the establishment of municipalities in South Africa (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996), which are defined in section 2 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000 as follows:

"A municipality—

(a) is an organ of state within the local sphere of government exercising legislative and executive authority within an area determined in terms of the Local Government: Municipal Demarcation Act, 1998;

(b) consists of—

(i) the political structures and administration of the municipality; and

(ii) the community of the municipality;

(c) functions in its area in accordance with the political, statutory and other relationships between its political structures, political office bearers and administration and its community; and

(d) has a separate legal personality which excludes liability on the part of its community for the actions of the municipality."

One could say that an organisation that is a municipality as defined, has as its organisational goals the objects as set out in the Constitution. For a municipality to be viewed as successful or performing, it needs to be achieving the goals as per the Constitution, which ultimately result in the betterment of its community and of South African society. Leadership is viewed as a key driver in the ability for the public sector as a whole to be successful, Mokgolo *et al.* (2012:1) go as far as to say that "leadership is a critical issue that the public sector needs to address in order to survive and succeed in today's unstable environment." Strong or effective leadership is proposed as a solution to the challenges faced by South African municipalities in providing adequate services to communities (Govender, 2017:427; Managa, 2012:3), supporting leadership as an important element of municipalities that warrants research. Strong leadership in municipalities is associated with practising and enforcing accountability (AGSA, 2020:22) as well as responsiveness (AGSA, 2020:20 & 24) to identified poor performance. Govender (2017:427) expands on the notion of strong leadership by associating it with taking responsibility for service delivery, being a major challenge faced by South African municipalities. With the recognition that leadership consists of both leaders and followers, to better understand leadership, followers and followership should also be studied (Carsten *et al*., 2010:543). The literature review will demonstrate that, if leadership is critical, then so is followership.

There are currently 257 municipalities in South Africa, consisting of eight metropolitans, 44 districts and 205 local municipalities (The Local Government Handbook 2020:12). The categories of municipalities originate from section 155 of the Constitution and are defined in the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 as categories A (metropolitan), B (local) and C (district). A municipality is an ecosystem that consists of the municipal council, the administration, and the community (Figure 1.1).

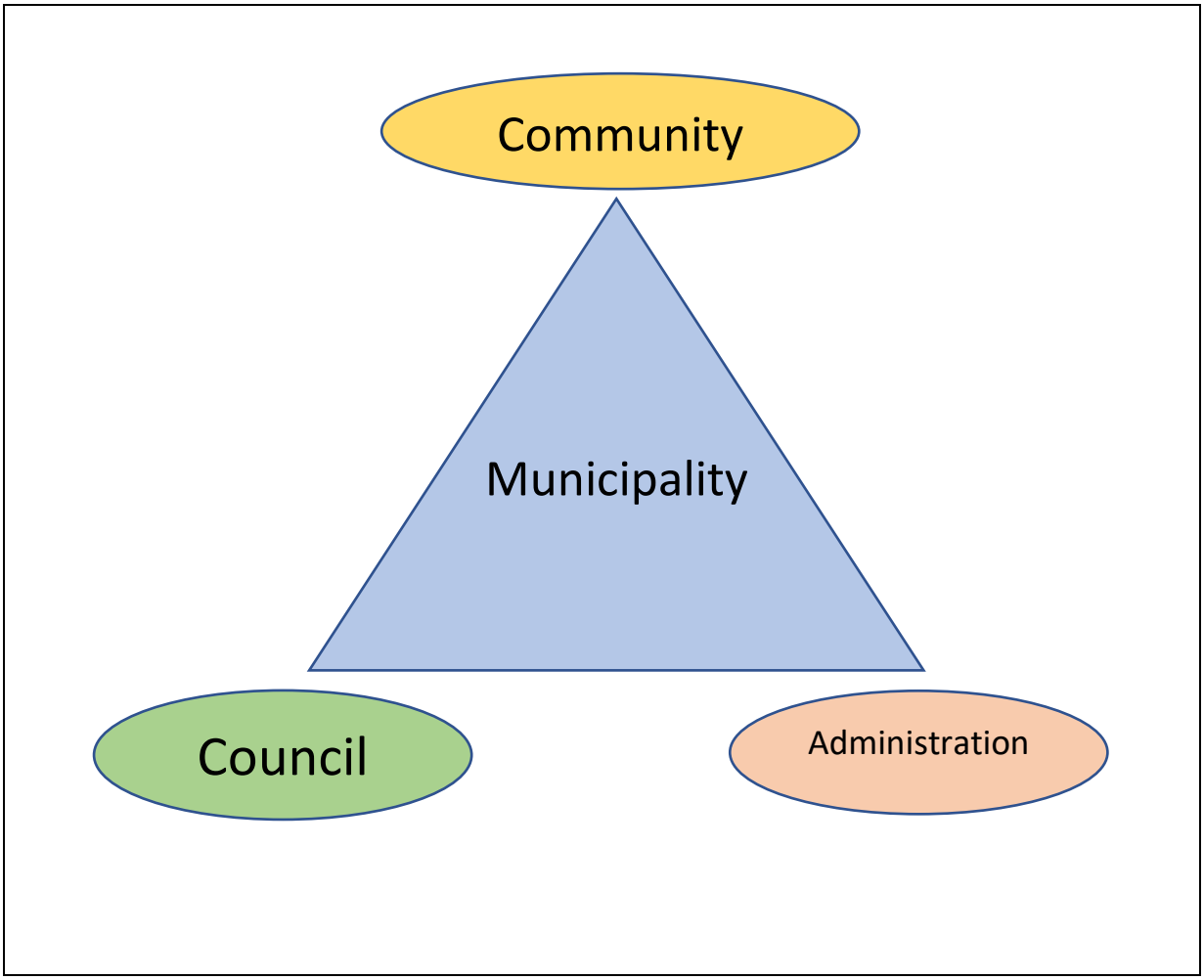


Figure 1.1 The three elements that make up a municipality (adapted from Salga, 2011)

The municipal council consists of members elected by way of section 157 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. The administration consists of employed municipal officials, such as the municipal or city manager and those below him or her. The community is comprised of residents, rate payers and organisations within the municipal area (Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000). The composition of the municipal council is as a result of political affiliation; therefore, it is the political leadership of the municipality, and may change with each round of elections, which take place every five years. These elections by the public confer "democratic legitimacy" on the councils (Pieterse, 2019:54), an important feature of South Africa since it became a democratic state in 1994. The administration consists of employees of the municipality who are not necessarily politically affiliated, and will, therefore, not change with a change in political leadership. This creates a situation where the people that make up the administration may have to adjust to new political leadership at least every five years, depending on the outcome of the local government

elections. This introduces a factor that could possibly impact the construction of leadership and followership within the municipalities.

The metropolitan municipalities administer the most urbanised areas in the country (The Local Government Handbook 2020:12), namely:

- Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality;
- City of Cape Town Metropolitan Municipality;
- City of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality;
- City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality;
- City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality;
- eThekwini Metropolitan Municipality;
- Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality; and
- Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality.

1.4. Contribution of study

This study provides a broader understanding of followership by exploring followership constructions with a focus on follower implicit followership theories (FIFTs). Furthermore, the organisational context, within which the study was conducted, provides additional knowledge in an area of followership where research is scanter.

Implicit theories of followership have been explored as an expansion of follower-centred research. However, such research has been directed at the leader's beliefs about followers. To answer the primary research question (How do employees in a complex organisation construct their followership?) this research explored follower self-schemas (being FIFTs), followership enactment, and the factors that contribute to how followers enact their followership. Applying van Gils, van Quaquebeke and van Knippenberg's (2010:340) sentiments on implicit leadership theories (ILTs), how followers socially construct their followership is informed by their beliefs and perception of how they should behave, as well as the input from their environment, being the contextual factors.

1.4.1. Focus on FIFTs

Implicit followership theory (IFT) approaches have primarily focused on the manager's IFTs with little focus on subordinates' views of followership. The present study seeks to contribute

towards addressing this by finding out from the followers what their beliefs about followership are; that is, investigating their follower implicit followership theories, their actual behaviour, and the factors that contribute to the actual behaviour. Whereas implicit leadership theories influence follower perceptions of leader effectiveness and leadership (Junker & van Dick, 2014), FIFTs formulate part of follower schemas which have been found to influence how followers perceive their role and how they should enact it (Carsten *et al*., 2010). FIFTs provide a useful framework for exploring followership constructions, as research on follower constructions of followership is nascent; thus, scholars need to move beyond the follower-centred perspectives of asking followers about leaders and ask followers about how they construct their experience of followership (Uhl-Bien & Pillai, 2007:193).

Previous studies have found that how followership is ultimately enacted is influenced by factors beyond the internal orientations, schemas or implicit theories held by individuals (Carsten *et al.*, 2010; Singh & Bodhanya, 2013). Therefore, followership enactment is a result of followers' interpretations of their roles and the impact of the environment within which they operate (Baker, Stites-Doe, Mathis & Rosenbach, 2014:77). It is with this in mind that the present study also considers the factor of contextual variables by exploring what factors in a complex environment influence how the subordinates enact their followership.

This study develops the literature on FIFTs by adding the perspectives of both a complex public sector organisation and a South African environment. Therefore, the contribution lies not only in the implicit followership theories, but also in the geographical expansion to broaden the current understandings of followership.

1.4.2. Context of the study

The case for the study and understanding of followership has been made by various scholars in the literature reviewed. The public sector, and more specifically, local government municipalities, play a significant role in the South African landscape. Therefore, research within these entities is important for the understanding of the broader field of leadership within these organisations. It was identified that there is minimal literature on followership studies in Africa, particularly in the public sector. Studies conducted in South African local government entities, such as those by Manganye (2019), Leibbrandt and Botha (2014), Govender (2017) and Rukuni, Magombeyi, Huni and Machaka (2019), focus on leadership; and South African

studies in the field of followership (Singh & Bodhanya, 2013; du Plessis & Boshoff, 2018) are not specifically focused on the public sector or local government. Thus, the contribution of this study has significance.

The present study took place in one of the metropolitan municipalities which, henceforth, shall be referred to as the City. The reason for selecting the City is that it presents with the features of a complex organisation. These features, as depicted in Table 1.1, are described by Webb (2011:228) as those that characterise a complex organisation. Additionally, the City's organisational size and features introduce a complex followership structured environment, typically characterised by superiors also being subordinates due to the multiple vertical reporting relationships (Zoogah, 2014:51). The reporting relationships within such structures tend to affect each other, and in turn, affect the followership structures (Ibid.). Therefore, the present study adds to the followership literature on social constructions, beliefs and self-schemas (Carsten *et al.*, 2010; Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2012) by investigating how followership within this type of complex structure is constructed. Important to note is that this structure is not limited to the specific type of entity in this study, being a metropolitan municipality, but is typical of large organisations (Zoogah, 2014:52) of which there are numerous in a global context. Complex organisations can be found in various sectors, including health, education and accounting services (Denis *et al.*, 2000:1064). Therefore, although the researcher selected a local government entity due to the significance of such organisations as highlighted in the preceding discussions, the transferability of the findings is broader than just local government municipal organisations. However, it is also important to acknowledge that the specific environment of a metropolitan municipality does present with additional complexity as a result of the political leadership aspect of the organisational structure as discussed in section 1.3. As alluded to in that section, the five-year cycle of local government elections that may result in new political leadership could have an influence on the construction of followership within the municipality. Whether, or how, this affects the construction of followership in this context would emerge through the answers to the secondary research questions, which interrogate the specific beliefs, behaviours and contributors to the behaviours of the followers as identified within the organisation.

Table 1.1 Features of a complex organisation

Quality	Justification
• Large number of components within the organisation communicating with each other	• Numerous departments and divisions in the organisation • Several regions and wards across the municipal area
• Different types of components, such as parent and subunits, within an organisation	• All these departments and regions need to work together as the municipal organisation to provide access to services for local communities.
• There are many relationships and interactions between the components.	• There is also the relationship between the political and administrative functions.
• There may be more than one output or result for one input.	• The City has numerous responsibilities as a municipality, as it needs to provide services to the local community. Such services include, *inter alia*, water, electricity, sanitation, transport, and health.
• Complex external interactions exist.	• As a municipality, and therefore in the local government sphere, the entity has a lot of public interest. • The entity is also subject to audits by the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA). • Every five (5) years, local government elections are held, which may result in significant changes in the political leadership of the entity. • The entity also participates in intergovernmental activities with national and provincial governments.
• Hierarchies in the business structure increase complexity.	• The city has thousands of employees across various occupational levels.

(Source: Compiled from Webb, 2011)

The findings introduce additional contextual factors regarding follower role enactment in complex organisations, as well as public sector organisations. The findings reveal a complexity in the followers' constructions of followership that is beyond categorising them into single typologies or categories. Followers possess beliefs that may, in fact, be located at extreme ends of the passive-proactive continuum; and thus, followership enactment may be as a result of followers activating any one or more of a number of their implicit theories along the continuum depending on the prevailing circumstances (as a result of contextual variables) at the time.

1.5. Delimitations and assumptions

The present study confines itself to interviews with administrative employees of the City. It therefore excludes political officials in the municipality. The purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of followers in constructing their followership in a complex organisation, and the researcher wanted to focus specifically on followership constructions from a non-political perspective. That the political aspect of the organisation did emerge in the findings thus becomes a contextual theme for consideration, and not the underlying assumption of the study.

Being a qualitative research adopting an interpretivist theoretical perspective, this study is underpinned by the assumption that reality is as interpreted by the various participants (Simon, 2011), and therefore, the understanding of the followership phenomenon is analysed from the perspectives of the respondents. The methodological choices are justified by the objectives of the study, as discussed in Chapter 4, and do not result in generalisability of the findings. However, transferability to similar contexts is supported.

1.6. Outline of thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters, the first of which is the present. The following two chapters discuss the relevant leadership and followership literature that provides the theoretical background to the study. Chapter 2 reflects on how followers have been featured in leadership studies, including them not being considered as significant actors in the leadership construct as in leader-centric research, to them being a key focus as in follower-centric studies. Chapter 3 discusses followership research which shifts from investigating followers' perspectives about leaders, or leaders' perspectives about followers to *followers'* perspectives about followers and following.

Chapter 4 is the chapter in which the methodological assumptions and choices are considered and justified. The suitability of the selected data collection and analysis methods, the practical implementation, as well as the limitations thereof, are discussed. The results are presented in Chapter 5, wherein they are categorised into themes for ease of presentation and discussion. Thereafter, the findings emanating from the analysis of the results are discussed within the context of followership theory. The concluding chapter then summarises the key findings, contributions and presents suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2: EXAMINING THE ROLE OF FOLLOWERS IN LEADERSHIP STUDIES

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher provides a summary of the literature examined to contextualise the relevance and contribution of the current study to leadership research. The earliest conceptualisations of leadership included the notions of leader and follower (Bass & Bass, 2008:27); however, the earlier leadership studies paid little attention to the role of followers, despite the acknowledgement that leadership cannot exist without them (Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2014:83). As demonstrated in this chapter, the role of followers has not continued to be considered as of little importance, as various approaches to the study of leadership have brought it into consideration, albeit at different levels of prominence. As research on leadership has expanded to include perspectives that consider followers as more significant role players within the leadership construct, it has come to include followership, being what the present study seeks to explore. It is important to understand how followers and the role of following have been examined within leadership research, as this provides the distinction between research about followers to investigate leadership, and followership research. This chapter therefore provides an overview of carefully selected and foundational leadership approaches with the specific intention of reflecting on the role of followers within studies applying those approaches.

The concept of leadership has been found in ancient Chinese, Egyptian and Greek texts dating as far back as 5 000 years ago (Bass & Bass, 2008:26), with the terms "leader" and "leadership" being traced back to the 1300s and 1700s, respectively (Van Seters & Field, 1990:29). The advent of scientific research into the field of leadership came in the 1900s (House & Aditya, 1997:409; Van Seters & Field, 1990:29). Despite its relatively long history, the definition of the construct of leadership has not been very clear. Appelbaum, Degbe, MacDonald and Nguyen-Quang (2015:74) quote Stogdill (1974) in their statement: "[T]here are as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept." A similar sentiment is expressed by Meindl *et al.* (1985:79) when they describe it as a "largely elusive and enigmatic" concept. In reviewing the literature, the researcher soon found herself agreeing with the point made by Bass and Bass (2008:63), that, in defining leadership, consideration should be given to "the purposes to be served by the definition". The purpose of the definition can be understood as the perspective from which the researcher is approaching

the particular study. Therefore, one can, and perhaps should, expect that there would be various definitions concerning what leadership is, or means.

With the purpose of situating followership, as well as the current study, within the study of leadership, the following sections examine how followers, and their role, have been regarded in leadership studies applying various approaches. Similar to Uhl-Bien *et al.* (2014), the researcher categorises leadership research under the approaches of leader-centric, follower-centric, or relationship-based views. In leader-centric studies (Bono & Judge, 2004; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Wilson, 2004), followers tend to be depicted as incidental to leadership; i.e., their role is to be led. The introduction of follower-centric approaches has led to followers being seen as social constructors of leadership, where their views and beliefs about leaders and leadership are explored (Offerman, Kennedy & Wirtz, 1994; Ehrhart, 2012). In the case of relationship-based views (Uhl-Bien, 2006; Brower, Schoorman & Tan, 2000), they have been portrayed as being an integral part of the leadership process, whereby they participate in a relationship of reciprocal influence (Uhl-Bien *et al.,* 2014:87). The chapter then concludes by commenting on how the more significant inclusion of followers in leadership studies led the path to the introduction of followership research. The call for more inclusion of followers in leadership research is expressed through statements such as, "there is no leadership without followers, yet followers are very often left out of the leadership research equation" by Uhl-Bien *et al.* (2014:83).

The structure of the remainder of the chapter is depicted in Figure 2.1 below.

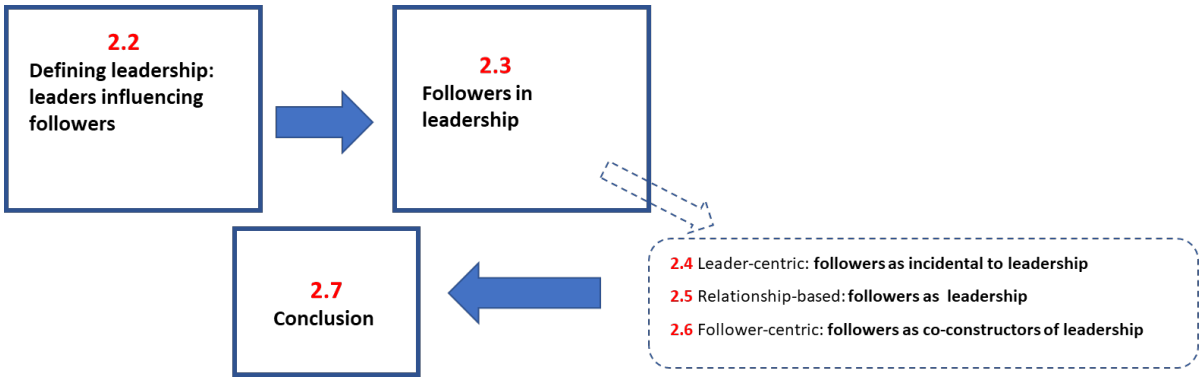


Figure 2.1 Outline of remainder of chapter

2.2. Defining leadership: leaders influencing followers

Leaders and followers, or leading and following, exist within the construct known as leadership. Therefore, one cannot research either one of these concepts without mentioning the other – the form and significance of that mention is a separate matter. Thus, before embarking on the journey of exploring followers in leadership, this chapter first provides a high-level overview of what leadership is, specifically in the context relevant for the current study. With the lack of a uniform definition of leadership (Antonakis & Day, 2018:5), one needs to consider the elements of various definitions for the purpose of the present study. The current study has a focus on followers, thus the concept of leadership is linked to the existence of followers, for there needs to be at least one follower for there to be a leader (Kellerman, 2007:1). The researcher came across various definitions of leadership from which she noted that the concept of influence is a key element of leading or leadership, as evidenced in the following definitions:

- "an act that causes others to act or respond in shared directions; the art of influencing people by persuasion or example to follow a line of action; the principle dynamic force that motivates and coordinates the organisation in the accomplishment of its objectives" (Kuye & Mafunisa, 2003:431);
- persuading or influencing of others to work towards or contribute to particular outcomes or goals (Stogdill, 1950:4; Hickman, 1998:133; Van Vugt *et al.,* 2008:182);
- the "responsibility to influence others in terms of their actions, thoughts and feelings" (Joubert, 2014:47);
- "a social influence process" (Appelbaum *et al*., 2015:74).

In addition to other scholars, such as Rast, Hogg & Randsley de Moura (2018) who regard influence as a component of leadership, Bass and Bass (2008:47-51) list numerous examples of scholars defining leadership as "the exercise of influence" or "a form of persuasion". The recurrent theme in these selected descriptions is that there needs to be a means by which to persuade or motivate others towards some kind of action. The opportunity to exercise such persuasion or motivation can be enhanced by a certain position that one has over others, e.g., becoming a leader by way of being formally in-charge and, therefore, having more opportunity to inform the actions of others. Although not always the case, in an organisational setting leadership does tend to be awarded as a result of a position or rank in an organisational hierarchy (Eacott, 2013:91). Therefore, the higher up a person is in that hierarchy, the more likely it is that they are considered a leader, and thus having the opportunity to influence or

persuade others towards certain actions, outcomes or goals. This creates the distinguishing factor between a leader and other members, in that the hierarchical position allows him or her to apply his or her influence on how others perform their activities towards achieving the goals of an organisation (Stogdill, 1950:4; Antonakis & Day, 2018:6).

The researcher made specific note of the use of language in the descriptions and definitions of leadership; use of words such as influence, persuade and motivate. The language used is such that, despite the fact that the title of "leader" may be ascribed to a superior or person of authority (particularly in an organisation), leadership occurs when that individual is able to influence or motivate certain types of behaviour or action from other members. The authority or power of that individual is not leadership; leadership occurs when others willingly adopt what that individual is leading them towards as their own goals to achieve, even if only for a set period (Hogan, Curphy & Hogan, 1994:493; Hogan & Kaiser, 2005:172; Kaiser, Hogan & Craig, 2008:96). In an organisation, that "willingness" to be influenced tends to be informed by formal positions. Bass and Bass (2008:55) articulate this well in their discussion of "leadership as a power relation" when they quote Janda's (1960) definition of leadership being "a particular type of power relationship characterized by a group member's perception that another group member has the right to prescribe behaviour patterns for the former regarding his activity as a member of a particular group". In an organisation, this perception of one having the "right" to influence would be informed by the existing hierarchy of positions and reporting.

The definitions of leadership discussed above are what are applicable when one requires the harnessing of collective effort towards specific goals or outcomes, where leadership is about the performance of teams, groups, and organisations (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005:169). This is typically the case in an organisational setting, where there are specific goals and objectives to achieve. Such a perspective is relevant for the current study, as it is exploring the phenomenon of followership within an organisational context.

2.3. Followers in leadership

Despite followership having been researched for over seven decades (Baker, 2007:50), the concepts of followers and following have for many years been viewed as less valuable than leaders and leadership by both scholars and management development practitioners (Agho, 2009:159). This is to be expected, as "the leadership role has the glamour and attention…we

take courses to learn it, and when we play it well, we get applause and recognition" (Kelley, 1988:143), such that the role of followers was seldom thought of as one from which anything positive could come (Kelley, 2008:5). This systemic devaluation of followers (as described by Alcorn, 1992:9) led to them being viewed as those who merely "passively and obediently" follow leaders (Baker, 2007:51). From an organisational perspective, this translated into followers being characterised as those who execute on the directives of the leaders as per performance expectations (Agho, 2009:159).

Although it was as early as 1955 when Hollander and Webb posited the existence of an interdependency between the roles of leader and follower that requires followers to be viewed as more than just recipients of leadership (Baker, 2007:53), it was Kelley's work in 1988 that associated the effectiveness of followers with organisational outcomes (Baker, 2007:55). This seminal work by Kelley (1988) set the foundation for the organisational followership studies that ensued. Therefore, although the existence of followers is a *sine qua non* of the construct of leadership, the contribution of the follower role thereto has not always been considered as significant (Bjugstad, Thach, Thompson & Morris, 2006:305). Through reviewing the various leadership literature, one can appreciate that followers have been considered with different levels of significance throughout the different approaches to leadership studies. It is with this in mind that the present chapter explores how followers have been treated in different approaches to leadership research. Using Uhl-Bien *et al.*'s (2014) review of followership theory as a basis, the ensuing discussion examines how followers have been regarded in leadership studies that have applied the different lenses of leader-centric, follower-centric and relationship-based approaches.

2.4. Leader-centric: followers as incidental to leadership

Leader-centric approaches place emphasis "on the leaders and how they affect the meanings, ideas, values, commitments, and emotions" of followers (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003:362); where the "leader traits and behaviours are the independent variables and followers' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours are the dependent variables" (Shamir, 2007:xii). That is, followers are treated as either recipients or moderators of leader influence (Shamir, 2007:xii) (Figures 2.2 & 2.3), positioning them as inactive participants, who are waiting to be led and contribute no value beyond fulfilling the leader's instructions. Thus, leadership studies from a

leader-centric perspective consider leader characteristics as the cause of any "systematic variance in the influence process" of leadership (Brown, 2018:83).

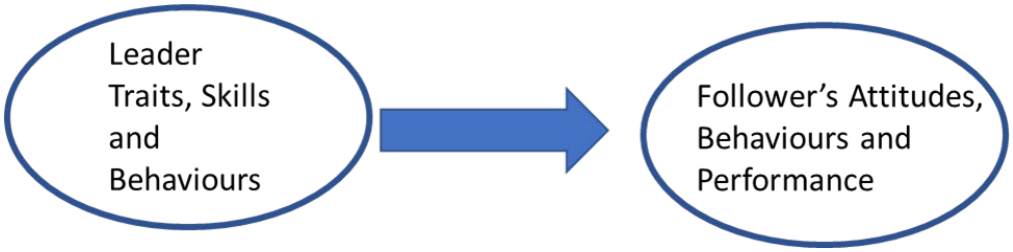


Figure 2.2 Followers as recipients of leader influence (Shamir, 2007:xii)

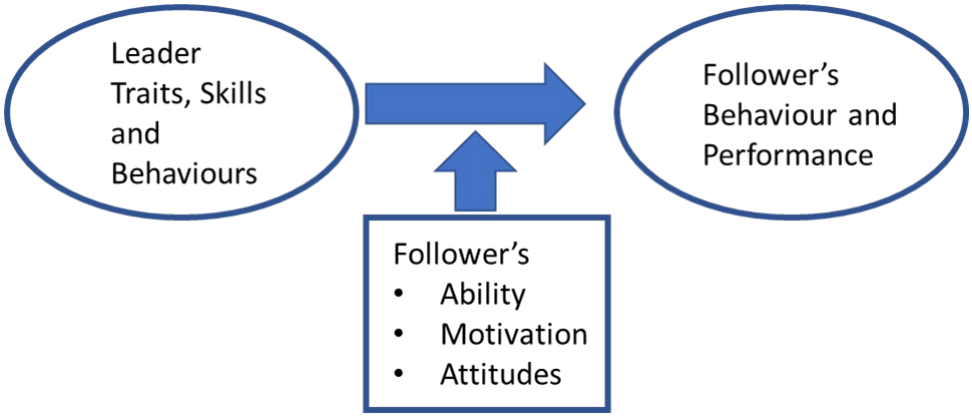


Figure 2.3 Followers as moderators of leader influence (Shamir, 2007:xiii)

Followers being treated as non-active participants in leadership, that is, being passive and obedient, has its roots in the early leadership research (Baker, 2007:51) where leaders were typically the focus. The research viewed followers as those who execute on the directives of the leaders (Agho, 2009:159), and as an "undifferentiated mass or collective" (Collinson, 2006:179). Uhl-Bien and Carsten (2018:196) attribute this view of followers to the fact that stories about leaders (both positive and negative) are told in a manner that disregards the actions or contributions of anyone else but those leaders. Thus, leaders were seen to be the only actors in, or constructors of, leadership; relegating the role of followers to that of passive participants in leadership (Oc & Bashshur, 2013:919).

The previously long-established view of followers as "those who concede to the leader's directives" (Lapierre & Carsten, 2014:ix) was born of leader-centric approaches which focus on the individuals who are leaders (whether by claiming it themselves or being given that title by others), where the "qualities, behaviours and situational responses" of the leaders (Fairholm,

2004:578) are of primary concern. This brought about the situation where leaders are viewed as "heroes or villains" depending on whether certain outcomes, particularly in an organisational sense, are achieved or not (Oc & Bashshur, 2013:919). In essence, this approach to leadership research puts forth the view that leadership is found within leaders (Drath, McCauley, Palus, Van Velsor, O'Connor & McGuire, 2008:639), resulting in leadership being "what leaders are or do" (Fairholm, 2004:579). Some of the research that emerged in addressing these two views is discussed hereafter.

2.4.1. Leadership as synonymous with leaders

Approaches that consider leadership to be synonymous with leaders examine the leadership as concerning an individual (the leader), and interrogate what this individual possesses (by way of traits, characteristics and attributes), as well as how they behave. These approaches include those that almost completely ignore the follower as an entity, due to revering the leader as the sole participant in leadership, to giving followers limited recognition as vessels upon which the leader acts (Figure 2.4).

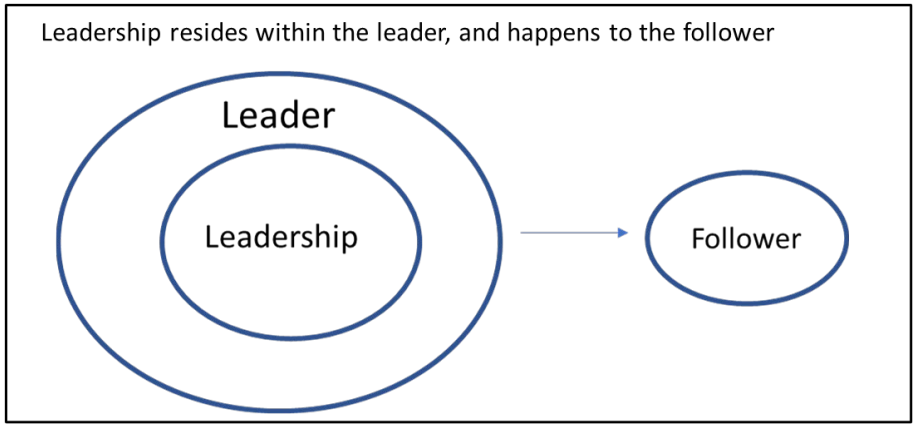


Figure 2.4 Leadership as synonymous with the leader

2.4.1.1. Trait-based perspectives

Trait-based perspectives have an overt focus on what makes an individual a leader. They approach leadership from the view of there being leaders and non-leaders (Zaccaro, Dubrow & Kolze, 2018:31), and the purpose of the research is to interrogate the differentiators between these two types of individuals. The initial trait-based approach on what made one a leader was the great-man view, proffered by Thomas Carlyle in the 1840s (Khan, Nawaz & Khan, 2016:1; Spector, 2016:250), which suggested that leaders are born, not made (Organ, 1996:1). Much

of the early leadership research that followed focused on the leader, examining their attributes (Hollander, 1992a:71; Oc & Bashshur, 2013:919), the major assumption being that "leaders possessed universal characteristics that made them leaders" (Hollander & Offerman, 1990:179). There was a focus on studying individuals such as biblical Moses, Winston Churchill, and Martin Luther King Jr, who were, or had been, leaders, and what made them great (Bass & Bass, 2008); thus, "implying that only a selected few can achieve greatness" (Harrison, 2018:15). Therefore, to be a great leader, one should emulate the behaviours and personalities of these historically great men (Van Seters & Field, 1990:30). Research, such as that of Borgatta, Bales and Couch (1954:755), referred to what they described as "the most adequate all-round leader", as the "great-man". The idea that leaders are specific individuals who are "gifts from God placed on earth to provide the lightening needed to uplift human existence" (Spector, 2016:250), gave way to a theory that was less focused on specific past leaders, but rather on the traits and characteristics that set leaders apart from non-leaders (Khan *et al.*, 2016:2).

The fixation of trait approaches on what makes a leader resulted in followers not being considered in the conception of leadership (Hollander & Offerman, 1990:180). Leadership studies were about how "exceptional individuals" shaped major historical events (Antonakis & Day, 2018:8) by leading the "passive, unthinkingly obedient" followers (Baker, 2007:58). Thus, followers featured as the non-leaders who were seen as not possessing the traits required to be leaders. A major criticism of the trait-based views was that even those whom history now views as morally abhorrent, such as Hitler, could be viewed as leaders due to their ability to exercise great influence over others (Ciulla, 2018:442). Those others, being followers, did no more than follow orders and "faithfully mimic the actions" of these leaders (Baker, 2007:51). Thus, followers were awarded the lowly role of entities who existed only as recipients of leader influence to loyally and obediently execute on their directives (Baker, 2007:56). In practice, the impact of the great-man concept can be observed through the ever-increasing remuneration of chief executives and organisational leaders (Spector, 2016:251), signifying the perhaps inherent belief that leaders are some special breed without whom the organisation could not work. The contribution of the followers is considered to be much less significant.

With a focus on identifying the traits, including physical traits, that made an individual a leader (Jago, 1982:317), researchers applying trait approaches generally tried to answer the following

questions: "(1) What traits distinguish leaders from other people? (2) What is the extent of the differences?" (Bass & Bass, 2008:101). As can be gleaned from the questions this literature aimed to address, followers were just the "other" that was not the leader; that is, they were those from whom the leader was being distinguished. The intention of such research was to identify leaders, and the rest would be those who are led by such leader. As demonstrated by the use of the prefix "non" with the terminology of "leaders and non-leaders" (Zaccaro *et al.*, 2018:31), followers were viewed as those who are *not* the subject of interest (being the leaders).

Despite the preoccupation with what makes a leader, the trait approach has not, however, produced the definitive answers that researchers were looking for, as it failed to produce a list of definitive common traits or characteristics possessed by all leaders (Khan *et al.*, 2016:2; Van Seters & Field, 1990:30). Another finding was that not all traits applied in all situations; that is, certain traits that resulted in leaders in a certain context could not be attributed to another (Jago, 1982:318). Such realisations led to the diminished popularity of the trait approach (Bass, 1990:38; Khan *et al.*, 2016:2), although not complete annihilation. It may be that pure trait approaches that consider leader traits to be the dominant antecedent to leadership became less favoured; however, there has continued to be research that considers leader attributes as contributing factors to leadership (Van Seters & Field, 1990:3; Bass & Bass, 2008:101). For example, in their study exploring the importance of leader traits in achieving successful leadership, Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) concluded that the individual (leader) does matter. Their findings were that leaders do possess certain traits that differentiate them from non-leaders; therefore, they do matter. Nevertheless, the development of approaches that moved away from a pure trait focus came with the realisation that, beyond the leader's traits, different situations can significantly affect whether an individual fails or succeeds in ensuring the desired leadership outcomes (Organ, 1996:4). These developments still had the leader as the subject of interest, as the intention was still on investigating what behaviours or characteristics of theirs were suited to different situational variables, followers being part of those variables (Jogulu & Wood, 2006:238).

2.4.1.2. Situational approaches

The situational approaches, otherwise known as the contingency approaches, to the study of leadership still came with a focus on leaders; however, there was a recognition that not all situations required the same qualities from leaders (Hollander & Offerman, 1990:180). In

Stogdill's (1948) survey of the literature focused on traits and characteristics, he concluded that a situation also had significant influence on who would emerge as a leader. An example of such is referred to by Jago (1982:318) when he cites findings by Schrag (1954) that informal leaders amongst prison inmates tend to be "neurotic and psychopathic", which are not traits we often find associated with the prototypical leader. Thus, leadership was considered to more likely arise as a result of the kind of leader required in a particular situation as opposed to being inherently existing within a specific individual (Ayman & Lauritsen, 2018:139).

Situational approaches regarded followers as a feature in leadership; however, only to the extent of being one of a number of contextual variables that the leader has to consider in deciding the most effective way to lead (Khan *et al.*, 2016:2; Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2014:86). The characteristics of followers, along with those of the leaders, were viewed as having an impact on leadership (Hollander & Offerman, 1990:180). The type of leadership required thus considers, amongst other factors, followers and how best the leader can get them to execute on a decision (Hollander & Offerman, 1990:181). Based on Hersey and Blanchard's (1969) situational leadership theory, the leader needs to select a suitable leadership behaviour based on such factors as the abilities, willingness and experience of the followers (Ayman & Lauritsen, 2018:146). Followers are thus not only viewed as those who will just obey and mindlessly follow a leader, and thus any leader will do. They are rather viewed as part of the situation the leader should consider in deciding how to enact or effect their leadership. Although followers are awarded a more significant consideration than in trait-based approaches, it is still only in so far as they form part of the context the leader needs to consider in enacting their leadership (Oc & Bashshur, 2013:920), not as a complex entity that can have a direct and significant impact on the leader and leadership.

2.4.1.3. Behavioural and style approaches

In a similar vein to situational approaches, behavioural approaches give some recognition to followers as role-players in leadership. The distinction between effective and non-effective leaders is drawn by evaluating leaders' interactions with followers (Jago, 1982:319). However, the behavioural approaches are still centred on how the leader's behaviour impacts leadership outcomes (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2015:74), as the focus is "on the behaviours of the leaders in moving followers towards goals" (Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2014:84). The basis of behavioural theories is that leaders can learn or acquire suitable leadership behaviours (Jogulu & Wood, 2006:238),

although the behaviours are still significantly informed by the personal attributes of the leader (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2015:75). Such behaviours include being task-oriented, relational-oriented, change-oriented, and passive leadership (DeRue, Nahrgang, Wellman & Humphrey, 2011:15). The suitability of the behaviours in achieving effective leadership is partly informed by the followers, where follower task accomplishment is impacted by leader behaviour (Davis & Luthans, 1979:239); thus, leaders also have to consider their behaviours within the context of how followers may react thereto. The followers, once again, are an element of the contextual variables that the leader has to negotiate in meeting her objectives; as leader effectiveness can include measurements of follower satisfaction with a leader, quality of the dyadic relationship, or follower/group performance (DeRue *et al*., 2011:11).

Leadership style can be defined as "relatively stable patterns of behaviour that are manifested by leaders" (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001:781). Style approaches investigate leadership styles adopted by different leaders, as well as which styles are most suited to different contexts, where context includes the followers and the organisational environment. The results of these studies have yielded numerous different leadership styles, as well as the conclusion that there is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to leadership, as "one person's toxic leader maybe another person's hero" (de Zilwa, 2014:66). Style approaches are still leader-centric, in that they are heavily focused on investigating the impact of leaders' behaviours and characteristics on follower actions, and thus, leadership outcomes. An example of this leader-centricness is the notion underpinned in one of the underlying assumptions of transformational leadership theory; that followers are transformed through, or by, their experiences with leaders (Siangchokyoo, Klinger & Campion, 2020:3). With transformational leadership, the leader has an effect on the followers by inspiring "confidence, trust, respect, cooperation and loyalty" from them through her actions (Appelbaum *et al*., 2015:75). Transactional leadership on the other hand, is about "accomplishing goals through and with" followers (Ibid.), where follower outcomes are influenced through reward or punishment (Jogulu & Wood, 2006:243). Followers are considered from the perspective of being the vessels through which the leader achieves the required outcomes as opposed to being independent actors within the leadership process. Thus, in behavioural and style approaches, the actions and behaviours of the followers are impacted by the leader's selected behaviours as determined by the leader's personal attributes and consideration of the environment. Accordingly, leadership is happening *to* the follower, where the leader is the one enacting it upon the follower.

2.4.2. Summary

As far back as 1973, Dansereau, Cashman and Graen made an observation that leader-focused approaches have been used particularly in research on leadership in formal organisations, where the focus is on the individual designated as a leader in terms of position. Initial interest was primarily in generating a list of traits or characteristics that differentiate those who lead and those who do not. Not having met with as much success as intended, the approaches incorporated contextual considerations, of which followers were one. This has led to a somewhat improved situation in the more recent leader-centric research which considers how followers (behaviours, perspectives, perceptions) are impacted by leaders and leadership, or how that impact is moderated by followers (Dvir, Eden, Avolio & Shamir, 2002; Nielsen, Randall, Yarker & Brenner, 2008; Mustafa & Lines, 2014). Such advancements have led to the definition of leader effectiveness to be an "outcome of leaders' behaviour rather than a particular type of behaviour" (Eagly *et al.*, 1995 in Jogulu & Wood, 2006:245), where measurements of leadership effectiveness include follower outcomes, such as level of organisational commitment, job motivation and attitudes (Jogulu & Wood, 2006:245).

Although the developments in leader-centric research do recognise followers as more than just passive recipients of leader behaviours, they are still viewed to an extent as, in the words of Shamir (2007), the dependent variable in the leadership equation. The followers react, or respond, to the leading actions and behaviours of the leader; therefore, leadership is happening *to* them, not *with* them.

2.5. Relationship-based views: followers as integral to leadership

The recognition of leadership being more than the result of leaders acting upon followers, and rather a phenomenon that encompasses an interaction between leaders and followers, has led to definitions such as, "*the process* [own emphasis] by means of which a person persuades and guides the members of the group or organization towards the achievement of its objectives" (Haq, 2011:2793), and numerous others that make reference to leadership being a process that includes the persuasion of a group of followers by a leader or team of leaders towards certain objectives, outcomes or tasks (Drath *et al.*, 2008:637). These definitions seek to address the leadership question, not by interrogating the person of the leader, but by asking "What is leadership?" (Fairholm, 2004:578).

2.5.1. Leadership beyond the leader: relationships and common goals

The introduction of the literature that views leadership beyond the individual who is the leader broadened the discourse landscape to include research that considers leadership to consist of a relationship between leaders and followers, and explores that relationship in order to add to the understanding of leadership (Dansereau, Graen & Haga, 1975; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Meindl, 1995; Bennis, 2007). Fairhurst and Uhl-Bien (2012:1043) articulate it through a relationship-based lens that leadership is "not a trait or behaviour of an individual leader, but a phenomenon generated in the interactions among people acting in context". There are still numerous studies from the recent past that focus on leaders or managers and how they lead, what makes them effective or ineffective, what skills make them better leaders, or how to develop the leaders (Coggburn & Schneider, 2003; Fernandez, 2004; Haq, 2011; Ingraham & Getha-Taylor, 2004; Lambright & Quinn, 2011). However, the progression of leadership studies has led to the identification of the role of followers being one of the aspects that should also be considered in the quest to better understand this phenomenon that is leadership.

Bennis (2007:3) expresses the sentiment of relationship-based views to leadership research as "leadership only exists with the consensus of followers". Such research views regard leadership as a "as a two-way influence relationship between a leader and a follower aimed primarily at attaining mutual goals" (Uhl-Bien, 2006:656); that it does not reside within a person, the leader, (Hollander, 1992a:71), but rather consists of relationships between leaders, followers and a task (Hollander, 1992b:45) (Figure 2.5). Therefore, for there to be a more holistic understanding of leadership, the research needs to include "bottom-up relations" (Lord & Brown, 2001:149). It has to expand beyond the examination of how leaders influence followers, and include investigating how followers are impacted by the behaviours and actions of leaders (Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2014:87), as well as how they, in turn, influence the behaviours and actions of leaders (Oc & Bashshur, 2013:919). Despite relation-based perspectives having been part of the leadership discourse for several decades, the introduction of the term *relational leadership* is a more recent occurrence within the last two decades (Uhl-Bien, 2006:654).

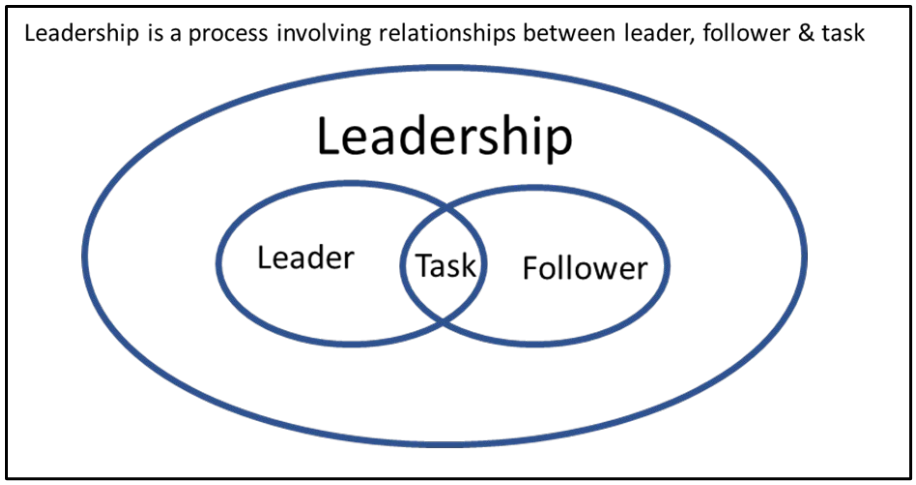


Figure 2.5 Leadership as a relationship between a leader, follower and task

Bennis (2007:3) presents leadership as a tripod (Figure 2.6) consisting of "a leader or leaders, followers, and the common goal they want to achieve where none of the elements can exist without the others". The conceptualisation of the tripod was not a single event, it has developed through a process that has taken place over many years, where each leg "has been the focus of theory building and empirical testing and represents an achievement in understanding" leadership as a phenomenon (Drath *et al*., 2008:638).

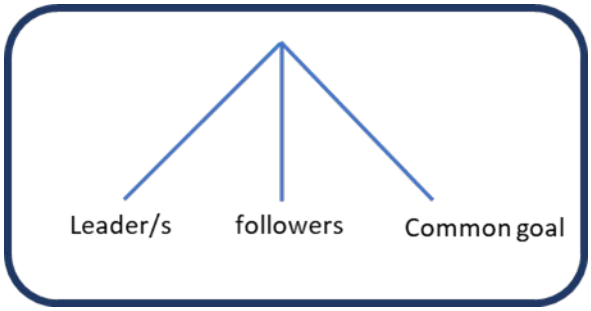


Figure 2.6 Leadership tripod (constructed from Bennis, 2007)

The tripod includes followers as a necessary and important component of leadership; however, the fundamental question it seeks to answer is "Who are the leaders and how do they interact with followers to attain shared goals?" (Drath *et al.,* 2008:636). Although the tripod addresses these elements, its simplicity was considered a limitation by Drath *et al.* (2008:635), albeit they also recognised that their critique was not an intention to devalue its meaningful contribution as a basis for various leadership studies. Instead of leader, follower and shared goal, their conceptualisation of the tripod was "leadership outcomes associated with (1) widespread agreement in a collective on the overall goals, aims, and mission (direction); (2) the

organization and coordination of knowledge and work in a collective (alignment); and (3) the willingness of individuals to subsume their own interests and benefit within the collective interest and benefit (commitment)" (Day & Thornton, 2018:372). Thus, leadership develops where enhanced direction, alignment and commitment at the individual, group or organisational level are achieved as outcomes (Day & Thornton, 2018:372) (Figure 2.7).

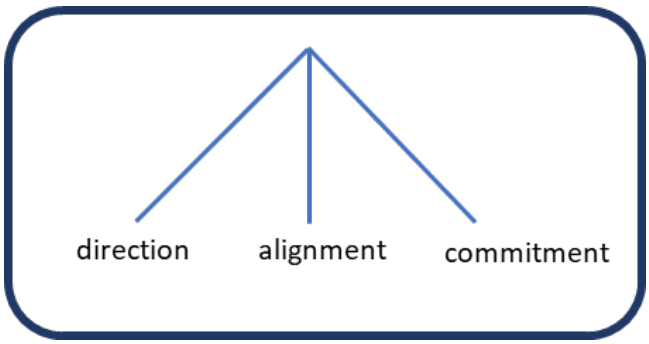


Figure 2.7 Tripod of direction, alignment and commitment (Drath *et al.* 2008)

The replacement of the leader, follower and common goal elements in the tripod with the direction, alignment and commitment outcomes which Drath *et al.* (2008) refer to as the DAC ontology, allows for the understanding of leadership to transcend beyond just the dyadic levels of analysis to encompass the individual, group or organisational levels (Drath *et al.* (2008:637). Epitropaki, Martin and Thomas (2018:111) also consider the different levels of analysis when they differentiate studies between those which focus on the dyadic relationship, and those which focus on social networks and collective systems, indicating the development in depth and breadth of relational leadership research. Within these different approaches, emerges the most dominant relationship-based research domain: leader-member exchange (LMX) (Epitropaki *et al.*, 2018:111).

2.5.2. Leader-member exchange

LMX is concerned with the "nature of relations between leaders and followers" (Antonakis & Day, 2018:11), positing that leadership outcomes are dependent on the quality of the exchange relationship between leaders and followers (Gerstner & Day, 1997:827). Van Knippenberg (2018:312) provides examples of both material (such as a bonus) and immaterial (e.g., respect) exchanges between the leader and follower, and states that what is given should be commensurate with what is received in exchange for there to be a high-quality exchange relationship. It is possible for a leader to have a different quality of relationship with different

followers in a group, as the quality of the exchange will differ between followers (van Knippenberg, 2018:312). LMX theory has its roots in the vertical dyad linkage theory (VDL) which is premised on the assumption that the leader's behaviour is dependent upon the separate relationships the leader has with each of his followers (Dansereau *et al*., 1973:187).

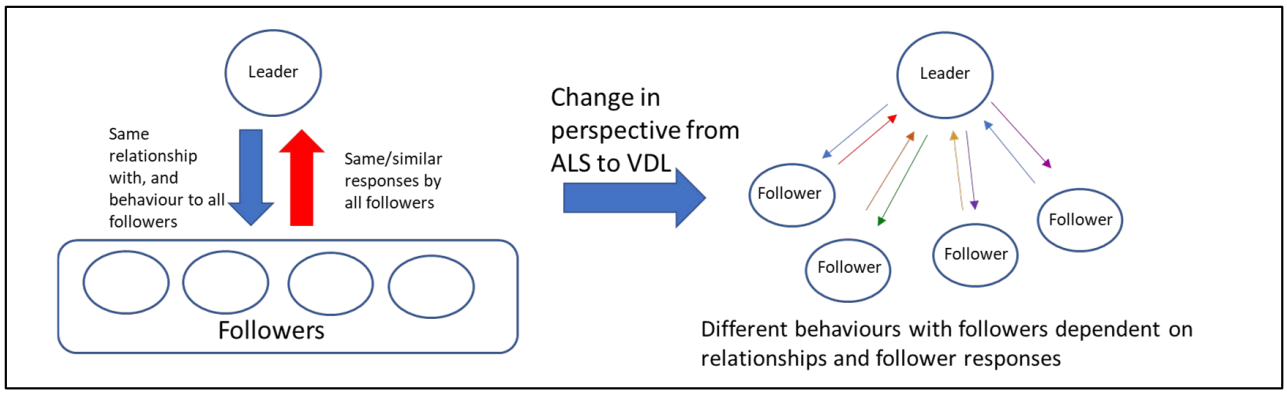


Figure 2.8 Change in perspective from ALS to VDL (adapted from Dansereau *et al*., 1973)

VDL was presented as an alternative to the average leadership style (ALS) model, being the then more common view that followers are homogenous, and thus, in VDL, followers' responses to leader actions and behaviours are dissimilar (Dansereau *et al.*, 1973:186) (Figure 2.8). Therefore, followers are a contributing party to the leadership relationship; i.e., there is an exchange relationship between the leader and follower which develops over time and is not necessarily the same between a leader and all his or her followers (Dansereau *et al*., 1975). Dansereau *et al.* (1975) go further to draw a distinction between what they term "supervision" and "leadership", wherein the former is where "a superior uses his authority to force the member to comply with some prescribed role" (Dansereau *et al*., 1975:75), whereas leadership involves "active exchange of leadership inputs and outcomes" (Ibid.). This was, once again, a step forward for followers in terms of recognition of their role in leadership; however, the relationship was still viewed in a vertical construction as opposed to that of equal contributors.

LMX was the progression of VDL to research that examines not only the relationships between leaders and followers, but also how those relationships develop and the consequences of such relationships on how organisations function (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995:229). The suggestion is that "high quality relations generate more positive leader outcomes than do lower-quality relations" (Antonakis & Day, 2018:11). Thus LMX, like VDL, focuses on the vertical dyadic relationship between leaders and members in an organisation. However, it considers the leader, follower and relationship each to be a domain of leadership (Figure 2.9), and should thus be

studied separately and in various combinations in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of leadership (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995:221).

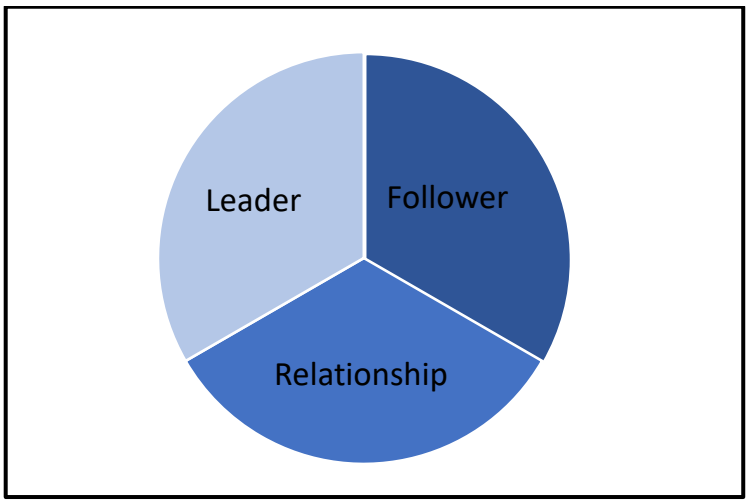


Figure 2.9 The three domains of leadership (adapted from Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995)

In relation to the three domains of leadership, LMX focuses on examining the relationship aspect of leadership, and not on the traits or behaviours of the leaders and followers (House & Aditya, 1997:430). LMX examines the quality of leader-follower relationships, what informs them, and the resultant outcomes (Uhl-bien, 2006:672). With this theory, leadership is considered a relationship of reciprocal influence between a leader and a follower with the purpose of achieving mutual goals. As depicted in Figure 2.9, the follower is an element to be considered in ensuring leadership outcomes. Alongside leader characteristics, interactional variables and contextual variables, follower characteristics are also considered as antecedents to LMX relationship quality (Epitropaki *et al.*, 2018:113). Findings regarding follower characteristics suggest that factors, such as high performance, competence and proactive behaviour from followers, are linked to higher quality LMX (Epitropaki *et al.*, 2018:114). Such research and its findings, support views that followers are not just those who are passively waiting for leaders to do leadership to them, but are actually a crucial part of the process in producing leadership outcomes. And thus, deserve more attention in leadership research.

LMX however still takes a leader-centric approach that privileges leaders over followers, in that it is premised on the relationships that *leaders* develop within each exchange (Yukl, 2013:16), and how these impact on the attitudes and behaviours of those leaders and followers (Epitropaki *et al.*, 2018:112). Lending support to this view, Uhl-Bien *et al.* (2014:88) comment

that, although LMX does regard the follower as a contributor to the relationship-building process, the leader is still considered as the primary contributor to that process.

2.5.3. Summary

The reviewed literature suggests that research which applies the relationship-based lens, by its nature, affords the follower a significant role in the leadership process. The followers are elevated from being primarily non-active, as in the leader-centric approaches, to being contributors with whom a relationship has to be built in order to achieve desired outcomes. The leader needs to interact with the followers in a manner that results in the behaviours required to produce such outcomes. It is further acknowledged that followers are not all the same, hence relationship development happens between the leader and her individual followers as opposed to treating all followers as a homogenous group. Therefore, the leader not only influences the followers, but the followers, in turn, influence the leader's behaviour, as the leader's objective is to form relationships that can lead to mutual goal attainment.

However, even though followers are treated as part of the relationship, they are not assigned the role of the builders thereof (Shamir, 2007:xix). The objective is to investigate what leaders should do, or how they should behave towards followers, in order to build the relationships that result in the achievement of certain outcomes. Followers' resultant actions and behaviours are examined as part of measuring the success, or lack thereof, of those relationships. The leader is still the primary subject of inquiry with regard to the creation of the leader-follower relationship, and the followers are the supporting actors thereto.

2.6. Follower-centric views: followers as social constructors of leadership

Research employing follower-centric approaches brings across followers' views of the leadership construct by examining their perceptions of leadership (Carsten *et al.,* 2010:544; Kean, Haycock-Stuart, Baggaley & Carson, 2011:509). These approaches investigate what leadership is through the eyes of the followers, exploring reasons why people prefer to follow certain leaders over others (Popper, 2015; Ehrhart, 2012). Essentially, leadership is viewed as a process that is socially constructed through the images that individuals have about leaders and what they are like (Alabdulhadi, Schyns & Staudigl, 2017:21). A distinction is drawn between follower-centric approaches and followership research in that the former asks followers about *leaders*, and is concerned with the constructions of leadership (Uhl-Bien &

Pillai, 2007:206), whereas the latter asks followers about *followers* in order to understand "who followers are, how they perceive their role" (Carsten, Harms & Uhl-Bien, 2014:4) and the constructions of followership (Uhl-Bien & Pillai, 2007). Therefore, follower-centric approaches are inquiring about leadership, and not followership. Follower "pre-conceived notions of leaders" (Hogan *et al.*, 1994:497) take centre stage in the inquiries, giving credence to the view that followers play an active role in the leadership relationship (Ehrhart, 2012). In short, a key question that follower-centric approaches seek to answer is: What does leadership mean to followers?

2.6.1. The meaning of leadership to followers

For research to veer towards asking this question, there had to be the following realisations as per Alabdulhadi *et al.* (2017:21): leaders do not equate to leadership, and leadership cannot be fully understood without studying followers. More specifically, understanding of the followers entails the interrogation of their perceptions about leaders (Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2012:210). There has been an emergence of follower-centric research in the recent past (Felfe & Schyns, 2006:710), arising as a response to the abundance of leader-centric research (Uhl-Bien *et al.,* 2014:86). The following sections discuss, in particular, the romance of leadership, implicit leadership theories (ILTs), and the social identity theory of leadership.

2.6.2. The romance of leadership: the social construction of leadership

Although not a theory as such, the romance of leadership (Meindl *et al.*, 1985) was a foundational work that truly captured the notion of leadership being in the eyes of the beholder, as it reflected on the central role that observers award to leadership for organisational outcomes. The importance of including the romance of leadership in the current review lies in its contribution to research on the social constructions of leadership. It brought into prominence the importance of followers in constructing leadership; that is, shifting from leader-centric perspectives to follower-centric perspectives (Meindl, 1995:330). The romance of leadership notion was a significant inspiration to follower-centric research (Bligh & Schyns, 2007:2) and approaches that emphasised leadership as a phenomenon socially constructed by followers (Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2014:86). This is evidenced by the 2 300 citations of Meindl *et al.* (1985) in 2 300 prominent works of various scholars (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Shamir, House & Arthur, 1993; Yukl, 1999).

The romanticising of leadership is described as a state whereby leadership is viewed as a "central organisational process and the premier force in the scheme of organisational events and activities" (Meindl *et al.,* 1985:79). They conclude that the role of leadership in events (both failure and success) becomes overemphasised and unrealistically becomes attributed even to factors that are outside of its control, essentially giving too much credit to leaders for organisational outcomes (Latham, 2014:11). The elevation of leadership to the primary causal agent of significant events is a mechanism used by many to make sense of, and process, such events, especially where there is an extreme outcome, such as very high or very low organisational performance (Meindl & Ehrlich, 1987:92; Bligh & Schyns, 2007:2). Since its introduction, the romance of leadership has been the subject of, or the concept applied in, numerous studies (Shamir, 1992; Meindl & Ehrlich, 1987; Felfe & Petersen, 2007; Gray & Densten, 2007; Schyns & Hansbrough, 2012).

The follower-centric approach to the romance of leadership was presented by Meindl (1995:329) as a way to "provide a complement to leader-centric perspectives". He posited that leadership emerges through social construction by followers when they perceive there to be a relationship in which there are those who lead and those who follow (Meindl, 1995:332). Therefore, the over-attribution of outcomes to leaders is as a result of followers' perspectives of leadership. How much, or what, is attributed to the leader is determined by the "characteristics of the observer", or follower (Bligh, Kohles & Pillai, 2011:1060). Thus, the followers' social constructions of leaders and leadership are more influential than the actual reality of the leaders in the given situation (Meindl, 1995:330). The follower, thus, becomes the subject of interest in so far as their opinions and beliefs regarding leaders and leadership are concerned. The aim is to understand more about how leadership comes into existence from the follower's perspective. Therefore, followers are recognised as individuals who are not all the same, but their differences are investigated for the purpose of understanding the social constructions of leadership.

The romance of leadership can be viewed as a specific ILT (Felfe & Petersen, 2007:2; Schyns & Hansbrough, 2012:1871) that regards leadership as causally dominant (Meindl & Ehrlich, 1987:93) in significant organisational events (Bligh & Schyns, 2007:2). ILTs, as an approach, investigate the different beliefs that followers hold about leaders, and are discussed in the following section.

2.6.3. Implicit leadership theories

As opposed to leader-centric approaches that attempt to address the question of what a leader is or does by studying the leader, ILTs investigate what individuals, usually followers, believe a leader is or does (Baker, 2007:54). Followers form an understanding of, and also react to, a leader's behaviours according to their ILT (Shondrick & Lord, 2010:1); that is, based on their perceptions of how a leader should behave. These perceptions that individuals hold are really their prototypes and stereotypes of how they think a leader should behave and the traits they should have (Yukl, 2013:233). Although first introduced by Eden and Leviatan in 1975, the significance of ILTs has been recognised, as it is an area of leadership that continues to receive attention from a number of scholars (Felfe & Petersen, 2007; Popper, 2015; Ehrhart, 2012; Alabdulhadi *et al.*, 2017; Junker & van Dick, 2014).

A key assumption of ILTs is that the preconceived ideas held by individuals on leader characteristics and behaviours determine whether they perceive someone as a leader (Hogan *et al.*, 1994:497). Oc & Bashshur (2013:920) state it as the view that "leadership exists in the minds of followers". At the most general level, a follower would differentiate between a leader and a non-leader (Offerman *et al.*, 1994:44). ILTs extend further than this distinction, though, to also encompass the basis upon which followers perceive or evaluate the effectiveness of leaders (Engle & Lord, 1997:992). That is, how a follower describes, evaluates, and experiences a leader is significantly influenced by their implicit leadership theory (Ling, Chia & Fang, 2000:729). Described by Offerman & Coats (2018:513) as the "cognitive structures or schemas that specify what people expect from leaders in terms of leader traits and attributes", ILTs are then the lens through which individuals view leaders, and thereby, judge their effectiveness. The unconscious application of this lens can even lead to followers rating leaders based on their ILTs as opposed to actual leader behaviours (Hollander & Offerman, 1990:180). Bryman (1987) found that implicit theories inform leader perception to such an extent that there is little difference between an individual's reporting of a real leader and an imaginary leader whose actual behaviour is unknown. The result is that those leaders who meet these preconceived notions of how they should be are in an advantaged position, as opposed to those who do not (Junker & van Dick, 2014:1155).

Individuals do not only use ILTs as a foundation for interpreting the leader's behaviour, but also to inform their own behaviours (Engle & Lord, 1997:991). Consequently, the follower's

behaviour will be determined by their perception of the leader's behaviours. Leadership is, thus, socially constructed by the actual observed characteristics and behaviours of the leader, as well as the observer's beliefs (van Gils *et al.*, 2010:340). This process of social construction can also occur in non-formal contexts, wherein an individual that boasts characteristics in line with the ILTs of others will be viewed as a leader and granted the opportunity to lead (Sy & McCoy, 2014:131).

Epitropaki and Martin (2005:660) advance the view that ILTs are formed through socialisation and past experiences with leaders. With that view in mind, research on ILTs has also had to consider the different elements that contribute to individuals' beliefs about leaders and leadership, such as "beliefs, values and personality traits" (Yukl, 2013:233) (Figure 2.10). The socialisation aspect, in particular, has led to the importance of cross-cultural research as raised by Yukl (2013), with Kono, Ehrhart, Ehrhart and Schultze (2012) finding that the development of ILTs is likely affected by cultural value. Differences have also been found between people of different social groups in China, as well as between Chinese people and those from the United States (Ling *et al.*, 2000).

As part of follower-centric approaches, ILT research does indeed challenge the leader-centric views by elevating the role of followers through the acceptance that follower characteristics shape the perception of leadership (Felfe & Schyns, 2006:709). The role of the follower is elevated to social constructor of leadership, as "all specified leader behaviours would still not make an individual a leader unless that person is also perceived as a leader" (House & Aditya, 1997:437). Further to this, ILTs seek to understand leadership from the perspective of the follower by investigating the underlying beliefs and conceptualisations that followers have regarding leadership; that is, how followers construct leadership. This extends to leader quality and effectiveness being, to a considerable extent, "determined by the follower's perceptions and interpretations" (van Gils *et al.*, 2010:340).

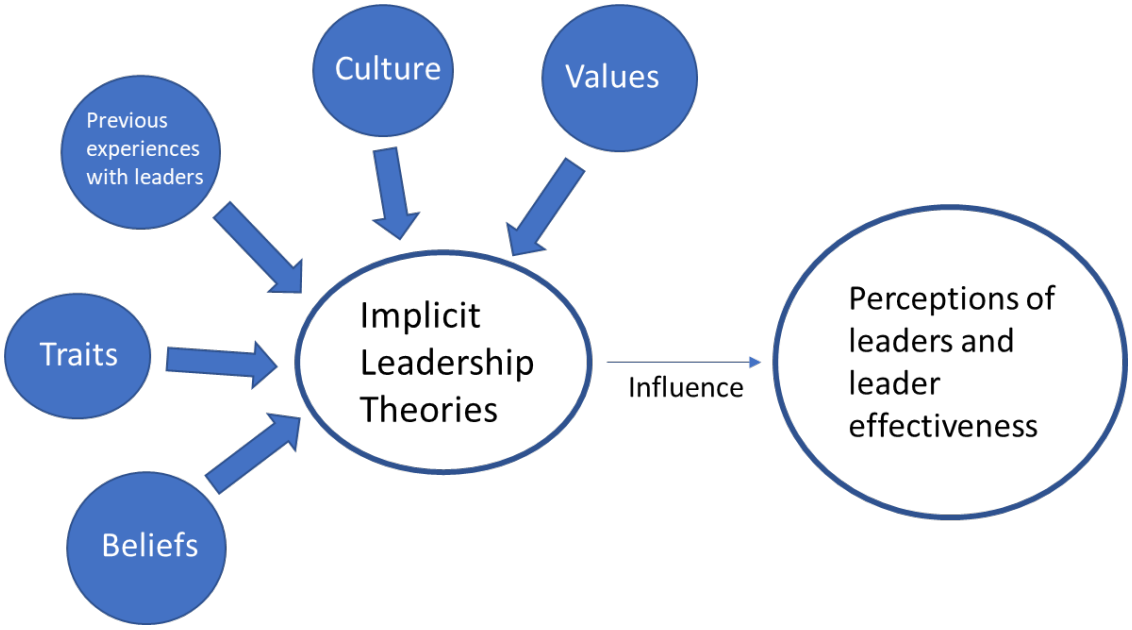


Figure 2.10 Contributors to ILTs and how individuals' ILTs influence how they view leaders (adapted from Alabdulhadi *et al.*, 2017)

2.6.4. Social identity leadership theory

Research approached through a social identity lens approaches leadership as being impacted by how individuals identify within a group (social identity); that is, the more they identify with that particular group, the more they will "experience group interest as self-interest" (van Knippenberg, 2018:302). Therefore, the follower's self-identity is aligned with the group social identity; they are more likely to work towards the attainment of the goals of that group, and thus, accept influence attempts by the leader of that group (Yukl, 2013:236). This approach, thus, considers leader effectiveness to be contingent upon the leader's ability to influence followers and the followers' proclivity to take the direction of the leader (Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2014:87). With the social identity approach, social groups comprise a mental framework including group values, beliefs, and acceptable behaviours that present the group; that is, what is considered "group normative" (van Knippenberg, 2018:303). A group may possess a social identity of proactive follower behaviours as opposed to conformance and deference, which will impact how they react to a leader who may be directing the group towards an unethical act (Yukl, 2013:236). Such followers may choose not to execute (follow) the leader's directive, thus, essentially not granting the leader the "permission to operate and innovate" (Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2014:87) as a leader. Should the leader not be behaving prototypically in terms of the group, they are unlikely to be viewed or accepted as the leader by said group. If the self-identities of the individuals in the group match the group social identity, there will be some shared social

construction of leadership (Bligh & Schyns, 2007:24). Therefore, leadership will be socially constructed by the group based on whether the leader is behaving in line with the opinions each group member holds about leadership (Ibid.).

Leadership studies applying this approach investigate leader group prototypicality, which means that leadership is "in the eye of the beholder" (van Knippenberg, 2018:310), a perspective that underpins follower-centric leadership research. Leadership is, thus, socially constructed through followers' understanding of leadership (Ibid.). The role of the follower is, thus, elevated to that of being central to the construction of the leadership role.

2.6.5. Summary

Follower-centric approaches arose as a response to the dominant leader-centric approaches in leadership research (Bligh & Schyns, 2007:6). The follower-centric works bring the long-outstanding attention to followers in leadership research, bringing to prominence the role of followers within the leadership process (Carsten *et al.*, 2010:544). Follower-centric approaches treat the follower as a more active participant in the leadership relationship and steer the leadership discourse towards assigning followers a more significant role of being social constructors of leadership. Such that it should be accepted that although an individual may possess an official title and occupy a certain hierarchical role within an organisation, whether or not that person is, *viewed* or *considered* a leader, or, seen to be effective in that role, is a matter significantly determined by followers' beliefs and characteristics.

Notwithstanding the increased attention to followers within follower-centric studies, the primary concern thereof is the constructions of leadership. Consequently, this does not bring forth what followership research does, being "follower-centred perspectives of followership" (Carsten *et al*., 2010:544).

2.7. Conclusion

This chapter has provided a summary of how followers have been considered in different approaches to leadership research. The literature brought together in this overview was to demonstrate how, as the body of leadership research has expanded, so has the consideration of the role of the follower. The research has developed from considering leaders as the only entity in leadership, where leadership was considered to be something that resides within the leaders,

and followers were just entities to be led, as in the trait and situational approaches. Such leader-centric approaches dominated the research on organisational leadership, preoccupied with the formally designated leaders of the organisations. As reviewed literature revealed, the followers were recognised as those who exist to be led by the leaders, but were not of significant interest, nor was their role viewed as being of much significance.

There was reflection on approaches that consider followers as more active participants, albeit to different extents. There has been an acceptance that leadership results from followers accepting the leader's attempt to influence them or their actions (Joubert, 2014:48), as without followers, there can be no leaders or leadership (Howell & Shamir, 2005:96). Relationship-based approaches view leadership as a mutual influence process between leaders and followers, where the focus is on constructing a relationship that will result in the desired organisational and leadership outcomes. The leaders are the primary constructors of this relationship, with the followers reacting thereto and informing the leader's behaviours towards them; thus, the followers also having an impact on the leader's behaviours. Followers are viewed as individuals, and thus may not all respond in the same manner to a leader; consequently, they need to be understood to the extent that they impact on leader behaviour.

Follower-centric approaches regard followers as social constructors of leadership; thus, leadership is partly constructed by followers, where their perceptions about leaders and leadership, combined with observed actual behaviours, result in a socially constructed reality (van Gils *et al.*, 2010:340). The inquiries in follower-centric research aim to better understand leadership by finding out what followers think and how they react to leaders and their acts of leadership. Therefore, as with relational approaches, the role of followers is investigated to the extent that it provides more insight into leaders and leadership. Followership research, on the other hand, takes us beyond the follower-centric and relation-based approaches of leadership studies to examining how followers construct and enact followership (Carsten *et al*., 2010).

Table 2.1 depicts an overview of the approaches and perspectives discussed.

Table 2.1 How followers have been treated in different perspectives to the study of leadership

Approaches and perspectives to the study of leadership	**Leader-centric:** followers as incidental to leadership	**Relationship-based:** followers as integral to leadership	**Follower-centric:** followers as social constructors of leadership
Trait-based perspectives			
Situational approaches			
Behavioural and style approaches			
Relational approaches			
Leader-member exchange			
Romance of leadership			
Implicit leadership theories			
Social identity theory of leadership			

(adapted from Uhl-Bien *et al*, 2014:85)

CHAPTER 3: FOLLOWERSHIP AND THE ACT OF FOLLOWING

3.1. Introduction

The literature discussed in Chapter 2 reveals that leadership research has evolved to recognise that followers are required for the leadership construct to exist (Bennis, 2007; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Meindl, 1995). Continuing along this path of follower recognition within leadership, the present chapter considers the emergence of studies on followers and followership by various scholars (Kelley, 1988; 1992; Baker, 2007; Agho, 2009; Carsten *et al.*, 2010; 2016; Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2014;). In followership research, followers are awarded the position of prominence in the leadership discourse, with an aim to understand "who followers are, how they define and enact their role, and the ways in which they may impact leaders and the leadership process" (Lapierre & Carsten, 2014:ix). Such prominence is indeed warranted if we have views that proffer that followers play a key role in the success of organisations (Avolio & Reichard, 2008:337), or even that their role is equal to that of leadership in determining organisational performance (Chou, 2012:74).

The focus of the present chapter is on discussing studies on followership. Followers were previously only considered from the perspective of leaders; this chapter reviews literature that explores what *followers* believe about followers and their behaviours. A review of the extant literature on followership is presented, from where the gap that the present study endeavours to address is identified. The chapter commences by discussing how followership research has come to be considered as a significant field within leadership studies, starting by reflecting on the seminal works that called for the inclusion of followers within leadership research. The two major approaches to followership studies are reviewed, noting key studies conducted using each of those approaches. The chapter concludes with an examination of followership studies conducted in Africa.

3.2. Followership research: the quest to understand followers

The call to include followers in leadership studies has been traced as far back as 1933, and was made by Mary Parker Follett when she acknowledged that followers and their role in leadership were not being given the requisite attention (Gilbert & Hyde, 1988; Baker, 2007; Bjugstad *et al.*, 2006). As previously discussed, leadership literature has not completely ignored followers; however, the discourse has included them in so far as they moderate, perceive or impact leader

behaviour and leadership. The importance of understanding the role of followers and following really received significant attention through the research of Kelley (1988; 1992). These two studies are part of the seminal works cited in recent research on followers and followership by various scholars (Carsten *et al*., 2016; Malakyan, 2015; Uhl-Bien *et al*., 2014; Crossman & Crossman, 2011; Danielsson, 2013).

The quest to understand followers as separate actors in the leadership process, as opposed to a by-product of leadership (Lapierre & Carsten, 2014:ix) has led to the emergence of followership research as a distinct field of study, with an acknowledgement that "followers differ in the way in which they define and enact the followership role" (Carsten *et al.*, 2018:731). Understanding the differences in follower behaviour and characteristics is of critical importance to leaders and organisations (Zawawi, Kamarunzaman, Hussin & Campbell, 2012:5), as followers are needed to fulfil organisational objectives. This has led to the research making enquiries into different aspects of followership, including social constructions of followership, follower characteristics, implicit theories of followership, follower role identity, and follower behaviours. However, before getting to the "how" of followership research, one needs to address the "what" of followership research; that is, addressing the question of what followership is.

Defining the concept of followership is not a straightforward matter; in fact, the researcher is not able to provide a definitive answer, as a generally accepted definition is yet to emerge (Blair & Bligh, 2018:131; Singh & Bodhanya, 2013:499; Hinrichs & Hinrichs, 2014:90); hence, the tendency towards referring to the concept of followership in terms of what research on followership is or entails (Uhl-Bien *et al.,* 2014; Carsten *et al.*, 2010; 2014; Kilburn, 2010). Some of the descriptions found in the reviewed literature include the following:

- "the corresponding role to leadership" (Kelley 2008:6);
- "the other side of the leadership interaction" (Blanchard, Welbourne, Gilmore & Bullock, 2009:11);
- Jin, McDonald and Park (2016:219) define active followership as "an interactive role that individuals play that complements the leadership for achieving group and organisational performance";
- "Followership can be defined as a role enactment process" (Zoogah, 2014:6); and

- "The acceptance of influence from another person or persons without feeling coerced and toward what is perceived to be a common purpose" (Stech, 2008:41).

From the above, it can be gleaned that there is a leaning toward understanding followership as the enactment of a role that is complementary to, not opposing, that of leadership; and that it is voluntary. This is aligned to understanding that followership acknowledges the existence of a mutual influence process between leaders and followers (Kilburn, 2010:9); that within the construct of leadership, there is not only the role of leading, but also the role of following. What has transpired, though, is that leadership studies have primarily focused on the act of leadership within the construct, paying little attention to the enactment of followership (Blanchard *et al.*, 2009:111). Followership theory emerged as a response to Shamir's (2007) call to "reverse the lens"; a call for scholars to reverse their perspectives on the leadership discourse and consider "followers as the causal agents and examine their impact on the leaders and the leadership relationship" (Shamir, 2007:xxi), thus, acknowledging that "followers and followership are core elements of leadership" (Uhl-Bien & Carsten, 2018:196).

The need for research on followership is underpinned by the assumption that it is not possible to gain a full understanding of leadership without examining the contribution of followers and followership to the leadership process (Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2014:89). The examination is conducted from the point of view of the follower; where followership is the subject of enquiry and followers are those to whom the enquiry is being made (Danielsson, 2013; Oyetunji, 2013; Blanchard *et al.*, 2009). Within the current literature, as understood by the researcher, there are two lenses applied in followership research: 1) role-based approaches, and 2) constructionist approaches. Role-based views identify followers based on organisational hierarchical structures (Carsten *et al.,* 2018:733), where followers are subordinates and leaders are managers. Research based on the constructionist approaches does not attach followership to a role, position or rank, but rather to the interplay of individuals' behaviours that result in leadership and followership (Uhl-Bien & Carsten, 2018:208). Ultimately though, both approaches are concerned with addressing the key concern of followership studies: how followers view *their* role within the leadership process (Carsten *et al.,* 2010:543; Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2012:210), as opposed to what they think about the leader's role which tends to be the focus of follower-centric approaches.

Although contributions to the existing body of knowledge on followership have come from research applying both of these approaches, it is argued that these differing views are the source of confusion within followership discourse (Uhl-Bien *et al.,* 2014:89) due to divergent views on use of language (Uhl-Bien & Carsten, 2018). As role-based views study followers in a hierarchical context, the thought is that they subordinate followership to leadership within the hierarchical structure, bringing forth the negative connotations of being a follower that have been prevalent in previous management literature (Baker, 2007:55). This results in scholars, such as Rost (2008), describing the use of the word *follower* as problematic, and thereby suggesting that followership is an outdated concept. Scholars positioned in the constructionist views also advocate for the use of other terms such as "collaborators", and "participants" (Uhl-Bien *et al.,* 2014:90), as their research does not typically result in the use of words related to following. However, Uhl-Bien and Carsten (2018:210) suggest that it may be that, due to the negative meanings typically associated with the terms, follower/following, participants might opt not to identify their behaviour as that of followership. They also make reference to Shamir's position (in Hosking, Shamir, Ospina, & Uhl-Bien, 2012) that constructionist research that omits followers no longer falls within the realm of leadership studies, but alternative phenomena, such as "collaboration and teamwork" (Uhl-Bien *et al.,* 2014:90).

3.3. Role-based approaches

Role-based approaches have been the lens for the earlier research that focused on follower typologies and styles (Zaleznik, 1965; Kelley, 1988; 1992; Chaleff, 2009) with the aim of finding out what makes for an ideal or effective follower as opposed to one who is not effective or ideal. Shamir's (2007) call to reverse the lens has been considered as a catalyst for development of research in this area (Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2014:89; Uhl-Bien & Carsten, 2018:204), which has expanded to include role orientations (Carsten *et al.*, 2010) and co-production beliefs (Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2012), as well as how these inform how leaders enact their leadership (Oc & Bashshur, 2013). The following discussion on various role-based approaches considers research on typologies, role orientations and implicit theories.

3.3.1. Follower typologies

Studies on follower typologies seek to find out how followers should or should not be with regard to characteristics and behaviour in order to be effective. Typology research recognises that different followers affect leadership in different ways (Kean *et al.*, 2011:508); therefore,

such differences need to be researched, just as the different types of leaders have been studied. The ensuing sections discuss the most notable typologies as identified in various followership studies (Kean *et al*., 2011; Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2014; Kilburn, 2010; Crossman & Crossman, 2011; Lapierre & Carsten, 2014).

3.3.1.1. Zaleznik's patterns of subordinacy

In his 1965 paper, Zaleznik examined the dynamics of followers and following (referred to as subordinates and subordinacy) in organisations. The dyadic relationship between leaders and followers was examined through trying to understand followers and follower styles. The resultant model categorises followers along two continuums, each on an axis. The first axis depicts the extremes of dominance to submission, wherein dominance is an individual's "wishes to control and overpower authority figures", and submission is "wishes to be dominated and controlled by authority figures" (Zaleznik, 1965:120). The desire to either control or be controlled (or anywhere in between) resides within the person, and is, therefore, not so much an action as much as it is a factor that impacts how the individual acts in response to situations (Zaleznik, 1965:126). The second axis is that of activity to passivity, where followers can either display active behaviours, such as being initiators of action; or be reactionary, where they wait for others to initiate action and they respond thereto (passive) (Zaleznik, 1965:126). This model resulted in four typologies as depicted in Figure 3.1.

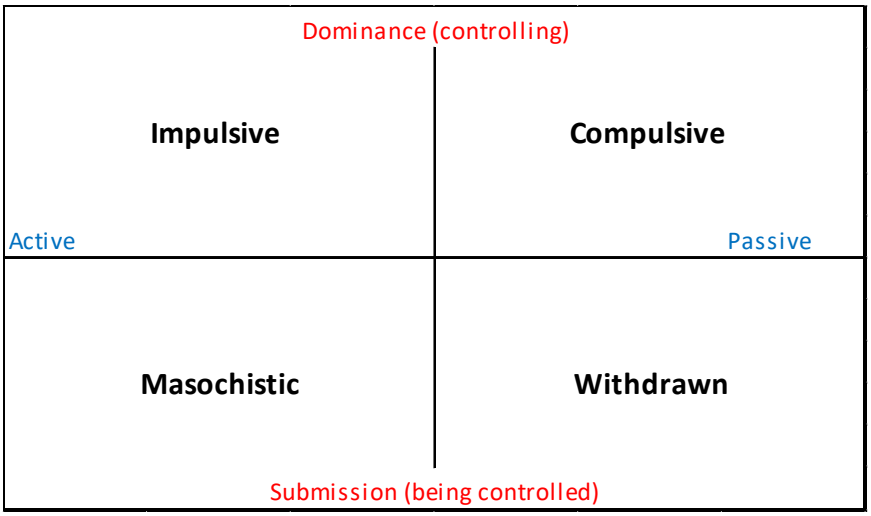


Figure 3.1 Patterns of subordinacy (Zaleznik, 1965)

The four typologies are described below:

1) **Impulsive:** Dominating the leader-follower relationship through active means. Can manifest negatively through conflict with superiors or job-hopping; or, where the individual practices an appropriate level of self-control, positively through constructive engagement with superiors to change organisational *status quo* for the better.
2) **Compulsive:** The follower wishes to control the relationship with the leader through passivity. This type of follower has the desire for control, but is not willing to take the actions or shoulder the responsibilities of taking that action in that desire for dominance.
3) **Masochistic:** Followers in this quadrant have a desire to be controlled or dominated by authority figures, and actively pursue situations that can result in such control. They are described as masochistic because they seek out situations for their superiors to exert control, in a negative manner, in order to fulfil their fantasies of the leaders being aggressors and persecutors.
4) **Withdrawn:** This category of followers displays a level of apathy; they have no desire for control and are also passive.

Although the primary purpose for the development of Zaleznik's typologies was to examine the source of leader-follower conflict, his focus on the followers and what underlies their behaviours and reactions provided the follower-centred lens that had been missing in research which included followers. The followers were viewed as an entity on their own, with their own underlying characteristics and behaviours that were influenced by their experiences and socialisations. This view of followers was taken forward to the studies that followed; which focused on not only examining the typologies, but also which of those typologies can be considered to be effective in the realm of enacting followership.

3.3.1.2. Kelley's effective follower

Over 20 years after Zaleznik's study, Kelley (1992:143) argued that we, as humanity, are so engrossed in leadership and its importance that, despite the fact that followership dominates our lives and organisations, it fails to dominate our minds. As a result, we do not consider "the nature and the importance of the follower" (Kelley, 1988:143), whereas, effective followers are vital for the successful outcomes of leaders and organisations (Kelley, 1992). Kelley's model identified five different follower styles placed on two axes representing two behavioural dimensions (Figure 3.2): the vertical dimension is the degree to which followers exercise

independent, critical thinking, and the horizontal dimension is the level of engagement, i.e., passive or active (Kelley, 1988:145). Based on the two dimensions, Kelley identified five follower types or followership styles. The labels for these styles were later amended in his 1992 and 2008 publications; however, the descriptions remained fundamentally the same. The five followership styles are:

1) **Alienated:** Those who think critically and independently but are low on engagement, and passive in their roles (Kelley, 1988:143). They can stand up to the boss, but carry a lot of negativity, coming up with problems and not solutions (Kelley, 2008:7) – reasons why not do to something, but no alternatives. They tend to always have something negative to say to the leader (Kelley, 1992:160).
2) **The sheep:** These are passive followers who lack initiative (Kelley, 1988:143). They do not exercise any independent, critical thinking and "look to the leader to do the thinking for them and motivate them" (Kelley, 2008:7).
3) **The yes-people:** They are actively engaged and are enthusiastic about doing work but they don't do much independent thinking, so they rely on the leader for that. The leader needs to provide inspiration, as they always come to the leader for direction (Kelley, 1988, 2008). They have a need to "please the boss" (Kelley, 1992:160).
4) **The survivors:** These are typically fence-sitters who play it safe by observing "which way the wind blows" (Kelley, 2008:7). They just want to survive all the changes that take place with new leadership and other organisational change; once they've figured out how things work, they go with that (Kelley, 2008:8).
5) **The exemplary followers:** They are actively engaged with positive energy and think for themselves as well (Kelley, 2008:8). They tend to be "self-starters and problem solvers" who don't necessarily need the leader in order to succeed or produce outcomes (Kelley, 1988:144). They will independently evaluate a leader's decision before agreeing or disagreeing with it; if they agree, they support, and if they disagree, they challenge and offer alternatives (Kelley, 2008:8).

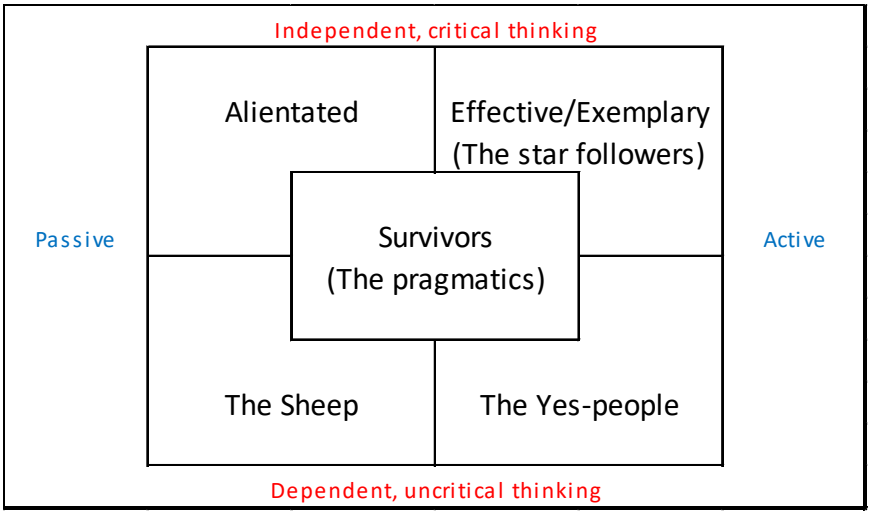


Figure 3.2 Kelley's follower typologies (adapted from Kelley, 1988:145)

Having positioned exemplary followers as the most effective, Kelley (1988:144) delved into the characteristics and behaviours that make them ideal followers. The first characteristic is that effective followers have the ability to manage themselves. The paradoxical nature of this characteristic is not lost on him, as he reflects that such a characteristic requires followers to exercise independence and control, as well as see themselves as equal to leaders, other than in terms of the formal reporting line. This requires an individual to behave outside of the usual passive and non-thinking connotations that have tended to be associated with followers and following, as demonstrated in the reviewed literature (Ibid.).

The second quality of effective followers is that they are committed to the organisation and to a purpose, principle, or person outside themselves. This quality allows for a follower to focus their efforts towards achieving organisational goals, although, at times, leaders can misconstrue this commitment towards the organisational goals as loyalty towards them. This misconception is revealed when the leader acts contrary to the organisational goals, as the follower can then cease to support the leader. Baker (2007:56) posits a similar argument from Litzinger and Schaefer (1982) that "because followers could withhold or grant their obedience to a leader, the leader was constrained to act in ways that the follower found consistent with organisational goals". Kelley (1988:145) also reflects on how this quality can have negative outcomes. This can occur when there is an incongruence between the goals the follower is committed to and those of the organisation, as such a strong level of commitment can result in the follower's actions being harmful to the organisation (Ibid.).

According to Kelley (1988), effective followers build their competence and focus their efforts for maximum impact. Such followers hold themselves to high standards of performance and continue to develop their skills not only to ensure competence, but also to expand the tasks they are able to do (Kelley, 1988:145). The importance of this quality lies in the fact that being committed with low competence is ultimately still incompetence (Ibid.).

The fourth quality listed by Kelley (1988) is that of being courageous, honest and credible, thus, establishing the followers as "independent, critical thinkers whose judgement can be trusted" (Kelley, 1988:146). This last-mentioned characteristic is what Kelley (1992:169) refers to as "courageous conscience" which is what is needed to challenge leaders in their ethical decision-making for the good of the organisation. It is a courageous thing for followers to challenge leaders, as it is not a social norm due to the dynamic between leaders and followers being such that "to obey is expected and rewarded; to disobey requires explanation and the risk of punishment" (Kelley, 1992:170). The courage to disagree with a leader, and not just obey, can be key in determining follower responses to unethical requests by a leader and maintaining ethical behaviour in organisations (Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2013:49). This kind of behaviour is more likely to come from followers that view their role as that of active participants in the leadership process, and thus feel a sense of responsibility to do what they know to be right (Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2013:58).

3.3.1.3. Chaleff's courageous follower

The matter of courage is a central point for Chaleff (2009), as he positions what he terms as "courageous followers" to be vital in getting the best outcome from the leader-follower relationship. He argues that the assumption that the leader should dominate the leader-follower relationship is in fact dangerous for the advancement of organisational outcomes (Chaleff, 2003:18). The dimensions of courageous followership are described as follows (Chaleff, 2009:20):

- *The courage to assume responsibility* – not only for oneself as a follower, but also for the organisation's common purpose;
- *The courage to serve – the* leader and the organisation towards the attainment of the organisation's objectives;
- *The courage to challenge* – any actions, behaviours or policies by the leader (and broader group) if they are in conflict with the organisational purpose or their integrity;

- *The courage to participate in transformation* – through a willingness to initiate required changes to get the leader and group back on track with the common purpose of the organisation;
- *The courage to take moral action* – including taking a stand against wrong-doing, either by disobeying direct orders or even resigning if necessary; and
- *The courage to speak to the hierarchy* – by developing means to appropriately escalate issues if immediate leaders are part of the issue or not taking appropriate action to address issues.

As is evident from the dimensions, courageous followership requires the follower to look beyond themselves and the leader-follower relationship. The follower needs to have the greater purpose of the organisation in mind, as that should drive their behaviour – the attainment of the broader organisational goals or objectives. For that to happen, the follower does require a certain level of consideration and engagement with the bigger picture, so that they may indeed enact their followership in a courageous manner. From identifying what encompasses a courageous follower, Chaleff then uses a two-dimension matrix to determine different follower styles. The first dimension depicts the degree of support a follower gives a leader, from low to high, and the second dimension represents how willing a follower is to challenge leader behaviours or policies that are detrimental to the organisation (Chaleff, 2009:43) (Figure 3.3).

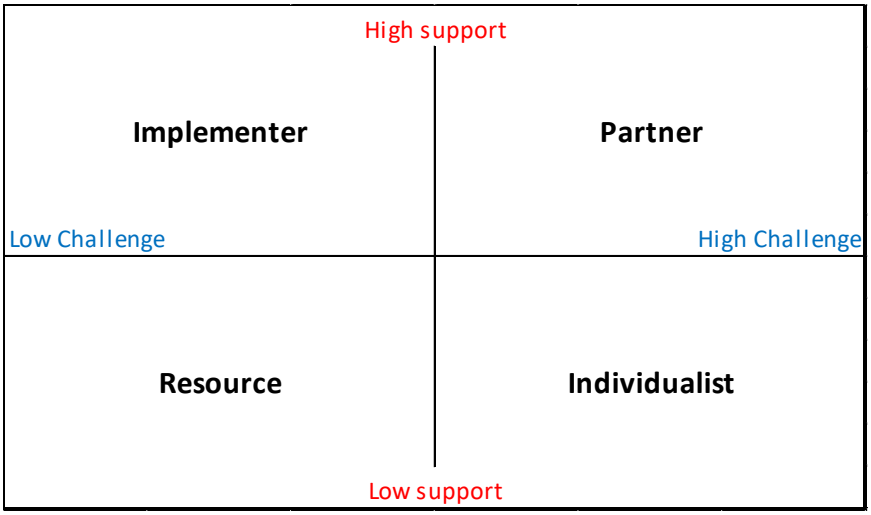


Figure 3.3 Chaleff's typologies (Source: Chaleff, 2009:43)

The resulting typologies are explained below:

1) **Partner:** A follower who displays many of the courageous follower characteristics as described. They offer strong support to the leader in the quest to achieve organisational objectives; yet are also willing to interrogate the actions of leaders when they believe they may be deviating from the organisational purpose.
2) **Implementer:** This type of follower is very dependable to the leader; they support them in all endeavours, and do not challenge them. It can be dangerous for an organisation to have this type of follower though, as they are likely not to commit what Carsten and Uhl-Bien (2013) refer to as "crimes of obedience"; that is, they are unlikely to challenge a leader even if they are doing the wrong things or even facilitate them by obeying instructions to do the wrong things.
3) **Individualist:** An individualist type of follower does not respect the leader (or their wishes) just for the reason that they are a leader. They tend to have low support for leaders and leader initiatives. They will typically challenge wrong-doing or actions that are divergent from what they understand to be the organisational goals. These characteristics tend to alienate them from the leader and the group.
4) **Resource:** The resource follower is not useless, they show-up and do their work; but that is pretty much all they will do. They are low on support, as they are not very committed to either the organisation or the leader; and they do not challenge, as that would require a higher level of engagement with the leader and the organisation's goals and objectives. They do what is required in terms of their job, and then leave, with little investment of themselves.

Blair and Bligh (2018:136) say that followers take a risk when presenting views that are divergent from the leader or the group; thus, such action would require courage. As seen from the review of Chaleff's typologies, the follower types that possess the most courageous follower characteristics are those that are willing to challenge the *status quo;* these being the partner and the individualist followers. However, the individualists are lacking on the support-giving, and can thus be less constructive than the partners. The risk-taking followers described by Blair and Bligh (2018:136) can result in the consideration of new ideas and doing things differently. This also aligns quite closely to Kelley's exemplary followers who think for themselves and make up their own minds on things, as opposed to agreeing with everything the leader says or does. Zaleznik (1965) also used the description of "courageous" for impulsive

followers who had sufficient self-control to prevent their high dominance and activity characteristics from being destructive. Although Kelley, Zaleznik and Chaleff used different typology categories and axes, the similarities between their models are still evident. Followers that are deemed most effective or good for organisations possess the characteristics of being able to think for themselves, thereby correcting leaders when they go astray, as well as having a strong level of activity, thereby supporting the leader's and organisation's goals through their own efforts.

3.3.1.4. Kellerman's engagement continuum

In support of advancing followership research, Kellerman argued that not only is there a two-directional relationship between leaders and followers, wherein followers also have power and influence, but also that followers are not all the same (Kellerman, 2007:7). In developing her follower typologies, Kellerman designed a single metric model based on level of engagement. Although applying a different model, a consistent theme still emerges in that Kellerman (2007:7) asserts that active followers are preferable to those who do not act. More specifically, she states that "good followers will actively support a leader who is good and will actively oppose a leader who is bad" (Kellerman, 2007:7). The levels of engagement range from "feeling and doing absolutely nothing" to "being passionately committed and deeply involved" (Kellerman, 2007:3) (Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4 Kellerman's engagement continuum (Kellerman, 2007)

Placed along the continuum from least engaged to most engaged, Kellerman (2007) describes each of the follower types as below:

1) **Isolates:** With a tendency for being found in very large companies, as it is easy to go unnoticed in such an environment (Kellerman, 2007:4), this type of follower is disengaged and just does their work as required. A bad leader can thrive with this type of follower as they, through their passivity, inadvertently help maintain the current state of affairs without any challenge.

2) **Bystanders:** This kind of follower also tends to thrive in a large company, as they deliberately want to go unnoticed (Kellerman, 2007:4). The label of "bystander" is rather apt, as this follower may be engaged enough to know what is happening around them; they just do not care. They do not have the organisation at heart, and are not bothered with the objectives or goals. That is, even if they are aware that the status quo is not right, they may go along with it as it is the "path of least resistance" and is less effort than being engaged in action to try and change it. Thus, they are, much like the isolate, also likely to keep a bad leader in place – although they would be aware that the leader is bad.
3) **Participants:** The participant follower is more engaged and invested in the outcome of what they are doing. They put some effort into obtaining certain outcomes (Kilburn, 2010:12); however, the outcome may not always be aligned with the leader's or organisation's purpose. Therefore, a leader needs to be aware of whether this person is aligned with them or not (Kellerman, 2007:5).
4) **Activists:** The activist follower has a high level of engagement and will engage in the required activities for the outcome they desire; however, such outcome may not be the same as that desired by the leader, hence the activist might not be an ally of the leader, but more that of the organisation. Activist followers are less common than isolates or bystanders due to the amount of commitment required to be this kind of follower (Kellerman, 2007:5). This same commitment is the reason that they can be quite impactful in an organisation, as they are willing to take action when required.
5) **Diehards:** A diehard follower is considered rare, due to the level of commitment required to be such a follower (Kellerman, 2007:6). They are willing to go all the way for what they believe in or are committed to. For a leader, this is good when such a follower is aligned to you; however, when what they believe includes getting rid of the leader, then they can be a liability for such leader. Diehard followers are willing to take the risk for what they believe is right; from an organisational perspective, this can manifest as whistleblowing, which is often considered to be quite risky by many (Kellerman, 2007:6). Diehards exhibit the courage to stick to their convictions.

Followers with a high level of engagement are more active, and act based on their commitment to a particular outcome. They are less likely to allow a leader to continue down what they believe is the wrong path, and thus, they are more useful to an organisation. The common

thread in the four typologies that have been discussed is the requirement of followers to do more than just passively obey leaders. This is aligned to Townsend and Gebhardt's (1997:140) assertion that "being a good follower is not a passive role". The researcher would venture to say that whether a follower is good or not is not just a matter of activity, but also depends on whether they assist the organisation in achieving its objectives or not. This also emerges from the typologies discussed, as a follower may be very active, but in the opposite direction to what the organisation requires; thus, being destructive. Therefore, in order for effective followership to emerge, the follower should prioritise the organisational goals above their own self-interests (Baker *et al.*, 2014:79).

3.3.2. Followership role orientations

The role-based approach continues to be used in more recent research including that of Carsten *et al.* (2010) wherein they conduct an exploratory investigation into the social constructions of followership. This was a qualitative study that sought to investigate how individuals "socially construct their roles as followers and examine the followership schema and contextual variables that are related to these constructions" (Carsten *et al.*, 2010:543). The motivation for their study was the lack of empirical evidence about how followership roles are constructed by individuals in organisations (Carsten *et al.*, 2010:545). Such studies are important in expanding leadership literature if one acknowledges that followers "define and enact the followership role" differently (Carsten *et al*., 2018), which would have some effect on the broader phenomenon of leadership. Situating their study within organisations meant that, in determining who is a follower, the researchers selected participants who were acting in subordinate roles (Carsten *et al.*, 2010:547). Thus, they applied a "position-based perspective that equates managers with leaders and subordinates with followers" (Uhl-Bien & Carsten, 2016:143). Applying this perspective may imply that researchers are assuming that managers lead and subordinates follow; however, this is really used as a means to operationalise who a follower is within a formal organisational setting (Carsten *et al*., 2010:547).

The findings revealed that individuals' social constructions of followership varied from passive to proactive (Figure 3.5), and that this is influenced by their inherent followership schemas, as well as the contextual variables of leadership style and organisational climate. The three constructions of followership that emerged from the study can be summarised as follows:

1) **Passive:** Emphasis on deference to the leader and ensuring that orders are carried out appropriately. Follower role is perceived as coming with significantly less responsibility than that of the leader.
2) **Active:** Follower role perceived to be active and that the follower should offer their views; however, only when solicited by the leader. There is still an emphasis on the leader being in charge and having more knowledge; thus, the follower should be active and use opportunity to learn from the leader.
3) **Proactive:** The follower should take initiative and constructively challenge the leader where necessary. They believe their role is also to influence the leader's decisions and take responsibility.

Passive	Active	Proactive
- Carry out leader's instructions - Do not challenge	- Offer input if solicited - Learn from the leader	- Take initiative to act - Challenge leader if deviating from what you know is right

Figure 3.5 Follower role orientations (Carsten *et al*., 2010)

Passive followers are susceptible to doing the bidding of bad or unethical leaders, as they primarily focus on carrying out leader instructions, even if they do not fully agree with their appropriateness (Lapierre, 2014:159). The low propensity to actively challenge the leader and obey instructions is consistent with the "yes people" and "implementers" as described in Kelley (1992) and Chaleff's (2009) models, respectively. The proactive follower aligns very closely with the "exemplary" and "partner" followers from the same studies. One can also align the proactive follower to Zaleznik's impulsive follower with self-control, and a highly engaged follower along Kellerman's (2007) continuum. The common thread that the researcher draws through all five of these follower descriptions is the independent thought and the willingness to act thereon.

Followers with proactive followership constructions have high co-production beliefs (Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2012); they believe that their role is to help the leader in ensuring organisational outcomes. This type of follower is important for mounting constructive resistance (Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2012) against leaders who are deviating from organisational purpose, as they not only choose who and when to follow, but also when to stop doing so (Townsend & Gebhardt, 1997:139). This can be a useful quality in curbing leader behaviour that is potentially harmful

to the organisation, as such followers are able to challenge requests or directives to perpetuate the leader's behaviour (Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2013:53). Therefore, just as it has been, and still is, important to explore the different types of leaders and leadership styles there are and which ones are most effective in different environments, research such as that of Carsten *et al.* (2010) is also important in exploring follower types and the contexts within which they prevail or thrive.

The research of Carsten *et al.* (2010) focused on followership role orientations and schemas, which are "generalized knowledge structures that develop over time through socialization and interaction with stimuli relative to leadership and followership" (Carsten *et al.,* 2010:546). In other words, it is what individuals think about how the follower role is, or should be, performed or enacted. Therefore, if one endeavours to understand how individuals construct their followership and why, followership schemas are an important aspect to understand.

3.3.3. Implicit theories on followership

Similar to schemas, implicit theories are also believed to "develop through socialisation experiences" (Thompson, Glasø & Matthiesen, 2018:86). Research by Sy (2010) inverted the ILT direction of research, and explored implicit followership theories (IFTs), with an aim to understanding "individuals' personal assumptions about the traits and behaviours that characterise followers" (Sy, 2010:73). Research on IFTs explores the beliefs individuals hold about the characteristics that followers possess and the behaviours they display. This differs from followership role orientations, which focus on beliefs about what the follower role means relative to the leader (Carsten *et al*., 2018:734). How the individual defines their role (their role orientation) can also influence their behaviour in that role (Parker, 2007:407). Followers are also the topic of IFT research; however, the interest has been mostly on *leaders'* IFTs rather than those of followers (Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2014:91), exploring the leader's perspective of what are the traits or characteristics of good or bad followers (Sy, 2010; Gao & Wu, 2019; Shondrick & Lord, 2010). Scholars opine that leader IFTs have an impact on how leaders perceive and behave towards followers, depending on whether or not those followers exhibit certain behaviours that are aligned with either positive or negative IFTs that the leaders hold (Sy, 2010; Junker & van Dick, 2014). The impact of IFTs can extend to leader ratings on perceived follower performance (Junker & van Dick, 2014; Epitropaki, Sy, Martin, Tram-Quon & Topakas, 2013).

Implicit theories on followership are an area of followership research that continues to garner attention, as with research by Braun, Stegmann, Hernandez Bark, Junker and van Dick (2017), Gao and Wu (2019), Goswami *et al.* (2020), Derler and Weibler (2014), and Thompson *et al.* (2018). However, even though about followers, much of the research is not from the perspective of followers. This results in leader-centred discussions, such as which follower behaviours are more or less appreciated by leaders (Benson, Hardy & Eys, 2016:950). Investigated from a follower perspective, IFTs are follower self-schemas (Epitropaki *et al.*, 2018:127). Carsten *et al*. (2010) set the path for a study dedicated to follower IFTs, or followership schemas, in their study on the social constructions of followership. However, since then, IFT and schema research still primarily approaches IFTs as an "other schema" of leaders (Epitropaki *et al.*, 2018:127). The observation that IFT research has so far mainly focused on the implicit theories of leaders is also made by Yang *et al.* (2020:581), who make a contribution to research on FIFTs by exploring "the structure, implicit attitude and consequences of followers' implicit followership theories in the Chinese cultural context". In order to advance followership studies, IFTs need to be explored from the perspective of followers themselves; that is, explore what followers believe about the characteristics and behaviours of followers, thereby focusing on how followers perceive reality, in this case, being followership (Antonakis & Day, 2018:12).

3.3.4. Summary

Role-based approaches applied in formal organisational settings designate the roles of follower and leader based on hierarchical positions that individuals hold. Thus, followers tend to be operationalised in the manner similar to Carsten *et al.* (2010), being those who are subordinate to another within an organised structure. Summarising the literature reviewed, the results have indicated that followers range from being passive "sheep" who follow orders without applying themselves to the outcomes, to being independent thinkers who challenge leader directives and take action that opposes leader instructions if necessary.

Zaleznik's (1965) research brought in a focus on followers and the examination of their behaviours by applying a matrix that placed followers on the two axes of control and level of engagement. This perspective of trying to understand followers based on their characteristics

and how those informed how they follow, led to future works which then tried not only to understand followers and the act of following, but also what constitutes effective followership.

The later works of Kelley (1988; 1992) then looked further at follower behaviour and characteristics to identify what makes a follower effective, or exemplary. The matrix applied there also included the level of engagement, but, instead of an individual's desire for dominance or submission (as per Zaleznik, 1965), rather analysed the exercise of independent thinking. Of the five typologies that emanated, the exemplary follower emerged as the effective follower. The effective follower is an individual whose willingness and ability to oppose the leader in favour of the organisation's objectives can assist in also limiting leader behaviour to that which is desirable for the organisation, since, if the leader deviates from the organisation objectives, she will not receive the support and obedience of the effective follower.

The effective follower corresponds well with Chaleff's (2009) courageous follower who keeps the organisational objectives in mind when she acts, and supports the leader in attainment thereof. The courageous follower is also inclined to challenge the leader if the leader is deviating from the organisation's goals, thus, operating as a high challenge and high support partner to the leader.

Unlike Zaleznik, Kelley, and Chaleff, Kellerman (2007) used the single dimension of "level of engagement" as opposed to a matrix typology. The level of engagement signified the commitment of the follower to the organisation, such that the most highly engaged were those with the highest levels of commitment and involvement in the organisation – being termed "diehards".

Carsten *et al.* (2010) also used a single dimension and placed followers along a passive to proactive schema continuum. They found that how followers enact their followership is a combination of their followership schemas which determine their proclivity to either be passive and deferent followers, or to be proactive and challenging followers (or in-between), and the contextual variables their environment presents them with. The contextual variables emerging from the study were specifically those linked to leader behaviour, such as whether the leader

is authoritarian or supportive, and those linked to organisational environments, such as a hierarchical structure versus a flat structure that allows more autonomy.

The findings in the reviewed studies identified that it is possible for followers to be the defenders of the organisation against unethical leaders by standing for the organisational purpose and challenging those who deviate therefrom. Perhaps this is what makes the IFT research important, as follower and leader IFTs may not be congruent. A follower who characterises effective followership through active or proactive behaviours could be perceived as insubordinate by a leader who believes that followers should only act on instruction from leaders and not take initiative (Benson *et al.*, 2016:950), as they may be deemed to be leading themselves. That may not be an entirely untrue conclusion by the leader, as the similarities between effective followers and effective leaders have not gone unnoticed (Blanchard *et al*., 2009; Baker *et al.*, 2014), illustrating that, at times, the distinction between a leader and a follower can be a matter of organisational hierarchy. That being so, it leads us to constructionist approaches which remove formal roles and positions from the examination of followership and, instead, focus on the inter-relation of the acts of leading and following.

3.4. Constructionist approaches

Constructionist approaches deem leadership to occur when there are acts of leading and following, regardless of whether those acts are done by managers or subordinates; that is, managers can at times "engage in following behaviours" (Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2014:89). This delinks followership from formal organisational roles and instead links it to the constructed reality among the actors in the phenomenon (Uhl-Bien & Carsten, 2018:209), that is, the individuals construct followership not through their roles, but through their actions – their acts of leading and following. The constructionist approaches, in some way, draw a distinction between subordinacy and followership; a subordinate is not necessarily a follower. Hinrichs and Hinrichs (2014:91) argue that this distinction is based on the origin of the deference, wherein "subordinates defer to superiors out of obligation", and followers make a choice based on a belief that "the leader's moral character, courage, effort or ideas" deem the leader's direction worthy of support. They contrast the choice a follower exercises in enacting the follower role with the lack of choice a subordinate has in being a subordinate by stating that "followers only sometimes enact a follower role; subordinates are always subordinates" (Hinrichs & Hinrichs, 2014:92). Another key point in the differentiation between subordinates

and followers is that, whilst an employee may not have a choice in their subordinacy, they may be subordinate without being a follower, and vice versa (Ibid.). Thus, unlike followership, hierarchical subordination presents a relationship between positions, and not people (Hinrichs & Hinrichs, 2014:92).

Using the lens of the constructionist view, the existence of followership is, thus, dependent on the *willingness* of a person or persons to follow another. It is not about the existence of a hierarchical structure *per se*. In the research conducted by Benson *et al*. (2016:953), one of the viewpoints shared was that everyone in a group, regardless of formal rank, takes on the role of followership at some point, and that, if no one is willing to take on that role at a particular point in time, then there is no leadership. An individual may choose not to follow, and express this choice by ignoring or subverting the individual in the formal leadership role (Kupers, 2007:196), just as an individual may choose to enact a follower role in a situation even if that is not their formally assigned role (Baker *et al.,* 2014:77). Therefore, the exploration of followership through a constructionist lens aligns with the view that, without followership, leadership cannot exist (Kelley, 2008:5). The study by DeRue and Ashford (2010) brings this co-existence to the fore by examining how leading and following together construct followership and leadership.

3.4.1. The claiming and granting of leadership and followership

In support of the view that a subordinate-superior relationship does not a leader-follower relationship create, DeRue and Ashford (2010) proposed a theory on the development of leader-follower relationships in organisations. Their theory is based on an identity construction process, wherein, through continuing interactions with each other, individuals co-construct leader and follower identities (Uhl-Bien & Carsten, 2018:212). As a foundation for their leadership identity construction theory, DeRue and Ashford (2010) use work by Pratt, Rockman & Kaufmann (2006) which examined professional identity construction, as well as Snow and Anderson's (1987) study on identity construction among homeless people. The resulting theory posits that leadership is created through a reciprocal process of claiming and granting of leader and follower roles between individuals, such that there is consensus between or amongst them of who is a leader and who is a follower in that moment. Therefore, the roles of leader and follower are not static within the leadership process, but are instead "flexibly negotiated between people" (Sy & McCoy, 2014:124). This aligns with Jago's (1982:316) view

that leadership is exhibited through an interaction between people; and it can thus be understood that, if there is leadership, the complementary side of the relationship is followership. This means that "for one to influence, another must permit himself to be influenced" (Jago, 1982:316).

Per DeRue and Ashford's theory, either one of the acts of granting or claiming can happen first; however, they must both happen in order for the granted or claimed identity to be constructed. An individual may wish to claim a follower role for themselves, thereby granting a leader role to another; and another individual may then grant the claimed follower role and thus claim the granted leader role. The means by which the claiming and granting is done is on two dimensions: verbal/nonverbal and direct/indirect (DeRue & Ashford, 2010:632). The examples from the study are depicted in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Constructing followership: examples from DeRue & Ashford (2010)

	Verbal	
	Follower claim Stating that you expect to follow the direction of another **Leader grant** Referring to another as the leader	**Follower claim** Stating: "I'm not the leader type" **Leader grant** Acknowledging another's close relationships with other leaders in the organisation
Direct		Indirect
	Follower claim Choosing to speak at a meeting only when called upon **Leader grant** Offering the head of a meeting table to another person	**Follower claim** Actively refraining from taking intiative **Leader grant** Taking the lead of another in one's behaviour (own example)
	Nonverbal	

Leadership, or, in the case of this study, followership, is therefore constructed through this two-way process of claiming and granting a follower or leader identity (Figure 3.6).

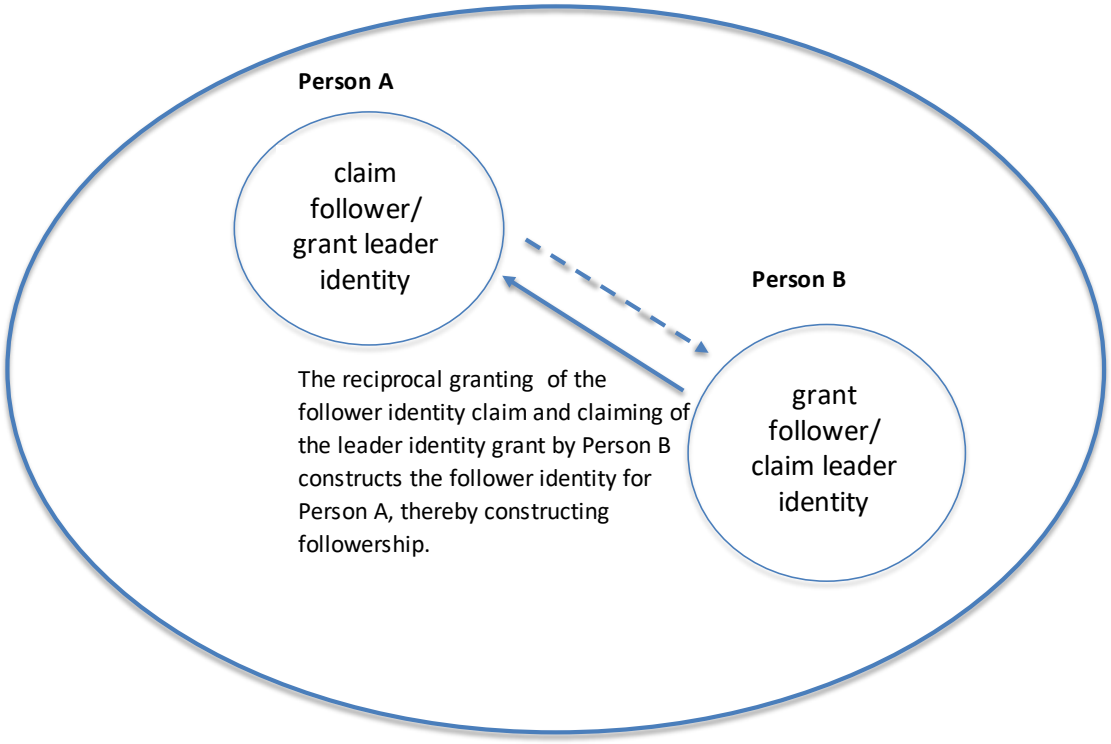


Figure 3.6 Followership identity construction (adapted from DeRue & Ashford (2010:631)

Identity construction theory supports the notion that followership is more than just accepting influence by another (Benson *et al.,* 2016:949), as its construction requires the other individual to claim the leader role as granted. Constructionist approaches, such as that of DeRue and Ashford, acknowledge that the roles of follower and leader may change depending on the situation and thus, need not be permanently assigned to an individual. This does add complexity to the research, as the roles are not assigned based on clearly observable hierarchical roles, but on the perceptions and beliefs of the actors and the interpretations of the researcher. Uhl-Bien and Carsten (2018:213) also raise the question of "[W]hat happens when claims and grants are not reciprocated or when there is resistance to taking either a follower or leader identity?" In continuing our quest to examine such questions, Uhl-Bien and Carsten (2018:213) suggest that we maintain the focus of the investigations on followers, so as not to return to the default position of privileging the leader in leadership research.

3.4.2. Leader-Follower Switching (LFS)

Researchers who approach leadership and followership studies from a constructionist approach recognise that leadership and followership are rooted in behaviours as opposed to hierarchical positions. Sy and McCoy (2014) bring this forth through the proposal of the LFS construct.

This construct is rooted in the observation that an individual may enact both a leader and a follower role, depending on context (Sy & McCoy, 2010:122). From an organisational perspective, this can be related to the employee who has subordinates and also has a supervisor; depending on which of those parties they are interacting with, they may enact either a follower or a leader role. Drawing from findings on role switching from multiculturalism research, Sy and McCoy conceptualise an LFS model depicting four styles of LFS. They propose that individuals in organisations have differing capacities for LFS, based specifically on the strength of the followership or leadership role orientations (Figure 3.7).

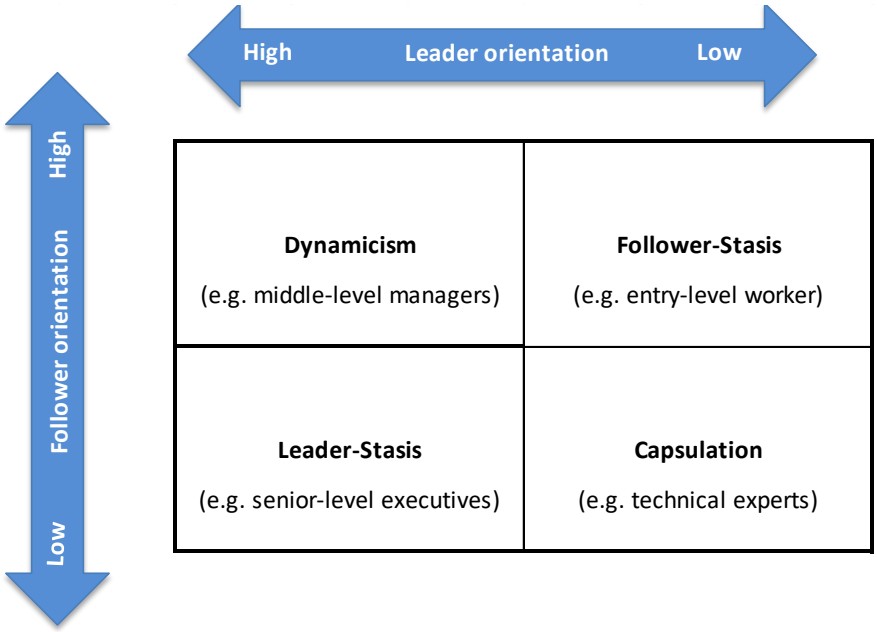


Figure 3.7 LFS styles model (Sy & McCoy, 2014:127)

Sy and McCoy (2014) describe each of the quadrants and also provide examples of the organisational level at which one might encounter the kind of individual possessing each style of LFS. Those individuals who are high on both the leader orientation and follower orientation are typically able to switch frequently between the two roles. Those with roles in middle management are most likely to be this dynamic, as they interact with both their supervisors and subordinates on a regular basis (Sy & McCoy, 2014:127). Per Baker (2007:56), this resonates with Kelley's (1988) point that "most managers play the roles of both follower and leader". Leader-stasis is associated with individuals who most often are enacting a leader role, such as senior executives; they usually will only enact a follower role when they interact with the CEO of the organisation, which may be less frequent than they have to interact with subordinates (Sy & McCoy, 2014:128). Those individuals with the follower-stasis style are usually quite

junior in the organisation and thus, may not have the skills or opportunity (due to formal structures) to enact leader roles as often (Ibid.). Therefore, they do not often switch between the follower and leader role enactment. Those with a capsulation style are often valued for their technical knowledge and occupy roles where they need only produce what is required without concerning themselves with enacting either the follower or leader role (Ibid.).

3.4.3. Leader-Follower Trade (LFT)

The non-static nature of the leader and follower roles is also proffered by Malakyan (2014) in his introduction of the LFT approach to studying leadership. Through this approach, he proposes that leadership and followership are interchangeable and valuable functions that can be "performed by the same person, or more than one person, in different situations" (Malakyan, 2014:11; Baker *et al.*, 2014:80). Thus, there is this fluidity within the roles that allows them not to be trapped within formal positions; but, instead, having them constructed through the actions and interactions of individuals. Therefore, the identities of follower or leader should not be ascribed based on organisational positions, as it is unrealistic to expect that the roles are static and individuals play the same role in every situation (Malakyan, 2015:228). Organisational leadership and followership outcomes are advanced by the interchangeability of leader and follower roles between individuals (Malakyan, 2014:11; Baker *et al.*, 2014:85. This can be achieved by viewing "leadership-followership as one unit" that results from a mutual influence process between the leader and follower (Malakyan, 2014:11). This supports Townsend and Gebhardt's (2003:21) statement that "leadership is a behaviour, not a position".

3.4.4. Leadership-Teamship-Followership (LTF) continuum

Townsend and Gebhardt (2003) present this fluidity between the roles of followership and leadership by way of an LTF continuum (Figure 3.8). They state that organisational effectiveness requires a shift from seeing leaders and followers as fixed roles, as leaders are, at times, required to serve employees, and followers are required to engage critically with their roles. This shift results in the LTF continuum which requires individuals within an organisation to be able to move along it as their roles require; thus, enacting any one of the roles along the continuum at different points in time, even through the day, depending on the context of their interactions.

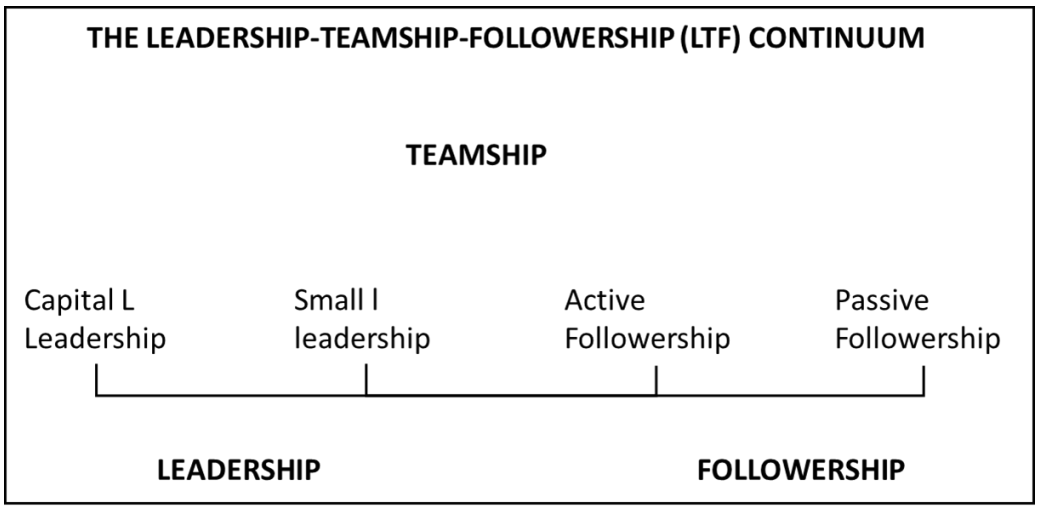


Figure 3.8 LTF continuum (Townsend & Gebhardt, 2003:19)

The continuum starts on the left with the uppercase L Leadership which would be the leadership for which the CEO or other main head of the organisation is responsible. To the right of the Leadership there is the lowercase l leadership that is attributed to other persons within the organisation who are not the head of the organisation. This could be anyone else who heads up a team or department, but is not accountable for the whole organisation. Moving further to the right, the continuum presents with the label, active followership, where such person would be actively engaged with leaders and contribute their views. At the extreme right of the continuum is passive followership, where an individual is disengaged and only does what is required. Of course, being a continuum, an individual can hold any location between the extremes of Leadership and passive followership.

As one moves from left to right along the continuum, they are either enacting leadership, teamship or followership. Townsend and Gebhardt (2003) describe teamship as the overlapping of leadership and followership, where, in the quest to achieve an objective, the roles between formal leader and follower roles become indistinguishable due to the interchange of the leader and follower behaviours being enacted based on the requirements at the time, such that the hierarchical follower may lead the leader due to their specific expertise on a matter. A point that is clearly made by Townsend and Gebhardt (2003:20) is that organisational success is enhanced by the ability of members to move along the continuum, especially away from the passive followership, and play the role required at the time.

Another point raised is that the position an individual occupies along the continuum can also be influenced by their passion or interest in the purpose or environment (Townsend & Gebhardt, 2003:20). This means that, in different aspects of one's life, one may occupy a different location on the continuum (Baker *et al.*, 2014:77), such that one may be "a colourless follower" at work yet an "effective leader" in a community volunteering programme (Townsend & Gebhardt, 2003:20). Understanding follower enactment along the LTF continuum allows organisations to train individuals appropriately by focusing on the areas where they need development, as, if a person can be effective in one area of their life, they usually can demonstrate same in another. Therefore, if an organisation is struggling with a dispassionate follower, they may do well to find out what the barriers are and assist in addressing them such that the individual can move to a more appropriate position along the continuum (Townsend & Gebhardt, 2003:21).

3.4.5. Summary

Constructionist views consider followership (and leadership) to be co-constructed in a relational context (Uhl-Bien & Carsten, 2018:209). Such views separate subordinates and followers, thereby identifying followership through following behaviours as opposed to formal positions or ranks. In order to construct leadership, and thereby followership, there must be a willingness and ability, by some, to take on a followership. (Hurwitz & Koonce, 2017:42). One can glean from these texts that a follower has to a) be able to follow and b) allow themselves to be led or influenced, and that with the existence of this attitude, leadership can then exist. The point re-iterated once again is that, without followership, there can be no leadership. Therefore, if we continue to study leadership without including followership, our understanding and knowledge of leadership is fundamentally lacking. As with leadership, followership also needs to be explored across paradigms applying different lenses in order to advance the literature.

3.5. Followership studies on the African continent

The present study having been conducted in a South African organisation adds to its contextual contribution within followership literature. Blair and Bligh (2018:130) highlight the point that Africa is one of the regions that is less represented in followership theory development, especially when compared to the three cultural regions of "English speaking, Catholic Europe, and Protestant Europe." They further posit that the social construction of both leadership and

followership roles and behaviours can be influenced by national culture (Ibid.:131). This view aligns with Yang, Shi, Zhang, Song and Xu's (2020:582) statement that several studies have highlighted cultural differences as a contributing factor to differences in implicit theories on followership. This highlights the importance of research that is conducted in various global regions so as to include different cultures in the development of followership theory and understanding and, in fact, determine whether followership is different or similar across cultures (Thomas, 2014:134). In the GLOBE study, Brodbeck, Chhokar and House (2007:1050) found that, "although there are commonalities across societies, culture influences [organisational] leadership in a number of ways". This is further motivation to include different regions (representative of different cultures) in studying followership. With South Africa being grouped under the Sub-Sahara Africa cluster in the GLOBE study, it was therefore important for the researcher to review literature on followership studies from the continent so as to reflect on the present study and its contribution. From the review, it emerged that the majority of studies applied quantitative approaches, and did not focus on followership schemas or FIFTs and did not investigate the social constructions of followership. They also did not have the specific contexts of a complex followership environment or the public sector which the present study does.

The researcher found two studies that specifically explored followership constructions in African contexts. One was a doctoral dissertation by Ofumbi (2017) which applied a qualitative approach applying a grounded theory perspective to investigate followership constructions in Uganda. Ofumbi (2017:307) found that the Acholi people of Uganda enact their followership through a

> process of observation, analysis, and response [where,] depending on the stimulus, the response can either solicit no actions, or actions to uphold or change the status quo. The response occurs as either delegation, obedience, and deference; participation alongside leaders; or intervention, especially when leaders are ineffective or malevolent.

These are all valuable contributions to the study of followership. More geographically dispersed (i.e., research outside of the Western world) research can only add to the better understanding of the followership phenomenon.

The other study was by Singh and Bodhanya (2013), who set out to examine followership amongst organisational followers in South Africa. The objectives of the study were specifically to:

- identify the factors that motivate South African followers in their followership roles and duties;
- identify what South Africans deem most important to their experience and enactment of followership in their respective organisations; and
- determine if, and how, these followership dynamics are influenced by South African contextual factors.

The data were obtained by way of qualitative questionnaires sent to participants from different organisations in both the private and public sectors. They developed a model representing the three systems affecting how followership is experienced and enacted in South Africa (Figure 3.9): being the individual themselves, and the organisational and environmental contexts. They assert that these systems are inter-related and influence each other, and thus, followership cannot be understood only by considering the individual follower without also considering the organisational and environmental contexts that contribute to "how they think, how they act, how they perceive themselves, how they perceive their roles and duties" (Singh & Bodhanya, 2013:507). They conclude by suggesting that more studies on followership in South Africa would be a good addition to the currently scarce African followership literature.

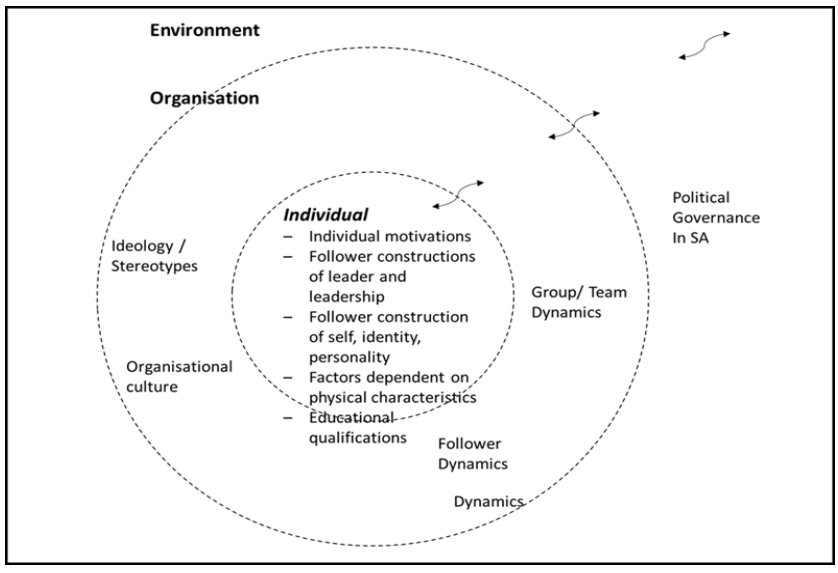


Figure 3.9 Followership model depicting the various individual, organisational and environmental factors influencing the experience and enactment of followership in South Africa (Singh & Bodhanya, 2013:508)

Other studies that the researcher identified within the field of followership did not specifically consider the social constructions or enactment of followership. Brief summaries are provided hereunder.

Oyetunji (2013) used a quantitative design to explore the relationship between followership style and job performance. Her study found that lecturers in private universities in Botswana, who identified as passive followers, had the highest job performance, whereas those who identified themselves as exemplary followers had very low job performance (Oyetunji, 2013:185).

Du Plessis and Boshoff (2018) explored followership behaviours as part of a broader study that investigated authentic leadership, psychological capital, and followership behaviour influences on work engagement of employees, applying a quantitative approach by way of questionnaires. The study found that followership is a significant influence on employee work engagement (Du Plessis & Boshoff, 2018:29).

Thomas (2014) conducted a study comparing followership styles between Rwandans and Americans. Respondents completed Kelley's 20-question followership style survey and the responses were statistically analysed to arrive at the results. The findings revealed that the American sample had a significantly larger number of people in the exemplary follower category than the Rwandan sample (Thomas, 2014:133).

3.6. The present study

The present study applies a role-based perspective to explore followership in a South African metropolitan municipality (the City). The study seeks to specifically investigate the following:

1) The beliefs employees at the City hold about followership;
2) How the employees enact their followership; and
3) The factors that contribute to how they enact their followership.

In applying the role-based approach, followers have been operationalised as those who are in a subordinate role. The subordinacy is defined by reporting to another individual. Therefore, the individual can hold a senior role in which they have subordinates reporting to them; however, as long as they are still reporting to another individual, they are considered a follower for the purposes of this study.

3.7. Conclusion

The journey of followership studies has come about through research employing various approaches in exploring the role of followers and following. The studies have evolved from only considering followers from the leader's perspective to including followers' views about followers and following, giving rise to followership studies as discussed in the literature reviewed. Studies on followership have gained traction through the recognition of the significant role that it plays within the broader understanding of leadership. This role is so significant that it has been said that when facing challenges, organisations should, in addition to the usual tendency to focus on leadership (Danielsson, 2013:708), also examine followership, especially given that followership can be linked to significant organisational outcomes (Blanchard *et al.*, 2009).

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the process applied to achieve the objectives of the current study. Herein, the researcher discusses the research design and methods employed in the study. The decisions on what design, methods, instruments and analysis techniques to employ were based on ensuring that the research aims were addressed in an adequate and valid manner. Guidance was obtained from reviewing literature on research methodology, as well as other studies that had similar objectives to the present research. A key objective of this chapter is not only to lay out the process followed, but also to demonstrate the appropriateness of the process by detailing the underlying assumptions that lead to the methodological choices made; that is, that the data collected and method of analysis are appropriate to the research aims (Hofstee, 2013:115). Arriving at the chosen methods is a process that begins with describing the philosophical assumptions that underpin such study which, in turn, inform the research design and methods (Crotty, 1998).

The objective of this research was to expand followership research by investigating how followership is constructed in a complex organisation. The research question emanating from this objective is: "How do employees in a complex organisation construct followership?" The secondary research questions resulting therefrom are:

1. What beliefs about followership do employees at the City hold?
2. How do employees at the City enact their followership?
3. What are the contributing factors to how employees at the City enact their followership?

With the purpose of contextualising the present study within the broader field of leadership, Chapter 2 provided an account of the existing leadership research relevant to this study (Rozas & Klein, 2010:389). More specifically, an overview of how various approaches to the study of leadership have treated the role of followers in leadership was presented. It was demonstrated how leader-centric perspectives initially paid little regard to followers, treating them as ancillary to leadership; where leadership was primarily viewed as being synonymous with the leader. The introduction of relational and follower-centric perspectives awarded the role of followers more prominence, as they were considered as co-creators and social constructors of

leadership; such that their actions, perceptions and behaviours, as well as their impact on leaders, became a subject of interest. These approaches, although granting followers a more significant role, are still leader-centred in their objectives, as the interest in followers is insofar as followers provide more understanding about leaders, and are not concerned with followership. In extending inquiry into followers and the role of following, followership research reaches further and includes investigation of followers and following from the perspectives of followers.

Chapter 3 presented the research that has led to the development of the field of followership research. The foundational works which brought attention to the field were presented, as well as the more recent works and approaches which served as a motivation for this study. The quest to understand followers and the act or role of following includes investigations about how they construct followership; including follower beliefs about followership, behaviours enacted, and the contextual variables that impact thereon. The two main approaches to followership research are role-based approaches and constructionist approaches; the major difference lying in how followers are identified or operationalised for the purpose of the research.

The researcher selected a qualitative research design as it is deemed "the most useful approach to understanding the meanings people make of their experiences" (Morrow, 2007:211) – and the current study is aimed at understanding what followership means from the perspective of followers. Within broader leadership studies, both qualitative and quantitative forms of inquiry offer legitimate modes of research (Parry, Mumford, Bower & Watts, 2014:134). However, qualitative research is still critical in the study of different areas of leadership due to the "extreme and enduring complexity of the leadership phenomenon" (Conger, 1998:108).

The process undertaken in the current study is elaborated on below (Figure 4.1).

4.2 Philosophical assumptions
4.3 Research design and methods
4.4 Instrumentation
4.5 Sampling
4.6 Population and environment
4.7 Data collection
4.8 Data analysis
4.9 Rigour in qualitative research
4.10 Limitations
4.11 Ethical considerations
4.12 Summary

Figure 4.1 Outline of remainder of chapter

4.2 Philosophical assumptions

The selected research design and methods for this study are influenced by the philosophical foundations underpinning the study. More specifically, these are the epistemological and ontological principles and assumptions on which all scientific research is based (Neuman, 2014:93). These assumptions arising from the philosophical standpoints inform how the researcher views the world and how it should be researched (Crotty, 1998:66) and therefore, affect the methodology employed (Crotty, 1998:7); as different perspectives bring different assumptions to the methodology. A requirement of good research is that firstly, one acknowledges their principle position and how the assumptions it comes with influence the approach to their enquiry; and secondly, that one explicitly states such assumptions in their research (Neuman, 2014:93; Creswell 2007:15).

4.2.1 Philosophical foundations

Ontology and epistemology refer to "theories about the nature of reality or being and about the nature of knowledge", respectively (Braun & Clarke, 2013:26). As explained by Crotty (1998:10), these concepts tend to be considered together, thus merging ontology into epistemological considerations. However, they are two separate concepts, each with its own considerations as to which stance is adopted within research, and in arriving at the chosen methodologies and resultant methods.

From an ontological perspective, the researcher locates her philosophical foundation within the critical realism paradigm. This paradigm posits that the world is real and exists; however, it is viewed, and thus made real, through the partial access that we all have to it based on our positions in relation thereto (Braun & Clarke, 2013:27). Critical realism, in lying somewhere between realism and relativism along the ontology continuum (Figure 4.2), thus, does acknowledge that there is an external reality that exists outside of human interaction, but that knowledge thereof is partial or mediated – based on the perspective of the one viewing such reality (Braun & Clarke, 2013:27; Charmaz, Thornberg & Keane, 2018:726; Fleetwood, 2005:199). This ontological perspective is commensurate with qualitative research, wherein researchers accept that there are multiple realities based on the perspectives of the participants (Creswell, 2007:17). Fairclough (2005:922) draws the distinction between what he terms the "natural and social worlds", where the social world is "dependent on human action for its existence – it is socially constructed". Therefore, the critical realist ontological position of the present study is compatible with the epistemological stance of social constructionism.

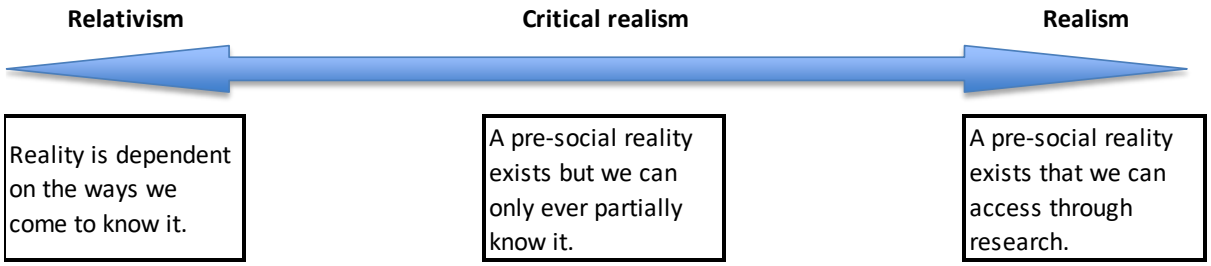


Figure 4.2 The ontology continuum (Braun & Clarke, 2013:26)

Social constructionist epistemology recognises meaning as constructed from "processes generated within human relationships" (Gergen & Gergen, 2008:816); that is, reality (and the meaning thereof) is not "some objectifiable truth waiting to be discovered" (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010:174), but is constructed by those who are experiencing it (Carsten *et al*., 2010:545). Essentially, this means that there exist multiple realities or "knowledges" (Braun & Clarke, 2013:30) as "constructed through social processes in which meanings are negotiated, consensus formed, and contestation is possible" (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010:174). This view of the world does not posit that there is not a reality without humans constructing it, but rather that the meaning of that reality can only be made through the eyes of the beholder, being the humans who are experiencing that reality (Crotty, 1998:10). Thus, the meaning of a phenomenon can only be constructed through the experiences of the individuals interacting in relationships

within and around that phenomenon (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2018:219). The goal of such social constructionist research is to seek understanding, and this is done by relying on participant accounts of the subject matter, as well as the researcher's interpretations of such accounts (Creswell, 2007:20, 21). In considering the present study, the exploration of followership is from the perspective of individuals who enact the role; thereby obtaining *their* descriptions and experiences regarding followership, as opposed to defining what it is and then conducting the research from that single defined reality or truth. Important to note, is the position of the researcher in relation to the knowledge that is being constructed; such that the researcher's role in the interpretation of the data means that she cannot be separated from the findings (Sale, Lohfeld & Brazil, 2002:45).

Having stated the ontological and epistemological stances of the present research, it is important to discuss the theoretical perspective which Crotty (1998:7) explains as the "philosophical stance that lies behind our chosen methodology" by providing the basis for reasoning and criteria applied in that process. The present study adopts an interpretivist theoretical perspective which is aligned to the ontological and epistemological perspectives as discussed above. Interpretivism is concerned with interpreting the meaning of phenomena from the subjective perspective of those involved in, or experiencing, such phenomena (Williams, 2000:210). Thus, with an aim to understanding the beliefs held about followership from those who enact the role of followership, it will be necessary to interpret the utterances of the participants to construct meaning therefrom.

4.2.2 Applicability to present study

The broad aim of this study being to investigate how followers construct their followership role, the assumptions embedded in the above-described philosophical foundations and theoretical perspective make sense. The meaning of followership is being constructed from the perspectives and experiences of individuals through their social interactions. This presents with multiple realities which are applied in making meaning of the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants that the researcher interprets, presents, and discusses in the chapters to follow. This is aligned with Braun and Clarke's (2013:30) position that constructionist approaches produce knowledge from data-grounded empirical research which seeks to understand a phenomenon. As demonstrated in the literature review chapters, social constructionist approaches are not new to followership, nor to the broader field of leadership.

4.3 Research design and methods

According to Yukl (2013:418), leadership research has predominantly applied quantitative approaches, and as such, it is important for researchers to conduct research applying qualitative methods. This is not to say that qualitative approaches do not present with challenges, however, they also offer the advantage of approaching, and thus offering understanding of, leadership as a complex social process (Yukl, 2013:417). The present study employed a qualitative approach which allows for the ability to study social meaning and the consideration of contextual variables that can affect such meaning (Parry *et al.*, 2014:133). The qualitative design is suited to research rooted in philosophical assumptions of there being multiple perspectives of reality, where the intention is to try and understand the construction or meaning of that reality from one or more of those perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The present study explored followership beliefs, behaviours and contributors to enactment, with the aim of expanding the understanding of followership; thus, the choice of a qualitative approach makes sense in addressing the research aims, particularly as the aim was to understand the meaning of followership, as opposed to testing prior theories regarding it (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen & Snelgrove, 2016:100). The researcher finds support for the present study from Ospina (2004:1282) when she states the following as one of the reasons for the application of qualitative approaches in leadership studies:

> *"To try to 'understand' any social phenomenon from the perspective of the actors involved, rather than explaining it (unsuccessfully) from the outside."*

Within the interpretivist perspective, there are three major approaches that one can take: symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics (Staller, 2012:3; Crotty, 1998:71). Symbolic interactionism is more suited to grounded theory research (Crotty, 1998:77), and hermeneutics is concerned with interpretation of text (Crotty, 1998:91); the present study was neither aiming to develop new theory nor interpret meaning from text. With the primary objective of this study being to understand the construction of followership from those who experience it (followers), a phenomenological approach is deemed suitable (Abawi, 2012:141).

4.3.1 Applicability of phenomenological design

Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach used with the aim of "describing the meaning of the lived experience of a phenomenon" (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007:1373). Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark and Morales (2007:239) deem phenomenology suitable with

questions about meaning, using the example: "What does timing mean to counsellors who regularly share test results with clients?" Obtaining views from different individuals is important, as meaning is constructed differently by different people. The constructionist viewpoint posits that "meaning is not discovered, but constructed" (Crotty, 1998:9). Supporters of constructionism aim to understand lived experiences from the perspective of those who experience them (Schwandt, 1998:221). Therefore, this study uses a phenomenological approach from a constructionist viewpoint, in order to explore what followership is from the perspective of the participants, and to construct meaning therefrom. Constructionism is rooted in the belief that reality is socially constructed, and rejects "the basic premise that an objective researcher discovers truths from pre-existing data" (Staller, 2012:2). This approach, of phenomenology and constructionism, is not uncommon, as the two are quite entwined (Crotty, 1998:12). Table 4.1, adapted from Starks and Brown Trinidad (2007), presents a concise explanation of phenomenology and how it applies to the current study.

Table 4.1 Application of phenomenology

HISTORY	European Philosophy
PHILOSOPHY *Application in present study*	There exists an essential, perceived reality with common features. *Critical realist, social constructionist, interpretivist approach to exploring followership as perceived by followers*
GOAL *Application in present study*	Describe the meaning of the lived experience of a phenomenon. *Described the social construction of followership among followers at the City*
METHODOLOGY	
Formulating a research question *Application in present study*	"What is the lived experience of the phenomenon of interest?" *How do employees of the City construct their followership?*
Sampling	Those who have experienced the phenomenon of interest.

Application in present study	*Followers (operationalised as employees of the City who occupy any role that is subordinate to another)*
Data collection: Interviewing strategy *Application in present study*	Participant describes experience; interviewer probes for detail, clarity. *Followers described their beliefs about, and enactment of, followership; as well as what influences such enactment.*
ANALYTIC METHODS	
Decontextualisation & Recontextualisation; Process of coding, sorting, identifying themes and relationships and drawing conclusions *Application in present study*	Identify descriptions of the phenomenon; cluster into discrete categories; taken together, these describe the "essence" or core commonality and structure of the experience. *Identified descriptions of follower beliefs, followership enactment and influencing factors; clustered into categories; together, these describe the social constructions of followership in a South African local government organisation.*
Role of analyst's views *Application in present study*	Bracket views. *Acknowledged own role in the process, as well as assumptions, and how they impacted on the analysis.*
AUDIENCE *Application in current study*	Clinicians, practitioners & others who need to understand the lived experience of the phenomenon of interest *Leadership scholars and members of organisations for whom the understanding of leadership, and thus followership, is of interest*
PRODUCT	A thematic description of the pre-given "essences" and structures of lived experiences

Application in current study	*Social constructions of followership*

(adapted from Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007:1373)

With an aim to analyse the statements and descriptions by the participants in order to extract themes from which the social construction of followership could be drawn (Creswell *et al.*, 2007:252), the present study is suited to phenomenology which seeks to derive meaning through the organising and analysing of data (Abawi, 2012:142). The suitability of the phenomenological design to the research problem in the current study, as opposed to other qualitative approaches, such as grounded theory, narrative research and participatory action research, is supported by Creswell *et al.* (2007) as illustrated in Table 4.2 which depicts different types of research problems and the most suitable study design to address them.

Table 4.2 Research problems and study designs

Type of research problem	**Most suitable qualitative design**
When detailed stories help understand the problem	Narrative research
When researcher has a case bounded by time or place that can inform a problem	Case study
When no theory exists or existing theories are inadequate	Grounded theory
When the researcher seeks to understand the lived experiences of persons about a phenomenon	Phenomenology
When a community issue needs to be addressed so that change can occur	Participatory action research

(adapted from Creswell *et al.*, 2007:241)

Followership research is primarily concerned with how followers construct followership; that is, what the meaning of followership is to followers. This has resulted in explorations of followership from role-based perspectives (Carsten *et al.*, 2010) and constructionist approaches (DeRue & Ashford, 2010) in order to understand what followership is and how it is done. However, what remains similar in both approaches has been the view that followership is ultimately constructed by the actors within the broader leadership process, the followers and leaders, whether formally designated such roles or emerging through acts of leading and following. This social constructionist view to followership takes its lead from the social relational and social constructionist views of leadership which, at their core, hold the notion that leadership is socially constructed through interactions between individuals (Fairhurst &

Uhl-Bien, 2012; Ospina & Schall, 2001). Therefore, one way to understand more about followership is to investigate what it means to the actors who, through their beliefs, behaviours and interactions, construct it. Once again, this confirms the suitability of a phenomenological approach for this study, as it "has been specifically designed to study the essence and meaning of experience" (Cilesiz, 2011:493).

4.4 Instrumentation

With the understanding of what the aims of qualitative research are, it is important to use a data collection method that allows participants to convey their views and responses in a manner not completely confined to the researcher's preconceived notions of the topic, as is the case with a questionnaire (Wilkinson, Joffe & Yardley, 2011:2). There are various methods of collecting data for qualitative research, including interviews, document review, and participant observation (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007:1375). Various literature sources were consulted (Creswell *et al.,* 2007; Rowley, 2012; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Crouch & McKenzie, 2006) which led to the researcher concluding that semi-structured interviews would be appropriate in addressing the aims of the present study.

The aim of the research was to construct meaning based on the perspectives of different individuals. It was thus important to obtain detail and probe participants in order to arrive at a construction of followership. It follows, therefore, that interviews with a few participants that are followers was an appropriate instrument for collecting data (Rowley, 2012:261; Carsten *et al.*, 2010:547). Semi-structured interviews are not only deemed appropriate for qualitative studies but also for novice researchers (Rowley, 2012:262), and are also a frequently used method for collection data in qualitative studies (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006:484; Braun & Clarke, 2013:78). Interviews present the opportunity to uncover ideas and understandings that the researcher may not have previously considered (Wilkinson *et al.*, 2011:2); hence, they are suited to this type of study.

In qualitative research, the researcher is also a research instrument (Staller, 2012:5; Devers & Frankel, 2000:265), as they analyse the collected data (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007:1376). The researcher also conducted the interviews, and in that sense, was also a research instrument. A feature of qualitative research rooted in the constructionist paradigm is that the researcher's beliefs and characteristics have an effect on the research process and "play a role in co-

constructing meaning with the participant" (Braun & Clarke, 2013:79).; however, the researcher needs a self-awareness of what the effect is and how it influences the conclusions (Haverkamp & Young, 2007:268). It is also important that the researcher does not bias the responses of the participants through verbal and non-verbal cues (Carsten *et al*., 2010:548).

The researcher needs to prepare an interview guide prior to the participant interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2013:78). The guide should have a few open-ended questions to elicit detailed responses discussion (Braun & Clarke, 2013:79; Wilkinson *et al.*, 2011:9); and the researcher should also allow for some flexibility in the order of questions, as well as for some probing (Rowley, 2012:262).

The interview schedule was developed by the researcher based on the objectives of the study and the research questions emanating therefrom, keeping in mind that the objective of the interview is to "serve the researcher's goal of obtaining knowledge" (Brinkmann, 2018:1003).

Using the research questions as a basis, four core questions were developed (interview schedule in Appendix A). The questions focused on how participants describe followership in positive and negative terms, how they enact their followership, and the factors that contribute to how they enact their followership. In arriving at the core questions, the researcher examined the interview protocol by Carsten *et al*. (2010:559) and considered it together with the present study's research objective of exploring followership, as well as the research questions as presented in Chapter 1. The questions were very simple and open-ended so as not to lead the participants by alluding to any kind of "correct" or "incorrect" response. The open-endedness of the questions also allowed the researcher to probe the responses of the participants. As much as open-ended questions are good for obtaining participants true thoughts or views about a topic, this same opportunity for them to discuss any aspect they may find important (Braun & Clarke, 2013:78) can present challenges in terms of staying on-topic. Therefore, the interviewer had to keep this in mind in ensuring that she did not get too engrossed in issues that were interesting, but not relevant to the study, and, thus, ensure that she kept the interview within the bounds of the research questions.

4.5 Sampling

The aim of the study required obtaining views from different participants in order to obtain rich data on how they socially construct followership. Therefore, it was important to the researcher to gather perspectives from individuals occupying different follower roles within the organisation. In order to achieve this, a purposive sampling technique, being "the deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the informant possesses" (Tongco, 2007:147), was employed to select participants across different divisions and levels. Drawing from Devers and Frankel (2000:264), this technique is deemed appropriate for this study, as the researcher intends to expand on the current understandings of followership, and possibly further develop the theory and concepts around followership through the different perspectives obtained.

The researcher had to first obtain permission from the City to conduct the study with participants employed by it. This was a fairly long and arduous process which required the researcher to enlist the assistance of her supervisors in obtaining an insider in the organisation to assist with contact details of the department that deals with such requests. A permission request letter introducing the researcher as well as the research project was then sent to the relevant individuals in the department. It took a number of months to eventually obtain the communication granting permission for the study to be conducted at the City. The researcher was also furnished with a list of departments, divisions and the main contact persons therein. The researcher's aim was to try and obtain participants from at least half of the departments in the City, which has 14 departments in total. Eight departments were initially selected, and at least two divisions within each department, to which to send emails requesting employee lists and contact details, attaching the permission letter from the City for reference. The selection of two divisions per department was to increase the possibility of obtaining at least one participant from each of the selected departments. After receipt of employee lists from some of the divisions and departments, the researcher started the process of contacting potential participants for interviews. Participants were initially contacted by email, and from those that initially agreed to the interviews, the researcher enquired if they could refer any other individuals who would be willing to do the interviews. Therefore, snowball sampling, as recommended by Rowley (2012:265), was used as a means to obtain more participants. Alongside the process of obtaining participants through other City employees, the researcher also reached out to her network for leads to other employees of the City. This also proved to be fruitful, as a number of participants who then also referred other participants were obtained.

An aspect that the researcher had to grapple with was sample size, as she had to ensure that she collected data from a large enough sample to support valid findings. Unlike in quantitative research, qualitative research samples are not based on statistical calculations in order to offer generalisability; however, it is vital to ensure that the findings can be scientifically supported – that is, valid. The importance of the issue of sample size is clearly highlighted by Francis, Johnston, Robertson, Glidewell, Entwistle, Eccles and Grimshaw (2010:1230) when they state that "use of samples that are larger than needed is an ethical issue (because they waste research funds and participants' time), and the use of samples that are smaller than needed is both an ethical and scientific issue (because it may not be informative to use samples so small that results reflect idiosyncratic data and are thus not transferable, and may therefore be a waste of research funds and participant time)". This means that the researcher had to find the "right" sample size, ensuring scientific validity without interviewing far too many participants such that she could be wasting the valuable time of participants and also end up unable to properly analyse the data. A study conducted by Mason (2010), wherein a sample of 560 qualitative PhD studies was selected and each examined for the sample sizes, found that the mean sample size was 31. The results of this study were further broken down by research approach, showing that, of the phenomenological studies included in the sample, the samples ranged from a low of 7 to a high of 89 with a mean of 25 and median of 20 (Mason, 2010). More recently, Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe and Young (2018) included in their study the median samples of qualitative studies from three health-related journals: 31, 15 and 30.5, respectively. Applying the reviewed literature as a guideline, the researcher initially decided on a sample size of 30 participants.

Another concept that featured in the studies examined was that of data saturation (Francis *et al.*, 2010; Mason, 2010; Vasileiou *et al.,* 2018). The concept is applied regularly in qualitative studies as a justification for the sample size (Vasileiou *et al.*, 2018:7). Researchers describe it using different words, but the understanding is consistent in that it means "no new themes, findings, concepts or problems" (Francis *et al.*, 2010:1230) are being identified with more participants being interviewed. That is, further discussion with participants will not result in a clearer understanding of the phenomenon (Laverty, 2003:29). With the initial aim of 30 interviews, the researcher booked her initial interviews and continued to request more referrals until she found that no new themes or concepts were emerging from the interviewees. This was not an easy determination for the researcher to make, neither was there an exact point at which

she came to this realisation. She continued to obtain participants up to interview 27, and upon reflection, realised that she had not obtained any new themes since a few interviews before that. This is not to say that there was no value in the later interviews, just that there were no further new experiences or descriptions that added to the data; and those participants were adding to the richness of experiences and descriptions already expressed by others and served to confirm for the researcher that she had indeed reached a point of data saturation.

4.5.1 Reflecting on self-selection bias

As described above, the participants for the present study were obtained through non-statistical sampling. Participants were approached by the researcher based on referrals and meeting the requirements of being an employee who acts in a subordinate role within the City. Even though approached by the researcher or referred through a contact, participants had to be willing to participate; thus, self-selecting. As explained by Bethlehem (2010:162), the principles of probability sampling are not applied when using self-selection to obtain participants, rendering generalisability unsuitable. However, this is not a concern for the current study, as generalisability is not one of the aims of a qualitative study (Morrow, 2005:252). Notwithstanding that generalisability was not the goal, the findings in the present study needed to be reflected on whilst considering that the type of person who is willing to take part in a study is likely an individual who has something to share and is willing to speak their mind. Therefore, this may be a contributing factor to the results indicating that many of the participants hold implicit followership theories or followership self-schemas, including proactiveness. The reliability of the results is not negatively impacted by this as the researcher had no prior knowledge of the participants, nor did she have any particular expectations of how they would describe their experiences of followership. Furthermore, the methods utilised to collect and analyse the data were also carefully selected and applied in pursuit of the research objective. Therefore, the data collected and the resultant findings present the constructed reality of the participants and address the research questions, and consequently, the research objective.

4.6 Population and environment

The participants for the study were selected from a single organisation, being the City. The City was selected for its attributes which would allow the researcher to achieve her aims of making a specific contribution to followership literature based on the gap identified from the reviewed literature. Firstly, the organisation is located within the public sector, more

specifically, local government. And secondly, the nature and size of the organisation, with over 20 000 employees, is such that it presents with a complex followership structure. These two attributes situate the research to address the lack of followership research in 1) South Africa, 2) local government organisations, and 3) complex followership structure organisations. Being located in South Africa, the City carries with it a complex history of legal racial segregation and oppression spanning many decades until 1994. The end of the segregation meant that integration had to start happening which included integration of municipalities to start sharing the country's resources in a more inclusive manner. This brought about several changes, including the amalgamation of various former councils that were merged to form the City in its current form and structure (figures 4.4).

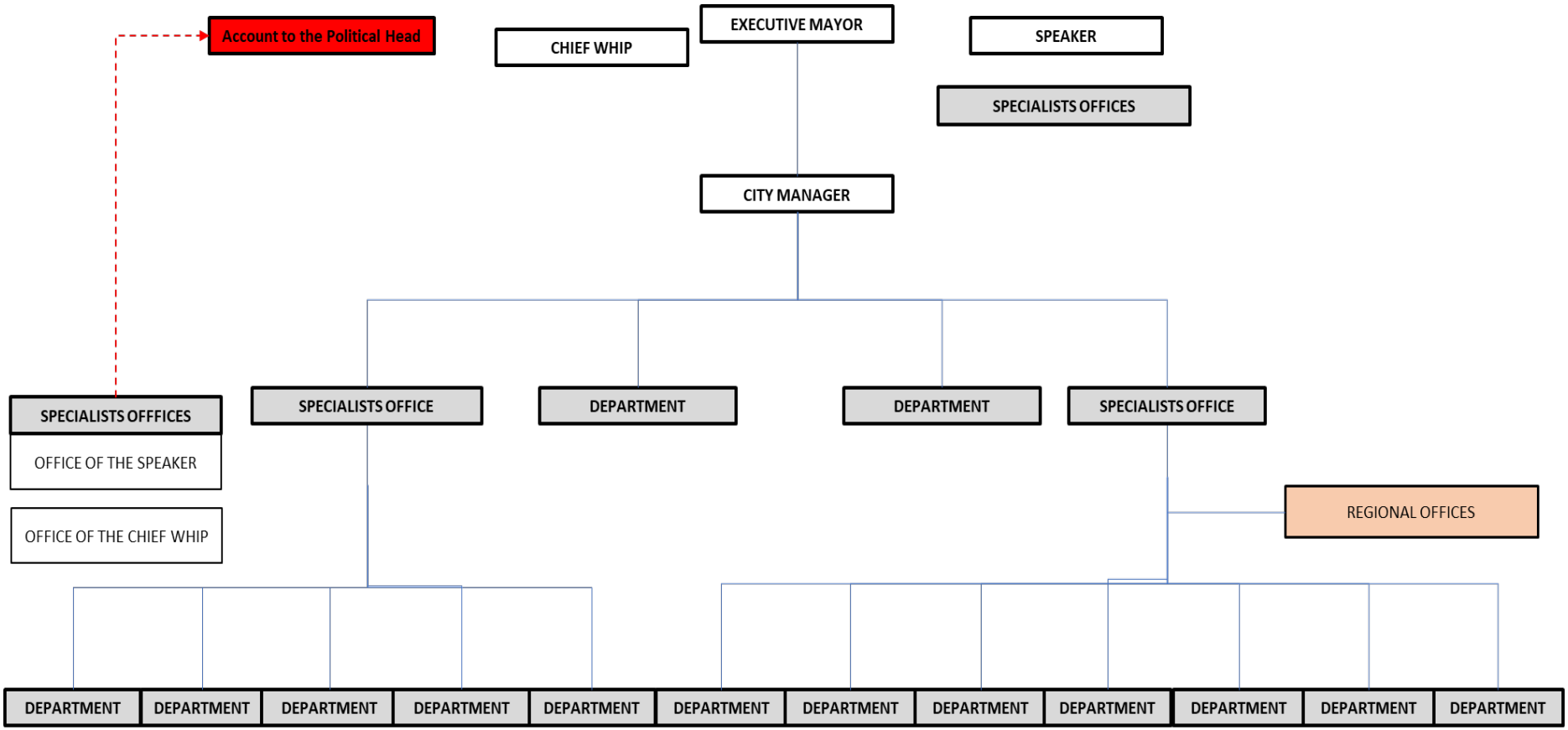


Figure 4.4 Organisational structure

Participants were selected from individuals who take on the role of followership within the organisation; that is, followers. Followers were identified as employees of the organisation who have a role that is subordinate to another. This role-based approach to operationalising followers as employees is similar to that done by Carsten *et al*. (2010:547), where followers were operationalised as "individuals acting in a subordinate role". Due to the hierarchical nature of the City (Figure 4.5), most employees take on a formal followership role, albeit to different extents as one moves up the organisation's hierarchy. This is a characteristic of a complex followership structure as described by Zoogah (2014:51). This makes it possible to obtain a follower perspective from various individuals occupying various levels within the organisation.

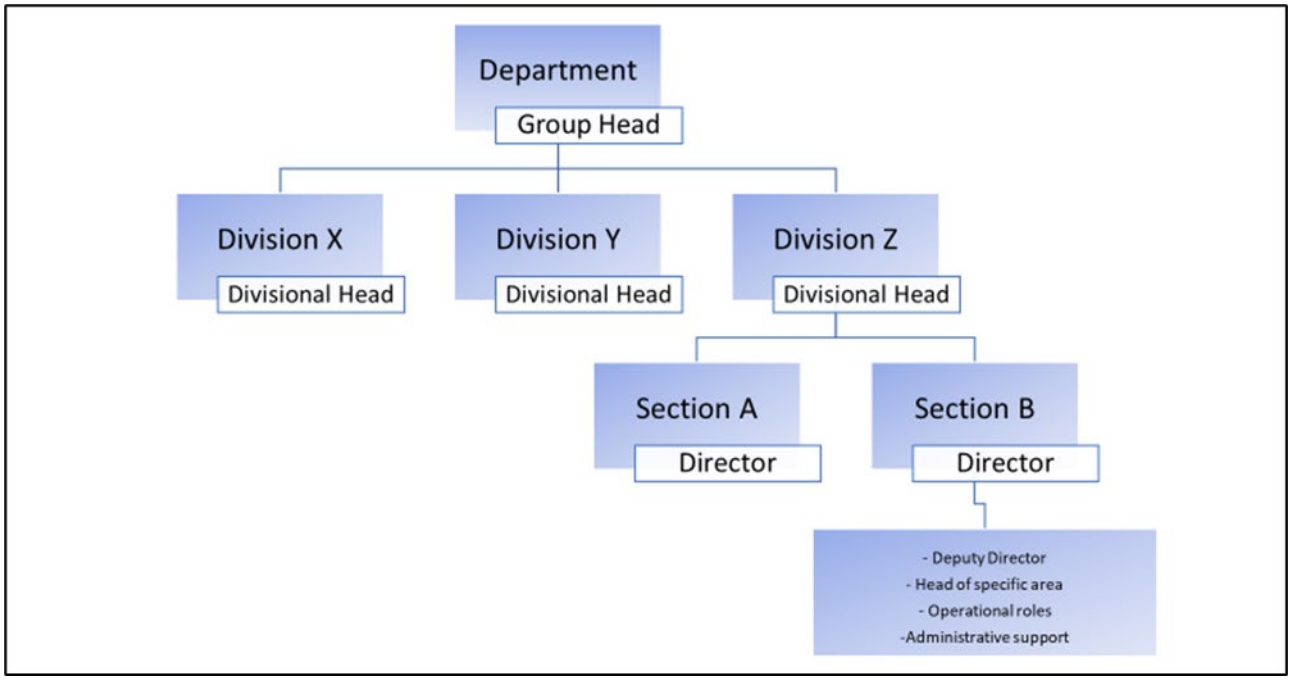


Figure 4.5 Typical Departmental Structure Found in the City

4.7 Data collection

Data were collected by way of 27 participant interviews in January, February and March 2019. Participants were contacted by email with a request for an interview. Where the researcher only had a telephone number, the potential participant was called and an email address requested in order to send the official request for an interview. The email request to the participants included a brief summary of the request in the body of the email, with two attachments, a letter of introduction and consent, and the permission letter from the City. The letter of introduction and consent gave a brief background of the study as well as details of the university and supervisor.

It also explicitly mentioned that participation was voluntary and their identities would remain confidential. Once individuals agreed to participate, the appointment for the interview was set up and the researcher travelled to the requested location.

At the start of all the interviews, the researcher once again explained the voluntary nature of participation and requested the participant to sign the hardcopy of the introductory and consent letter previously sent by email. These signed documents have been stored in hardcopy as well as scanned for electronic storage. Permission was then requested to start recording the interviews, all the participants agreed to this. The researcher also assured each participant that anonymity would be maintained, and the recordings were purely for the researcher to be able to recall an accurate account of the interview for purposes of data analysis. The interviews were recorded using a voice recording application on the researcher's phone and then uploaded on the cloud for backup and storage. A copy of the recording was kept on the researcher's computer hard drive for ease of access; however, the primary means of protecting and storing the recordings was via a cloud storage platform accessible online on a password-protected account, the access details of which are known only to the researcher. The recordings were sent to a professional transcription company to be transcribed for ease of analysis (Staller, 2012:6). During the interviews, the researcher made notes on specific things said by the participants, on which she needed to probe more, when they had completed a sharing a thought.

Interviews are frequently used to collect data for qualitative research (Qu & Dumay, 2011:238; Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007:1375). That being said, it must be mentioned that the interview does have its limitations and challenges, including the view that it can produce subjective and/or unreliable results (Qu & Dumay, 2011:239; Alshenqeeti, 2014:44). Qualitative research, by its nature, has a level of subjectivity, as it typically solicits the subjective views of participants (Krefting, 1991:214), using words which the researcher must interpret (as opposed to numbers) (Braun & Clarke, 2013:3) into meaning and results. To overcome these challenges, the researcher employed some of the advice by Alshenqeeti (2014:41&44), including:

- Kept the questions concise and clear
- Conducted the interviews at the location chosen by the participants, for their comfort
- Remembered not only to speak (ask questions), but also to listen
- Took notes and did not just rely on the recordings of the interviews
- Avoided asking leading questions

- Allowed participants an opportunity to clarify the points they were making

Despite their challenges, interviews are still a widely used data collection method for qualitative research (Englander, 2012:13; Ryan, Coughlan & Cronin, 2009:309), as they allow for greater profundity in the exploration of participant views, behaviours and experiences (Alshenqeeti, 2014:39). The use of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to have a conversation based on open-ended questions in order to solicit complete and descriptive answers that were not confined by very structured questions, yet still maintain control over the overall topic under discussion (Ayres, 2008:810). Semi-structured interviews were suitable for the present study because they are useful for exploring "meaning, understanding, and interpretations rather than to treat the interviewee as a vessel for retrieving facts" (Staller, 2012:6). The responses from the interviews were then analysed by the researcher in order to address the specific research questions and the overall objective of the study.

4.8 Data analysis

The interviews were sent to the transcribers in tranches of a few at a time, allowing for the interviewer to start receiving transcripts before completing all the interviews. The transcribed documents were uploaded onto Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis tool provided by the university. The use of Atlas.ti was to assist the researcher in organising and managing the data (Rowley, 2012:268). Data analysis is not a one-size-fits-all process, and as such, can require iteration and revision before reaching finality (Rowley, 2012:267). Rowley (2012) discusses the key components that she deems as universal with respect to data analysis. These, and the application thereof in the present study, are presented in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 Key components of data analysis process

Component	Application in present study
Organising the data set	- Interview recording and transcript saved in separate folders per participant on researcher's computer and backed-up on the cloud. - Each transcript uploaded onto Atlas.ti
Getting acquainted with the data	- Read through the transcripts and listened to the recordings

Classifying, coding and interpreting the data	- Codes were derived from the text based on each of the areas covered by the interview questions. - Emergent codes were then grouped into sub-themes and themes.
Presenting and writing up the data	- A write-up on the data was prepared and is presented in Chapter 5.

(adapted from Rowley, 2012)

As described by Pope, Ziebland and May (2000:116), the data analysis process is laborious and time-consuming; something which the researcher experienced. Requiring numerous and in-depth engagements with the data in order to derive meaning, this is not surprising. The goal of the data analysis was to identify themes emerging from the data, being an inductive approach. However, the participants' responses were to interview questions which were derived from the researcher's knowledge from the reviewed literature, being an *a priori* approach (Ryan & Bernard, 2003:88). Joffe and Yardley (2011:3) reflect on this combination of inductive and deductive processes of extracting themes as unavoidable, given that the process will be influenced partly by knowledge the researcher already possesses from existing literature. From surveying various literature (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas, 2013; Vaismoradi *et al.,* 2016; Smith, 1992; Joffe & Yardley, 2011; Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019), the researcher came to realise that thematic analysis is similar to content analysis, and had to decide which one was more suited as a method of analysis in the present study. The decision made was to analyse the interviews using the thematic analysis method. The researcher selected this method for the salient features of its applicability across different types of research questions and data types, its use in deriving data-driven codes and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2013:178), and its suitability to a constructionist philosophical stance (Vaismoradi *et al.*, 2013:400). Thematic analysis is also deemed more of a qualitative analysis method as, unlike content analysis, it does not focus on the frequency of occurrence of a particular category in its analysis, but also considers meaning within context and other qualitative features (Joffe & Yardley, 2011:3). This results in containing the "subtlety and complexity of a truly qualitative analysis" (Ibid.).

The researcher performed an initial round of analysis wherein she read through the transcripts and listened to the recordings; this was just to refresh her mind on each interview and also to

ensure that the transcripts were correct. Where she found discrepancies, she made the necessary adjustments – these occurred mainly due to areas where the transcriber found the recording inaudible. The researcher listened more intently and also had the benefit of her own notes and memory, and thus could fill in such gaps, although there were not many. As suggested by Corbin and Strauss (2012:5), the transcripts should first be read for the purpose of familiarising oneself with the data without trying to immediately identify code or themes. The researcher then started manually highlighting and identifying some initial codes and themes in order to immerse herself in the data for the purpose of making sense thereof and identifying any areas of interest (Vaismoradi *et al.,* 2016:103). As much as the researcher's judgement plays a significant role in this process of generating ideas around the data, Vaismoradi *et al.* (2016:103) warn that one should not become so preoccupied with their own ideas such that they miss key points emanating from the data.

The next step was for the researcher to go through the transcripts on Atlas.ti and do the same coding there. These two steps formed the step of generating initial codes (Vaismoradi *et al.*, 2013:402). The initial analysis generated over 500 codes which were then further analysed such that related codes were grouped together. The list of initial codes was exported from Atlas.ti to Microsoft Excel, as the researcher felt it would be easier to sort, filter and group the data in that format. Data were grouped into different workbooks and sheets, and the sheets and workbooks continued to be grouped together as the researcher continued to funnel the data into fewer categories. This process of axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2012:5), wherein related categories were grouped together, continued and resulted in the final themes as presented in Chapter 5. As tends to be the case with thematic analysis, final themes were derived from considering both manifest content and latent interpretations (Joffe & Yardley, 2011:3). This is another distinction between the content and thematic methods of analysis; as with content analysis, the researcher would have had to select either manifest or latent content to proceed with (Vaismoradi *et al.*, 2016:101; 2013:399). The steps taken to arrive at the final themes, as presented and discussed later, required a level of judgement from the researcher (Vaismoradi *et al.*, 2016:105).

At this point, the researcher wishes to reflect on her significant role in arriving at the themes extracted from the data. As Saldaña (2013:4) states, "coding is not a precise science, it is primarily an interpretive act". In constructionist research, the researcher co-constructs meaning with the participant through the interview and the process of analysis (Rowley, 2012:270). The

role of the interviewer, who in this case was also the researcher, remains a topic of discussion in reflections about qualitative methods (Ryan *et al.,* 2009) due to the proximity to the research subject. However, as previously discussed, this is a feature of qualitative research that needs to be acknowledged and constantly reflected upon by the researcher. Vaismoradi *et al.* (2016:106) reflect on this as follows:

> *"Paradoxically, researchers need to both immerse themselves in the data and conversely distance themselves from the data so as to reveal theme, and to assess and examine the accuracy of the coding process. Maintaining closeness to data is required for a valid representation of participants' views. However, it may prevent researchers from taking a critical approach towards data analysis and hinders their ability to be rigorous in data analysis."*

In the present study, the researcher was cognisant of her interviewing demeanour, doing her best to avoid bringing any preconceived notions to the interviews, the analysis of the data, and the interpretation thereof. However, what could not be avoided is that what she already knew from reviewing the literature could not be unknown; therefore, it may be that the analysis and results thereof will hold within them some part of the researcher that may not be there were a different researcher to have undertaken the study.

4.9 Rigour in qualitative research

Rigour is a vital aspect of research in order for it to be deemed useful and of value, otherwise it may as well be fiction (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002:14). Qualitative research has been on the receiving end of criticism regarding its perceived lack of scientific rigour when compared with quantitative designs (Vaismoradi *et al.*, 2013:403). In addressing the issue of validity in qualitative research, the researcher was confronted with statements such as, "critics of the qualitative paradigm constantly raise concerns as to the validity and reliability of the approach" (Pugsley, 2010:332). Tobin & Begley (2004:389) also mention this debate by some on the rigour in qualitative research, alluding that it is due primarily to the position occupied by the researcher in qualitative research; that is, not just of one who uses the research instrument, but of being the research instrument. Situating the researcher in this manner results in the inclusion of researcher values and realities in the co-constructing of meanings, giving rise to subjectivity (Morrow, 2007:213). Unlike with quantitative inquiry, where the aim is to control for subjectivity, qualitative researchers accept that objectivity is not possible (Morrow,

2007:216) thereby having subjectivity form an integral part of the research (Morrow, 2007:213). Although rigour is of utmost importance in qualitative as much as in quantitative studies, it may not be appropriate to apply the same terms as indicators for rigour or quality (Tobin & Begley, 2004:389). Quantitative research is concerned with validity and reliability as indicators of quality or rigour in research (Seale, 1999:465). However, the applicability of those terms, along with that of generalisability, to qualitative inquiry has been challenged (Tobin & Begley, 2004:389). In quantitative research, generalisation is of value, and is attained by way of larger statistical samples, whereas qualitative research seeks to gain deep understanding from often smaller purposive samples (Sandelowski, 1995:180). Therefore, although purposive sampling is inherently biased, for qualitative research it "can provide reliable and robust data" (Tongco, 2007:154).

In qualitative research, validity "generally refers to a study's rigour to ensure that the findings are a result of the appropriate implementation of methods" (Cilesiz, 2011:501). Creswell and Miller (2000:125) echo a similar sentiment in that validity in qualitative research is not referring to the data, but rather to the interpretations and conclusions drawn therefrom. Therefore, the researcher borrowed some strategies to establish validity and reliability from Morse *et al.* (2002:18) as illustrated in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Strategies for Establishing Validity

Strategy	Description	Application in current research
Methodological coherence	Congruence between the research question and the components of the method	Methodology described, justified and applied appropriately
Appropriate sample	Participants who best represent or have knowledge of the research topic	Purposive sampling from required population
Thinking theoretically	Ideas emerging from data are reconfirmed in new data.	Interviews were conducted until no further new themes/ideas emerged from additional interviews.

(compiled from Morse *et al.* (2002)

It is important for the researcher to keep in mind that, in using a constructionist approach, the goal is not to pursue an understanding signified by accuracy, but rather "a new, dialectical understanding of" followership (Haverkamp & Young, 2007:278). Thus, appropriate data collection and analysis were key components of ensuring validity of the present study. Vaismoradi and Snelgrove (2019) advise that rigour is enhanced by appropriate description of philosophical perspectives, as done in the earlier parts of this chapter.

In addressing the notion of rigour in constructionist research, Morrow (2005:253) refers to Guba and Lincoln's (1994) assertion that it is still an unresolved issue that requires more critiquing. This lack of clarity is not as a result of lack of engagement by scholars, as there are several studies that address the question of validity in qualitative research (Krefting, 1991; Morrow, 2005; Morrow, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000); it is rather that there are various criteria and procedures that can be applied. Vaismoradi *et al.* (2013:403) mention credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability as the most common criteria applied in determining validity in qualitative research.

4.9.1 Credibility

Credibility is referred to as "truth value" by Krefting (1991:215); essentially being the validity or accuracy of the results emanating from the data analysis. There are various methods to achieve this, including reflexivity (Morrow, 2005:252), which was applied by the researcher. This was done by reflecting after interactions with participants, as well as keeping notes on those reflections and observations made during the interviews. Part of the process also included the consideration of how the researcher's background and experiences could influence or shape the research process (Morrow, 2005:253), including how she interacted with participants, what she extracted from the data, as well as how she analysed and interpreted it. Achieving credibility includes the disclosure of the researcher's background and considerations on how it may have impacted on the study.

The researcher is a 39-year-old South African with a professional background in accounting and auditing. Her interest in this study was piqued by her interest in matters of leadership and how they impact on government, particularly as she feels there are significant shortcomings in the South African government when it comes to serving citizens. Due to her professional work, the researcher is interested in the workings of municipalities and how they perform in terms of effectiveness, and pays particular attention to the annual reports released by the country's

auditing authority (the Auditor-General South Africa) regarding the outcomes of financial and other performance by local government municipalities. She had to remain aware of how her existing knowledge of what she believes to be inefficiencies and possible problems plaguing municipalities might impact how she interpreted the participants' reflections on followership within the organisation. To combat this, she went back to the original interview transcriptions, recordings and notes several times during the analysis process to ensure that her inferences were based on the data and valid, and not driven by assumptions based on her preconceived expectations of participant experiences.

4.9.2 Dependability

The criterion of dependability is concerned with consistency, and is achieved through maintaining an "audit trail" (Morrow, 2005:252), including notes on how the process was undertaken, development of themes and analysis thereof. This entire process should also be described in sufficient detail so that it can be replicated using the same methods (Krefting, 1991:221). The researcher has records of the research process undertaken in completing this study.

4.9.3 Confirmability

Confirmability addresses what would be objectivity in quantitative research (Morrow, 2005:252); however, in qualitative research it is about acknowledging that objectivity cannot be achieved, and in fact is not the point (Morrow, 2005:252). Therefore, confirmability is achieved through the acknowledgement of the researcher's position and reflexivity (Krefting, 1991:221), as done above, as well as the detailing of the research process as done in this chapter.

4.9.4 Transferability

Transferability is for qualitative research what generalisability is for quantitative research (Morrow, 2005:252); although different. Due to its typically small samples, as well as the research methods, the findings of qualitative research are not usually considered to be generalisable, and should not be stated to be (Morrow, 2005:252). However, there is a consideration as to the relevance of the results to another setting, something to be determined by the reader of the study (Morrow, 2007:219). The researcher's job in this case is not to imply transferability, but to provide enough description and information about the research context

and participants such that others can make their own assessments regarding the transferability of the findings (Krefting, 1991:220).

4.10 Limitations

A limitation of this study lies in the fact that, as a qualitative study, the results are not generalisable. This same challenge is presented by the fact that the use of purposive sampling also limits the applicability of the of the interpretation of the results (Tongco, 2007:154). The current study also obtained the participants' own viewpoint about how they behave and enact their followership and not a third party's view. This is necessary for the study, as it is about constructions of followership from their perspective; however, it does result in a very subjective account of individuals' own behaviours, being how they perceive themselves to behave as opposed to how they may actually behave. Therefore, the actual behaviours could be different from the self-reported behaviours. Additionally, to maintain the confidentiality and privacy requirements of the organisation that granted permission for the study to be conducted therein, the researcher was unable to provide more background information on the environment which would have provided more context on the findings.

4.11 Ethical considerations

The researcher is bound by the ethics policies of the University of Pretoria. She did not commence with any interviews prior to obtaining ethical clearance from the University as well as permission from the City. In addition to this, each participant was requested to sign a letter of consent to take part in the study. Any potential participants that were approached and declined the interview were subsequently thanked for their consideration and not contacted any further, in acknowledgement of their wish not to be part of the study. The researcher was also sure to confirm with participants at the start of the interviews that they were participating voluntarily, and also requested permission to record each interview.

The current study does not include any physical testing on the participants therefore the risk of physical harm did not exist. The researcher has maintained, and continues to maintain, the confidentiality of the identities of the participants so as not to cause them any disadvantage or victimisation. The researcher maintained a list of all participants, the recordings and the transcripts of the interviews, as well as the notes taken during interviews. These have been maintained only for records and audit trail; the confidentiality of participants' identities and anonymity, where mentioned in the study, have been maintained.

4.12 Summary

This chapter described the selected methodology for conducting the study. It started with locating the study within the appropriate philosophical paradigms and theoretical perspectives, so as to lay the foundation for the assumptions underlying the methodological choices. Justifications for the selected research design and method, sampling method, as well as data collection method and analyses were also provided. This allows for a reader to trace, from beginning to end, the roadmap of how the research was conducted in order to arrive at the conclusions that are drawn.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

5.1. Introduction

The preceding chapter laid out the process undertaken in collecting and analysing the data to answer the research question: **How do employees in a complex organisation construct their followership?**

In order to answer this overarching question, the dissertation had to address the following three research questions:

1. What beliefs about followership do employees at the City hold?
2. How do employees at the City enact their followership?
3. What factors contribute to how employees at the City enact their followership?

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a description of the participants and present the data and results of the analysis as described in Chapter 4. The results represent the codes that emerged from the responses of the participants and are presented per research question. On the question of beliefs, some of the resultant codes are not unfamiliar to the researcher, as they are similar to existing literature. These include, but are not limited to, beliefs of followership centred on follower behaviours of proactivity, compliance and accountability. As will be discussed later in this chapter, participants also hold the role of leadership as significant in the "success" of followership. That is, in addressing what makes a follower good or ideal (or vice versa), a significant number of participants indicated that good or bad followership is an outcome of good or bad leadership. This is despite the interview question having followers being the subject and not leaders. When it comes to followership enactment, the results reveal that participants are not always able to demonstrate what they believe to be ideal follower behaviours. Once again, this is not unexpected when one refers to the literature. However, what is notable perhaps are the behaviours that most participants do enact as compared to those that they do not, as presented by the data. The results show that factors of internal origin, such as a person's natural disposition or background, are key factors in enabling participants to enact their ideal followership; whereas factors of external origin tend to mostly hinder participants in their quest to enact their ideal followership. The results also introduce the contribution that the element of party politics (present in all South African municipalities) has in influencing how followership is enacted in the organisation.

After describing the participants, the remainder of the chapter addresses the results in the order of the research questions (Figure 5.1).

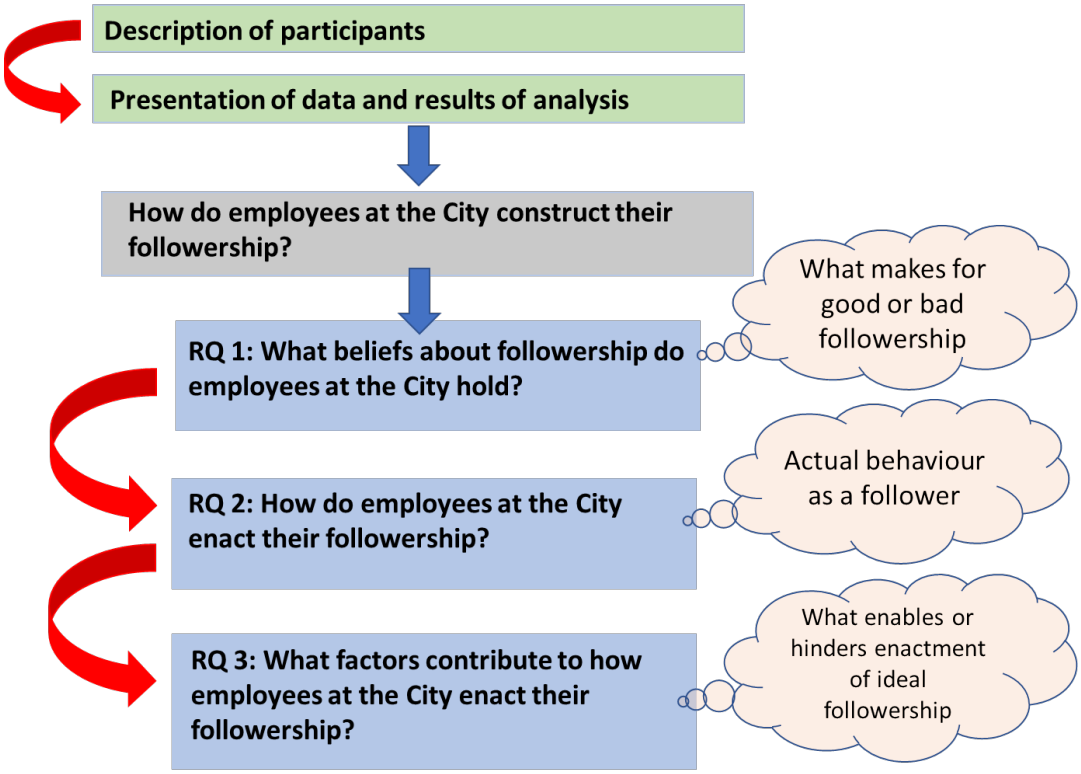


Figure 5.1 Outline of results presented

5.2. Description of participants

The participant group included individuals of different tenures, ages and departments, amongst other features. Though the sampling was not statistical, the researcher still endeavoured to collect data from a diverse group of individuals.

Table 5.1 Departments from which participants were selected

Department and Division Spread		
Departments (n = 11)	**No. of different divisions**	**No. of participants**
Department 1	5	5
Department 2	1	1
Department 3	1	1
Department 4	1	3
Department 5	1	1
Department 6	2	8
Department 7	2	2
Department 8	2	2
Department 9	1	1
Department 10	2	2
Department 11	1	1
Total	**19**	**27**

Participants were selected from eleven different departments and, in some cases, also different divisions within those departments (Table 5.1). The participants included both those with a short tenure and a long tenure within the organisation, with the shortest tenure being 3 years, whilst the longest was 43 years (Table 5.2). Table 5.2 depicts further information on the participants, including age and gender. The age range is also fairly wide; the youngest participant is 30 years old and the oldest is 63 years old. The gender split is also equitable, with 12 women and 15 men included in the sample.

Table 5.2 Participant information

Information	Categories	*n* (N= 27)
Age	30 - 39	10
	40 - 49	7
	50 - 59	9
	+60	1
Years of tenure	0 - 9	11
	10 - 19	10
	20 - 29	3
	30 - 39	2
	+40	1
Gender	Women	12
	Men	15

One of the longer-serving participants had been working at the municipality since she had left school, and completed her further education whilst employed there. She was one of four who would have been employed in the racially segregated councils prior to the first democratic elections of South Africa in 1994; these councils were subsequently amalgamated into the City as it is currently formulated. Thus, there was great depth and diversity of experience amongst the participants from which the researcher has extracted rich data. As the approaches to the participants had made it clear that participation in the interviews was completely voluntary, those that did agree were quite comfortable to do the interviews and share their views and experiences.

5.3. Presentation of data and results of analysis

The first phase of analysis, completed using Atlas.ti, resulted in 529 codes. The codes were further analysed and filtered to arrive at the final categories and themes that are presented hereunder. The data and results will be presented as they address each research question.

5.4. Beliefs about followership

Research Question 1 sought to find out the beliefs employees at the City hold about followership. To address that research question, the participants were asked to describe what they perceived to be an ideal/good follower and a non-ideal/bad follower. This was done to ensure that the researcher obtained richer descriptions of their beliefs regarding the act and role of following. The matter of what constitutes good or bad followership was not predetermined by the researcher. That is to say, the participants were not led into any particular direction when asked to describe what they would deem as a good or ideal follower versus a bad or not ideal follower. Thus, the researcher did not have any prototypical good or bad follower in mind, but allowed the participants to describe situations of good or bad followership according to their own beliefs. The analysis of the responses to these questions allowed for extraction of the codes presented in the ensuing sections.

Numerous codes were used as a description of what a good follower should do or how they should be, as well as to say that a bad follower is someone who would then fail to demonstrate that particular behaviour or characteristic. The initial grouping of the codes was as per the use by the participants; that is, either to say a good follower is one who behaves in that particular manner, and a bad follower is one who does not behave in the stated manner (Table 5.3).

Table 5.3 Grouping of final category codes: Beliefs about followership

Final category codes	Good followership (sub-codes)	Bad followership (sub-codes)
1 Proactive and takes initiative		
	· Innovate; solve problems; contribute your knowledge/inputs · Take initiative; be proactive · Speak-up; raise concerns, differing views, suggestions · Roles not static - follower can lead the leader when required; roles are different but both important & necessary	· No initiative · Not raising issues
2 Respectful deference		
	· Compliance and adherence to orders - Observe rank · Be respectful · Offer your inputs and views, if given opportunity - or at a later time	· Refuses to be led or take instructions · No respect for authority/management · Arrogant/ self-centred person - will not follow instructions · Too outspoken about opinions
3 Engaged and supportive		
	· Complementary/Supportive to leader (and organisational goals) · Must understand org. environment and objectives as well as those of your work (ask questions if need to)	
4 Principled and has integrity		
	· Discerning (in who/what they follow) · Be ethical · Remain true to yourself · Should be honest and trustworthy	· Following blindly; not questioning or discerning what you are following (whether it is right or wrong) · Not trustworthy/ opportunistic
5 Professional conduct		
	· Maintain professional behaviour and objectivity - do not be swayed by politics, individuals or other external factors · Comply with organisation's policies and procedures. Job description · Be productive; efficient - get job done · Should be adaptable and flexible to different types of leaders and organisational change · Clear scope; direction; structure (then you know what is requried) · Sticking to professional relationships/ do not get personal · Role at the time - situational (leader somewhere else, follower somewhere else)	· Lack of competence (cannot do job) · Does not adhere to the rules and regulations of the organisation · Followers not separating political issues from work (administration)
6 **Purpose and dedication**		
	· Passion/ inspiration · Followership is better when done out of choice · Dedication/ Commitment	· Being forced to follow (obligation, not because care about outcome) · Lack of dedication: commitment · No big picture view - does not or will not understand the importance of their role as a follower (e.g. in terms of service delivery)

Final category codes	Good followership (sub-codes)	Bad followership (sub-codes)
7 Will and ability to learn		
	· Good follower is basically a "leader in training" · The will and ability to learn	
8 Responsible and accountable		
	· Responsibility and accountability	· Lack of responsibility & accountability - does not care to perform work well
9 Positive attitude		
	· Traits associated with "nice" or "friendly" - "good" behaviour · Positive attitude · Collaborative; work with others - teamwork/ team player · Good interpersonal skills	· Negative attitude · Lack of social skills (not teamplayer/ poor communicator) · Being difficult; just objecting and raising questions to be disruptive
10 An outcome of good leadership		
	· Good leadership (respectful, values followers, integrity, lead by example, good character) · Open relationship with leader · Leaders/ leadership can influence how one follows	· Poor leadership · Dictator leadership · Treating followers unfairly · Not allowing inputs from followers

For example, one participant stated that a bad follower is not committed to their job, and another said a good follower is one who shows commitment. In this example, the initial grouping done was to allocate “commitment” to a good follower description and “lack of commitment” to a bad follower description. However, the ultimate belief is that good followership requires commitment.

The reason for initially coding under good and bad followership was to ensure that the researcher captured the proper meaning of the participants’ views and did not omit anything due to only looking for descriptions used in the positive. Upon completion of the data analysis process, the resultant codes were grouped and classified into ten (10) code categories representing participants’ beliefs about followership (Table 5.4). The ten code categories were themed as follows:

Self-focused beliefs: Beliefs centred on the self; where the associated characteristics or behaviours are primarily concerned about how the follower conducts themselves in the manner that *they* believe is appropriate. Other factors, such as the recipient of the behaviour or the organisation, are secondary to the follower just doing what they think achieves their intentions.

Organisation-focused beliefs: Beliefs centred on the organisation; where the associated characteristics or behaviours have a significant focus on the organisational goals or objectives.

Leader-focused beliefs*:* Beliefs centred on the leader and relating to, or the relationship with, the leader.

As evidenced in Table 5.4, some of the codes overlapped between themes as the beliefs were framed around more than just the self, leader or organisation.

Table 5.4 Belief codes as per self, organisation and leader themes

THEMES FOR BELIEFS ABOUT FOLLOWERSHIP		
No.	**Code**	**Definition**
Self-focused beliefs		
1	Proactive and takes initiative	Contribute knowledge/inputs to solve problems. Innovate. Raise concerns, suggestions and differing views. Guide the leader if necessary.
2	Principled and has integrity	Discern what and who you follow (follow what you think is good). Be ethical, honest and trustworthy.
3	Will and ability to learn	Learn from leader and others. Not afraid to make mistakes, they're an opportunity to learn.
Self- and organisation-focused beliefs		
4	Professional conduct	Do your work as required and be productive regardless of individuals occupying the leadership position. Do not be swayed by politics, individuals or other external factors. Do not take things personally. Follower is your role in a particular context.
Organisation-focused beliefs		
5	Responsible and accountable	Admit to mistakes. Be responsible and accountable for work.
6	Purpose and dedication	Passionate, inspired, dedicated and committed. Apply effort. Following as a choice, not just based on hierarchy
Leader- and organisation-focused beliefs		
7	Engaged and supportive	Understand organisational environment and objectives (organisational and specific job). Complement and support leader in achieving objectives.
Leader-focused beliefs		
8	Respectful deference	Comply with lawful orders, policies, organisational structure. Observe rank and be respectful. Raise issues if asked or wait for appropriate time.
9	Positive attitude	Collaborative, team player. Have traits associated with being "nice" or "friendly". Being easy to work with.
10	An outcome of good leadership	Good followership emerges as a response to leaders who value followers (and their input) and allow open relationships, not dictator leaders.

5.4.1. Proactive and takes initiative

This was the most-occurring belief (n = 20) about followership, with a definition of *Contribute knowledge/inputs to solve problems. Innovate. Raise concerns, suggestions & differing views. Guide the leader if necessary.* Participants who had descriptions categorised under this theme believe that followers should raise their opinions and put forward their views, even when those views may be contrary to those of the leader, as indicated in the quotations below:

> Participant 20: *"I would say if you are able to raise your opinion if you are not comfortable with something...Then I assume you would be a good follower."*
>
> Participant 8: *"I think you should be able to tell your leader when they're making a mistake."*
>
> Participant 2: *"They must have the openness and the courage to come to the leader if they have suggestions or problems or situations that they are not sure about."*

The sentiment was that followers should not sit back and wait for instructions, "always waiting to be told" (Participant 14), when they may already know what to do. And even if unsure, you should try and solve the issue instead of allowing fear to stop you, as that makes you a bad follower.

> Participant 27: *"A bad follower is someone who does not listen, who does not take initiative; someone who is afraid to start anything, is always afraid of making mistakes."*

Respondents believed that a follower's role includes adding value by suggesting better ways of doing things and communicating clearly with leaders when they believe things (including the leader) are going the wrong way. The general belief was that the follower does not necessarily know less than the leader, and thus should step up instead of keeping quiet. Courage was also mentioned as part of this belief, perhaps because, as a follower, it may not always be easy to speak up, especially in challenge to a *status quo* or leader's way of doing things. This belief code was quite prevalent, with it being cited

by 74% of the participants as a behaviour that followers should demonstrate in order to fulfil the role of a good follower.

5.4.2. Demonstrating principles and integrity

Fifteen participants (56%) had descriptions that were categorised under this code. Following without considering one's own values and ethics was indicated as a negative factor when it came to the beliefs shared by the participants. The belief is that good followership includes discerning what or who you are following, as without that, you will follow even that which is not good for you or the organisation.

> Participant 20: *"Don't ever allow that working environment or your colleagues or your supervisors to change who you are. If you are a good follower remain a good follower in spite of what situation you find yourself in…don't allow external forces to determine how you behave."*

The participants believed that a good follower should be trustworthy, act with integrity and "not follow blindly" (Participant 6). The good follower is one that "thinks about what she or he is following" (Participant 16) and the bad follower is one that does not "object to things that are not right in that organisation" (Participant 1). As such, followers "should follow instructions, but those instructions must be ethical" (Participant 4).

Possessing the qualities of being "trustworthy and honest" (Participants 4, 9 & 19) was viewed as important for a good follower. Respondents believe that things do not work if there is no trust or honesty, that it can compromise the broader environment in which they are operating, as the integrity of the information being shared and the work being done is then under question.

> Participant 9: *"You must be trustworthy, because if people ask you something, and you give one this answer and the second person calls you and you give them another answer, it's not going to work."*

In a public service organisation, such as the City, the quality of integrity in followership is perhaps worthy of notice.

5.4.3. Will and ability to learn

> *"As a follower you need to be able to accept that obviously you don't know everything, give yourself that room to learn. Through that process you are then able to improve on whatever you are doing"* (Participant 22).

This code developed from the descriptions of eight participants (30%). It also only emerged as a sentiment expressed about good followers, without it being mentioned as a factor lacking in bad followers. The participants believe that a good follower should be willing to learn from her or his own mistakes and from other people as well. As Participant 8 said, a good follower should be "willing to… learn and make mistakes". There is an element of self-awareness with this characteristic, for, in order to be willing to learn from others, one must first acknowledge that they still have something or things to learn. This code is aligned to a follower also being willing to take initiative, as the willingness to make an error and even use it as a learning opportunity, for example, requires a follower to be willing to take actions that may not have been direct instructions from their leader. Participant 17 described a good follower as "a leader in training"; an indication that some form of independent action is required from the follower, as without that, they would just wait for instructions so as to ensure they are always doing the "right" thing.

5.4.4. Professional conduct

A major element of this belief is that a follower should understand their role from a professional context; that is, the role of follower is not necessarily your role in all aspects of your life, it is the role you are required to fulfil in the particular professional space you are occupying at the time, and there is no need to personalise it. The focus should be on executing as per your required role, and not on the person to whom you are reporting; that is, your leader.

> Participant 22: *"It is important to separate the person from the actual role that needs to be played within the work space."*

This was also extended to the fact that one may find oneself having a leader that is less educationally or professionally qualified than they, but that "if you understand followership, you understand that in this circumstance, it is time for you to follow" (Participant 17) that person, even if under different circumstances, you may not have done so. The example used by

the participant was the case where one might be an engineer who has to report to an individual who is not an engineer and, thus, does not possess that technical knowledge.

Being a good follower requires an understanding that leadership and followership are roles that one occupies at different times and in different spheres in one's life, and thus one should not undermine the contribution or importance of one's follower role. As offered by Participant 22, "one should appreciate their role as a follower has nothing to do with being subordinate, but it has everything to do with how you understand the importance of the role that you play as a follower because we can't all be leaders as you need followers to execute whatever instructions or directives that have been given". He further elaborated on this by using an example where one might get to work and be led by someone who, outside of work, perhaps culturally, would be their junior.

> Participant 22: *"If I find somebody at work who is your senior but in terms of the cultural lineage the person is your junior…So, I should be able to then swop those roles and be able to say 'I am being led, and I need to take instructions from this particular person who has now also swopped roles from being a follower from outside and being a leader within the work space.'"*

The ability to separate the person from the role in a professional manner also aligns with the ability to adapt to different leaders, as well as other organisational changes. One of the respondents also indicated that, in this environment, those followers who fail to separate their political affiliation from their work duties are, in fact, not being good followers. This is of critical importance in an organisation, such as the City, where the individual who occupies the mayoral position, or even the governing party, can change with each election cycle (five years).

> Participant 19: *"Objectivity is important because, here in the City, this is a political office and then different political parties are involved, so a good follower should also consider those kinds of environments that the leader might be a member of the opposition party."*

The issue of objectivity may be of heightened importance to those who, like one of the respondents, work in the Office of the Mayor. This is specifically due to the fact that the

individual who occupies the position of Mayor may change, but you should still perform your duties accordingly, without being distracted by such a change. At the time of conducting the interview with Participant 19, he had been in his current role for four years, indicating that he had been through an election cycle which would have caused some changes to senior political leaders.

This belief centres very strongly around separating personal issues from one's work. The respondents were clear in their convictions that, to execute your followership role successfully, you need to be clear about your role and the role/s of others within your work context and not extend your personal circumstances into that situation. The good follower is able to contextualise their role within what is required, and does not take it as a statement of any other role they may occupy in life or even in the organisation. As succinctly put by one of the respondents, "Do what is right. Do what you are supposed to do. You know why you are here" (Participant 5).

5.4.5. Responsible and accountable

Six participants described good followers as having characteristics that fall into this category, as illustrated in the following quotations:

> Participant 8: *"Definitely they have to be accountable to their work."*
>
> Participant 7: *"There will have to be signs of responsibility and accountability."*

Out of those six participants, one, plus an additional six participants, then used it to describe bad followers as those lacking in responsibility and accountability. Therefore, respondents used it more to describe bad followers as those lacking in accountability and responsibility than to describe good followers as those who are responsible and accountable (n=7; n=6, respectively). The code emerged from a total of 12 participants, accounting for 44% of the sample.

The code includes, particularly in the context of being an employee at an organisation, the use of work time appropriately, including being at work when required to be. Several participants mentioned issues of tardiness, leaving work early, and being away from office without appropriate reporting as behaviours they associate with being a bad follower.

Participant 25: *"They're not punctual…They come late to work, they leave early."*

Participant 3: *"You'll just disappear, don't report, don't come to work."*

Participant 9: *"People take time off from work and yet you never see a leave form. You never see anything, but then they're hardly at work? Most probably always on leave, but there's nothing coming in, as a leave form. This is very bad for service delivery you know."*

That aspect links this code closely to the *Purpose and dedication* code, in that taking accountability and responsibility has to come from a commitment to the objectives of the work of the organisation. If the individual is not committed to any outcome, they are not likely to behave in a manner that is responsible or take any accountability for their actions or lack thereof. Some of the participants touched on this in describing bad followers, through the use of phrases relating to "not caring" (Participant 18) or "failing to take things seriously" (Participant 26). A clear link between the two codes is drawn by Participant 5 when she refers to a statement she previously made (as quoted in the section on *Purpose and dedication*) relating to knowing your purpose of service and behaving accordingly, by further saying "you must be responsible, as I said, you must first know why you are here".

5.4.6. Purpose and dedication

This code, defined as *Passionate, inspired, dedicated and committed. Apply effort. Following as a choice, not just based on hierarchy*, was another one expressed by a majority of participants (63%). Some of the descriptions in this category included:

Participant 15: *"A person who shows job commitment."*

Participant 21: *"Someone who is always there for the organisational needs."*

Participant 26: *"A good follower is the one who will be doing his or her best to be able to achieve the objective of the section."*

What was particularly notable was that many of the participants related the dedication to be towards the work the follower does or to the organisation, and not the leaders *per se.* Participant 5 included serving the managers when stating that a follower should understand the purpose for which they are there which she articulated as: "The main reason you are here is nothing else but to serve, serve community, serve customers also to serve your managers." On the other

hand, Participant 20 was quite clear that the dedication or commitment shown cannot be towards an individual when one is working for an institution, and should thus be to the work one is doing. Despite the differences in the expression thereof, what emerged for the researcher was that the participants believed that good followership involves some form of drive or dedication towards, commitment to, or passion for, the outcomes of the work one is doing. Such commitment also extends to allowing oneself to be led for the purpose of achieving those outcomes.

The belief is that the contrary is true for the bad followers. It was expressed that disinterest and a lack of care for one's work was a negative characteristic for followership. Participants related this to the fact that people are in jobs they are not interested in due to the difficulty of finding other work; therefore, they are just there to earn a salary and have little, or no interest in the objectives or outcomes of the work they do. Some of the quotations that encapsulated this are:

> Participant 16: "*Contributing nothing and they're just there to collect a salary.*"
>
> Participant 19: *"Sometimes people are relaxed; they are not committed to their job, you see… you know these days it's difficult to find a job so people just get a job for the sake of earning a salary."*

Interestingly, although used mainly to describe good followers, this code had the greatest number of participants using it in the negative as an indicator of bad followership; that is., where a lack of commitment and dedication, and similar behaviours were brought up in describing a bad follower. Fourteen participants stated it as a positive description for good followers. Eight of those 14, plus an additional three participants, then stated it in the negative as a description for bad followers, to result in a total of 11 participants (41%) believing that a lack of purpose is indicative of bad followership.

5.4.7. Engaged and supportive

Respondents believe that followers should try and understand the organisation in order to be better aides to their leaders. The belief is that, by engaging more with the organisation and understanding one's own role in achieving its objectives, they are a better follower. The more the follower knows, the better able they are not only to assist the leader in achieving organisational goals, but also to let the leader know when they are doing something that is

divergent from the organisational objectives. This is the kind follower in which the leader can place confidence, and rely on due to the support they lend. Such a follower would, for example, "make the leader feel comfortable that things will still be going in his absence" (Participant 16), "complement the leader" (Participants 19 & 21), and "have a good understanding of what the objectives are or what needs to be achieved" (Participant 22).

Respondents also believe a follower should understand the leader's vision so that they can not only support the leader, but also provide constructive criticism where necessary in order to assist the leader in achieving said vision, as articulated below:

> Participant 21: *"Someone who understands the leader's vision…who shares the vision and complements. And also, who can, just in case there is something that they don't understand or they don't agree with it, can openly, positively criticise."*

Therefore, the follower described under this category is not necessarily expected just to accept everything as is; they should ask questions of the leader in order to help the leader improve the situation or plan. The enquiries to the leader should be respectful and done with the intention of assisting towards the ultimate goal; hence, the engagement being supportive. This belief lies somewhere between taking initiative, being proactive and respectful deference. It requires the follower to do more than sit back and take instructions from the leader. For them to be a good follower, they should be able to probe and get an understanding of why something should be done, so they can support appropriately. However, they still play more of a complementary role to the leader and defer to them; that is, their leadership comes into play when the leader is absent. In all, 41% (n = 11) of the participants mentioned this belief.

5.4.8. Respectful deference

Defined as *Comply to lawful orders, policies, organisational structure. Observe rank and respectful. Raise issues if asked for or wait for appropriate time*, this theme had high occurrence amongst the descriptions by the participants (n = 18). It requires an acceptance of rank as a signifier of how one should enact their followership. That is, if person X is subordinate to person Y, then person X is the follower and person Y is the leader in the context of that relationship, and person X needs to have a certain demeanour in how they interact with person

Y. The main feature of this demeanour is respect and "recognising authority" (Participant 4), coupled with the willingness and ability to take instructions. The ability to take instructions was prominent amongst the descriptions under this code; with those who hold this belief being very direct about it, as evidenced in the quotations below:

> Participant 13: *"A bad follower is someone who refuses to take orders."*
>
> Participant 4: *"An ideal follower is obviously someone who is able to take an instruction from a leader."*
>
> Participant 18: *"For me an ideal follower should be someone who is willing to take instructions."*

The inability or refusal to comply with instructions is associated with being difficult and not accepting, and thus not appropriately enacting, your role as a follower, as expressed in this statement by Participant 17:

> *"You will find someone who doesn't want to be led, but who is always arguing all the way, and then that will be a person that is very difficult to lead because the person doesn't know…Sometimes it is not about how educated you are or what you know. It is the fact that at that time, somebody is supposed to lead you."*

Respectful deference does not mean just doing without applying yourself, as participants were also clear that the directives and instructions one is given should be lawful (Participant 25) and according to your delegated function (Participant 13), otherwise you should not carry them out. Even when a follower has a differing view, ultimately, following the instructions is what results in being a good follower. Therefore, if at all you are raising your differing opinion or suggestion, it should not result in, or be construed as, insubordination; it must be done with the due respect to the leader. Some of this was captured in the following remarks by respondents:

> Participant 13: *"You are entitled to provide your opinion and, you know? But at the end of the day, if the manager already gave authorisation on something, who are you as a follower to, you know? You just have to follow. Instructions are instructions."*

"You need to challenge, but then, for me, if you're not willing to take orders that are required for you as you signed your duties and responsibilities (then you're a bad follower)."

Participant 8: *"I think what is key on telling your leader when he or she is making a mistake…it's the approach…it mustn't come as instructions to the leader."*

There also seemed to be a strong sense of following the rules and policies of the organisation, not necessarily just the instructions of an individual leader. A number of participants emphasised the existence of set structures and regulations that one should follow in the organisation, and that if one does that, they are a good follower. Thus, the requirement of compliance is not only directed to the specific individual who occupies the role of leader in terms of position or rank, but to the organisation as a whole. Two quotations on describing a good follower articulated this, as follows:

Participant 5: *"A good follower is someone who adheres to the policy of the organisation."*

Participant 24: *"As a follower you have to respect, listen, and be able to follow a bit of rules because that means working within restricted rules."*

The participants' utterances represent a belief that following instructions, policies, regulations and anything else that the organisation comes with, is a requirement of good followership.

5.4.9. Positive attitude

This code includes descriptions of the type of behaviour that is associated with being nice, friendly and a team player. It came through 13 of the respondents, with a key feature of the belief being that a follower should be someone who participates and is easy to work with.

Participant 16: *"A good follower, I think, would be someone that's humble."*

Participant 2: *"A good follower is friendly."*

Participant 4: *"To be seen as a good follower, I believe it's very important to be a team player.*"

The participants with the belief seemed to suggest that an element of toeing the line and avoiding any unnecessary ruffling of feathers, so to speak, is required. It is centred around the ability to be amicable and cooperative, with use of descriptors, such as "having decorum" (Participant 4) and behaving in a "manner that is acceptable" (Participant 5). This code bears a similarity to that of *Respectful deference,* where one should be cooperative (in so far as it is lawful) and not make things difficult for the leader by being unnecessarily resistant. As expressed by one respondent, "there is clear authority of instruction and the team and the players need to know what needs to be done to get the job done" (Participant 4). Therefore, the team players, being the followers, need to follow the instructions to ensure that the requirements of the leader are met.

5.4.10. Good followership as an outcome of good leadership

In addressing the question on their beliefs about followership, a code that developed was one which is not behaviour- or character-based, but more of a condition or state that can lead to either ideal or non-ideal followership. Just over half of the participants (n = 16) expressed the sentiment of good followership emerging as a response to leaders who value followers (and their input) and allow open relationships. On the other hand, bad followership would be a reaction to dictator-type leaders who do not treat followers well. A respondent very clearly described this as, "followers are designed by the leader" (Participant 17). The emergence of this code was interesting in that the other belief categories that emerged were focused on what characteristics or behaviours make for a good follower; that is, those beliefs are more inward looking. The belief that good or bad followership can emerge as an outcome of having good or bad leaders is an outward looking belief; it is not about how the follower should enact their role, but rather about how leaders impact on followership through their behaviours and characteristics.

Not all participants hold this belief; therefore, it perhaps denotes that there are followers who bestow more significance on the leader's role in followership than others do. In further disaggregating the results, the researcher found that the 16 participants who held this belief, are spread across different departments and employment levels. However, ten of the 16 are men, meaning that 67% (10/15) of the male respondents hold this belief, whereas 50% (6/12) of the female respondents hold this belief.

Respondents believe that leaders who display characteristics, such as integrity and treat followers with respect, provide an enabling environment in which to enact good followership. There was some emphasis on the "difference between a boss and a leader" (Participant 26), in that the latter does not just instruct, but has respect and allows room for expression of the views of others; that is, demonstrates a value for followers. Participant 17 also expressed a sentiment that good followers come from having been well-led, not even necessarily by their current leader, but by any other previous leader they may have had. Furthermore, leaders that treat their followers unfairly or have a dictatorship style are likely to hinder even those who would want to be good followers and result in their being resistant towards that leader. There is a belief that followers mirror their leaders, thus, a good leader will get good followership in return, and a bad one, bad followership.

> Participant 10: *"Depending on what the leader gives out to his followers; chances are you will reciprocate. What you give is what you get…if you get a very good leader then people are willing and they put in the extra effort and they go the extra mile. Whereas if you get a leader who is more like a dictator kind of a leader, you get a lot of resistance from those followers. You get a lot of slacking. You get a lot of… the morale is just so low. You get a whole lot of that. So, it depends on what kind of leadership style is adopted and what kind of leader that person is. Then people tend to…we react to that actually, half of the time. So, if you are getting somebody who is going to dictate to you, you are gonna show, you would want to be in a situation where you're like, 'Okay, I am gonna show him'."*

An open relationship between the follower and the leader is also touted as an important aspect of followership. If the lines of communication are open between a follower and their leader, then the working relationship is easier to navigate (Participant 3). This finding illustrates that, although the focus was on what a good or bad follower is, the dyadic leader-follower relationship cannot be considered without significantly featuring the leader. It is a reminder that followers and leaders do not exist independently of each other in the leadership process. Therefore, the description of either followership or leadership will likely end up with a focus on the relationship between leaders and followers, and the behaviours of both in creating the process and the outcomes thereof.

5.4.11. Summary

The summary of the code frequencies is presented in Table 5.5. The code categories with an occurrence of at least 60% of the respondents were *Proactive and takes initiative* (n=20); *Professional conduct* (n= 19); *Respectful deference* (n= 18); and *Purpose and dedication* (n = 17). These codes are dispersed across the different themes of self-, leader- and organisation-focused beliefs. Two of these codes have the organisation as a focus, albeit to different extents. This could be due to the type of entity that the City is; a public sector organisation that exists to deliver services to the community in which it operates. It could be that working in such an entity creates a sense of appreciation amongst employees that their collective work has greater societal impact than perhaps other types of organisations. All other categories had at least a 40% occurrence rate amongst the participants, except for the *Will and ability to learn* which was at 30%.

Table 5.5 Coding frequencies for beliefs about followership

	Self-focused			Self- and org-focused	Organisation-focused		Leader- and org-focused	Leader-focused		
Participant	Code 1	Code 2	Code 3	Code 4	Code 5	Code 6	Code 7	Code 8	Code 9	Code 10
1	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
2	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	-
3	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	1
4	1	1	-	1	-	1	1	1	1	1
5	1	1	-	1	1	1	-	1	1	-
6	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
7	1	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
8	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	1	-	1
9	1	1	1	-	1	1	-	-	1	-
10	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	1	-	1
11	1	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	1
12	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
13	1	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	1
14	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	-	1
15	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	1	1
16	-	1	1	-	-	1	1	1	1	1
17	-	1	1	1	-	-	1	1	1	1
18	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	1	-	1
19	1	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	-	-
20	1	1	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	1
21	1	-	-	1	-	1	1	1	1	-
22	1	-	1	1	1	-	1	1	1	1
23	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
24	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1
25	1	-	-	1	1	-	1	1	1	-
26	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	1
27	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-
No. of participants	**20**	**15**	**8**	**19**	**12**	**17**	**11**	**18**	**13**	**16**
% of participants	74%	56%	70%	30%	44%	63%	41%	67%	48%	59%

(Note: where the 1 appears means that the participant mentioned that code)

Key of belief codes		Section
Code 1	Proactive and takes initiative	5.4.1
Code 2	Principled and has integrity	5.4.2
Code 3	Will and ability to learn	5.4.3
Code 4	Professional conduct	5.4.4
Code 5	Responsible and accountable	5.4.5
Code 6	Purpose and dedication	5.4.6
Code 7	Engaged and supportive	5.4.7
Code 8	Respectful deference	5.4.8
Code 9	Positive attitude	5.4.9
Code 10	An outcome of good leadership	5.4.10

5.4.12. Reflecting on self-selection bias

As described in Chapter 4, the participants for the present study were obtained through non-statistical sampling. Participants were approached by the researcher based on referrals and meeting the requirements of being an employee who acts in a subordinate role within the City. Even though approached by the researcher or referred through a contact, participants had to be willing to participate; thus, self-selecting. As explained by Bethlehem (2010:162), the principles of probability sampling are not applied when using self-selection to obtain participants, rendering generalisability unsuitable. However, this is not a concern for the current study as generalisability is not one of the aims of a qualitative study (Morrow, 2005:252). Notwithstanding that generalisability is not the goal, the findings in the present study need to be reflected on with the consideration that the type of person who is willing to take part in an interview is likely an individual who has something to share and is willing to speak their mind. Therefore, this may be a contributing factor to the results indicating that many of the participants hold implicit followership theories or followership self-schemas, including characteristics, such as proactiveness, passion for work and professional execution of work.

5.5. The enactment of followership

In order to address Research Question 2, which is concerned with how employees at the City enact their followership, participants were asked to describe how they behave as followers. The purpose of the enquiry was to determine whether individuals behave in line with their stated beliefs. The emerging themes regarding behaviour included some of the themes on belief, as well as additional themes that had not arisen as beliefs. All participants, but one, stated that they either do, or try to, behave in a manner they deem to be ideal followership as per their descriptions. Participants were not able to confirm that they enact their followership in line with *all* their beliefs. There are various reasons for this, including a lack of opportunity to enact a particular behaviour. For example, a participant may hold a belief that one should be engaged and supportive, but is in an environment where they cannot support the leader's views or actions. These reasons will be discussed further on in the dissertation. The researcher noted that the one participant who felt that they do not enact their followership in an ideal manner at all displayed a very despondent demeanour. The key factors he highlighted as giving rise to his behaviour will also be discussed subsequently. In this section, the discussion focuses on the enactment of the followership, and not necessarily the reasons therefor.

Eleven behaviour codes emerged from the participants, eight of which were aligned to the belief codes discussed in the preceding section and were categorised under the broad theme of "internally controlled behaviours". The three new codes were themed under "externally controlled behaviours", as they all were behaviours where the participants were behaving in a manner that was a response to something presented from outside of them; that is, their leader or the environment. One of the behaviour codes directly opposed one of the beliefs about good followership; that is, the participant was behaving in a manner that is a contradiction of his beliefs about ideal followership. The remaining two codes that emerged were new in relation to the follower beliefs previously discussed. From the results, it is evident that an individual may hold particular beliefs about how followership should be enacted, yet may not necessarily describe their behaviour as demonstrating all those beliefs, as the opportunity to demonstrate certain behaviours is dependent on the situations the follower has been presented with. Of the behaviour codes that matched the belief codes, four of them had a low prevalence in terms of the behaviour described by the participants. Table 5.6 depicts the behaviour codes and their frequencies, as well as aligning them to the follower belief codes, where relevant.

Whereas *Engaged and supportive* is a followership belief held by 12 participants, three participants actually described their behaviour to be in that manner. Participant 26 described his behaviour as follows:

> *"Like now my boss is not here …but I know what to do. When they send the emails to my boss, I am also cc'd…And then just like now I know he is not in the office…When he is at the Head Office, I am doing his job. Writing reports, giving answers, sending to him and then he will read and if he needs more info, he will send it back. I can say I am supportive to him, I can say I am a follower because I know his work…I am not waiting for him, as long as I see I am on that email, I am doing my part."*

The belief and behaviour code of *Principled and has integrity* fared similarly, with only four participants reporting enacting their followership with that behaviour, although only three of those four had actually indicated it as a belief code. This equated to 20% of those with the followership belief actually enacting it.

Table 5.6 Followership behaviours and beliefs

	Self-reported follower behaviours	No. of participants who enact behaviour	% of participants who enact behaviour (n = 27)	No. of participants matching behaviour with belief	Total no. of participants who hold belief	Example quotations
	Self-focused behaviours					
1	Proactive and takes initiative	21	78%	16 (80%)	20	*"I usually tell my boss if she has done something that I do not agree with." (Participant 14)*
2	Principled and has integrity	4	15%	3 (20%)	15	*"The minute I see something that is not right, I tell you. I say, you know what, please. I respect you, but this is not acceptable."* (Participant 11)
	Self- and organisation-focused behaviours					
3	Professional conduct	11	41%	9 (47%)	19	*"Whichever leader that you put in front of me, professionally I will be willing to follow"* (Participant 8)
10	Operates with political awareness: Is mindful of the political nature of organisation and navigates accordingly	1	4%			*"I knew what to do, what to say, what not to do, what not to say...What to say to who, what not to say to who. So that's how politics are."* (Participant 18)
	Organisation-focused behaviours					
4	Purpose and dedication	11	41%	7 (41%)	17	*"I have shown good commitment and passion and done everything that is expected of me."* (Participant 15)
5	Responsible and accountable	2	7%	1 (8%)	12	*"I have that sense of accountability towards myself so I know that I need to be at work at a certain time, I need to do my work."* (Participant 20)
	Leader- and organisation-focused behaviours					
6	Engaged and supportive	3	11%	3 (27%)	12	*"I really try to support my supervisor or my director in doing what is required to make his job easier." (Participant 16)*
	Leader-focused					
7	Respectful deference	7	26%	6 (33%)	18	*" I respect my manager, so whoever he is, I respect that figure of authority"* (Participant 4)
8	Positive attitude	2	7%	2 (15%)	13	*"I try my best to be a team player, to form part of the team."* (Participant 4)
9	Disengagement and minimum effort: Just does job, does not care anymore - completely disengaged	1	4%			*"You don't even care now. You just do what you have to do but you don't care…we just leave things as they are…aslong as we get paid."* (Participant 3)
	Leader- and self-focused behaviours					
11	Respect as a precursor to followership: Follows instructions if issued respectfully (not ordered) - tone matters	2	7%			*"I do it more enthusiastically when he asks me to do something for him than when he says 'you should have done this'."* (Participant 11)

Not everyone is faced with the situation where they may have to decide against their leader due to an issue of principles or integrity; only those who have had to make the decision to enact their followership in that manner would be able to describe such a situation. Various participants mentioned how the political environment of the organisation has an impact on how one enacts one's followership. However, this will be delved into in the section of the chapter presenting the factors that impact followership enactment.

Of the 13 participants who believe that a follower should have a positive attitude and be easy to work with only two (15%) described their behaviour as aligning with that belief. Participant 4 said that he tries to be a team player so that he and the people that he manages are not looked badly upon by his superiors.

Two participants described actual behaviours aligned to responsibility and accountability, whereas 12 had highlighted the code as a followership belief. It also emerged that only one participant who held the followership belief actually behaved in line with it; the other participant had not indicated the code when describing their beliefs about followership. The rest of the behaviour codes will be discussed in more detail, for the reason of being more prevalent or not previously having emerged as followership beliefs.

5.5.1. Proactive and takes initiative

Overall, the most occurring behavioural theme was that of followers taking initiative, as expressed in the following interview excerpts:

> Participant 26: *"I cannot just sit waiting for instructions while I know [what to do], I am taking initiative."*
>
> Participant 6: *"I am extremely solutions [driven] and competitive… I want to have this done by this day and this time. Trust me, it will be done."*
>
> Participant 2: *"If I disagree, I just say I disagree with this, because in a discussion you don't always see what your leader sees. Therefore, you need to have open discussion."*

In total, 21 respondents said their followership enactment includes taking initiative and challenging where necessary. Interestingly, of those 21 respondents, five of them had not

mentioned this behaviour as part of their beliefs. On the other hand, four participants who had indicated that they believe a good follower should show initiative and be proactive did not describe their enactment to include the behaviour. The match between participants who hold this belief and whose followership enactment includes the behaviour is 80% (16 out of 20).
A point was also made that the follower's perspective is important because leaders are typically not "on the ground", and are, therefore, not aware of certain issues or occurrences in accomplishing the desired outcomes.

> Participant 13: *"I will give my inputs. I will give my value to the executives, as they are not always here. They don't see, they don't talk to clients. So, the clients' inputs are the ones that will also help us to do things better as an organisation."*

Respondents also spoke of instances where they felt that raising differing views and opinions is not behaviour that is welcomed by their leaders. Participant 24 had described beliefs consistent with her behaviour of innovating and offering differing views, but in describing her followership, she initially referred to herself as a "terrible follower". Upon probing, it came to light that this is what she believes her leader thinks of her, as this type of behaviour can, at times, result in an impasse between her and her leader. Another respondent (Participant 27) said he has been told he is "a very difficult person" by his supervisors due to his behaviour of questioning and trying to obtain an understanding. Despite the reception, both these participants persist with enacting their followership in this manner as aligned to their beliefs.

5.5.2. Professional conduct

This was the second most prevalent behaviour by participants, with 11 participants (41%) indicating it. Of note is that 19 respondents had stated it as a followership belief; therefore, it had a high frequency. Participants with this behaviour do not take things personally and focus on their professional responsibilities as opposed to who is occupying a particular position. The sentiment is that they do not concern themselves too much with the individual leader, but more the role that the leader is fulfilling. They follow the policies and objectives of the organisation, therefore, the person on the other end of the instructions is not an issue for them.

Participant 19: *"I know what I want, I know where we [as an organisation] are going, and then it's very easy for me to support whoever is the leader."*

Another respondent drew the distinction between following the position, and thus being subordinate, and being an actual follower of a person.

Participant 17: *"I am not actually following the person, but it is just that my position is just behind or below them. So, in that way I may be seen as a follower, but basically, I am a subordinate."*

Participant 20 mentioned that she has been under the leadership of what she believes to be both good and bad leaders. Yet regardless of such, she has remained the same in the execution of her duties, as she believes that you should always do what you are supposed to do, even if you may not "like" the leadership style of the leader.

A slightly different take on focusing on the work was given by Participant 22. He feels that focusing on one's work is actually easier to do when you are a follower. What was particularly interesting about this is that the respondent occupies a fairly senior post, as a director.

"So, for me and through years of experience I've gained in the work place and from society itself, I have also learned that it's actually better to follow. From an accountability perspective, not that I am running away from being accountable. However, the load is much better when you follow than when you are leading because, I mean especially in the work space... you know… you are able to focus on the role you have been given to play. In terms of accounting for other things, you really shouldn't worry much about that."

Of the participants who hold this belief (n = 19), 47% of them (n = 9) behave in line with it.

5.5.3. Purpose and dedication

Being committed and going the extra mile is also a belief held by the majority of the respondents (63%), and is enacted by 11 respondents overall (41%). Participants who behave in this manner mentioned service delivery as a key factor for them in ensuring they do their

work properly. They come in early, or do the work of more than one person due to being short-staffed. Some of the respondents do this even though they may not get any recognition for it, as Participant 15 said, "I have shown good commitment and passion and everything that he was expecting from me. But it is not guaranteed that I will get the recognition, and I do not think it is everyone who can do that." It seems, though, that some of the participants really apply effort because they believe in the end-goal, being that the organisation exists to service the community. Participant 18 detailed how she has been using her own resources (fuel, vehicle, unpaid overtime) to ensure that she meets the community needs within her portfolio. Given that this is an organisation that exists to ensure services to the citizens, the researcher once again notes that it is not surprising that many followers would hold followership beliefs aligned with having purpose and being dedicated; it is, however, surprising that not as many of them ultimately enact their followership in line with that belief.

5.5.4. Respectful deference

Notwithstanding that 19 participants hold the followership belief, only six (33%) of those same participants described their followership enactment to be consistent with the code *Respectful deference*. This is notable for the fact that the belief code was quite prevalent amongst participants (67%). Overall, seven participants described their behaviour as that of respectful deference, saying that they have respect for authority and are willing to follow instructions, as long as they are lawful. Even if they may have a differing view, they will find an appropriate time in which to raise it, as there is high sensitivity to how the leader may receive it.

Participant 1: *"I will still raise my view, contribute and say, 'This is how I think we should approach what.' But if it comes as an instruction, we have to carry that instruction, as long as it is not illegal, because some of the things it is just about the approach, you might see the short way there, somebody is seeing a long way, but because they are your boss, sometimes you must just follow that."*

Participant 13: *"I'll give input where I think it's due, etcetera, and we all know that input is not always welcome…I would follow the instruction as per… I will follow what is required of me to do. Whether my inputs fall on that ear, whatever."*

Participant 8: *"Look, if I don't agree with certain issues or tasks, definitely I will raise it. It depends on the mood as well, that we must address it at the right time…That's key, 'cause at times I found that certain leaders they don't like to be questioned or being corrected in front of colleagues, so you'd rather have a space where...comfortable space where you can address those types of issues then."*

5.5.5. Disengagement and minimum effort

This behaviour is described as: *Just does the job, doesn't care anymore and is completely disengaged.* There was one respondent, Participant 3, who described himself as behaving in this manner. This was not at all aligned to his beliefs as described, and he acknowledged that. However, he explained that this is a behaviour he has developed over time due to very negative experiences with his leader. He felt that previous attempts to enact his followership in a more proactive and value-adding manner had been met with disdain and no appreciation. He mentioned that his self-esteem had taken a knock, and as a means of "surviving" in the environment, he had taken to this behaviour.

Participant 3: *"Even if he says something wrong, you just ignore. It's like you don't care anymore. You just work. Whatever they give you, you don't ask questions. Try your best – the best as you can to do it [without asking any questions]."*

He just does the minimum that is required and is not bothered as to whether he is adding any value to the leader or the organisation. He comes to work to comply with the fact that he has to be there in order to get paid, and that is where it ends for him. This is a very strong example of how a follower can be constrained in enacting their followership in line with their beliefs by a leader's behaviour or attitude towards them. Interestingly, this is one of the participants who believe that a requirement of good followership is good leaders. In discussing that point he juxtaposed how he relates to his subordinate with how his supervisor relates to him, in order to demonstrate how he thinks a good leader brings out the good from the follower, and that an open relationship between a follower and leader results in a good working relationship. There was a great sense of despondency and hopelessness as he repeatedly expressed how he feels intimidated by his leader and is unable to talk to him or address issues.

5.5.6. Operates with political awareness

An organisation, such as the City, being a municipality headed by political leaders, has an inherent political nature that may not always be avoidable for employees. There was one participant who specifically described her behaviour with reference thereto, expressing that she is mindful of the political nature of the organisation and navigates accordingly. She described her behaviour to specifically include using the politics of the organisation to achieve her work objectives. She does not hold a very senior position within her division (she is a level below deputy director), thus one would assume she is very removed from the politics that play out at the top management levels. However, she did mention the political nature of the organisation as a major challenge, although she has learnt to work around it to limit its impact on how she accomplishes her goals. In reflecting about a situation she had to navigate to get a project complete, she said "I knew what to say to who. What not to say to who. So that's how politics are."

The issue of the political nature of the organisation and its impact on followers will be discussed when dealing with Research Question 3.

5.5.7. Respect as a precursor to followership

This code developed from two followers who described their behaviour as that of good followers and said that they are willing to follow instructions of their leaders, so long as they are issued in a tone that they find respectful. One of the participants is fairly senior in his department, although still having roles above him that he reports to and expressed that he has no issue with following or being a follower. He made reference to the situation that, if both the leader and follower can be humble, a lot can be accomplished and learnt from each other. Even in referring to those who follow him, he alluded to a preference of seeing the relationship as that of collegiality and not necessarily of hierarchy. Thus, this enactment is an example of the leader aspect of followership enactment; that is, the followers are willing to be ideal followers, but can behave in a non-ideal manner depending on the leader's behaviour.

5.5.8. Summary

The behaviour codes emerging from the respondents indicate a situation in which, for the most part, followers are not always able to enact their ideal followership behaviours. The most prominent behaviour is that of being proactive and taking initiative. This is not surprising given

that it was also a highly occurring belief amongst participants. However, there were other belief codes that were held by a majority of participants which have not emerged strongly when it comes to enactment. Presented in Table 5.7 is the frequency of each behaviour code amongst participants, as well as how many of those enacting that behaviour are doing so in line with what they stated as their beliefs.

Table 5.7 Summary of Participants' Beliefs

	Self-focused		Self- and org-focused		Organisation-focused		Leader- and org-focused	Leader-focused			Leader- and self-focused
Participant	Behaviour code 1	Behaviour code 2	Behaviour code 3	Behaviour code 10	Behaviour code 4	Behaviour code 5	Behaviour code 6	Behaviour code 7	Behaviour code 8	Behaviour code 9	Behaviour code 11
1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
2	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
4	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	-
5	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
9	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
11	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
12	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
13	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
14	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
15	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
16	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
17	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
18	1	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
19	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
20	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
21	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
22	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
23	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
24	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
25	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
26	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
27	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
No. of participants	21	4	11	1	11	2	3	7	2	1	2
% of participants	78%	15%	41%	4%	41%	7%	11%	26%	7%	4%	7%
No. that matches with belief	16	3	9	N/A	7	1	3	6	2	N/A	N/A

Key

indicates that participant also holds the belief

dicates that participant is behaving contrary to belief

Key of behaviour codes		Section
Code 1	Proactive and takes initiative	5.5.1
Code 2	Principled and has integrity	
Code 3	Professional conduct	5.5.2
Code 4	Purpose and dedication	5.5.3
Code 5	Responsible and accountable	
Code 6	Engaged and supportive	
Code 7	Respectful deference	5.5.4
Code 8	Positive attitude	
Code 9	Disengagement and minimum effort	5.5.5
Code 10	Operates with political awareness	5.5.6
Code 11	Respect as a precursor to followership	5.5.7

The behaviour codes that also came up as beliefs are what were themed as internally controlled. On the other hand, the last three codes for follower enactment seem to be follower responses to issues that are externally controlled; e.g., leader attitudes and organisational environment.

This introduces the following section which addresses the factors that influence (whether positively or negatively) how the respondents enact their followership, being what Research Question 3 seeks to answer.

5.6. Contributors to followership enactment

Research Question 3: What factors contribute to how employees at the City enact their followership?

Research Question 3 seeks to find out what factors contribute to how employees at the City enact their followership. In addressing this, the researcher asked participants what factors make it easier for, or enable, them to enact their ideal followership, and what factors make it more difficult for, or hinder, them in enacting their ideal followership. Some respondents had only positive factors; that is, they only mentioned factors that enable their enactment of followership. Other respondents mentioned both the factors that enable and those that hinder their enactment of followership. There was one participant who had no enablers for their followership; they just felt hindered in enacting any part of what they believe to be ideal followership, and were in fact enacting followership that is not what they believe to be ideal at all.

The results have been grouped into two broad themes; namely, factors of internal origin and factors of external origin. Those themes have been further broken down into sub-themes, whereunder each of the emerging codes has been categorised (Figure 5.2). Factors of internal origin are those that can be attributed to the individual participants; that is, those that they describe as being what drive them from within to behave in a particular way and not in another. Factors of external origin are those that can be attributed to the environment in which the participants have to operate; that is, the organisation and the other people they have to interact with. Of particular interest, is the emergence of macro-political issues as a factor that influences the enactment of followership in the organisation. Also noted is the fact that the aspect of leadership emerged as both an enabler and a hindrance, depending on whether it was considered good or bad leadership. This links back to the beliefs held about followership. The discussion on the different themes ensues below.

	Enablers	Hindrances
Factors of internal origin	**Work related factors** · experience · career aspirations · big picture focus	
	Nature of person factors · personality & background	
Factors of external origin	**Leadership factors** · leaders as enablers	**Leadership factors** · leaders as hinderances
	Organisational factors · inclusive organisational culture · policies provide guidance	**Organisational factors** · rigid nature of organisation · lack of resources · lack of recognition · other followers (negative/low morale) · political interference

Figure 5.2 Factors that influence the enactment of followership

5.6.1. Factors of internal origin

The responses under this theme were in two categories (Table 5.8): work-related factors – being those where the participants focus on a work-related goal or objective, even if it is internal to them; and factors to do with the nature of the person – that is, factors that are unrelated to their work, and have more to do with the natural disposition of the person, whether through nature or nurture.

Table 5.8 Factors of internal origin

Factors of internal origin	Categories	*n* (N= 27)
Work-related	Experience	5
	Career aspirations	7
	Big picture focus	10
Nature of person	Personality & background	13

5.6.1.1. Work-related factors

Experience – A number of participants (n = 5) mentioned that having long work experience, whether in the organisation or elsewhere, was an enabler in trying to enact their ideal followership. Some respondents said they had learnt from previous jobs how to be a good follower, and thus tried to continue enacting that.

> Participant 23: *"Where I come from, I've learnt a lot from the leaders. Luckily, I managed to implement what I've learnt from the previous department."*
>
> Participant 8: *"I was with a different company before I came here, so they've trained me, they developed me into who I am."*

Leadership experience also emerged as an enabler of good followership, where the desire to have better followers actually drives one to try and enact what they believe to be good followership.

> Participant 21: *"And I believe that whatever that I do [sic] is what I expect others to do. But if I don't do it myself, it is seeds that will produce the same harvest because we have to do unto others what you will expect them to do… And whatever that I do [sic] to my bosses I'll also get from my subordinates…so I lead by example.*

It was also evident that long tenure at the organisation provides confidence for a follower to behave in their desired manner. One of the respondents who had been at the City for decades very clearly stated that, because he had reached what he believed to be the highest position he would ever get at the organisation, he had no fear in doing what he thinks is right. He did not have to fear any punitive actions, such as not getting a promotion.

Career aspirations – Seven participants mentioned being driven by the desire for gaining recognition that can lead to career advancement. They use that drive as an enabler to keep trying to be good followers. One respondent sees the opportunity of advancement by learning about the senior role above his own when he has to act in that role due to a vacancy. He said he uses that time not only to learn, but also to create an opportunity for his superiors to see that he is suited for the role and should thus be promoted into said role: "I am creating an

opportunity as well for appointment to the position" (Participant 15). It is a similar case with Participant 9, where she has had to perform some of the duties of the vacant Deputy Director post that she would ordinarily be reporting to. She explains:

> *"I've learned a lot since my Deputy Director left…I learned lots and lots of stuff. How he did his work. Where he got the information from…You have to do it, because, someday, as I say, someday this position, Deputy Director position, will be advertised and then, you're not good enough."*

Participant 22: *"You don't wake up at the top. So, for me that is one of the things that makes me appreciate being a follower because it is always from a positive perspective, it always gives me the hope that I am learning something I am going to grow one way or the other. It would then make me ready to get to the next level.*

To be known as a good follower is something that can also assist in getting into different divisions and departments, or even in other government entities, as mentioned by some of the respondents.

Participant 20: *"I think somehow, when you are a good follower, then even people you don't report to, somehow can see you. So, you wouldn't want everybody to paint you in a bad light when you know you are a good performer and somebody else [in a different division] might be able to absorb you"*

Participant 18: *"I still see myself working in parliament one day. So, I cannot just risk that."*

The researcher classified this as a factor that enables good followership from within the participants. When talking about this factor, it was something within them that kept driving them towards good followership. That is, they kept trying to enact their followership in their ideal manner due to their aspirations of learning more and furthering their careers, with the acknowledgement that, in order to do so, one has to be a good follower.

Big picture focus – Keeping a big picture mindset was mentioned by ten respondents as something that helps them to keep trying their best to be what they perceive as good followers.

They recognise the role they play within the overall objectives of the organisation. Participant 18 recounted an incident where she was requested to do what seemed like a very menial task; however, because she understood what the end-goal of doing it was, she could appreciate how that task fitted into achieving that end and completed it appropriately. Thus, there is a commitment to the organisation and the work that it does.

> Participant 19: *"I know where our City wants to be...how it wants to look like in 20- or 30-years' time, so it is easy for me to make a contribution and be part of that process."*

There is an understanding from the respondents that the impact of not being a good follower can have consequences further than just their leaders; hence, the belief that their role as followers within this organisation is important, and requires to be appropriately discharged for the success of the greater goals of the organisation. There is a commitment and dedication to the ultimate receivers of the work being done in the organisation, being the community. One of the longer serving participants (tenure of 25 years) clearly expressed this sentiment when asked about what enables his followership.

> Participant 26: *"The environment that I am working in, I love the City…We are supposed to give services, when we see things don't go well, we worry, we try to help, and then to take those steps to improve the situation…I know when I come to work, I want to make a difference every day".*

Two participants (Participants 13 & 11) made direct reference to what are known as the "Batho Pele" principles. "Batho Pele" means "People first" in the South African language of Setswana. These are principles applied by the City to ensure the delivery of appropriate services to its customers, being the citizens.

5.6.1.2. Nature of person factors

Personality and background – Respondents (n = 13) cited factors of background as enablers to them enacting followership in the way they believe to be ideal. The matter of background presented differently for the respondents; some of them alluded to strict or religious

upbringings and military backgrounds which they believed taught them to apply effort and try to follow as best as they could.

Participant 14: *"The way I am, my upbringing. My parents were strict."*

Participant 16: *"Me coming from the Christian religion, I try to build on those principles or draw from them."*

Participant 16: *"I still come from the era where we had to do compulsory two years military training. It was enforced that you should respect a position."*

One of the respondents said he is a naturally humble person and also was socialised in a manner that encouraged good followership as the path to learning more and improving oneself (Participant 22). Therefore, he uses this as a driver to be a good follower. Another perspective was that of having a non-adversarial personality, "my personality…I'm not always fighting with everybody" (Participant 2). This makes it easier for him to enact his followership.

Participant 6 mentioned that she was brought up to be an independent thinker, and that equips her to be able to follow as she thinks is best without necessarily following things or people that she may not believe are right. Personality also came in as an enabler for this respondent, with her mentioning several times through her interview that having a dominant and independent personality allows her to stick to what she believes is right, and thus enables her to enact followership in the way in which she sees fit for the situation. If she thinks she should take initiative or go about something a different way, she does so. Having strong ethical character was also an enabler, as Participant 12 said that, due to his character, he always challenges what he believes is not right, regardless of the environment or situation.

Having self-discipline, being a good planner, and being responsible were some of the factors mentioned as enablers of good followership. The ability to plan and prioritise what needs to be done and ensuring it is executed accordingly is how Participant 25 said he ensures he is a good follower. Another participant expressed that "having a sense of responsibility" (Participant 20) towards herself enables her to enact good followership, as she knows what needs to be done and does not rely on being told by anyone else.

Being able to work well with people and forming good working relationships, as well as motivating oneself to enact good followership by maintaining a positive attitude, also emerged as enablers. The notion is that, despite other factors that may frustrate the respondents' efforts to enact good followership, the ability to tap into their positive energy from within themselves helps them to keep trying to be good followers.

Participant 10: *"If you are gonna get lemons you make lemonade, or you are gonna cry? I am that type of person. What are you going to do with these lemons?...You just make the best of the situation and you try to make it work and you have a choice to be happy or to be miserable. I know it sounds so cliché or whatever, but it is what has been working for me."*

Participant 14: *"Even my personality, I am somebody who is a positive thinker. That is why I am still working, why I am still here."*

As noted, none of the respondents brought up internal factors as hindrances to them enacting their followership in an ideal manner.

5.6.2. Factors of external origin

Respondents had external factors that impact their followership positively (enablers), as well as factors that impact their followership negatively (hindrances). The factors were categorised into two major codes which had both enablers and hindrances (Table 5.9).

Table 5.9 Factors of external origin

Factors of external origin	Categories	*n* (N= 27)
Leaders as contributors to followership enactment	Leaders as enablers	8
	Leaders as hindrances	9
Organisational factors	Inclusive org. culture	2
	Policies provide guidance	3
	Rigid nature of organisation	7
	Lack of resources	4
	Lack of recognition	6
	Other followers (negative/ low morale)	5
	Political interference	8

5.6.2.1. Leaders as contributors to followership enactment

Participants found their leaders to be either enablers or hindrances to their ideal followership. It was not surprising that 17 respondents expressed factors of leadership to influence their followership, given that it came up significantly in participant beliefs about followership as well. The split between those participants who felt that their leaders enabled their followership (n = 8) and those who felt that their leaders hindered their followership (n = 9) was fairly even.

Leaders as enablers – The participants who mentioned leadership as an enabler described their leaders as supportive and encouraging of them as followers. The leaders consider their input in making decisions and are willing to take their different suggestions. The below quotations illustrate this sentiment:

> Participant 4: *"As long as we are not breaching any policies or procedures then, yes, management will take into account certain issues. They will try to resolve it; they will try to ensure that their personnel's morale is still up, and they are willing and able to do what is required for us."*
>
> Participant 16: *"We are allowed our own initiatives and we're actually allowed a lot of freedom at work by my supervisor. So that's quite nice."*

Another factor that drives the enactment of good followership is the knowledge that leaders place reliance, and depend, on an individual to assist them when there are challenges.

> Participant 26: *"They use[d] to call me when there is a problem…I can see that what I am doing at the moment, I am doing it at my best. Because when there is something wrong, all of them they have my numbers…That encourages me to work harder."*

That good followership is a result of good leadership was one of the beliefs that emerged for Research Question 1. Therefore, it is not unexpected that having good leaders is emerging as an enabler for respondents to enact their ideal followership. This is also applicable to the converse result that emerged; that is, that bad leadership is a hindrance to the enactment of good followership as expanded upon below.

Leaders as hindrances – There were respondents who expressed that their leaders serve as a hindrance to their efforts to enact their ideal followership. One of the participants actually enacts followership against his beliefs due to how strong the negative impact from his leader is (Participant 3). He was also one of the participants that believe that leaders can have a significant impact on how followers ultimately enact their followership. He expressed a complete lack of will to bother trying to be a good follower anymore due to how his leader's behaviour has negatively impacted him. He said that his leader does not take kindly to suggestions and input, and that he is "afraid to go to him". As a result, he does not offer his ideas or suggestions anymore and just does only as much as is required for him to be meeting his job requirements. This is in contrast to the beliefs he expressed about followership; including that followers should take initiative, support their leaders and be committed to their work. This respondent was also not able to mention any enablers of good followership, unlike others who, despite experiencing hindrances, also have enabling factors.
The issue of leaders who do not consider suggestions and inputs was expressed by other respondents as well.

Participant 18: *"Because they don't listen, not listening is the issue, is the problem, is the main issue. You don't listen. Maybe you don't listen to your juniors, to your subordinates because they are junior. So even if they warn you. Even if they tell you that, no, don't do things this way… you don't listen because you just want to prove … you just want to… I don't know. Maybe to prove that you are in charge."*

Participant 17: "*That's why I am saying there are times when my followership is dictated by the way…the behaviour of the leader."*

Participant 24: *"You do it their way or get out of this place. They even tell you 'Resign, leave, get a job elsewhere.'"*

This kind of behaviour results in followers feeling undermined, especially where they possess the relevant qualifications for the area they are working in, and as though they cannot add the value they wish to add.

An intriguing point by Participant 24 was that of leaders who do not do their work, and how this results in a form of role reversal, where she, as the follower, ends up leading the leader in

order for work to be done. This makes it difficult for her to enact her ideal followership as she is now "leaderless", in her view. That this situation is something she perceives as negative is possibly rooted in the fact that the City, being a complex followership structure, runs on a very hierarchical model, where leader and follower are assigned based on subordinate-superior relationships. Thus, since Participant 24's followership schemas include leader-focused elements, she may have difficulty enacting her ideal followership behaviours when she perceives there to be no leader.

> Participant 24: *"We have structures, we have a certain person at a certain level who is supposed to be leadership. Now you find yourself as a follower having to play a role of leadership over the person who is supposed to be leading you because they're not doing their work. Now you have to pick up things they're supposed to be running with. So now we are playing both games. I'm running management but I'm supposed to be learning. So, who am I going to follow?"*

Even though respondents said they use other motivations to keep contributing and doing what they believe is right, the did say that leaders who behave in this manner do make them feel discouraged. This extends to leaders who are not knowledgeable and do not take professional advice from the participants even though they have the professional qualifications to give the advice; this occurs particularly where the leader is not qualified in the professional field and the follower is. The respondents feel disrespected by this behaviour, and it does, to an extent, "arrest" their ideal follower enactment.

5.6.2.2. Organisational factors

These are factors that have to do with the organisation. Most of the organisational factors emerged as hindrances to followership enactment; however, there were some that were cited as enablers.

Inclusive organisational culture – An inclusive culture was cited as an enabling factor by two participants. This view is in contrast to those who find the rigid nature of the organisation to be a hindrance. Besides their similar ages (49 years and 52 years, respectively), there are not many obvious similarities between these two participants: one is female and the other is male;

they work in the same division, but perform very different functions and thus do not report to the same person; their tenures are 10 and 25 years, respectively. The respondents who conveyed this sentiment felt that there is open communication upwards and downwards within their immediate environments.

> Participant 26: *"Here, at least, we have that room to express your views and the respect is there. Even if it comes from the junior one, when he comes bringing something… you know, we learn every day."*
>
> Participant 23: *"What I will say about the organisation…when we communicate, everything is transparent. I can see now that, at least, the department is communicating to the employees. So that's a good image about the department. And then, like, if there's something bad that the department has done, it's also redressed…and they give us the reason why this thing happened and then also the way forward to resolve that problem."*

These participants also had no organisational factors as hindrances, indicating that they generally have a positive experience of the organisation as a whole. They also expressed that their leaders are enablers of their followership, which brings forth the possibility that the follower's experience of the organisation may be impacted by the relationship they have with their leader.

Policies provide guidance – The presence of policies empowers some of the followers in enacting their roles well; they feel that knowing those policies well gives one a clear path to follow. A follower does not have to guess what is required and can also challenge or advise their leaders based on those policies. This makes it easier for the respondents to do what they believe is right, as it is backed up by policies and regulations.

> Participant 9: *"Policies, agreements and Acts and everything that I know that we use. That you must know of, because somebody is going to ask you sometime. And what I have on my computer, I've got a folder where I put in all this stuff…all my applicable, information. If somebody asks me, 'What about this? Where do you get it?' then I can make a print*

screen and say, 'I get it from the BCEA, that page, this is the answer, this is the solution.'"

Rigid nature of organisation – The rigid nature of the organisation was mentioned as a factor that respondents (n = 7) find to be in their way when trying to enact their ideal followership. Rigid policies and structure impede upward flow of information from followers to top leadership. This is particularly felt when it comes to having input into the organisational strategy implementation and decisions. Followers feel too removed from that process, and that, even if they have good suggestions which they share with their leaders those may not get to the ultimate decision-makers due to the very hierarchical structure of the organisation; their bosses have bosses who, in turn, have bosses, and so forth. Therefore, this frustrates any process for them to feed into the decisions that are made, the issue being that the respondents feel that the expectations from the top leadership can, at times, be out of touch with the reality on the ground. Hence, they feel that their inputs should be considered in the strategy formulation and decisions.

Participant 19: *"The problem is that we, as the followers, where most people are...the lower level, they are in contact with the community and then there are ideas that they want to bring up, but, since they are not involved in strategy, it is difficult for them to do so."*

Participant 1: "*In big organisations, like the city, currently how policy is formulated is problematic…it is formulated somewhere far, in this case at council level. So, councillors will sit and decide and formulate the policy, which is not implementable. But, because you are at a level where you must implement, you are expected to carry it through…So policy formulation process is a big thing."*

Participant 6: *"Here policies and procedure is…So basically it is like written in stone."*

This sentiment was shared by respondents in different departments and at different levels, reflecting that it is likely an institution-wide issue. This is perhaps not a surprising result, given that the City is a municipality and, thus, operates in the highly regulated public sector.

Lack of resources – A few respondents (n = 4) also mentioned the issues of understaffing and a lack of resources to do their work properly, leading to them feeling overworked and stressed. Where there is understaffing, part of the problem is the process of filling vacancies also being subject to rigid policies and procedures, resulting in others having to fulfil the roles whilst the process of filling the vacancies is taking place.

> Participant 25: *"I write my report every month. I will just state on the report that, you know what, I need more manpower to help. I have been doing this for more than six years now, you see. So, in that case, now the environment seems to be frustrating, I feel like I could leave my job."*

Participants 5 and 6 (from the same department) spoke of a situation where one of the satellite offices is constantly affected by power outages. This results in the team members at that satellite office being unable to service customers who then get diverted to the office the participants work from. Due to the regularity of this situation, their office is constantly under pressure, and they struggle to cope with the volumes of work. This is an issue that is causing them to experience a stressful work environment.

Lack of recognition – Six participants said that they feel there is a lack of recognition in the environment, and that this makes it challenging to enact ideal followership. An individual may perform the functions of a role that they would usually be reporting to; for example, a head of a specific area or function being asked to be an Acting Deputy Director. However, when they apply for the promotion, they do not get it and, instead, another person gets appointed. This is despite them feeling they have already proven their abilities to perform the role and sometimes even doing it without any additional remuneration. Respondents described this situation as one that leaves them feeling unappreciated and as if their efforts are in vain. This then discourages them from taking on such responsibilities going forward which then hinders their ideal followership.

> Participant 15 *"For example, right here I am acting in a sub-section for almost two years now, and they have advertised the job last year and we are still waiting for interviews. You find that you are not really compensated for doing extra work…So, you are expecting a person to do the job he was doing before and the job of the senior person that left, and without*

compensation. How will that person follow you forever, until the appointment is made without thinking of his effort, time that is spent on that and extra work that he is doing. So, will that person be able to be a hundred percent follower? I do not think so."

Participant 5: *"There is an open deputy director position here. We are not recognised, they picked someone from another department and brought them to us, whereas we have experience…Can you see this discouragement and demoralisation?"*

Participant 4: *"Every employee, to an extent, knows, no matter how hard you try, you'll never be recognised."*

Participant 9 brought up a different aspect regarding recognition. She was lamenting the fact that bonuses are not based on one's effort and work, as everyone gets a "13th cheque" regardless of performance. Therefore, someone who actually puts in effort can get discouraged by the fact that there is no real recognition for that effort, and may not bother to enact their ideal followership.

Other followers (negative/low morale) – How other followers behave emerged as a hindrance in this environment, where five respondents referred to the low morale and negative attitudes of colleagues as having an impact on how they enact their followership. The behaviours described included a "bare minimum" attitude whereby their colleagues do not put in any effort, thus impeding their work as well. As Participant 5 put it, "I am trying to be up to level but someone will fail you by not adhering to what they need to do." Therefore, due to the interdependency between roles, even the individual who is trying to be a good follower will struggle to behave in their ideal manner. Another example was an "everybody does it" kind of attitude whereby bad behaviour becomes normalised in the environment. Thus, even those with good follower intentions get caught-up in behaviours they believe are not part of being a good follower.

Participant 18: *"Another thing is that people do wrong things and we end up normalising the situation… We also … we follow to do the wrong things, knowing very well it's wrong. You do it. You know why? Because they have normalised it. It is like it is a normal way of doing things."*

Political interference – Being a government organisation, where the top leadership positions result from municipal elections, the City is exposed to the macro-politics of the country. What this means is that any shifts in the power held by the different political parties, or within the political parties, are likely to have some effect on leaders of the City and, ultimately, the organisation. Although the structure, as previously discussed, draws a separation between the political and administrative leadership of the entity, it seems that the politics seep through to the employees of the organisation even though their employment is not a political matter. One of the ways this happens is through the usual change of leadership that takes place every local government election cycle. This regular political cycle can present some frustration to followers as they have to make changes to some of what they have been working on yet some of those changes are not communicated well. This can make it difficult for one to enact their ideal followership.

> Participant 7: *"Here, every five or four years there is a change of leadership that comes through and whoever that is comes through with their own ideas and new strategies, new everything if I can just sum it in that way. But the reality is that people don't like changes... and a lot of times information doesn't filter downwards."*

As explained by Participant 21, the issue is that these changes cause difficulties in enacting ideal followership due to the frustration caused by having to halt projects midway in order to start others or significantly change direction from a strategy implementation perspective.

The political factors are not limited to strategy implementation, it seems followers also experience the politics in a more first-hand kind of manner. Respondents have observed individuals being appointed in roles through being politically connected, resulting in people who, in *their* view, are not suitably qualified occupying those roles. This causes frustration to the followers, as they feel undermined by having to report to people who they believe know much less than they do about what needs to be done.

> Participant 25: *"It demoralises us because we know what is happening. Even if they change from one department to the other, we know what is happening. It demoralises everything."*

The seemingly significant influence that politics have in the environment is also believed to drive decisions. Participant 24 was bemoaning how she has had to implement projects that she believed were professionally unsound due to politics:

> *"So now with our own leadership they have a way of detecting and chasing goals which they decide on their own. They come and tell us what you need to do, based on the pressure that they get from politicians. So, we find ourselves in a very depressed mood most of the time."*

This is why she believes that all municipal officials, even up to the position of Mayor, should possess relevant professional qualifications so that decisions are driven more by their soundness than by political efficacy.

Issues of political appointment and interference were mentioned by eight respondents as a hindrance; they feel disempowered to an extent, as those who are politically connected tend to act with little regard for others in the organisation and cause a morale issue for those who are trying to be good followers. Even though the participants said they are able to work around the issue of politics, it is still a hindrance for them in enacting their followership.

> Participant 22: *"In as much as, like, we should not be affected by these things but because we are human beings and we get to a point where, as followers, we question whether the leadership is interested enough from a service delivery perspective or if they are focusing on what they are focusing on. So, if it means they are not interested, why should I bother as a follower? That is the attitude I am referring to. People they just say, 'But why should I bother if the leaders are not interested as well?'"*

Participant 13 related an encounter where she was asked by one of the political principals to do something that she knew was against organisational policy. Her counter to it was to refuse the instruction unless it was in writing, as a means to "cover" herself if asked why she did it. She mentioned that she has often had to do that when the politicians want certain things done that are just to garner favour with the community for votes (in the next elections) without considering what organisational policies and regulations require. When respondents spoke about this issue of politics, they felt that the ideal situation would be one where they should not

be impacted by the politics at all; however, it was a situation that seems to permeate throughout the organisation.

5.6.3. Summary

When looking at the overall results for Research Question 3, the researcher found that there were six participants who mentioned no hindrances to their followership (Table 5.10). Of these six participants, four experienced factors of external origin as enabling contributors to their followership enactment. Interestingly, these four participants have an organisational tenure from 10 to 33 years (three of them being 24 years or more) – with a median of 24.5 years. The gender split is three male participants and one female. When performing this analysis across all six of the participants who expressed no hindrances the maximum tenure increases to 43 years, whilst the minimum remains at 10 years – resulting in the same median of 24.5 years. The gender split presents five male participants and one female participant. Also emerging is that three of these six participants work in the same division.

On the other hand, there were 14 participants who experienced external factors only as hindrances. These participants had an organisational tenure from 3 to 20 years (13 of them being less than 15 years, and nine of them being less than 10 years) – with a median of 8.5 years. The gender split presented seven female and seven male participants, and there was no notable pattern emerging with regard to the divisions. The difference in the medians between those respondents who experience factors only as enablers and those who experience them only as hindrances is of particular interest to the researcher. It could be an indicator that those individuals who have been in the organisation for a long time have found ways to enable their ideal followership in the environment; or that they stayed *because* the environment is enabling to them. Similar could be said for the male employees in the City and how they navigate the environment to enable their ideal followership.

Table 5.10 Experience of external factors as enablers and hindrances

Participant	Enablers		Hindrances	Participant Category	
	Internal factors	External factors	External factors	Tenure	Gender
1		x	x	12	F
2	x			43	M
3			x	8	M
4	x	x	x	14	M
5	x		x	13	F
6	x	x	x	6	F
7	x		x	20	M
8	x			10	M
9	x	x	x	37	F
10	x		x	5	F
11	x		x	6	M
12	x	x		33	M
13	x		x	15	F
14	x	x	x	15	F
15	x		x	8	M
16	x	x		24	M
17	x		x	12	M
18	x		x	9	F
19	x	x	x	4	M
20	x		x	7	F
21	x		x	12	F
22	x		x	6	M
23	x	x		10	F
24	x		x	3	F
25	x	x	x	10	M
26	x	x		25	M
27	x		x	9	M

Experience of external factors		
	Enablers only	Hindrances only
No. of participants	4	14
Median tenure	24.5	8.5
Male	3	7
Female	1	7

5.7. Conclusion

This chapter presented an overview of the results of the data analysis. The primary research question that the dissertation is addressing is: How do employees in a complex organisation construct their followership? In addressing this question, the results were presented to address each of the secondary research questions as follows:

1. What beliefs about followership do employees at the City hold?
2. How do employees at the City enact their followership?
3. What factors contribute to how employees at the City enact their followership?

The results revealed that followers hold various beliefs about followership, and these beliefs can be broadly classified as self-, leader- or organisation-focused (Table 5.11). Despite it emerging as the only externally controlled belief, the belief that good followership arises out of good leadership was held by more than half of the respondents. Just how much impact leaders can have on followers, and thus the enactment of ideal followership, was further revealed and explored in the results presented in relation to Research Question 3.

Table 5.11 Beliefs about followership

Self-focused		**No.**	**%**
1	Proactive and takes initiative	20	74%
2	Principled and has integrity	15	56%
3	Will and ability to learn	8	30%
Self- and organisation-focused		**No.**	**%**
4	Professional conduct	19	70%
Organisation-focused		**No.**	**%**
5	Responsible and accountable	12	44%
6	Purpose and dedication	17	63%
Leader- and organisation-focused		**No.**	**%**
7	Engaged and supportive	11	41%
Leader-focused		**No.**	**%**
8	Respectful deference	18	67%
9	Positive attitude	13	48%
10	An outcome of good leadership	16	59%

The most widely held followership belief amongst the respondents is that followers should be proactive and show initiative. Ranking second to this, is the belief that followers should remain objective and focus on the work they need to do. Other codes held by more than half of the participants were: Respectful deference, Principled and has integrity, and Purpose &

dedication. The data suggest that follower beliefs are not always focused on self, leader or organisation, and can be focused on a combination thereof.

The results also showed that the ultimate enactment of the followership may not be in line with one's followership beliefs. This was suggested through the findings related to Research Question 2. Followership enactment that was most aligned to beliefs was that of taking initiative and being proactive. This had the highest match between respondents who hold the belief and those who enact it. Each of the other beliefs was enacted by less than 50% of respondents, with focusing on one's work and having purpose and dedication being the most frequently mentioned behaviours, with 11 participants each. None of the respondents described their followership enactment in a manner that demonstrated the will and ability to learn.

Three behaviour themes that had not come up as beliefs emerged as behaviours by participants (Table 5.11). They were only expressed by a few participants; however, the researcher is of the view that they were significant due to how they link to the factors that influence follower behaviour. The participant who described his behaviour as being disengaged and applying minimum effort is greatly impacted by his leader's behaviour. This, coupled with the data relating to Research Question 3, illustrates the significance of the leader-follower relationship in followership construction. The researcher has a similar view regarding the behaviours described by the two followers who assert that they are more likely to follow if they are treated with respect. Their descriptions suggest that they require a certain level of respect in the leader-follower relationship as part of the followership construction.

Table 5.11 Follower behaviours

Self-focused		No.	%
1	Proactive and takes initiative	21	78%
2	Principled and has integrity	4	15%
Self- and organisation-focused		**No.**	**%**
3	Professional conduct	11	41%
10	Operates with political awareness	1	4%
Organisation-focused		**No.**	**%**
4	Purpose and dedication	11	41%
5	Responsible and accountable	2	7%
Leader- and organisation-focused		**No.**	**%**
6	Engaged and supportive	3	11%
Leader-focused		**No.**	**%**
7	Respectful deference	7	26%
8	Positive attitude	2	7%
9	Disengagement and minimum effort	1	4%
Leader- and self-focused		**No.**	**%**
11	Respect as a precursor to followership	2	7%

The three behaviours which did not initially emerge as beliefs are behaviours that seem to occur as a reaction to external stimuli, such as the organisational environment or leader behaviours. Hence, there are some similarities between them and the contributing factors emerging in response to Research Question 3, such as the political environment and factors of leadership; both being factors of external origin.

Many of the participants admitted to experiencing challenges or hindrances to their enactment of ideal followership. Overall, the results reveal two broad themes of factors that impact how individuals enact their followership: internal and external factors. The internal factors only serve as enablers of ideal followership, with none of the participants having mentioned internal factors as influencing their followership in a negative way. This may be the reason some followers are able to enact followership behaviours that are aligned to internally controlled beliefs. Internally controlled beliefs, being those that are not about what others are doing or what the environment presents, would be driven by such internal factors. However, from the data, it would seem that the positive impacts of the factors of internal origin are still limited by the challenges presented by some of the factors of external origin.

Evident from the responses by participants is that external factors can be either enablers or hindrances of good followership, with leadership being a factor for most participants – whether negative or positive. Besides leadership, matters of political interference had the highest

mention as a hindrance amongst participants. This seems to be a significant environmental factor in the organisation, and shall form part of the discussion in the following chapter.

The results presented in this chapter introduce the aspects to be discussed in the next chapter. Each aspect of the results – being the followership beliefs, behaviours and influencing factors – is discussed within the context of the existing literature on followership construction, as well as the additional context of a public-sector organisation with a complex followership environment. The chapter expands on the contribution of this study to the field of followership.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.1. Introduction

This chapter analyses the results from the study through a follower co-production beliefs lens to extract follower implicit followership theories (FIFTs), also known as follower self-schemas. The results presented in Chapter 5 addressed the three research questions. This chapter discusses the themes that emerged in answering those questions in order to answer the primary research question and address the research objectives. As a reminder, the primary objective of the present study is to explore the followership constructions of employees in a complex organisation in order to answer the question: How do employees in a complex organisation construct their followership?

The study applied a social constructionist approach in answering the research question in order to construct meaning from the data collected and analysed. The findings are presented in the order of the research questions. The findings relating to Research Questions 1 and 2 are discussed together as they relate closely to each other and part of the analysis includes illustrating the similarities and differences between participants' beliefs and enacted behaviours. The discussion on Research Questions 1 and 2 provides a natural segue into examining the factors that contribute to how employees enact their followership, as enquired by Research Question 3.

The beliefs and behaviours are discussed according to the emerging categories of self-focused, self- and organisation-focused, organisation-focused, leader- and organisation-focused, leader-focused, and leader- and self-focused. An overview of the FIFTs of employees and their positioning along the co-production continuum, as described in Chapter 5, is then presented. The factors that impact followership are discussed as per the resultant categories of leadership factors, organisational factors, work-related factors, and personality and background factors. Further analysis of how participants matched between their beliefs and enacted behaviours is presented and discussed, leading to the conclusion of the chapter. A graphical representation of the outline of the remainder of the chapter is presented in Figure 6.1.

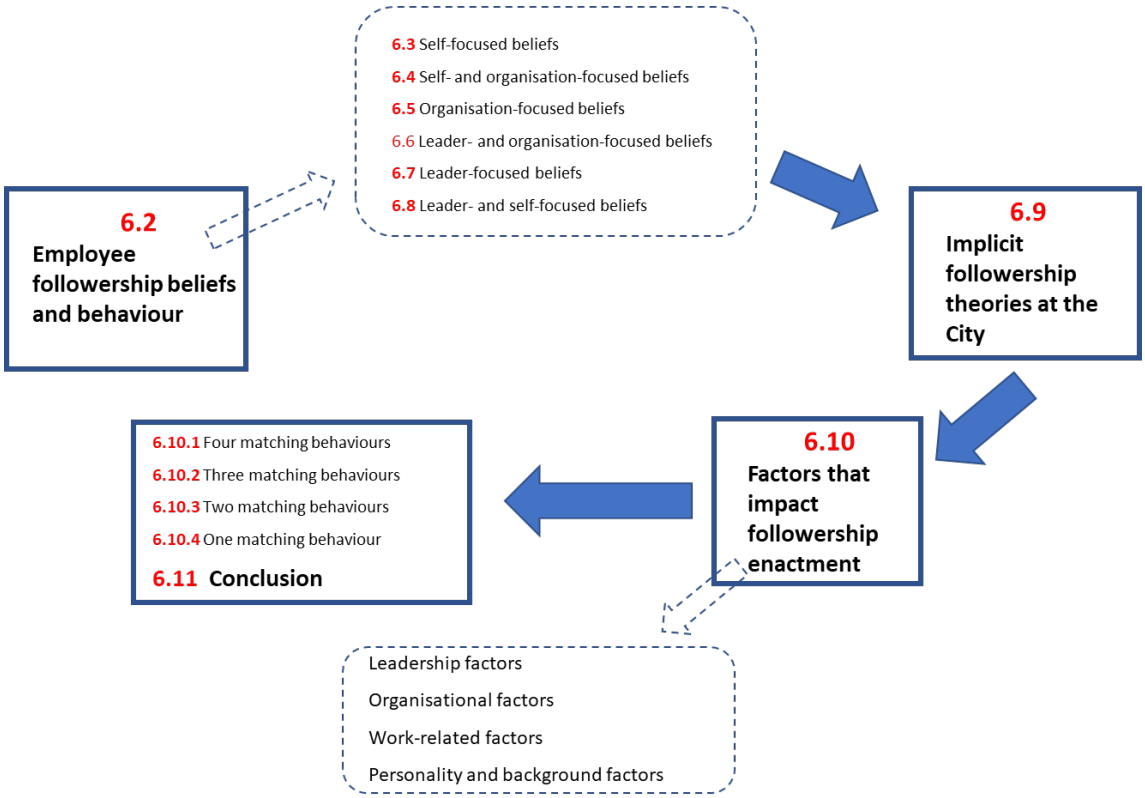


Figure 6.1 Outline of the remainder of Chapter 6

6.2. Employee followership beliefs and behaviours

For purposes of this study, followers were operationalised as employees who hold a subordinate position in relation to another. Therefore, exploring the employee beliefs about followers and following is synonymous with exploring FIFTs. FIFTs are the "preconceived perceptions" (Gao & Wu, 2019:1) that followers hold about followers and followership. It emerged that employees of the City hold implicit beliefs about followership that are focused on the self, the leader, or the organisation.

The analysis that underlies the following discussion was done by applying a followership co-production lens combining the works of Carsten *et al*. (2010) and Carsten and Uhl-Bien (2012). The researcher has associated the coding categories under each of these themes using Carsten *et al.'s* (2010) passive, active and proactive followership schemas as a basis. The passive, active and proactive schemas of followership are linked to follower co-production beliefs ranging from weak to strong (Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2012). The researcher notes that Carsten and Uhl-Bien (2012:210) specifically mention that their study on follower co-production beliefs differs from, amongst others, IFT research, in that it is *not* about what leaders think about followers, but "about how followers perceive followership". This difference is noted

when one is exploring leader implicit followership theories (LIFTs); however, the present study explored FIFTs which is aligned with the approach of follower co-production beliefs.

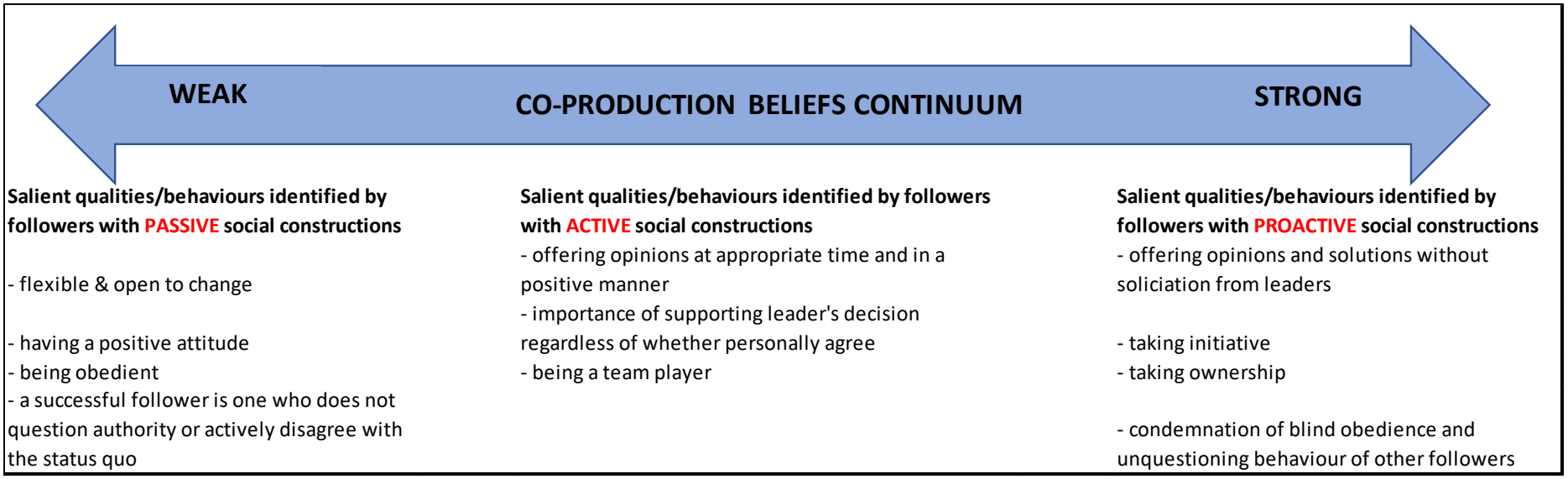


Figure 6.2 Compiled from results in Carsten *et al*., 2010

The follower co-production beliefs model is a continuum; therefore, the degree of passivity to proactivity is subjective and not a scientific exercise of "boxing" the code categories according to delineated criteria. The researcher used her understanding of the definitions she provided for the emerging themes, and the underlying initial codes, as well as her interpretation of Carsten *et al.'s* (2010) results (Figure 6.2) to apply the followership schema labels. The categories of beliefs were located along the continuum based on the associated schema of passive, active or proactive, and are discussed below.

6.3. Self-focused beliefs

Applying the model as per Figure 6.2, the three beliefs that are focused on the follower (self) are associated with stronger co-production beliefs on the continuum, as they require followers to exercise independent thought and use their judgement to decide what is appropriate or not in terms of their own actions. This is similar to Kelley's (1988) exemplary followers who are described as being active and exercising independent critical thinking. These descriptions can be applied to the self-focused beliefs as categorised; they highlight the importance of followers doing what they believe is appropriate in the situation. The behaviours included in this category are "proactive and takes initiative", "demonstrating principles and integrity", and "will and ability to learn".

6.3.1. Proactive and takes initiative

These employees believe that followers should be actively involved enough that they can share their views, even if they are different to those of the leader. They should also feel free to challenge the leaders without awaiting solicitation. Proactive social constructions of followership "emphasize the importance of influence, challenge, and 'silent leadership' when enacting the followership role" (Carsten *et al.*, 2010:551). Similar commentary is made by Townsend and Gebhardt (2003) in their descriptions of what they term "Active followership". Kelley (1988, 2008) also describes his category of "Exemplary followers" as those who challenge leaders and offer alternatives and solve problems where possible. This belief also aligns with the "courage to challenge" element of Chaleff's (2009) courageous follower. Such followers are willing to disagree with leaders, even at the risk of conflict, if they believe certain actions are not appropriate (Chaleff, 2003:7). The participants who hold this belief expressed that the follower needs to be able to challenge leaders, as well as provide alternative solutions where possible; and this should be done even if such advice is not requested from the follower.

Most participants who hold the belief that followers should be proactive and take initiative reported their behaviour to be in accordance with it. There were four participants who hold the belief and did not describe any of their behaviours in line with it. Upon further analysis of these four participants, the researcher did not find similarities between them with regard to age, tenure or department. However, they were all male, and three of them reported leadership to be a hindrance to their followership enactment. Participant 3 was one of them, and he has completely disengaged from the organisation due to negative leader experiences (negative

leadership factors being the *only* influence on his followership enactment). Interestingly, contrary to the other three respondents, Participant 4 reported leadership as an enabler in his followership enactment.

As reported in Chapter 5, some of the participants who reported their behaviour as per this belief had not had this belief emerge as part of their descriptions. This resulted in a total of 21 participants reporting behaviour of being proactive and taking initiative. Of those participants, there was an even split between those who find leadership to be an enabler versus those who find it to be a hindrance (six each). Other key factors that those participants stated as contributors were the rigid organisation policies and issues of political interference as negative factors at seven (n = 7) each. The primary enablers were identified as having a big-picture focus and personality and background (n = 7 and n = 11, respectively). A summary of the category analysis is presented in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1 Summary of code: Proactive and takes initiative

Proactive and takes initiative	
Co-production belief: strong/ proactive	
No. who hold belief	20
No. who enact behaviour	21
match with those who hold belief (16/20)	80%
Enablers *	
External - Leadership factors	6
External - Organisational factors	5
Internal - Work-related	16
Internal - Nature of person	11
Hindrances *	
External - Leadership factors	6
External - Organisational factors	26

*** denotes number of instances of category emergence and not number of participants;**

thus, if participant mentions more than one code in that category, each instance is counted as one

The findings suggest that those followers who hold this belief are able to overcome external challenges and enact their followership as per their own implicit theories. It could be argued that they have a more proactive schema, as suggested by even holding this belief, and are therefore less influenced by their external environment. This is an indication that they have the courage of their convictions and possess the characteristics of effective followers as per Chaleff (2009) and Kelley (1988). However, this does not mean they are not aware of the factors that

present challenges to them, most notably the rigid organisational structure and the macro-political factors. Carsten and Uhl-Bien (2012) found that individuals with strong co-production beliefs are able to continue exercising upward communication behaviours even in contexts that may be less welcoming or open to such behaviour. Therefore, it is likely that most of the respondents have strong co-production beliefs on the proactive part of the continuum.

6.3.2. Demonstrating principles and integrity

The belief that one should enact one's followership with principles and integrity is also associated with a more proactive follower schema. This resonates with Carsten and Uhl-Bien's (2013) discussion on the relationship between follower co-production beliefs and their susceptibility to following unethical instructions or committing "crimes of obedience". Those followers with a more passive follower schema are unlikely to challenge unethical instructions from leaders, whereas those with "stronger co-production beliefs may constructively challenge their leaders when faced with an unethical directive" (Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2013:53). Kellerman (2007:7) expresses a similar view in stating that good followers "will actively oppose a leader who is bad (ineffective and unethical)". Consideration of who or what one is following, as opposed to blindly following, is a key feature of this belief which aligns it with proactive followership constructions as found by Carsten *et al.* (2010:557).

Those respondents who described their behaviour in line with this belief described how they refuse directives that they believe are unlawful or inappropriate. This requires what Chaleff (2003:8) refers to as the courage to take moral action which may necessitate disobeying direct orders from the leader in lieu of "answering to a higher set of values", perhaps those of the organisation.

As depicted in Table 6.2, as much as this belief is held by more than half the respondents, just four provided behaviour descriptions aligned therewith. It may be that employees have not been faced with situations that would require the activation of this belief; or they are finding it challenging to enact it as a result of hindrances.

Table 6.2 Summary of code: Principled and has integrity

Principled and has integrity	
Co-production belief: strong/ proactive	
No. who hold belief	15
No. who enact behaviour	4
match with those who hold belief (3/15)	20%
Enablers *	
External - Leadership factors	-
External - Organisational factors	1
Internal - Work-related	5
Internal - Nature of person	1
Hindrances *	
External - Leadership factors	2
External - Organisational factors	5

*** denotes number of instances of category emergence and not number of participants;**

thus, if participant mentions more than one code in that category, each instance is counted as one

6.3.3. Will and ability to learn

For one to learn, the participants believe that one should be willing to make mistakes. This requires a level of autonomy to attempt tasks without direction from the leader, but rather based on what the follower thinks should be done. The researcher placed this on the "active to proactive" area of the continuum, as there must be independent action taken; that is, the individual must take initiative. None of the participants who mentioned this belief reported behaviours that were associated with the belief; therefore, it did not emerge as a behaviour code.

6.3.4. Summary

Most participants had self-focused beliefs (n = 26) and reported self-focused behaviours (n = 22). Their primary enabling factors were those of internal origin, with 21 participants citing as such. There was one participant who did not mention factors of internal origin at all; instead, she found the organisational factors to be both enablers (the policies in place) and hindrances (the rigid structure). This was an intriguing finding, as all other participants, other than Participant 3 – who is a very specific case – had at least one factor of internal origin as an enabler. It could be that the participant takes her internal drivers for granted as contributing to her ultimate enactment of followership.

Table 6.3 Summary of Self-focused Beliefs

Collation of self-focused beliefs	
Co-production belief: strong/ proactive	
No. who hold belief	26
No. who enact behaviour	22
match with those who hold belief (21/26)	81%
Enablers *	
External - Leadership factors	6
External - Organisational factors	5
Internal - Work-related	17
Internal - Nature of person	11
Hindrances *	
External - Leadership factors	7
External - Organisational factors	26

*** denotes number of instances of category emergence and not number of participants; thus, if participant mentions more than one code in that category, each instance is counted as one**

The summary presented in Table 6.3 implies that the employees at the City not only have self-focused beliefs, but also enact their followership in line with them. There is an indication of strong co-production beliefs, for which the enactment of related behaviours is enabled primarily by factors of internal origin. It should, perhaps, not be surprising that those who construct their followership around self-focused behaviours would find their primary source of enablement to be within themselves, as such behaviours are driven by what the individual thinks or perceives to be right or appropriate.

6.4. Self- and organisation-focused beliefs

The two behaviours that fall under the category of self- and organisation-focused beliefs are "professional conduct" and "operates with political awareness". Operating with political awareness did not emerge as a belief, but rather as a behaviour through the description of one of the respondents.

6.4.1. Professional conduct

This belief is centred on the follower separating their person, and that of the leader, from the roles of leader and follower. That is, the follower should focus on performing their work in line with their job and organisational requirements, and avoid being distracted by personal, political or other matters. The researcher situates this belief on the active schemas of the continuum, where the co-production belief is not as strong as proactive schemas. The reason for this is that

the behaviour calls for one to accept one's subordinacy in terms of formal role, and follow, as well as duly respect the leader as a result thereof; however, the following is not necessarily of the leader as an individual, but of the role that the leader is enacting. Hence, the behaviour is described in accordance with professional conduct, for it is about fulfilling one's role within the context of the professional environment and requirements. This extends to ensuring that one does not become affected by the highly political nature of the top leadership which may change from time to time. Accordingly, it is important that followers be objective, as this enables them to continue performing their duties as required regardless of the actual individuals who occupy the formal leader roles.

These are followers who may fall within the "pragmatics/survivors" category of Kelley's (1988) model. Although not necessarily fence-sitters, who go with the wind (Kelley, 2008:7), they do not commit themselves to any particular leaders, such that they are able to withstand changes in leadership. They exercise independent thought and critical thinking, and are active; but they are mindful to keep to their work and perform accordingly. In addition, one of the participants also specifically mentioned how being a follower gives him the opportunity not to have to be responsible for everything. He was clear that this is not an attempt to avoid accountability, but an appreciation of the fact that enacting the follower role allows one to focus on what one needs to do, and not really stress about the rest; further supporting a less proactive and more active positioning on the continuum. It may be that, due to the City being a complex environment, enacting a follower role may be preferable in that it provides the opportunity to focus on work and not the other complexities that come with a politically-led public sector organisation.

Although a belief held by 19 participants, it was only reported as a behaviour by 11 (Table 6.4). Most of the participants (n = 7) said they are enabled in their followership enactment by maintaining a big-picture outlook regarding their roles, thus, ensuring that they strive for performance of their delegated tasks as they understand how such tasks contribute towards the organisation's broader objectives. Carsten *et al.* (2010:549) had a similar code which they labelled mission conscience, defined as "Being mindful of the overarching company goals and direction. Focusing on the bigger picture and greater purpose of the work." They associate it more with a proactive schema, demonstrating that the context of how a belief is framed can determine how the code is categorised in terms of passive, active or proactive schemas. In the

context of this study, the professional conduct code is more active than proactive, and is underpinned by a big-picture focus (or mission conscience).

Table 6.4 Summary of code: Professional conduct

Professional conduct	
Co-production belief: moderate/ active	
No. who hold beliefs	19
No. who enact behaviours	11
match with those who hold belief (9/19)	47%
Enablers *	
External - Leadership factors	3
External - Organisational factors	2
Internal - Work-related	12
Internal - Nature of person	4
Hindrances *	
External - Leadership factors	3
External - Organisational factors	2

*** denotes number of instances of category emergence and not number of participants;**

thus, if participant mentions more than one code in that category, each instance is counted as one

6.4.2. Operates with political awareness

Although only expressed by one respondent, this code is significant given the environment within which the organisation operates, being a municipality. The employee in question was referring to the macro politics that impact on the organisation as a whole, and how she sometimes has to manage such politics in order to achieve the objectives of her work. This code is indicative of an active schema, where the follower is not challenging leaders or appearing not to be deferring *per se,* but she is treading a fine line between getting what she needs to complete her work as required. This is similar to professional conduct; however, it differs in that this respondent directly addresses the political issues as opposed to just disregarding them, as they have resulted in a more direct impact on her work.

6.4.3. Summary

The self- and organisation-focused behaviours straddle being self-focused and organisation-focused. The respondents who mentioned them are focused on doing what they feel they need to do in order to facilitate their work, which work they feel contributes to the greater organisational goals.

6.5. Organisation-focused beliefs

The categories that were themed under organisation-focused beliefs are "responsible and accountable" and "purpose and dedication". Both of these beliefs have been grouped as active schemas; thus, a more moderate co-production belief than the proactive schema.

6.5.1. Purpose and dedication

This is another code that aligns with Carsten *et al.'s* (2010) "mission conscience" code. This code has been categorised as active, thus, with a stronger co-production belief, yet more moderate than that of a proactive schema. Participants who reported their followership enactment according to this behaviour category are primarily enabled by their big-picture focus, and personality and background factors. This would make sense, as having mission conscience would underlie commitment and dedication. In addition, their passion towards the work is likely to be driven by their personal interests and background. Table 6.5 presents a summary of the code.

Table 6.5 Summary of code: Purpose and dedication

Purpose and dedication	
Co-production belief: moderate/ active	
No. who hold beliefs	17
No. who enact behaviours	11
match with those who hold belief (7/17)	41%
Enablers *	
External - Leadership factors	2
External - Organisational factors	3
Internal - Work-related	11
Internal - Nature of person	6
Hindrances *	
External - Leadership factors	5
External - Organisational factors	17

*** denotes number of instances of category emergence and not number of participants;**

thus, if participant mentions more than one code in that category, each instance is counted as one

6.5.2. Responsible and accountable

This was another belief that, although held by a significant number of respondents (n = 12), very few (n = 2) reported their behaviours to be in line with it. The sense of responsibility and accountability is in relation to the organisation. Respondents described this belief as ensuring

that one takes accountability for one's work, uses work time appropriately, and is punctual. This represents an active followership schema. Albeit that two participants were the only ones to describe this behaviour as categorised, the researcher acknowledges that aspects of accountability and responsibility also emerge from behaviours, such as professional conduct and taking initiative or other active and proactive behaviours. The active and proactive behaviours indicate a more active and engaged role from followers, therefore, requiring them to take on more responsibility than those with a more passive schema who may have a relatively lower sense of responsibility due to a propensity to defer more to the leader (Carsten *et al*., 2010:550). Chaleff (2003:6) shares a similar sentiment by including the courage to assume responsibility as one of the dimensions of a courageous follower.

6.5.3. Summary

The organisation-focused beliefs could also be considered to be behaviours associated with being a good employee. This is not surprising because, as discussed in Chapter 3, the approach applied in the present study operationalises followers as employees who are subordinate to another within an organisational environment. In total, 13 participants enact their followership with organisation-focused behaviours. Considering this, as well as the self-focused, and self- and organisation-focused beliefs, indicates that most participants construct their followership along stronger co-production beliefs. This is reflected upon further on in this chapter.

6.6. Leader- and organisation-focused beliefs

There was only one code that was classified under this theme. The participants who described engaged and supportive behaviour perceive the follower's role also to be complementary to that of the leader. The follower needs to equip themselves with the requisite knowledge such that they not only assist the leader, but are also able to stand in for the leader when she or he is absent. This behaviour falls within the active followership schemas, where the follower is there to support the leader, and should do so actively. The ideal enactment of this behaviour requires the follower to probe and obtain an understanding of what should be done, and why. Hence this is aligned with more active schemas than passive, as part of enacting one's role in this manner requires the active engagement with the leader and the required tasks. However, the role stops short of being proactive, as the follower should still play a supportive role to the leader and defer to them.

This equates to the "courage to serve" as per Chaleff (2003:7), whereby the follower should be supporting the leader in achieving the organisational objectives by ensuring that they are sufficiently engaged to do so, thus, making this a leader- and organisation-focused belief. The support of the leader is not just for the sake of supporting the leader, it is to assist them in achieving the organisational objectives. This is supported by the fact that the followers mentioned that their leaders rely on them to do additional work where there are staff shortages or when the leader himself is absent, for the sake of ensuring that work goals are achieved.

Eleven respondents indicated being engaged and supportive as a followership belief; however, only three reported enacting their behaviour as such. All three of the participants who described their behaviour in this manner, mentioned leaders as an enabler. Four of the participants who identified the belief but did not report enactment thereof had leaders as a hindrance factor to their followership. This suggests that a positive dyadic relationship has an impact on the follower's ability, and perhaps willingness, to actively engage and support the leader; that is, to be an exemplary follower. It may be that the desire to enact their followership in this manner is motivated by the relationship they have with the leader; or, they have a good relationship *because* they have been showing support to the leader. For example, where the leader has active implicit theories of followership (Sy, 2010), it could result in an appreciation of the active follower behaviour. Regardless of which may have come first between the good relationship and the support, there seems to be an indication of a high-quality exchange dyadic relationship as with Gerstner and Day's (1997) LMX model.

6.7. Leader-focused beliefs

The leader-focused behaviours identified by respondents are of a more passive schema along the continuum. They present weaker co-production beliefs, with respectful deference being viewed as the weakest. The emergent behaviour that was not a belief is specific to one respondent, but is deemed significant, as it illuminates the level of impact leaders and their behaviours can have on followership enactment.

6.7.1. Respectful deference

This was a code that had a high occurrence amongst participants as a belief. However, it was cited by a significantly fewer number of respondents as a behaviour (Table 6.6). On the followership schema continuum, the researcher placed this in the passive schema as having

weaker co-production beliefs. The element of passivity emerges in that it describes compliance with rules, policies or instructions from those above one in the organisational hierarchy. It should, however, be noted that acceptance of the role of followership does not, on its own, mean passivity. The leaning towards a passive schema with this code category emerges from the use of "taking or following instructions" and bad followers being described as "those who refuse to take orders". DeRue and Ashford (2010:640) posit that the acceptance of the follower identity, and thus the granting of the leader identity to another, is a likely occurrence as a result of formal organisational positions of superior and subordinate. An example of the resultant behaviour can be to "follow and not challenge" the direction of said superior (Ibid.).

Table 6.6 Summary of code: Respectful deference

Respectful deference	
Co-production belief: weak/ passive	
No. who hold beliefs	18
No. who enact behaviours	7
match with those who hold belief (6/18)	33%
Enablers *	
External - Leadership factors	2
External - Organisational factors	1
Internal - Work-related	7
Internal - Nature of person	2
Hindrances *	
External - Leadership factors	2
External - Organisational factors	8

*** denotes number of instances of category emergence and not number of participants;**

thus, if participant mentions more than one code in that category, each instance is counted as one

This code stands in direct contrast to the strong co-production belief of being proactive and taking initiative, yet 13 participants held both these beliefs. However, when it came to behaviours, the majority of participants reported only the proactive behaviour. There were five participants who reported both behaviours, with one of them not mentioning it as a belief. She said that, at times, one has to comply with directives even after giving one's inputs and making suggestions. She acknowledged that, ultimately, one has to defer to the formal leader, as it is they who have to make the final decision.

6.7.2. Positive attitude

Two respondents described themselves as enacting their followership with a positive attitude, associated with a more passive followership schema. The researcher located this somewhere

between passive and active on the continuum. Having been cited by 13 participants as a characteristic of good followership, it emerged in the reported behaviours of only two of those participants.

6.7.3. Good followership as an outcome of good leadership

There were 16 respondents who believe that leadership has a significant impact on how followership emerges. There were no behaviours linked directly to this belief; however, there were two other reported behaviours that resonate with this belief. Participant 3 behaves contrary to how he believes followers should act as a result of feeling demotivated and intimidated by his leader. This denotes the significance of the leaders in the construction of followership. As a result of what the respondent experiences as negative leader behaviour, he has not only *not* been able to enact followership in line with his beliefs, but he has behaved in direct contrast thereto. Included in Participant 3's beliefs is that good followership emerges from good leadership; perhaps, that is why his negative experiences with his leader have caused such an extreme reaction as to completely disengage and be withdrawn (Zaleznik, 1965). As described by Zaleznik (1965:126), the withdrawn follower is passive, submissive, and does only the bare minimum.

6.8. Leader- and self-focused beliefs

The followers who reported this behaviour consider themselves to be good followers who abide by the leader's instructions, but they need such instructions to be issued with respect. Therefore, there is a level of deference to the leader which situates the behaviour along the passive end of the continuum. However, there is also the follower's requirement for respect from the leader and a sense of collegiality that would usually signify a relationship between equals. This is the self-focused part of the behaviour, which introduces an element of a more active followership schema, thus, placing this behaviour between the passive and active schemas. This kind of behaviour could lead to someone being an alienated follower (Kelley, 1988) in that they may resist their leader due to not feeling respected.

6.9. Implicit followership theories at the City

Followers' implicit theories of followership are synonymous with follower self-schemas or followership schemas, being what followers believe are the characteristics and behaviours of followers. The present research aimed to explore followership constructions by employees at

the City by investigating their implicit followership theories as well as their enactment of followership (by self-reported behaviours). Chapter 5 presented the different beliefs and behaviour codes emerging from the respondents and categorised them into three major themes and sub-themes; the sub-themes being hybrids of the major themes. It was found that followers frame their followership beliefs around self, the organisation, or the leader, or a combination of any of these. The preceding sections of this chapter then analysed the codes contained in each of these themes through the combination lens of follower co-production beliefs of leadership as propounded by Carsten and Uhl-Bien (2012) and Carsten *et al.*'s (2010) followership schemas. The summary of that analysis is illustrated in Figure 6.3.

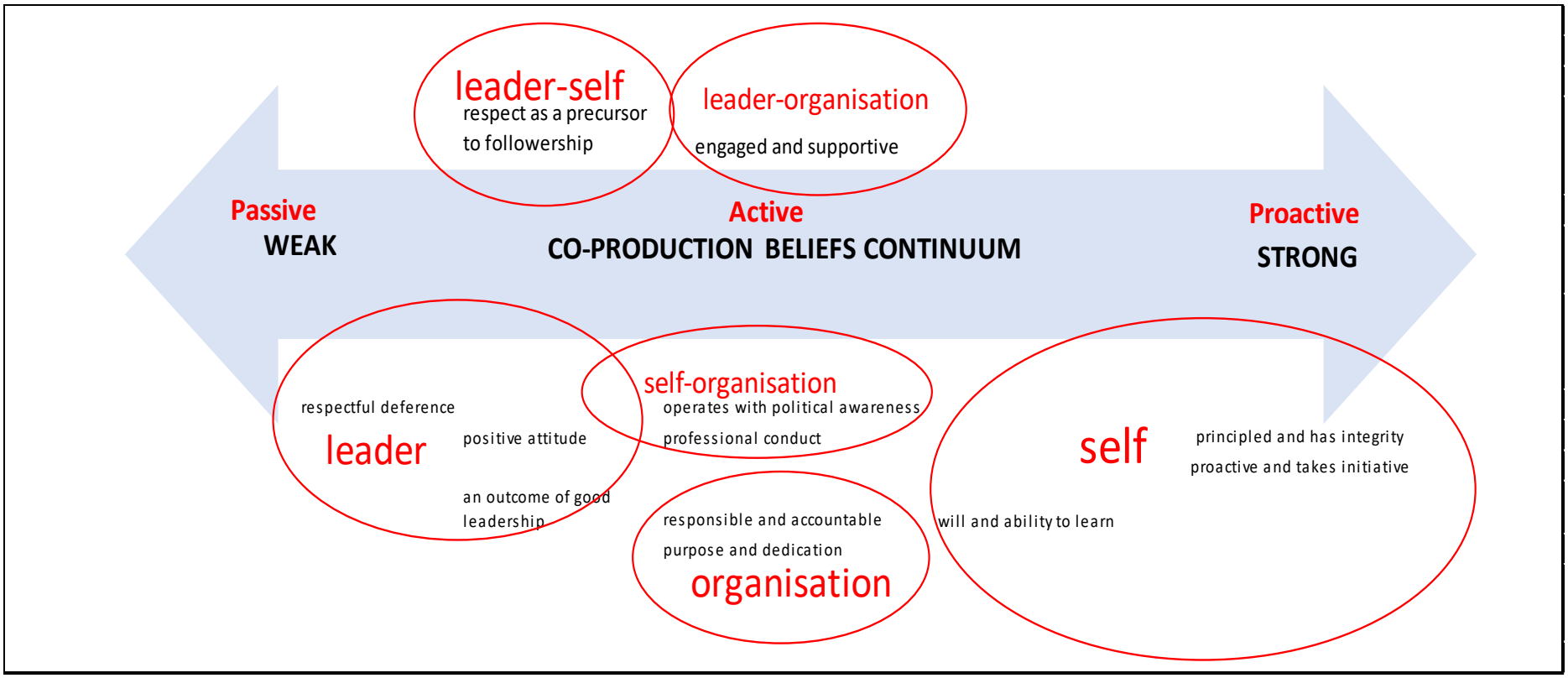
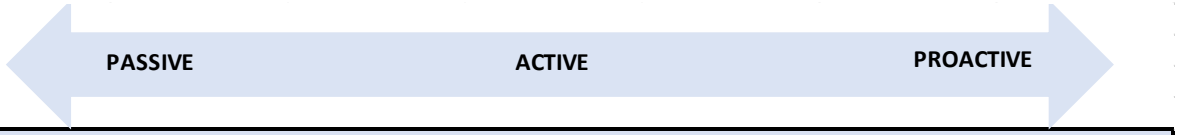


Figure 6.3 Mapping of belief and behaviour codes along the follower co-production beliefs continuum

The analysis revealed that self-focused beliefs are associated with stronger co-production beliefs, organisation-focused with moderate beliefs, and leader-focused with weaker beliefs. All but one of the participants described self-focused beliefs; that one participant (Participant 18) did, however, describe a self- and organisation-focused belief. This would suggest that the employees have strong co-production beliefs about leadership and, thus, have implicit theories based on more active and proactive schemas. The more intriguing result of the analysis, however, is that employees do not only have self-, leader- or organisational-focused beliefs; some of the individuals hold beliefs across the continuum. Notably, 22 of the participants who have proactive beliefs also hold the more passive leader-focused beliefs, with 17 specifically believing that followers should behave with respectful deference. The researcher posits that this is an indication that one's implicit theories may extend across the co-production continuum, suggesting that the schema that ultimately gets activated into enactment is dependent on the situation presented. This implies that, just as there is situational leadership, there could be situational followership which would require followers to select suitable followership behaviours based on leader and environmental factors presented by a particular situation.

The researcher's position is further advanced by the finding that, in enacting their followership, participants also described behaviours across the spectrum of passive to proactive, although reported behaviours in most codes were not as prevalent as when discussing their beliefs. Of the 22 participants that reported proactive behaviour, only six also reported behaviours on the more passive side of the continuum, being leader-focused behaviours. This is despite the fact that many more participants held the leader-focused beliefs. This indicates that, although participants hold beliefs that are located on various points along the continuum, when it comes to behaviour, they have to select the most appropriate behaviour for the context or situation.



	Leader-focused	Leader- and self-focused	Leader- and organisation-focused	Organisation-focused	Self- and organisation-focused	Self-focused
Beliefs	24	0	11	21	19	26
Behaviours	9	2	3	13	12	22

Figure 6.4 Summary of participants per beliefs and behaviours theme presented along the followership continuum

The summary provided in Figure 6.4 illustrates the previous points: whereas the beliefs are almost balanced on the ends of the continuum, the behaviours are much more concentrated on the active to proactive side. Employees of the City activate more proactive implicit theories when enacting their followership. Therefore, even though they have a willingness, as per their expressed beliefs, to enact more leader-focused behaviours and behave with deference, the situations they find themselves in may require them to activate their more proactive behaviours.

6.10. Factors that impact followership enactment

The factors that influence how employees ultimately enact their followership were categorised into factors of internal and external origin as described in Chapter 5. In order to understand the construction of followership, the researcher believes it is vital to consider more than just the beliefs and behaviours of employees, but also the factors that influence how they enact their followership. This study therefore takes a similar approach to that of Carsten *et al*. (2010) by also examining the contextual matters that may affect followership. However, the organisational environment and leaders emerged as significant themes, aligning to other studies that have found that organisational climate and leader behaviour impact on followership construction and enactment (Carsten *et al.*, 2010; Singh & Bodhanya, 2013).

Leadership emerged as a contributing factor to followership enactment from 17 participants; with a fairly even split between leadership being an enabler (n = 8) or a hindrance (n = 9) (Table 6.7). Of the respondents who have leadership as a factor, the majority were male (n = 11), equating to 65%. This further translates to that 11 out of the 15 study respondents that are male (73% of males) consider leadership to be a factor that impacts on how they enact their followership, whereas 50% of the women respondents (6 out of 12) share the sentiment. A further deep dive into this code reveals that, of the 17 participants who experience leadership as a factor, ten also believe that good followership emerges from good leadership. Of those ten, seven are male. Additionally, of the 16 participants who believe that good followership emerges from good leadership, ten of them (62.5%) are men. An extension of this is that ten of the 15 male respondents, and thus 67%, hold this belief, whereas 50% of the female respondents do. There is a suggestion that the men regard leadership as an important element of followership more than women do. Participant 3, who has completely disengaged as a result of experiencing his leader as a significant hindrance to his followership enactment, is also male. It could be that

the FIFTs of men are more leader-focused than those of women; however, a conclusion cannot be drawn on such as it falls beyond the scope of the present study.

Table 6.7 Breakdown of leadership factors

Breakdown of leadership factors					
	Total no. of participants	Female	Male	% of Female	% of Male
Positive leadership factors (enabler)	8	3	5	25%	33%
Negative leadership factors (hindrance)	9	3	6	25%	40%
Total participants	**17**	**6**	**11**	**50%**	**73%**

How followers ultimately behave can be significantly influenced by the style of leadership and behaviours related thereto. Participant 3 is a clear example of this, as his leader's authoritarian and intimidating behaviour has discouraged him to the point of acting in complete contrast to what his natural disposition is. It may be that, even though Participant 3 reported beliefs that are along the proactive part of the continuum, his co-production beliefs may not be strong enough to withstand a leader who is very unaccepting of followers who practice upward communication (Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2012).

Organisational characteristics, such as the structure of the organisation, are also factors that can affect followership enactment (Zoogah, 2014:51; Carsten *et al.*, 2010). The respondents (n = 7) reported the organisation to be too rigid in the sense that enacting proactive behaviour can be challenging. Experiencing the challenge has not stopped the participants from enacting proactive behaviours, as all seven of the participants reported themselves as being proactive and taking initiative; one of them had not mentioned this type of behaviour, or any self-focused characteristics, as a belief, yet still described their behaviour in line therewith. Three participants only had beliefs situated on the stronger co-production belief part of the continuum. Two of the participants only reported taking initiative as a behaviour, whereas the other participant described her behaviour as proactive as well as behaving with respectful deference. All three of the participants mentioned the rigid nature of the organisation as a hindrance for them. These results are an indication that strong co-production beliefs are not severely diminished even in the face of a rigid organisational structure; and being an

organisation of its magnitude and many hierarchical levels, the City lends itself to a complex followership structure (Zoogah, 2014:51).

There were two respondents who experienced organisational factors as both enablers and hindrances, one of whom expressed views that could be considered as contradictory to each other. Participant 1 mentioned that the organisation does have policies in place which is good as it enables one to know what to follow; however, she also felt that the hierarchical structure of the organisation serves as an impediment to getting things done. It creates delays in obtaining required approvals when making suggestions on how best to implement the policies. She mentioned how the policies are formulated "at the top" and, thus, are not always implementable on the ground as envisioned by those individuals who approve them. Also acknowledging that contributing one's input and feedback from being on the ground is a long process before it can result in any revision of how a policy should be implemented. The second participant, who experienced both enabling and hindering organisational factors, also mentioned the presence of policies as an enabler. She, however, felt that the organisation could do better with differentiating between those employees who put in the effort and go the extra mile, and those who are just doing the bare minimum. She finds that the lack of recognition through performance-based bonuses results in lacklustre effort from some, and even presents challenges to those who, like her, want to do their best but feel it may be in vain. In total, there were three participants who mentioned the organisational policies as an enabling factor in their followership. The consistent message from them was that policies clear the path of followership, as they are not dependent on the individuals who are leaders. This matches with the fact that none of them mentioned leaders as either enablers or hindrances; perhaps they consider policies to be their *de facto* leaders, and not their supervisors.

Of the five participants who mentioned some organisational factors as enablers two felt that the organisation has an inclusive culture, and they are given an opportunity to make their inputs and receive transparent communication. As mentioned in Chapter 5, these two participants also mentioned their leaders as enablers; thus, they may be experiencing the organisational environment through the lens of having good leaders. They also mentioned no hindrances to their followership enactment. Therefore, their organisational experience, and thus, their followership experience, is likely shaped by a positive dyadic relationship. This is indicative of a high quality LMX which results in outcomes, such as proactive follower behaviours and high performance (Epitropaki *et al.*, 2018:114), which are good for the organisation.

Table 6.8 Organisational factors as hindrances and enablers

Breakdown of organisational factors					
	Total no. of participants	Female	Male	% of Female	% of Male
Hindrances					
Rigid nature of organisation	7	5	2	42%	13%
Stressful & overworked	4	3	1	25%	7%
Lack of recognition (incl. financial or promotion)	6	4	2	33%	13%
Negative attitudes/ low morale from other followers	5	4	1	33%	7%
Macro political issues/ interference	8	5	3	42%	20%
Total participants who experience hinderances *	**17**	**11**	**6**	**92%**	**40%**
Enablers					
Inclusive organisational culture	2	1	1	8%	7%
Policies in place	3	2	1	17%	7%
Total participants who experience enablers *	**5**	**3**	**2**	**25%**	**13%**

* This is the not the sum of the column, but the total number of participants who mentioned factors in this category

Overall, the organisational factors were identified as hindrances more than enablers (Table 6.8). Of all organisational factors, whether enablers or hindrances, political interference emerged most frequently. The presence of macro-political influence is a circumstance of the sector in which the City operates, being a municipality which has political leadership. The structure of the organisation is designed to separate the political and administrative functions (as discussed in Chapter 4); however, it seems that the political objectives do sometimes impact on the followership enactment of employees at the City. Most of the respondents who mentioned political interference as an issue (five out of the eight) also mentioned leadership as a hindrance. Even though one of the eight did mention leadership as a positive influence on their followership, it could be that those who are negatively impacted by the political environment view their leaders as part of the issue by allowing their decisions to be influenced by politicians (Participant 24).

All but one of the female participants experience at least one of the organisational factors as a hindrance. Compared to the proportion of male participants who experience the same, this is quite intriguing. The male respondents experience organisational factors as hindrances significantly less than the female participants; this is the case even when one analyses per category of organisational factor. There are no significant differences between the male and female participants with regard to followership beliefs along the co-production continuum or enactment of followership. Therefore, it seems as though the underlying issue is the organisational environment, as opposed to being that those participants construct their followership in a significantly different manner to the male participants. Considered alongside the discussion regarding the leadership factors, one could conclude that the male employees place more significance in leadership than the organisation when it comes to their followership constructions; the opposite being the case for the female employees. Consequently, it may be that issues concerning the "characteristics of the organisational context such as culture, strategy and structure" (Zoogah, 2014:51) affect the female employees followership constructions more than that of the male employees.

A prominent occurring work-related factor was "big picture focus" (n = 10); respondents feel that keeping a focus on the achievement of the organisational objectives and goals drives them to try and enact their ideal followership. There is an understanding that their actions, or lack thereof, have an impact on the organisation's ability to achieve the required outcomes. Having a big-picture focus means that the respondents' concern for the organisation's objectives drives how they try and enact their followership which is aligned with the active followership schema of professional conduct and purpose and dedication. The link with professional conduct is in the recognition that doing their work properly is important and contributes to the greater service that the City provides to society as part of its objectives. As mentioned by Participant 26, he comes to work with the mindset that he is there to assist the City in providing services to the community. This link is also supported by the fact that all ten respondents who mentioned keeping a big-picture focus as an enabler also hold the belief that followers should conduct themselves professionally, and seven (all of whom hold the belief) reported enacting their followership as such. Having purpose and dedication is a belief held by seven, and enacted by six (four of whom hold the belief), of the participants who focus on the big-picture goals to drive themselves towards their ideal followership. The belief of purpose and dedication requires followers to be committed to their work and the organisational goals which is principally similar to keeping a big-picture focus. Thus, employees who construct their

followership around organisation-focused beliefs and behaviours are enabled by maintaining their focus on the organisation in their endeavours to be good followers.

Table 6.9 Breakdown of work-related factors

Breakdown of work-related factors					
	Total no. of participants	Female	Male	% of Female	% of Male
Experience	5	3	2	25%	13%
Career aspirations	7	4	3	33%	20%
Big picture focus	10	3	7	25%	47%
Total participants *	**18**	**8**	**10**	**67%**	**67%**

* This is the not the sum of the column, but the total number of participants who mentioned factors in this category

A noteworthy point about those for whom this code emerged as an enabler, is the age dynamics. Whereas one-third of total respondents are in the 30 to 39 years age group, only two participants within that age bracket mentioned big-picture focus as an enabler. Thus, older employees may feel more enabled by a focus on organisational goals than younger individuals. In addition to age, gender also featured as an element of difference. Significantly more men than women stated big-picture focus as an enabler (Table 6.9). As a result of this, when analysing those who believe followers should exhibit professional conduct, it was found that six of the seven participants whose behaviour is in line with their belief are male. Thus, male employees seem to be driven by a big-picture focus more than female employees. This is regardless of the fact that there is no significant gender difference in the beliefs of professional conduct, and passion and dedication.

Personality and background factors were mentioned as enablers by 13 respondents; suggesting that employees are driven by intrinsic factors in being good followers. These are characteristics about their nature that they believe contribute to their ability to enact their ideal followership. The majority of these respondents (n = 10) believe that followers should take initiative and be proactive, and eleven participants (nine of whom hold the belief) enact their followership accordingly. This suggests that employees of the City who are driven by their intrinsic characteristics are more likely to activate their proactive schema in their enactment of followership.

Overall, although respondents mentioned factors that affect them negatively, only one described behaviour that is contrary to their beliefs as a result thereof. The other participants maintained that they still try and enact good followership in the face of their mentioned challenges. The beliefs and behaviours were disaggregated and compared per participant to find out how many participants reported behaviours that were as per their beliefs. The highest matching participants had four behaviours aligned to their beliefs, and the least was zero (being Participant 3). Each category from four behaviours to one is discussed below.

6.10.1. Four matching behaviours

Table 6.10 Participants with four matching behaviours

	Self-focused		Self-and org-focused		Organisation-focused		Leader-and org-focused	Leader-focused			Leader-and self-focused
Participant	Behaviour code 1	Behaviour code 2	Behaviour code 3	Behaviour code 10	Behaviour code 4	Behaviour code 5	Behaviour code 6	Behaviour code 7	Behaviour code 8	Behaviour code 9	Behaviour code 11
4	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	-
13	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
26	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-

(Coloured cell means matching to belief.)

There were three participants whose reported behaviours matched with four of their beliefs. As Table 6.10 depicts, their behaviours were spread across the followership continuum; therefore, they did not have a significantly more proactive or more passive schema than the rest of the participants. The common behaviour among the three of them is that of professional conduct (behaviour 3) which they not only all report as their behaviour, but they also all hold the belief thereof. In examining the factors that they say affect them (Table 6.11), it was found that none of them experience leadership as a hindrance; in fact, two of them mentioned that they are enabled by their leaders. All three of them stated that having a big-picture focus contributes to their ability to enact their followership in their ideal manner.

Table 6.11 Factors that enable or hinder ideal followership behaviour

	Leadership factors		Organisational factors							Work-related factors			Nature of person factors
Participant	Positive leadership factors	Negative leadership factors	Inclusive organisational culture	Policies in place	Rigid nature of organisation	Stressful & overworked	Lack of recognition (incl. financial or promotion)	Negative attitudes/ low morale from other followers	Macro political issues/ interference	Experience	Career aspirations	Big picture focus	Personality and background
4	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	1	-
13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-
26	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-

Participant 4 mentioned the most hindrances, including lack of recognition, and the low morale and negative attitudes of colleagues. He mentioned his aspirations to be recognised for what he believes is good work, and thus, being a good follower, despite the fact that he does feel that the lack of recognition for extra effort can serve as a demotivating factor. He mentioned that the low morale that he notices among his colleagues likely results from the lack of recognition, and that it can have an impact on how one enacts one's followership, although, for him, it has not yet caused him to stop trying his best to be an ideal follower.

Participant 13 mentioned political interference as an obstacle to negotiate in attempting to enact ideal followership. She presented no other categories of hindrances, and evidently, her ability to focus on the big picture is a significant enough enabler that she is able to behave in line with four of her beliefs. Participant 26 did not mention any hindrances to his followership enactment. He generally described a positive experience at the City, including feeling that it is an inclusive organisation.

Despite two of the three participants in this group experiencing some challenging situations in enacting their followership, they all were able to activate some of their ideal followership behaviours. With professional conduct being the consistent belief amongst them, it may be that their

ability to focus on the job at hand enables them not to allow negative factors to impact them too much in the execution of their followership in the way they believe it should be done.

6.10.2. Three matching behaviours

Table 6.12 Participants with three matching behaviours

	Self-focused		Self-and org-focused		Organisation-focused		Leader- and org-focused	Leader-focused			Leader- and self-focused
Participant	Behaviour code 1	Behaviour code 2	Behaviour code 3	Behaviour code 10	Behaviour code 4	Behaviour code 5	Behaviour code 6	Behaviour code 7	Behaviour code 8	Behaviour code 9	Behaviour code 11
11	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
19	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
20	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-

Three respondents had three behaviours matching with their beliefs (Table 6.12). They also shared the common belief and behaviour of professional conduct. Most of the behaviours are on the proactive to active side of the continuum. Participant 11 requires respect from the leader before he is willing to accede to directives which is a behaviour placed on the weaker side of the co-production beliefs continuum. Participant 19 is still able to be deferent as well as proactive which most participants were not able to do even though they held both beliefs. He is able to strike a balance between giving his inputs and taking initiative, and listening to his superiors so he can try and be a better follower.

In terms of factors that enable or hinder the followership of these respondents, there was no congruence on leadership factors: one of the respondents indicated negative leadership factors as a hindrance, another indicated positive leadership factors as an enabler, whilst the third one did not include leadership as a factor at all (Table 6.13). None of the participants experienced any enablers from the organisational factors, but they did draw motivation that enabled them to be good followers from internal factors, such as their own career aspirations, big-picture focus or their personality.

Table 6.13 Factors that enable or hinder ideal followership behaviour

	Leadership factors		Organisational factors							Work-related factors			Nature of person factors
Participant	Positive leadership factors	Negative leadership factors	Inclusive organisational culture	Policies in place	Rigid nature of organisation	Stressful & overworked	Lack of recognition (incl. financial or promotion)	Negative attitudes/ low morale from other followers	Macro political issues/ interference	Experience	Career aspirations	Big picture focus	Personality and background
11	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
19	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
20	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1

6.10.3. Two matching behaviours

There were more participants with just two matching beliefs and behaviours (Table 6.14) than the previous categories. The most matched behaviour was once again the proactive and takes initiative category. Most matching behaviours were spread across the continuum from weak to strong co-production beliefs. At the extreme ends, four respondents matched with the belief of proactive and takes initiative, and three of the respondents were able to match with their respectful deference belief.

Table 6.14 Participants with two matching behaviours

	Self-focused		Self-and org-focused		Organisation-focused		Leader- and org-focused	Leader-focused			Leader- and self-focused
Participant	Behaviour code 1	Behaviour code 2	Behaviour code 3	Behaviour code 10	Behaviour code 4	Behaviour code 5	Behaviour code 6	Behaviour code 7	Behaviour code 8	Behaviour code 9	Behaviour code 11
2	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
5	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
9	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
22	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
24	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-

With this group of participants, more negative leader factors emerged (Table 6.15) with three of the six participants citing leadership as a hindrance. Of those three respondents, two (Participant 22 and 24) also believe that good followership is an outcome of good leadership. The political nature of the organisation also emerged as an organisational hindrance with three of the participants. Personality and background as an enabler emerged with four of the participants, whilst the work-related enabling factors were dispersed across the different participants. One notices that, as leadership emerges more as a hindrance, participants enact followership less in line with their beliefs. This alludes to the significance of the influence that leadership, particularly what followers may perceive as bad leadership, has on how followership is ultimately enacted.

Table 6.15 Factors that enable or hinder ideal followership behaviour

	Leadership factors		Organisational factors							Work-related factors			Nature of person factors
Participant	Positive leadership factors	Negative leadership factors	Inclusive organisational culture	Policies in place	Rigid nature of organisation	Stressful & overworked	Lack of recognition (incl. financial or promotion)	Negative attitudes/ low morale from other followers	Macro political issues/ interference	Experience	Career aspirations	Big picture focus	Personality & background
2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
5	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	-	1	-
8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
9	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1
22	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	1
24	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1

6.10.4. One matching behaviour

The remainder of the participants (n = 14) matched only one of their behaviours with their beliefs (Table 6.16). The primarily matched behaviour was being proactive and taking initiative. This is not surprising; as already indicated in previous sections, the most enacted behaviour is that of being proactive. Having purpose and dedication is the behaviour that was second-most prevalent in this group of respondents. Interestingly, this group of behaviours is primarily on the active to proactive part of the continuum. Thus, employees are able to activate their proactive behaviours more frequently than their more passive behaviours, even in the face of challenges such as the hindrances mentioned.

Table 6.16 Participants with one matching behaviour

	Self-focused		Self-and org-focused		Organisation-focused		Leader-and org-focused	Leader-focused			Leader-and self-focused
Participant	Behaviour code 1	Behaviour code 2	Behaviour code 3	Behaviour code 10	Behaviour code 4	Behaviour code 5	Behaviour code 6	Behaviour code 7	Behaviour code 8	Behaviour code 9	Behaviour code 11
1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
6	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
12	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
14	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
15	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
16	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
17	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
18	1	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
21	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
23	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
25	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
27	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

As expected, more of the factors that impact on followership enactment emerged in this group of participants, being a larger number of them (Table 6.17). Leadership factors emerged as both enablers and hindrances, with no significant difference between the two. The rigid nature of the organisation featured more significantly in this group than the other groups.

Table 6.17 Factors that enable or hinder ideal followership behaviour

	Leadership factors		Organisational factors							Work-related factors			Nature of person factors
Participant	Positive leadership factors	Negative leadership factors	Inclusive organisational culture	Policies in place	Rigid nature of organisation	Stressful & overworked	Lack of recognition (incl. financial or promotion)	Negative attitudes/ low morale from other followers	Macro political issues/ interference	Experience	Career aspirations	Big picture focus	Personality & background
1	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
7	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
10	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	1
12	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
14	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
15	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
16	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
17	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
18	-	1	-	-	1	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	-
21	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-
23	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
25	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	1
27	-	1	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

6.11. Conclusion

This chapter analysed the results presented in Chapter 5 through a continuum combining follower co-production beliefs and followership schemas. The positioning of codes along the continuum was achieved by critically evaluating the meaning of codes. The results of the analysis were the construction of followership based on followers' implicit theories of followership, the factors that enable and hinder their ability to behave according to their implicit theories, and the resultant followership behaviours enacted.

The findings show that employees hold strongly proactive and passive beliefs across the co-production continuum simultaneously; however, the enacted behaviours are more proactive, with very few enacting more passive-leaning behaviours. The researcher posits that the complex and hierarchical structure of the organisation lends itself to followers who need to be able to activate different schemas as they encounter different situations, especially because they are usually both a subordinate and a superior within the same position. Perhaps having a single *modus operandi* does not allow one to be an effective follower in this environment, as its complexity requires interacting with different types of individuals who may all have different ways of doing things, or simply, different objectives. The proactivity mainly came through as a way to challenge leaders when followers do not believe they are acting according to mandate, avoiding crimes of obedience (Carsten &Uhl-Bien, 2013). The researcher notes, however, that the research instrument applied, being interviews, presents with a key limitation that may have resulted in self-selection bias, leading to respondents being those employees who are more proactive in nature. Also, the lack of full anonymity may have discouraged those employees who have more passive followership constructions from participating, whereas an anonymous survey may have provided an opportunity to include such participants (Braun & Clarke, 2013:80).

The respondents' inability to behave in line with many of the passive behaviours is due to the hindrances presented by the leadership and organisational factors. The impact of such factors is supported by similar findings in Carsten *et al*. (2010); however, in the specific type of sector the City operates in, the complex followership structure and political nature add the following considerations:

- Followers have to be more courageous in challenging and taking moral action, as the mandate of the organisation is of national importance and affects communities, thus the followers' focus on the organisational objectives keeps them courageous.
- The political nature of the organisation presents followers with an additional challenge in enacting their followership, such that, if they are not vigilant or lack the courage for moral action, they may end up executing on directives that are unlawful or unethical.

Although complex environments present with many levels of hierarchy and rigid structures, followers whose positive FIFTs include proactive behaviour are able to activate such proactive behaviours regardless of the structure and hierarchy. In enacting followership, they are driven

primarily by internal factors, such as their own career aspirations, focusing on the greater organisational goals, and also their natural inclinations as a result of background and personality. The public sector nature of this organisation, being a municipality, adds more complexity for followers to deal with in the execution of their duties.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Introduction

This study explored followership constructions and behaviours in a complex organisation from a South African perspective by investigating how employees at a South African metropolitan municipality construct their followership. The primary research question was: How do employees in a complex organisation construct their followership? The study employed a social constructionist qualitative approach to specifically answer the following secondary questions:

1) What beliefs about followership do employees at the City hold?
2) How do employees at the City enact their followership?
3) What factors contribute to how employees at the City enact their followership?

The importance of followership research as an area of focus within leadership studies was illuminated through the literature reviewed. Without discounting the importance of leaders within leadership, the case has been made for studies to focus on followers beyond their facilitation of the leader's role within leadership. The call for a follower focus, being traced as far back as the 1930s (by Follet), has resulted in various studies that consider the significance of followers (Sy, 2010; Meindl, 1995; Alabdulhadi *et al.*, 2017; Drath *et al*., 2008) although still primarily exploring leaders and leadership. Followership research, however, seeks as its main objective to explore followers' perspectives about followership. In the words of Uhl-Bien and Pillai (2007:187), "just as leadership is in the eye of the beholder, so is followership". Therefore, this study examined followership from the eyes of the followers who experience it and, thus, construct it.

The findings made in this study add to the growing body of followership research and the understanding of the followership construct. The importance of followership studies is also not just theoretical in terms of the understanding thereof and the broader concept of leadership, but also from an organisational perspective. As with leadership studies, organisational contexts provide a structured environment in which to investigate followership as applied in the current research. This study investigated the social constructions of followership by examining the follower implicit followership theories (FIFTs), behaviours and factors impacting the followership enactment of employees in a complex organisation in the South African public

sector. The specific theoretical contribution of the study is adding to the literature on followership constructions in the context of a complex environment.

The selected organisation presents with a complex environment, as it is large, has complex external interactions (Webb, 2011:228), and its hierarchical nature also creates a complex followership structure denoted by individuals occupying roles of both subordinate and superior (Zoogah, 2014:51). Further contributions of the study are that it was conducted in a public sector environment, thus contributing to literature on followership in the public sector, as well as being conducted in South Africa where studies have not focused on FIFTs. The study, thus, advances followership theory in areas not previously explored.

The purpose of this chapter is to summarise the findings of the research by answering the overarching primary research question as well as the secondary questions. It also serves to demonstrate the theoretical contribution and the limitations of the study, as well as highlight areas for future research.

7.2. Summary of findings

Examining the social constructions of followership can assist with understanding the enactment of followership (Uhl-Bien & Pillai, 2007:188). Such understanding is not only important for expanding the literature, but also for organisations and those who are in the leadership and followership relationships. It was found that employees at the City construct their followership based on characteristics and behaviours that focus on the self, the organisation, and the leader, or a combination thereof. Overlaying these belief categories with the followership schemas/co-production beliefs continuum, it was found that employees' implicit theories on followership range across the continuum from passive to proactive schemas, and that they hold proactive and passive beliefs simultaneously. Consequently, employees do not hold implicit theories of either passivity or proactivity, but rather a combination of beliefs that lean either way. This finding suggests that these beliefs, considered to be on opposite ends of the continuum (Carsten *et al.,* 2010), can co-exist within an individual. The results further suggest that the emergence of followership beliefs as behaviours is dependent on whether the environment or situation in which the follower is enables or hinders his ability to enact followership in line with his followership beliefs.

The primary research question of the study was addressed by answering the secondary research questions. The following sections address each of the secondary research questions, leading to answering the primary research question. The headings relate to the research question as follows:

- Follower beliefs about followership: addresses Research Question 1
- Followership enactment: addresses Research Question 2
- Contributors to followership enactment: addresses Research Question 3
- The construction of followership by employees in a complex organisation: addresses the primary research question.

7.2.1. Follower beliefs about followership

Analysing employee beliefs about followership from the perspective of follower co-production beliefs and followership schemas, the findings for Research Question 1 were that employees have implicit followership theories that are self-, organisation- or leader-focused beliefs, or combinations thereof. These beliefs are located across the followership continuum from passive to proactive, as also found by Carsten *et al*. (2010).

Leader-focused beliefs are more passive, being associated with behaviours of deferring to the leader, trying to be easy to work with, or a view that follower outcomes are dependent on how the follower is being led. These behaviours can be associated with Kelley's (1988) "yes-people" or Chaleff's (2009) "implementer", who look to the leader for direction, and support leaders almost without question; they want to "please the boss" (Kelley, 1992:160). Such followers can be detrimental to an organisation if they simply accede to all requests by a leader without much consideration, leading to "crimes of obedience" (Carsten and Uhl-Bien, 2013), where followers even obey unethical or unlawful orders. However, in this case, the researcher found that, even though employees indicated a willingness to defer to their leaders on decisions, they did not do so without any engagement thereon. That is, as much as they are there to execute or implement a decision, they still consider its lawfulness and appropriateness with regard to organisational policy, and if it is not deemed appropriate, they refuse on those grounds. Therefore, applying Kelley's model, these followers do not exercise a lack of critical thinking at all, it is just that they will not challenge unnecessarily. Considering these followers from the perspective of Chaleff's model, they may increase their level of challenge and decrease their level of support for that leader on that specific request, as it may be harmful to the organisation

and even themselves as those who executed the decision. There was one respondent who is completely passive; he attributes this to his leader's behaviour, and says it has driven him to do only what is required. This type of follower may be destructive to the organisation, as he is no longer willing to engage or think critically about the work he does. His behaviour is closely aligned with the withdrawn follower as described by Zaleznik (1965).

Organisation-focused, self- and organisation-focused, and leader- and organisation-focused beliefs are located in the active region of the continuum. These beliefs call for the follower to be active, requiring them to actively support the leader or the organisation through their behaviours. Employees with organisation-focused beliefs make the organisation the centre of their actions; thus, their commitment and accountability are towards the organisation and not any particular leader. With professional conduct in particular, a distinction was drawn between following the position of the leader and not necessarily the person occupying the position. That way, regardless of who is in that position, the employees felt they would continue to do what is required to achieve the outcomes. Leader- and organisation-focused beliefs included an element of supporting both the leader and the organisation; however, it was also suggested that the support for the leader is within the context of understanding what the organisation's objectives are such that the support for the leader is in the pursuit of those objectives. Self- and organisation-focused beliefs have a balance between being about the follower doing what they need to do within their mandate of work, but also in ensuring that they do their part to contribute towards the greater organisational goals. There is also an element of not involving oneself in more than the work one needs to do. The employees with this belief emphasised the importance of keeping to one's professional duties; thus, the researcher placed the belief more in the active than the proactive schema.

Constructions around self-focused beliefs are on the proactive to active side of the continuum. A significant number of employees at the City believe that you need not be solicited by the leader in order to contribute your views or challenge the leader's views. A follower should critically engage with their organisational environment and their leader's directives, as it is possible that, even as a follower, you may have a better way to do things. This was particularly raised with reference to the fact that followers are closer to the actual work that must be done; whereas, the leaders can be a bit removed and, thus, not understand certain practical implications. Thus, it is the follower's duty to bring such information to the leader's attention for consideration in making a decision. The employees also understand that offering their views

does not guarantee that such views will be acted upon; they indicated that what is ultimately done with the input is not the primary concern, as long as they feel they have done the right thing by providing their view on the matter. Such employees possess the courage to challenge and take a moral stand (Chaleff, 2003); and they do this regardless of what the reaction of the recipient (in this case the leader) will be. Participants 27 and 24 mentioned how they are aware of how their proactive behaviour is not always welcomed by their leaders, but they continue to enact their followership in that way because it is how they believe followers should be.

This study found that employees did not only hold beliefs along a particular part of the continuum; but that individuals were able to hold beliefs across the continuum. That is, employees simultaneously hold beliefs that are both proactive and passive, and anywhere in between. This is an important finding, as the indication is that followers should not be considered to fit into a particular typology of category of followership schema. Followers are not always necessarily going to hold schemas that are clearly passive, proactive or active, as beliefs may be spread across the breadth of the continuum. All participants had elements of self-, organisation- and leader-focused beliefs. Thus, seemingly, followers wish to include leader-focused behaviours in their followership enactment. However, the findings indicate that the enactment deviates to being self-focused due to the leadership and organisational factors that affect the employees as found in the answer to Research Question 3.

7.2.2. Followership enactment

Despite the beliefs that range across the co-production continuum, it is in the enactment of followership where there emerged a more proactive tendency amongst employees. The less proactive behaviours tending towards being passive, were reported far less than the proactive behaviours in terms of enactment. Consequently, even though the majority of participants had beliefs on the extreme ends of the continuum, they activated primarily self-focused behaviours in the enactment of followership which are associated with more proactive schemas. This is clearly depicted in Table 7.1 which exhibits the distribution between self-, leader- and organisation-focused descriptions when analysing the beliefs held against the behaviours enacted. Thus, as supported by the findings in Carsten *et al.* (2010), employees' implicit theories are not the only determining factor to followership enactment.

Table 7.1 Participant distribution between belief and behaviour themes

	Self-focused	Self- and organisation-focused	Organisation-focused	Leader- and organisation-focused	Leader-focused	Leader- and self-focused
Beliefs - total participants	26	19	21	11	24	0
Behaviours - total participants	22	12	13	3	9	2
Difference between belief and behaviour	**-4**	**-7**	**-8**	**-8**	**-15**	**2**

Employees at the City construct their followership combining their schema and the appropriate response to the situational factors presented to them. The schemas, which are activated and translated into behaviour, are based on their responses to a combination of the factors that impact them. From an external factor perspective, leadership is a significant factor, as well as the political environment of the organisation. However, the self-focused beliefs translated into behaviours more than any other theme. It may be that those who hold proactive beliefs have naturally proactive schemas, and thus the courage to enact followership as they see fit instead of being discouraged by factors in the environment whether it be leaders or the organisational factors. This would suggest that employees have strong co-production beliefs and see their role as one that should moderate, or at least attempt to, the leader's behaviour where required. One of the participants also mentioned having to be more proactive and even lead because, at times, she feels her leader is not doing his work, leaving her with the question of who she is supposed to follow. In this case, the leader creates a vacuum by not claiming the leader role formally granted to him through his organisational position. The follower is thus left to claim that role herself, whilst granting the leader the follower role. This deviates from the expected role-based followership construction one would find in such a hierarchical organisation, and instead, leans towards constructionist approaches, such as that by DeRue and Ashford (2010).

The employees' beliefs about proactive followership allude to a mindset that does not view followership as a static role. In as much as they acknowledge the rank-and-file nature of the organisation, the majority of employees are driven by a need to contribute their views, and thus, in a way, lead from behind. The results suggest that there could be elements of Leader-Follower-Switching (LFS) present with the employees where they possibly fall into the "dynamicism" part of the matrix due to both a high follower orientation and a high leader orientation (Sy & McCoy, 2014). Such a view also correlates with the fact that most respondents were able to hold both strongly proactive and passive beliefs. The complex followership structure of the organisation may lend itself to such beliefs, as individuals are both

subordinates and supervisors in the hierarchical structure. However, the researcher draws no conclusion on the LFS construct, as the study was not designed for such purpose.

In spite of not enacting all their ideal behaviours, most of the respondents did not report enacting behaviours that were contrary to their beliefs. There was one participant who enacted his followership in a manner that is completely against his beliefs. However, he has reached a point where he feels completely hindered in his attempts to enact followership as he perceives it should be done.

7.2.3. Contributors to followership enactment

It was found that employees are enabled by factors of both internal and external origin; however, factors of external origin also serve as hindrances in their ultimate enactment of followership behaviours. The factors of external origin include leadership, which encompasses the leader-follower dyadic relationship and how the followers experience their leaders' behaviours. They also include organisational factors which emanate from the environment in the City, as perceived by the employees. Factors of internal origin relate to the internal drivers of follower behaviours, including work-related factors and those pertaining to the follower's personality and background.

The leader-follower relationship plays a significant contextual role in employees' followership constructions. It was found that, where there was a good dyadic relationship, followers engaged and supported the leader; whereas, in cases where there was a bad dyadic relationship, even those followers with a proclivity to support leaders did not enact the behaviour. Thus, follower engagement and support of leader is dependent on the quality of the leader-follower relationship, where a good relationship can result in alignment towards mutual goals (Uhl-Bien, 2006:656). On the other hand, a bad relationship may result in differing levels of follower withdrawal of active engagement and support, where the follower may even completely withdraw, as in the case of Participant 3. Alternatively, the follower may choose to focus on enacting self- and organisation-focused behaviours, as with Participants 17 and 27.

The environment at the City plays an important role in how employees are constructing their followership. Of the major factors contributing to how employees enact their followership, macro-political issues and the rigid nature of the organisation emerged second and third to

leadership in the themes of external origin. The rigidity of the organisation due to its hierarchical nature, as well as its political nature, serve as hindrances to employees' ability to enact their desired followership. Notably, all eight of those respondents who cited macro-political issues as a hindrance hold the belief of professional conduct; however, only two of them enact the behaviour. Therefore, activities at the political level of the organisation also impact on how employees are able to maintain their objectivity and perform their work as they believe they should. For example, Participant 18 has had to adjust her behaviour to manoeuvre around the politics in order to achieve the desired outcomes of her work, whereas she believes that one should just focus on one's work and not become affected by the politics. This speaks to the point raised in Chapter 1 regarding how the political aspect of the organisation presents an additional complexity that contributes to the construction of followership in this context. Although mentioned by seven employees, the rigid nature of the organisation does not stop employees from giving their inputs and being proactive; albeit they realise their inputs might not always get to the ultimate decision makers. Nonetheless, those employees place importance on being proactive. As previously mentioned, it might be that those employees who believe that followers should be proactive have strong co-production implicit theories in any case, thus, it comes naturally to them to behave in that manner.

Employees are primarily enabled by internal factors; whether it be their personalities and backgrounds or more work-related factors, such as the desire for promotion. The most prominent work-related enabler for employees at the City is their ability to focus on the big picture with regard to the objectives of the organisation. This drives them to keep trying to be good followers to assist the City in achieving its objectives in terms of providing services to the community. Six of the 11 employees who enact their followership with purpose and dedication say they focus on the big picture as an enabler. Almost half (n = 13) of the employees are enabled by their intrinsic personality factors in their endeavours to enact ideal followership.

Such findings were similar to those of Carsten *et al.* (2010), who found that followership constructions were also influenced by organisational climate and leadership styles. However, in addition to this, the study found that further to a hierarchical and rigid structure, the political environment in the organisation also served as a hindrance.

7.2.4. Summary: The construction of followership by employees in a complex organisation

In addressing the primary research question, employees in the City construct their followership through a combination of the following elements (Figure 7.1):

- Their implicit followership theories; that is, how they believe followers should behave;
- The factors that impact on the situation they are in; that is, the leaders, the organisational environment, and their own internal factors; and
- Their actual behaviour resulting from the interaction between their FIFTs, the environmental context (leader and organisation), and their internal personal factors; that is, their followership enactment responds to all those factors.

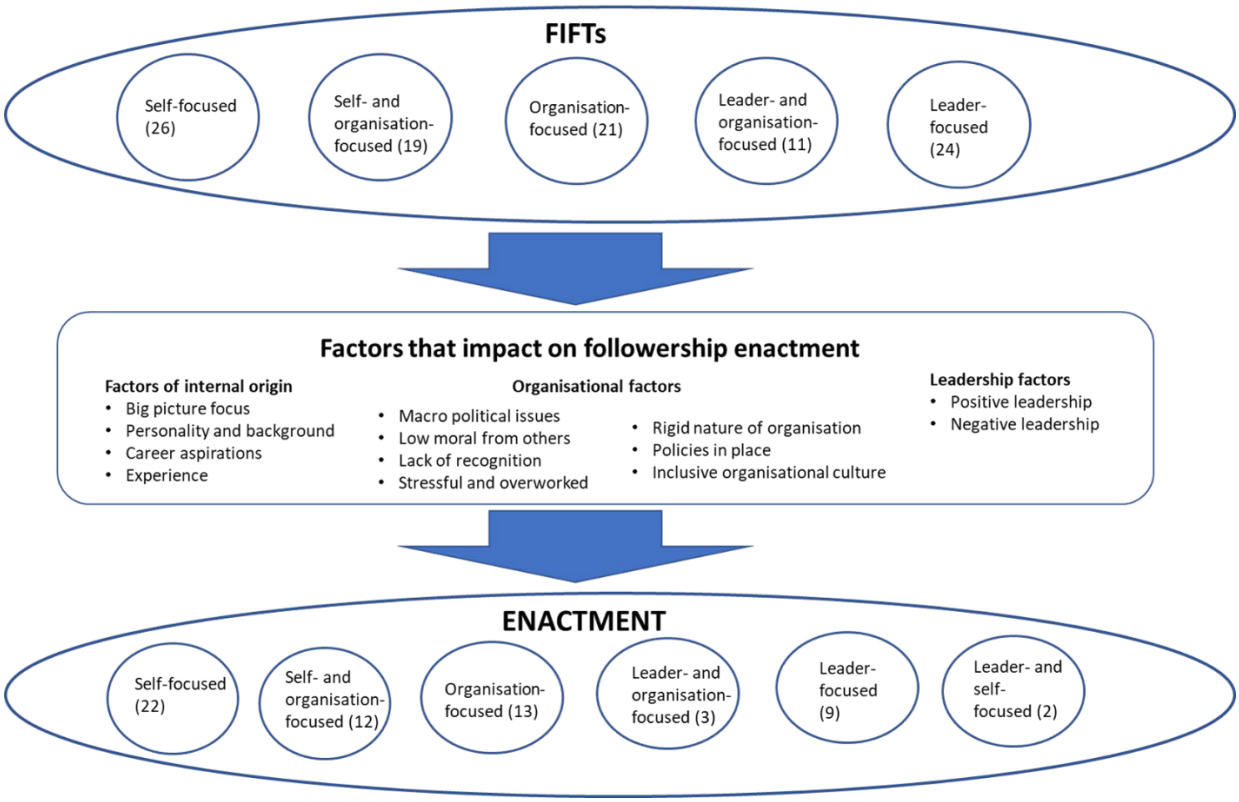


Figure 7.1 Diagrammatic representation of how employees in a complex organisation construct their followership
***Numbers in brackets indicate the number of employees for each FIFT and enactment of behaviour.**

It was also found that:

- The leader-follower dyadic relationship is a key contributor to followership enactment;
- Male employees are more affected by leadership factors, both positive and negative, than female employees in enacting their followership;

- Female employees experience organisational factors to be hindrances more than male employees; and
- Employees who experience external factors as a hindrance are more likely to enact proactive behaviour.

This study also showed that, to enable employees to enact their ideal followership schema, the following is required:

- Recognition for efforts and contribution
- Leaders who do not discourage or demotivate followers
- Flexible structures that allow for the consideration of follower inputs
- A less stressful working environment with sufficient resources
- An environment with other followers who do not have negative attitudes or low morale
- A clearer separation from the political environment

Internal factors serve as the primary motivator with regard to employees' enactment of followership. From a work-related perspective, they motivate themselves by focusing on the broader organisational objectives and their career aspirations, as well as using their prior experience. Many of them are also enabled by their intrinsic elements; that is, factors coming from their upbringing and personality that inform their beliefs and behaviours.

The study, thus, concludes that employees in a complex organisation simultaneously hold followership beliefs across the passive to proactive continuum, and construct their followership based on their beliefs and contextual factors that present in the situation. Within the City, this results in predominantly self-focused proactive behaviours due, in large part, to negative leadership factors and the macro-political environment. Proactive or active followers possess characteristics of "follower substitutes for leadership" (Powell & Mendez, 2008:31), and are, thus, inclined to be self-starters and work independently. These are the type of followers that are willing to disregard the instructions of leaders, if necessary, in order to achieve the appropriate outcome. They can be valuable followers for an organisation, especially one such as the City, which has a mandate that is of national importance and requires individuals who are willing to actively engage in working towards that mandate.

7.3. Contributions to followership research

This study makes a contribution to followership research by expanding research on followership constructions through investigating follower implicit theories of followership in a complex organisation. As previously discussed, the implicit followership theory (IFT) literature is focused on leaders' perceptions about followers, and not on followers' perception about followers or follower self-schemas. Through this study, the researcher has added the perspective that individuals in a complex organisation do not only hold followership schemas that are proactive, active or passive, but can hold beliefs that range across the followership continuum from proactive to passive. This is an important insight into followership schemas and how they differ across the continuum within one individual. Followers then activate the behaviours based on the required schema for the situation. This introduces the conceptualisation of followership as being situational or contingent upon certain variables. Therefore, as with situational leadership, there is not one effective or acceptable style of followership applicable in all situations. Followers must enact the appropriate schema, and thus behaviours, for the given situation. This is impacted by various factors within the follower's environment, such as the type of leaders and organisational climate. The situational followership notion may be a phenomenon that presents most noticeably in complex followership environments, such as the City, due to the interchanging roles that individuals have to play between being superiors and subordinates, as a result of the complexity introduced by the very hierarchical structure.

The second contribution this study makes to followership is from a public sector perspective, particularly in South Africa. Public sector entities, and more specifically, local government municipalities, have a strong political element to them as evidenced in the structure presented in Chapter 4. Although the political sphere is not supposed to impact on the administrative employees, the findings indicate that it does. The political environment has become a factor that followers need to navigate in order to enact their ideal followership. To minimise the impact of political matters on followership enactment among the administrative employees, local government entities need to consider implementing a clearer separation between the administrative and political aspects of the organisation. It should also be noted that a study conducted in a context that does not follow democratic processes, as explained in Chapter 1, may present significantly different findings with regard to how a political environment

influences followership construction. Therefore, the transferability of the present study's findings is likely limited to similar functioning democracies.

As evidenced by the reviewed literature, followership research has primarily been conducted outside of the African continent, and more specifically South Africa. This study, therefore, also serves the purpose of providing a South African perspective not only to followership, but to research on FIFTs, in particular. The findings of this study address the gap in IFT research from a complex organisation perspective, as well as from a follower perspective, as most of the IFT research focuses on leaders' implicit theories of followership (Sy, 2010; Gao & Wu, 2019; Junker & van Dick, 2014; Goswami *et al*., 2020).

7.4. Recommendations for future research

This study focused on follower implicit theories, followership enactment, and the factors that contribute to followership enactment in a South African complex followership environment. It was conducted in a single municipality, and although this was a large municipality, being a metropolitan municipality, perhaps a study including more municipalities would provide more insights into the social constructions of followership in South African local government. Further to this, a similar research conducted in a similarly complex followership structure in the private sector could possibly add a different perspective. The research also proposes that further research be done to explore the notion of situational followership, and test hypotheses related thereto. For example, it may be of interest to find out what specific conditions activate a particular kind of followership schema in followers, and whether this differs depending on in which part of the continuum followers' implicit theories are concentrated.

Research into factors that inhibit or hinder followers from enacting their ideal followership, especially in the public sector, could illuminate the factors that need to change in order to activate effective followership in employees. Effective followership could then enable effective leadership which, together, could drive the organisations towards the desired outcomes.

7.5. Conclusion

The research problem this study sought to address was the dearth of followership research in South Africa, specifically research on followership constructions. The selection of a

metropolitan municipality was also as a result of a lack of followership research in public sector entities. The case for the importance of followership research has been discussed in Chapter 3. Thus, in the expansion of that, it is important that research extend to the public sector and, specifically, local government. The reason for this is the critical role played by local government in society, as stated in the Constitution of South Africa and discussed in Chapter 1. The mandate of such institutions is of national importance. In addition, the recent failures in the municipalities as reported on by the Auditor-General South Africa, have raised concerns about the leadership of such organisations. There is an acknowledgement that leadership cannot be fully understood and appreciated without including followership. Therefore, the present research had as its aim the understanding of followership in a metropolitan municipality, being a complex followership organisation.

This study explored followership constructions in a complex followership organisation. The results were analysed to extract followers' implicit theories on followership through the lens of followership co-production beliefs. The findings introduce the notion of situational followership; where followers may hold various beliefs about followership across the co-production continuum, but enact the behaviours associated with the appropriate schema for the situation.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Interview schedule

The purpose of this study is to investigate how followership is constructed. By investigating followership, the study aims to better understand leadership. In all places of work, there are leaders and there are followers. For example, in a school, the school principal would be the leader and the teachers the followers. In a retail operation, the store manager would be the leader and the tellers and shop floor staff would be the followers. When answering the interview questions, I would like you to reflect on the role of followers and how they behave and interact with leaders in an organisation. There are no wrong or right answers, I am interested in your views about followers. All responses to these questions will be held strictly confidential and you will not be identified as a participant in this study. In order to accurately capture all your responses, I would like to ask your permission to voice record the interview. (Start recording) May I voice record the interview? In addition, would you mind if I used some of your quotes from the interview under an anonymous pseudonym for the purposes of publishing this research.

Name	
Age	
Highest qualification	Matric/ college diploma/ university undergraduate degree/ post graduate
Current position and department/division	
Years in this organisation	
Years in the current position	

(REMEMBER TO BE CLEAR, LISTEN AND DELICATELY PROMPT)

1. Good/ideal follower
    a. How would you describe someone who is an ideal (or good) follower?
    b. What kind of behaviours would they display?

2. Bad/not ideal follower
    a. How would you describe someone who is not an ideal (or bad) follower?

b. What kind of behaviours would they display?

3. How do you behave as a follower?

4. (Where there are differences between the ideal follower described and the actual behaviour described, phrase as follows): I note some differences between what you describe as an ideal follower and how you describe your behaviours as a follower – what is it that causes you to behave in the manner you describe?

   OR

5. (Where no differences between the ideal follower described and the actual behaviour described, phrase as follows): What is it that causes you to behave in the manner you describe?

APPENDIX B: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION AND CONSENT

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA
Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences

Letter of Introduction and Informed Consent FOR Participation in Academic Research

Department of Business Management:
Albert Luthuli Centre for Responsible Leadership

An exploration of followership constructs and behaviours

Research conducted by:
Ms. M.T. Matshoba-Ramuedzisi (17382069)
Cell: 082 415 1074
Email: tmatshoba@gmail.com

Dear Respondent,

The purpose of this study is to investigate how followership is constructed. By investigating followership, the study aims to better understand leadership. In all places of work, there are leaders and there are followers. For example, in a school, the school principal would be the leader and the teachers the followers. In a retail operation, the store manager would be the leader and the tellers and shop floor staff would be the followers. When answering the interview questions, I would like you to reflect on the role of followers and how they behave and interact with leaders in an organisation. There are no wrong or right answers, I am interested in your views about followers. All responses to these questions will be held strictly confidential and you will not be identified as a participant in this study. In order to accurately capture all your responses, I would like to ask your permission to voice record the interview.

Please note the following:

- This study involves an anonymous interview. Your name will not appear in the study and the answers you give will be treated as strictly confidential. You cannot be identified in person based on the answers you give

1

- Your participation is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without negative consequences
- Please answer the questions during the interview as completely and honestly as possible. This should not take more than an hour of your time.
- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. A summary of our findings can be provided to you on request.
- Please contact my study leader, Prof. Derick de Jongh at derick.dejongh@up.ac.za if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

In research of this nature the study leader may wish to contact respondents to verify the authenticity of data gathered by the researcher. It is understood that any personal contact details that you may provide will be used only for this purpose, and will not compromise your anonymity or the confidentiality of your participation.

Yours sincerely,

Tumeka Matshoba-Ramuedzisi

Please sign this form to indicate that:

- You have read and understand the information provided above.
- You give your consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis

Respondent's name **Date**

Respondent's signature

2