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**FOLLOWING AUTHENTICALLY IN
THE UK PUBLIC SECTOR: THE
IMPORTANCE OF VISIBILITY, VALUE
AND VOICE**

RACHAEL LOUISE MORRIS

PhD

2015

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the requirements for the award of Doctor
of Philosophy of the University of
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Abstract

This thesis explores processes of following in the UK public sector, and sheds light on individuals' experiences of following authentically. It addresses calls for extending understandings of followership and, informed by the empirical data, adds to models of authentic followership.

By taking a relational constructionist perspective, the thesis focuses on processes of following, recognising these as on going and as occurring in relation to multiple others and within multiple contexts. This study adopts a follower-focused approach, placing followers as *the* central focus of the study both theoretically and methodologically. The thesis develops links between the theoretical areas of followership and employee voice, to problematise and inform, through the study's emergent findings, contemporary understandings of authentic following.

This qualitative study employed a multiple-method research design consisting of interviews, visual research diaries and photo-elicitation interviews. Through this, participants shared their experiences and, through the design's staged and reflexive approach, gave descriptions and understandings of their current and past experiences of engaging in following. Thematic analysis was utilised to interpret the data and the findings, across the multiple data sources and data types, were presented thematically.

The use of multiple and visual based data collection methods, which is claimed as a methodological contribution to the followership field, provides rich insights into the lived experiences of individuals doing following and, particularly, highlights the importance of visibility, value and voice, within an overarching theme of agency. Processes of following in this thesis are thus conceptualised as individuals acting independently and having choice in the ways that they engage in following, whilst also recognising the structures in which they are located. The thesis proposes a new framework for following authentically, highlighting the complex ways in which visibility, value and voice interact.

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Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee on 08/01/2013.

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 82,220 words

Name: Rachael Morris

Signature:

Date: 27th August 2015

Chapter One

Introduction

1.0 Chapter Introduction

This chapter will provide an introduction to the focus and context of the thesis. The scope of the thesis will be outlined, stating the research question, sub-questions and the research objectives that guide this. The central concepts will be discussed to provide clarity on how they are conceptualised for the purpose of this thesis. The potential theoretical and methodological contributions of this study will be outlined, before concluding with an overview of the structure of the thesis.

1.1 The Focus of the Study

This thesis explores following from the perspectives of those individuals engaging in this process, to gain insight into how this is experienced. Focus is placed on how individuals understand following and how they experience this, with an interest in the enactment of agency and the restrictions of structures upon those individuals. This study is based within public sector organisational contexts, to understand such processes within typically challenging and large, highly structured organisations. This thesis views following as a process occurring in relation to processes of leading, which individuals fluctuate between. In this sense, individuals are not considered to be followers or leaders, but to be doing following and leading. The study is interested in authentic followership in particular, and the challenges to this practice of followership, which holds many assumptions and is underexplored. It explores the interactions within processes of following, and the ways in which these interactions influence the extent to which individuals do following authentically, shedding light on the complexities that challenge current naïve perspectives of authentic followership.

1.2 The Scope of the Study

This section will provide an overview of the background to the study, to provide clarity over what is and is not the focus. The central concepts of the study and my personal motivations for the study will also be outlined.

1.2.1 Background and Scope of the Study

This study draws upon existing work within the followership field, the authentic followership and leadership fields, as well as work within the field of employee voice. It recognises the tendencies within the followership field to associate passivity (Frisina, 2005; Kellerman, 2007) and related stigma (Bjugstad, Thatch, Thompson and Morris, 2006; Rost, 1995; Kellerman, 2007) with the terms followership and followers. It however aligns with contemporary and emergent understandings within the field, and focuses on processes of following (Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe and Carsten, 2014), and views individuals not as *being* a follower or a leader, but instead as individuals who engage in following and leading across different times and across different contexts. In doing so, it supports complementary concepts offered to the study such as *teamship* (Townsend and Gebhardt, 2003) and of the active role (Rost, 2008) that individuals play within following, as indicated by DeRue and Ashford's (2010) discussions of relational leadership. This thesis therefore refers to individuals as engaging in following, and as those doing following, as opposed to followers or non-followers and leaders.

The study adopts a relational constructionist perspective, which focuses on interactions and how meaning making is done together, exploring the actions and responses of individuals (McNamee and Hosking, 2012). Through this perspective, this study recognises following as occurring in relation to multiple others and within multiple contexts. And, as previously indicated, it considers leading as being in relation to the process of following. The participants in this study are not viewed as followers, rather as individuals who are reflecting upon their experiences of engaging in processes of following. Therefore, this view appreciates they may also engage in leading at different times. It is for this purpose that the dyadic relationship between a follower and leader is not the focus of this study or explored, for instance, by speaking to managers and their subordinates as many studies within followership and leadership have done. Instead, research questions and discussions with participants are centred on experiences of following. Therefore this study adopts a follower-focused approach with its focus upon how those following (rather than followers) understand this process, as well as how they *do* and experience this (Kean, Haycock-Stuart, Baggaley, & Carson, 2011).

The study is located within the UK public sector context, and includes individuals from a range of organisations including local government, healthcare, and education amongst others. Fourteen individuals from five different types of public sector organisations are

included in this study. Much of the existing research on leadership has been based in America (Bryman, 2004), with a similar trend in existing followership research (Baker, 2007). Within the area of authentic leadership more specifically, existing studies have called for further research to be conducted in a variety of contexts to broaden understandings (Walumbwa, Wang, Wang, Schaubroeck and Avolio, 2010a; Shamir and Eilam, 2005). Furthermore, there have been calls for further research on followership in the UK Public Sector specifically – Collinson (2005) called for research on follower identities in the UK Public Sector due to the belief that they would be “required to act as calculable followers” in upcoming challenging times (Collinson, 2005, p.1426). Pederson and Hartley (2008) claim that the UK’s public sector should be further studied due to the extreme reforms that it has engaged in, including with regards to management and leadership. In line with this, the notion of authenticity is often associated with organisations which are experiencing difficult times and “highly disruptive change” (Bunker and Wakefield, 2004, p.18), with the belief that during such times authenticity becomes desirable in organisational leaders (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Luthans and Avolio, 2003). Whilst these perspectives are based on leaders’ authenticity, this study aims to give attention to authenticity during processes of following, within the “turbulent” (White, 2000, p.162) context of the UK public sector.

Traditional views of the public sector are largely centred on notions of individualisation (Lawler, 2008) and bureaucracy, with controls, rigid structures and rules for the workforce to abide by (Greener, 2009). However, cultural change initiatives and movements such as New Public Management (NPM) have set out to encourage decentralisation (Gultekin, 2011) and empowerment (Diefenbach, 2009; Goldfinch and Wallis, 2010), throughout all organisational levels, to achieve a more collective way of working. As a result, postmodern management in the public sector is considered more participative and enabling for employee empowerment (Fenwick and McMillan, 2010). This raises questions around the opportunities but also challenges and restrictions that employees may face in following and in being open and transparent, both central to authentic leadership and followership models in the theory base. However, whilst this study is not aiming to explore a specific relationship between authenticity and empowerment for followers, it provides a framework for justifying the selection of this context.

Lawler (2008) acknowledges that followers may have received more power during NPM changes. However he refers to this as *collective leadership* rather than considering it as a transformation in the way that following occurs. Pinnington (2011) argues that the public sector values the socialness and authenticity of leadership more than the private sector,

and suggests that because of this we may be more likely to see more relational approaches to working in this sector. Whilst Pinnington's (2011) perspective is focused upon leading, it provides support for exploring relational approaches to following in the public sector. Within the theory base there is further support for followers experiencing empowerment through recent changes in the public sector but, whilst many studies have focused on NPM policies, little attention has been given to the perspectives and experiences of employees themselves (Palermo, Cohen, Loan-Clarke and Mellahi, 2010) or, in line with this study, those doing following. Furthermore, Pinnington (2011) argues that decentralisation of management and increasing responsibilities for individuals at lower levels of public sector organisations has occurred, and suggests that this has led to an increased need for followership development.

Having outlined the scope and background of the study, the next section presents the research question, sub-questions and research objectives guiding it.

1.2.2 Central Concepts of the Study

This section will outline the concepts that are central to this study, and in doing so will also identify those that are outside the scope of this study. Those concepts considered key for this study include: followership, authentic followership, voice, agency and structure.

Followership – The concept of followership is “undervalued and underappreciated” (Vondey, 2012, p.3), which may be reflective of the infancy of this theory base relative to that of leadership. Though more publications are emerging within this field, few provide a “concrete” description of what the concept means (Crossman and Crossman, 2011, p.482). However, associations of powerlessness and passiveness are held for followership (Kellerman, 2008; Rost, 1995) with some, such as Townsend and Gebhardt (1997), using the terms follower and subordinate interchangeably. This thesis does not view the terms interchangeably, rather it aligns with Dixon and Westbrook's (2003) distinction between the concepts as subordinates “being under the control of superiors as if in some hypnotic trance” and followers as being “a condition, not a position” (p. 20).

Several studies in the followership field have adopted a social constructionist perspective, and have discussed followership as being based on the behaviours of individuals and recognised followers as being in relation to leaders (Uhl-Bien et al, 2014; Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera & McGregor, 2010). Whereas the social constructionist perspective of

such studies leads to identification of follower and leader traits and typologies, for instance of skills and/or extent of engagement in followership, by adopting a relational social constructionist perspective, this thesis emphasises the complex, dynamic interactional (Collinson, 2008) nature of the process of following. With little written specifically on processes of following, this thesis will draw upon understandings of followership and follower concepts and align them with the relational philosophical positioning of this thesis. As mentioned above, the relational perspective adopted for this study and the focus on following as a process recognise both those following and those leading within this process. Whilst leading is acknowledged here it is not a central focus of this thesis, and so the leadership theory base will be drawn upon to aid understandings of following only. Furthermore, relational/interactional social constructionist studies of followership have had a tendency to adopt an identity perspective (Collinson, 2006; 2008). However, the theoretical concept of identity is outside the scope of this study. Instead, it is focused on experiences of following in order to gain insight into how following is 'done'.

Authentic Followership – The concept of authentic followership is contemporary and growing in use within the followership and leadership fields, emerging in recent edited publications of followership including Lapierre and Carsten (2014), and Riggio, Chaleff and Lipman-Bluman (2008). It has emerged largely from frameworks of authentic leadership, with assumptions transferred across. Although the concept of authentic leadership is outside of the scope of this study, this is an instance in which understandings from the leadership field will be drawn upon. Carried forward from early definitions of authenticity, the notion of authentic leadership and thus followership is centred on being true to the self (Harter, 2002) and aligning behaviours with values and beliefs (Endrissat, Muller & Kaudela-Baum, 2007). This study, in line with its relational constructionist approach, focuses on authenticity as being a potential element of the process of following. However, the thesis challenges existing frameworks which consider individuals as being authentic or inauthentic as an either/or condition, and instead proposes that individuals will do following more or less authentically.

Voice – The concept of voice arises from the employee voice theory base, first emerging in the 1970s and considered to be the expressing of thoughts and opinions of employees for organisational change (Hirschman, 1970). Similar to Hirschman (1970) others went on to discuss voice in relation to the expression of thoughts by employees to challenge others when dissatisfied. This study aligns with this view of expressing thoughts, but recognises that this will not be limited to a desire to change something or to express dissatisfaction. Furthermore, whilst the employee voice theory base refers to voice and

silence as two potential behaviours, this study argues that adopting a processual perspective enables recognition of employee voice as a process in which individuals may engage to varying extents and in varying ways.

Agency and Structure- The concepts of agency and structure are concerned with the ways in which individuals' behaviours are influenced by the self and by others. This thesis acknowledges the positioning of individuals within social structures, and the ways in which such structures will influence them; for instance, the public sector context is focused on in this study, with structural issues including hierarchies, bureaucracy and external power apparent. However, and opposing much of the traditional theory on followership, this thesis recognises individuals, and thus individuals doing following, not as being passive and done to, but instead as being active individuals (Linstead & Thomas, 2002) who have the "capacity to take action" (Tourish, 2014, p.86).

Having outlined the central concepts of the thesis, the personal motivations for the study will now be considered.

1.2.3 Personal Motivations for the Study

Throughout the study and the writing of this thesis I will adopt a reflexive approach, recognising my own role in the research and the ways in which I will bring my previous experiences and understandings to the study. In this sense, I acknowledge my role in the research as being active, and am aware of the local and historical contexts (McNamee and Hosking, 2012) that influence the way in which I engage in the research. Reflexivity is a useful way for qualitative researchers to recognise the ways in which they impact the study, which positivists claim to avoid. The thesis will refer to the self as "I" at points, to highlight where I have made decisions and am able to recognise the impact that I have had upon the study. For example, in Chapter Three (Methodology) when I refer to the way in which the study is designed I will make it clear how I made particular decisions. Similarly, in Chapter Seven (Conclusions) when evaluating the study I will discuss reflexivity again to recognise the role and impact that I have had as a researcher for the study, as well as the impact of the study on me. I will now provide an insight into my personal motivations for this study to allow them to be acknowledged from the outset.

When I began my doctorate, as a twenty-two year old, I saw myself as a recent graduate having completed my undergraduate degree in 2011. Whilst I did have work experience

having combined full time study with full time employment, the roles that I had taken on to date were at lower levels in organisational structures. During my degree there was a heavy emphasis on leadership and the development of leadership skills, and so I was conscious of the emphasis placed on leadership, as a development need. I immersed myself in leadership related theory as part of my undergraduate dissertation, which focussed on corporate social responsibility (work that was published in a co-authored journal article (Slack, Corlett and Morris, 2015)). Ethical leadership and authentic leadership emerged as areas of interest, and I decided to look further into authentic leadership as I was aware of this as a contemporary topic and one that was of interest within Newcastle Business School's teaching and research agenda. As I began to explore this theory base I found myself becoming critical and frustrated with discussions and frameworks that acknowledge followers, a concept I was unfamiliar with, and yet there was a lack of emphasis placed on this. Followers and followership were brushed to the side, so to speak. My interest in followership theory grew from here, and I found that I was able to reflect on past personal experiences of following. I did not feel comfortable in viewing myself as a subordinate, a term that I had become familiar with through studying business at A-Level when I was first exposed to management and early leadership theory. The concept of a follower had more resonance for me and so I was keen to further my understandings.

Furthermore, as I began my doctorate I was also beginning my role as an academic member of staff at Newcastle Business School as a Graduate Tutor. Reflecting upon my own learning during my degree, I became aware of the lack of recognition given to followership despite the heavy emphasis placed on leadership; through further reading and publishing during my doctorate I became aware of the wider scale of this imbalance (Morris, 2014a). I was keen to explore this theoretical area further to be able to extend the existing degree course content, with the intention of adding value as I progressed as an academic member of staff in building followership content into modules taught within Newcastle Business School. Through this I felt that I would be able to build my own understandings as well as those of students, to allow them to have an alternative perspective of the self and what they are doing when working in organisations but without a formal leader role.

1.3 Research Questions and Objectives

This research aims to gain insights into the experiences of individuals doing following, to understand how the process occurs as well as influences upon the process. As the area is currently under researched and under discussed within the theory base, the research intends to add to limited understandings of how following (and followership) is understood. By conducting empirical research, this study hopes to extend understandings of following, which currently rely upon conceptual discussions, by offering individuals' accounts of their experiences of following within organisational contexts.

The overall research question for this study is:

What can individuals' experiences, within public sector contexts, tell us about processes of following?

The sub-questions below are related to this, and will be addressed through the study:

- *How do individuals within the UK public sector understand following?*
- *How are processes of following experienced?*
- *What can reflections on experiences of following tell us, to challenge and advance existing understandings of authentic followership?*

To guide the process of this study, the following research objectives have been set.

- *To critically review the followership, authentic followership (and leadership), and employee voice theory bases to conceptualise key terms and identify gaps in existing understandings.*
- *To fuse followership, authentic followership (and leadership), and employee voice theory bases, as a theoretical framework for understanding individuals' experiences of following.*
- *To develop an appropriate methodological approach and design a multiple method data generation process, to gain rich insights into participants' experiences of following.*

- *To offer in depth insights into experiences of following, presenting illustrative data and interpretations from thematic analysis.*
- *To make an original contribution to followership and authentic followership theory bases.*
- *To make an original methodological and empirical contribution to the followership field, through the use of visual research methods, enhancing reflective capabilities and depth of insight into participants' experiences of following.*

As well as addressing the research question and sub-questions at various points throughout the thesis and in-depth within Chapter Six – Understanding Following Authentically through Voice, Visibility and (being) Valuable, and Chapter Seven – Conclusions, the research objectives will guide particular chapters.

1.4 Potential Contributions of the study

This thesis has several potential contributions to make, through its theoretical focus and methodological design.

Insight into experiences of following – This thesis has the potential to provide a theoretical contribution to the followership field, by focusing on how individuals experience processes of following. Through this it will extend understandings and add to the limited body of follower-focused studies (Kean et al, 2011) and enable insight into how following is experienced to shed light on the complex nature of an underexplored process.

Insights into experiences of following based on empirical data – This thesis has the potential to provide an empirical contribution to the followership field, adding to the limited number of qualitative based empirical studies. Carsten et al (2010) conducted one of the first qualitative studies into how individuals understand followership, and placed emphasis on followership activeness and passiveness by individuals. This thesis has the potential to build on this work to explore more in depth individuals' experiences of doing following, gaining insight into how they understand following but also how this process is challenged and enabled across multiple contexts and over time.

Rich and reflective data – This thesis has the potential to make a methodological contribution, through the research design. The use of multiple methods, and in particular visual methods, is lacking in the organisational field more broadly (Warren, 2009), and certainly within the followership field more specifically. The research design could contribute rich insights into experiences of following, due to its reflective nature and the range of forms and points of dialogue between participants and myself.

Challenges to frameworks of authentic followership, offering a processual perspective – This thesis has the potential to make a theoretical contribution to the followership field by challenging existing frameworks of authentic followership. Through providing a critical review of such frameworks, and by aligning with the theoretical and epistemological positioning of the study, this thesis has the potential to offer a new perspective on authenticity and its application to the followership field.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

This section will provide a brief outline of the structure of the thesis. The thesis consists of six main chapters, with supporting documentation provided in appendices, as detailed on the contents page.

Chapter One - Introduction: This chapter has provided an introduction to the thesis, outlining the focus and scope of the thesis as well as the guiding research questions and objectives. It has also outlined the central concepts of the thesis and provided an indication of the potential contributions of the thesis. An outline of the structure of the thesis was also provided.

Chapter Two - Followership, Authenticity and Voice: This chapter provides a critical review of the theory bases of followership, authentic followership (and leadership), as well as employee voice. Through this it provides an indication of the key concepts for the thesis, as well as the identified gaps within extant theory bases of followership, authentic followership (and leadership), and employee voice.

Chapter Three - Research Methodology: This chapter provides an overview of the philosophical and methodological considerations applied to the design of the study. It details the research design, including the methods used from the stages of data collection

to data analysis and interpretation. Throughout, the decisions that I have made are openly expressed to provide clarity and justification.

Chapter Four - Insights into Experiences of Following: This chapter presents the emerging themes from the thematic analysis of the data for this study, providing rich illustrative extracts from the data and supporting these with interpretive discussions. A summary of the emerging themes and sub-themes is provided at the end of the chapter.

Chapter Five: This chapter focuses on the construction of following, and presents the emerging discourses of following. The chapter details the approach taken to analyse the data and presents illustrative extracts for each discourse, before linking back to the conceptualisation of following for this thesis.

Chapter Six - Understanding Following Authentically through Voice, Visibility and (being) Valuable: This chapter presents collectively the emerging themes and provides links to the theory bases, to enable theorising from the data. Through this, the central argument of the thesis is confirmed and the conceptual framework presented. An illustrative example for the framework is provided, before stating the contribution of the thesis.

Chapter Seven - Conclusions: This chapter provides a review of the thesis, summarising the central argument and contributions of the thesis. It reviews the achievement of the research objectives as well as the guiding research question and sub-questions. This chapter presents a review of research quality through an evaluative framework, before outlining potential limitations of the study and areas for further research. The chapter, and the thesis, therefore, are then brought to a close with a chapter summary.

1.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided an introduction to the thesis, outlining the scope and background of the study. It has outlined the central concepts for the thesis, and has outlined the guiding research questions and research objectives. The potential contributions have been identified, and an overview of the structure of the thesis provided, detailing the order and purpose of each chapter. The theoretical bases underpinning this thesis will now be critically reviewed in Chapter Two – Followership, Authenticity and Voice.

Chapter Two

Followership, Authenticity and Voice

2.0 Chapter Introduction

This chapter will review the relevant theory bases that underpin the study, and in doing so will address the first and second research objectives: *to critically review the followership, authentic followership (and leadership), and employee voice theory bases to conceptualise key terms and identify gaps in existing understandings; to fuse followership, authentic followership (and leadership), and employee voice theory bases, as a theoretical framework for understanding individuals' experiences of following.*

This chapter is split into three main sections:

- The Followership Field
- Authentic Followership, informed by Authentic Leadership literature
- Employee Voice and Followership

This chapter begins by critically reviewing the followership field, providing an overview of the emergence and development of the field, as well as the past and current conversations and debates. Through this the clusters of understandings in the followership field will be summarised to position this study within the existing clusters and conversations and to provide its conceptualisation of following. Clusters include traditional perspectives (typologies; leader-centric), as well as contemporary perspectives (follower-centric; follower-focused; constructionist). Next the literature base of authentic followership will be considered, drawing upon understandings from the field of authentic leadership. The significance of this literature base will be explained and the aspects relevant to this study depicted. Leading on from this, employee voice is introduced and critically reviewed.

The above sections will allow for understandings of the extant literature and discussions to be formed and made explicit. The implications of the literature review for the study are then discussed, making explicit the links between the three literature bases, and

considering the influences of existing understandings for the key concepts and research questions guiding this study.

2.1 The Followership Field

This section outlines the current state of the followership field, identifying its origins and tracing the (lack of) development that has occurred with regards to understandings through a review of conceptual and empirical studies.

2.1.1 The Emergence of the Followership Field

The emergence of followership in academic literature first began in 1955 (Baker, 2007) and, as Baker (2007) points out, the moment where the field of followership received real traction was in 1988 through the publishing of Kelley's (1988) work "In Praise of Followers", in the highly rated journal of Harvard Business Review. Kelley suggested that followers could be positive contributors to organisations and outlined several types of follower, differing in terms of their ability to be independent, critical thinkers as well as the level of activeness they demonstrate. This suggestion of different types of followers, who will not all act in the same way, paved the way for much of the subsequent focus in the field; this will be discussed later in the chapter. Chaleff (1995) is also identified in Baker's review as a key contributor to the rise of interest in followership, through his work on courageous followers. Chaleff challenged traditional ways of thinking about where power should be held, and suggested that both leaders and followers needed to be courageous in the releasing and acceptance of responsibilities. Since then, leading authors and work have included Kelley (1988; 1992; 2008), Chaleff (2003; 2009), Kellerman (2008). These authors have given rise to the importance of followers and their positioning within leadership and followership processes, essentially raising the profile of followers. It is notable, however, that there are still a limited number of articles published exclusively on followership, and these tend to be conceptual, lacking empirical research to support their discussions (Baker, 2007; Carsten et al, 2010). This suggests that the initial traction for this new concept failed to maintain its relative position in the field, and remains "undervalued and underappreciated" (Vondey, 2012, p.3).

The field of followership is commonly considered either as a post-thought, branching off from the leadership field, or in conjunction with the leadership field. Kelley's (2008, p.5) claim, that "No one talked about followership; it was never part of the conversation, unless

it was tagged on as an afterthought”, is reinforced by Avolio and Reichard (2008) when they claim “Where the follower has been included, it is usually in terms of what the leader is “doing to” the follower, not the reverse” (p.326). For instance, a large proportion of work incorporating followers is actually centred on leadership and merely branches off to consider followership briefly (Malakyan, 2014). In contrast, the emphasis in this thesis is on followership studies, with leadership as a background construct; for instance, in this section of the chapter the emphasis is upon followership, and in the next section the emphasis is upon authentic following, drawing upon notions from the leadership field. This is reflective of the epistemological positioning of the study, which views following (and leading) as a relational process, and is also reflective of the more contemporary literature that recognises the interplay and need for appreciation of both followers and leaders. This aligns with the belief that followership (and leadership) cannot be understood in isolation (Baker, 2007; Kellerman, 2008; Srinivisan and Holsinger, 2012). However this does not necessarily mean looking at both followers and leaders, but recognising that in order to follow one must be following someone, in order to lead one must have others following. These differences in such perspectives will be returned to later in this chapter specifically with regards to the extant literature, and this thesis’s desire to be an exclusively follower-focused study referred to throughout the thesis.

Traction in academia

As mentioned, there is limited attention to followership relative to the leadership field. Few publications are dedicated to the review of the followership literature (Crossman and Crossman, 2011), but understandably they share the tendency of beginning their reviews by highlighting the sheer lack of publications in the field. An overview of the existing publications and areas lacking attention within the field will now be identified and discussed, to provide justification for the focus of this thesis.

Baker (2007) was one of the first authors to publish an article with the sole purpose of reviewing the followership literature (Crossman and Crossman, 2011); this was based on a search of followership publications on electronic databases between 1928 and 2004. Within this Baker identified just 480 publications, with the majority being located within leadership entitled journals. This reiterates arguments previously highlighted regarding followership as an “afterthought” to leadership (Avolio and Reichard, 2008, p.325; Kelley, 2008. p. 5). Prior to this, there had been acknowledgment of the lack of publications on followership; for instance Lundin and Lancaster (1990) commented on how many more pages had been written on leadership compared to followership. Although an out-dated

perspective, in the sense that much has now been written since 1990, Lundin and Lancaster (1990) however was also not based on a literal counting method, and so it shed little light and failed to consider the *types* of publications or specific dates in which they had emerged. Addressing some of these issues, Bjugstad et al (2006) conducted a search for followership works that had been published between 1928 and 2004. This was however restricted to books alone, and so it was arguably not reflective of advances and trends occurring in contemporary research being published in academic journals. Nonetheless, Bjugstad et al. (2006) reported a ratio of 1:120 for followership to leadership books, illustrating the significant difference in attention received by the followership and leadership fields. Bjugstad et al (2006) also observed that of these followership books the majority were not within the Business and Management fields, and instead had political or spiritual focuses. Overall this denotes a lack of traction in the business and organisational fields, resulting perhaps in reliance on other domains and creating the multi-disciplinary nature of followership.

In other academic arenas, there remains a lack of representation of the followership field, for instance at conferences. However, driven by some of the current leading authors in the followership field (including Kelley 1988; 1992; 2008; Chaleff, 2009; Dixon, 2009) the first followership symposium took place at the International Leadership Association conference in 2014. Furthermore the setting up of online communities has also begun to emerge, for instance on the social networking site LinkedIn and a private group for knowledge exchange. The community of followership academics is very much in existence, but it seems then that their voice needs to become amplified and their impacts to be felt further afield to enable the followership field to climb out of its infancy (Kelley, 2008).

Within the emergence of this field there are several trends identifiable, which will be briefly outlined now and further discussed within the remainder of this chapter. The first concerns the context in which research on followership has occurred. As recognised by Brown and Thornburrow (1996) and later by Baker (2007), much of the literature has been written by American authors and has been based on understandings in an American context. Illustrative of this, almost 50% of followership publications between 1955 and 2014 were from America (Web of Knowledge search results, 2014). As a result, there are calls for research to be replicated and expanded to other contexts (Baker, 2007; Brown and Thornburrow, 1996) with Western Europe (Walumbwa et al, 2010) and more specifically the UK public sector (Collinson, 2006) being identified in particular. This thesis addresses this by studying followership across multiple contexts within the UK public sector, as further outlined in Chapter Three- Research Methodology.

The second trend is a tendency for followership studies to adopt a conceptual approach and to therefore lack an empirical base (Baker, 2007; Carsten et al, 2010). As a result there is little insight into followership in practice and also of the credibility and transferability of models and understandings presented in the field. The empirical studies that have been conducted have tended to adopt quantitative approaches (Crossman and Crossman, 2011) and so consequently there remains a lack of insight into the experiences of followers and also of the range of meanings attached to followership and related constructs (Tanoff and Barlow, 2002; Vondey, 2010).

A final trend is the way in which followers have been integrated into studies and publications. The aims of individual studies and the ways in which followers have been incorporated into them suggest a focus remains on furthering leadership understandings. For instance, between 1955 and 2014 *Leadership Quarterly* and *Leadership* were the journals with the highest number of followership publications within the social sciences category (Web of Knowledge search results, 2014). This is further reflective of the absence within the field of followership-focused journals.

From the above discussions it is clear that followership has had gradual emergence as a field and is becoming more prevalent within the organisation studies theory base, but that much of the research focus is intertwined with leadership. The followership field will now be outlined in terms of the studies conducted, highlighting the transition that has occurred, moving from traditional to more contemporary perspectives. The mapping provided in Uhl-Bien et al's (2014) recent review of the field helped shape understandings for this review.

2.1.2 Traditional Perspectives

The followership literature emerged in 1955 as previously discussed in this chapter. Works at that time, and earlier, held premises that are very different to those that are now held regarding followership. These differences are reflected in the meaning of followers and followership as well as the language used and the ontological approaches to understanding the phenomenon. The few reviews of followership literature available refer to the "historical treatment of followers" (Uhl-Bien et al, 2014, p.2), and make observations about the literature "moving" towards new views (Baker, 2007, p.52).

The term follower was first used in empirical research around 1955, when Hollander and Webb (1955) referred to followers as being interdependent with leaders, but also had a tendency to refer to them as non-followers. This initial discussion of followership is reflective of a binary perspective, with its identification of followers and non-followers as two distinct and rigid positioning's. This is a key way in which the theory base has since transformed, which will be discussed throughout this chapter. Prior to this, when referring to those not considered as leaders in organisations, discussions focused on subordinates. Being a subordinate was defined as "mechanical or physical; it is being under the control of superiors as if in some hypnotic trance" (Dixon & Westbrook, 2003, p.20). Through such understandings, notions of hierarchical positioning's were emphasised, as well as suggestions of having lesser importance and control or authority compared to others. Understandably, the subordinate term has thus been perceived as undesirable and associated with feelings of patronisation and of belittling. This is referred to in discussions around the concept of followership and follower to explain the undesirability that is sometimes attached to followership. Rost (2008) for instance refers to this as the "stigma" that followership now carries with it. Considering the historical period, the term subordinate was aligned with traditional assumptions about leadership and management in the literature, more focused on authority and control. In their review of the followership literature, Uhl-Bien et al (2014) refer to this as a "leader-centric" perspective, which will be discussed shortly.

When the terms follower and followership were introduced the focus was one of passivity. For instance Kellerman (2008, p.86) described followers as having "...less power, authority, and influence than do their superiors". Furthermore, and as previously discussed, in Townsend and Gebhardt's (1997) understanding of followership they used the term subordinate, as well as "comply" and "orders". This demonstrates that despite being discussed for forty years in the literature, understandings still held on to ideas of subordination. This was not the case for all authors writing on followership of course. However, even today, as Rost (2008) identified, the stigma is still felt and so notions of a lack of control and power have carried through to contemporary works too.

Typologies

The followership literature to date, albeit still in its infancy (Crossman and Crossman, 2011), has followed a similar trend to that of the dominating leadership literature. For instance, both fields have tended to focus on identifying idealistic types of leaders and followers, and multiple listings of what are deemed to be effective and ineffective

behaviours of leaders and of followers have resulted. These “descriptive and prescriptive” (Crossman and Crossman, 2011, p.481) areas of literature, which focused on individuals and on measuring their behaviours and characteristics, tended to lack application to practice other than through quantitative research and also to lack sufficient critique to enable on-going refinement and development. However, this significant part of the existing literature arguably put followership on the research agenda, and so will not be ignored in this review. Models will now be discussed, with implications for this study being identified subsequently.

Following Zaleznik’s (1965) first followership typology model, numerous models have subsequently been proposed. Robert Kelley’s (1988; 1992) work is considered to have been “ground breaking” (Hinrichs and Hinrichs, 2014, p.81), and it paved the way for many subsequent models and he is identified today as one of the pioneering authors within the field. He also delivered keynote panel discussions at the Followership Symposium at the International Leadership Conference 2014. Kelley proposed a model of typologies of followers, which many have since gone on to add to or reshape. Two other major authors in the field are Chaleffs (2003) and Kellermans (2007), whose models of typologies of followers are also respected within the field and well cited. Reviewing these typologies, amongst others, it becomes apparent that the basis of categorisation differentiates between authors. For instance, Kelley (1992) focused on critical thinking and activeness, Chaleff (2003) on support and challenge, and Kellerman (2007) on the extent of engagement. Reflective of the themes arising across seven models, ranging from 1965 to 2007, and typologies within them, Table 2.1 is categorised into four clusters: *activeness and contributions*, *passiveness and withdrawals*, *idealised and detrimental*, and *mutuality*.

Table 2.1: Categorisation of Typologies [1. Chaleff (2003), 2. Kelley (1992), 3. Kellerman (2007), 4. Collinson (2006), 5. De Vries (1989), 6. Zalzenik (1965), 7. Potter and Rosenbach (2006)]

Activeness and contributions	Passiveness and withdrawals	Idealised and detrimental	Mutuality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Resource (1) •Implementer (1) •Individualist (1) •Activist (3) •Contributor (7) •Participant (3) •Pragmatic survivor (2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Subordinates (7) •Controller (5) •Bystander (3) •Historics (5) •Passive (2) •Dependent (5) •Masochistic (5) •Isolates (3) •Passive (5) •Alienated (2) •Withdrawn (6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Resistant (4) •Dramaturgical (4) •Politician (7) •Masochistic (6) •Alienated (2) •Diehards (2) •Conformists (4) •Exemplary (2) •Impulsive (6) •Compulsive (6) •Yes people (2) •Star followers (2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Partner (1 and 7)

The categorisations in Table 2.1 share similarities with the original models, and enable a broader range of types to be clustered together. Key themes emerging from the existing models includes a focus on activeness and passiveness, which has been categorised respectively with terms of contributions and withdrawals to reflect descriptions of follower types in terms of the extent to which they do and do not contribute as a follower. Additionally, a new category of idealised and detrimental is offered. This is intended to acknowledge the tendency for typology models to focus on figuring out the ‘best’ and ‘worst’ followers, despite some perhaps seeming a little dramatic and extreme, for instance “Diehards” (Kelley, 1992), arguably posing unrealistic forms of followers. Finally, a category of mutuality is offered, which encompasses two models, which referred to partners. At the time of creating such models, the traditional assumptions discussed earlier in this section dominated the field, and so this may explain the lack of consideration of types that suggest a more mutual approach between followers and leaders.

Criticisms of such typologies are centred on their appropriateness to contemporary organisations, due to their simplicity and rigidity (Kellerman, 2007). For instance, they are criticised for failing to recognise or emphasise that followers are not consistently of one type. Bjugstad et al (2006) relate this to understandings in the leadership literature, which propose that leaders change styles and types depending on the situation (see Hersey and Blanchard, 1982), and argue that this should be the case for followers also. More fundamentally to this thesis, models of follower typologies understand individuals as *being* a type of follower, rather than engaging in the *doing* of following. These models

have however, been useful for giving momentum to the followership field. Rather than a focus on the labels ascribed to individuals, the value of these typology models for this thesis, and its understanding of following as a process, is their consideration of particular ways of behaving. For example Kelley's (1992) *critical thinking* and *activeness*, and Chaleff's (2003) *support* and *challenge*. There are discussions and studies existing that consider the importance of context and leadership for this, however insufficient insight has been provided into the experiences of individuals when following with regards to choosing how they do following and how they choose to be challenging and critical too, as well as how they feel before, during and after such situations.

Followers in Leadership Studies (Leader Centric)

As identified by Meindl, Ehrlich and Dukerich (1985) there has been an imbalance of focus on leaders, which they refer to as the "romanticised conception of leadership" (Meindl et al, 1985, p.92). However, as theory bases developed followers did begin to be incorporated into leadership studies, albeit in a restricted way. Uhl-Bien et al (2014) categorise this incorporation as leader-centric, with followers portrayed as "recipients or moderators of the leaders (Shamir, 2007, p.x). In this sense, the stigma of passiveness and of being done to continued to affect the ways in which followers were incorporated into theory; Shamir (2007) refers to followers as being on the receiving end of leadership and as a means of achieving some sort of outcome. Interestingly, Shamir (2007) attributes some form of power to followers in their role as 'moderators', although little focus on this was given until the introduction of follower-centric and follower-focused perspectives at a later date (Kean et al, 2011), which will be discussed in the next section (2.1.3 Contemporary Perspectives - The Journey Here and Beyond).

Leader-centric work has heavy emphasis on the characteristics and behaviours of leaders (Tee, Paulsen and Ashkenasy, 2013), and how these then influenced followers. Work done from this perspective would include followers to understand their opinions of their leaders, but also retain leaders as participants to understand their perceptions of their influence upon followers. Having done this in their study, Delbecq, House, Sully de Luque and Quicgley (2013) suggested that future research needed to incorporate followers' opinions to enable a more "compelling" (p.17) argument to be formed. However, despite including the opinions of followers, issues remain. For instance Brown and Fields (2011) explored the self-leadership of executive directors within firms in the USA, and were particularly interested in the extent to which this was noticeable to followers. Although followers were included as participants in the study, Brown and Fields (2011) explain that

they accessed these participants by allowing leaders in the case study organisations to select the followers to be involved. The use of a questionnaire meant that Brown and Fields (2011) were unable to explore the type of relationship the chosen followers had with their leaders and what their experiences of following them were. Through this they arguably silenced followers' voices by restricting the means and by restricting access. Their research also retained emphasis on the leaders as having influence upon followers, neglecting the possibility of a two-way process.

More recent models of leadership, such as transformational leadership, which emerged around 2006, saw the inclusion of followers to a greater extent. In such models, emphasis was placed on leaders as taking more of an interest in the coaching and mentoring of followers (Zhu, Riggio, Avolio and Sosik, 2011), viewing them as valuable and as people rather than objects to be done to (Northouse, 2013). Again, direct links are made between leaders and followers and how they influence one another (Hetland, Sandal and Johnsen, 2008), and according to Bass and Riggio (2006) this incorporated interest in followers may be the reason why transformational leadership has proven to be such a popular, and "central" (Northouse, 2013, p.185), theory within the leadership field. Despite this being an important transition in recognising followers as valued people, and as individuals who can have great influence upon the achievement of objectives, there is still a shortfall (Uhl-Bien et al, 2014), due to the main focus on leaders and, therefore, a lack of in-depth attention given to understanding following.

Many studies that claim an interest in followership are, in fact, more focused on leadership. Kean et al (2011) offered a useful way to understand this as 'follower centric' research, which, whilst retaining leaders as the topic of focus acknowledges leadership as socially constructed, and incorporates followers to understand their perspectives on leadership. They then propose the perspective of a follower focused approach, which is concerned with how followers socially construct followership and how they do following. Therefore, the latter approach places much greater focus on followers both as participants in research and as the topic of enquiry. Kean et al's (2011) paper, as also identified by Carsten et al (2010), calls for further research from this perspective. Those studies more aligned to a follower centric and follower focused approach will now be discussed.

2.1.3 Contemporary Perspectives – The Journey Here and Beyond

More recently, followership has begun to be understood as a field in its own right. Rather than adding followers on to leadership studies and models, authors began to write about them as the focal point, recognising their value to organisations (Hurwitz and Hurwitz 2009b) and overcoming, to some extent, the “infatuation” with leadership (Hurwitz and Hurwitz, 2009a, p.81). As discussed earlier in this chapter, this focal interest has grown since 1955 and symbolic of this growth is the recent emergence of literature reviews of the followership field (see Baker, 2007; Bjugstad et al, 2006; Collinson, 2006; Crossman and Crossman, 2011; Uhl-Bien et al, 2014). Authors have categorised the existing literature in various ways. For instance, reviews have been organised in terms of perspectives on followers as being active or passive (Baker, 2007), as conforming or resisting (Collinson, 2006), as well as how they are motivated (Bjugstad et al, 2006), how they are compatible with leaders (Crossman and Crossman, 2011), and more recently by the ways in which they have been integrated into theory (Uhl-Bien et al, 2014). This section will consider the more contemporary perspectives of followership, and also detail the most recent calls for research based on studies more recently conducted.

Follower-centric and Follower-focused Studies

As mentioned, Kean et al (2011) provide a useful way of categorising the inclusion of followers into studies through their concepts of ‘follower-centric’ and ‘follower-focused’, with the former carrying more traction in academia than the latter. Key works from each of these areas will now be discussed.

Follower-centric studies are concerned with the ways in which followers construct leadership, and therefore have an inherent interest in leaders. Studies adopting this approach (Tee et al, 2013; Dasborough, Ashkanasy, Tee & Herman, 2009; Chong and Wolf, 2010; Smothers, Bing, White, Trochhia, & Absher, 2011; Smothers, Absher and White, 2012; Smollan and Parry, 2011; Rowe, 2006) have explored the ways that followers perceive their leaders and the ways that they can have influence upon leaders, for instance through their actions and behaviours. Seeing influence as upward rather than top down only offers a different perspective to that of the mainstream leadership and followership literature. Tee et al (2013) found that a leader’s mood and task performance is influenced by her/his followers’ mood state, and argued for their findings as a contribution to the reciprocal affect theory posited by Dasborough et al (2009). Whilst this research involved two studies (to build a more comprehensive insight into this

relationship), it was based on undergraduate students and their completion of various activities, and so lacked contextual application to organisational practice. Similarly, Chong and Wolf (2010) sought the views of undergraduate students in their study and, whilst they moved away from hypothetical activities by using a questionnaire, the questions were based on their perceptions of leadership generally. Therefore this continues the lack of in-depth contextual application and insight into experiences of individuals. Refining the focus, Smothers et al (2011) considered the impact that context can have upon what followers see as the ideal leader. They compared private and public academic contexts and engaged academic staff in their research, however they restricted their participants to staff at a professor level considering them to be followers of heads of departments and executive teams. This study restricts understandings to followers as being identified according to ranking in organisational hierarchies but, even with these participant selection criteria, fails to include other levels that may also be considered as followers. Furthermore, their study did not take into account the departments that individuals were based in (Smothers et al, 2012), and was therefore limited by a lack of comparison of different contexts within the data set.

Addressing the issues associated with reliance upon lab based and quantitative based studies, Rowe (2006) and Smollan and Parry (2011) adopted qualitative methods in looking at the perceptions of leaders from a follower's perspective. Adopting an ethnographic approach, Rowe (2006) observed UK police officers in their daily working lives, in order to understand their experiences of leadership in the police context. Through this he was able to identify what is considered important for leadership, and understand this through the "valuable and original insight" (Rowe, 2006, p. 757) of followers' perspectives. Also focused on followers' perceptions of their leaders, Smollan and Parry (2011) explored leader emotional intelligence. Whilst this was a follower-centric study, which focused on leaders, it shed light on the ways in which these perceptions affect followers' behaviours too. For instance, the expression of followers' emotions was found to be influenced by how emotionally intelligent they perceived their leaders to be. However, this was focused on change specific scenarios and so may not be relevant to other contexts.

As previously outlined, follower-focused studies are concerned with the ways in which followers construct followership and *do* following. This particular area of the literature is significantly limited, with few authors considering the ways in which followers understand followership and what following 'feels' like, as well as how it is conceived and practised. Two key studies informing this thesis are that of Carsten et al (2010) and Kean et al (2011), which both adopted qualitative research approaches to explore followership from

the perspectives of followers. Kean et al's (2011) study was mainly focused on exploring followers' perceptions of leadership within their organisation. However through this they contributed understandings of following from a follower's perspective. From their study, located within the UK healthcare context, they found that individuals did following in various ways including *doing following*, *standing by*, and *resisting following*. Through this study, they also argue that followers have an active role and co-construct leadership. This advances existing understandings of followership, placing emphasis on the role of followers within leadership as being more active and perhaps more influential through their suggestion of co-construction. In contrast, Carsten et al (2010) placed emphasis on exploring constructions of followership from the outset of their study, with interview questions designed to access participants' telling of understandings of followership. As one of the first studies to adopt such an approach and to set the focus on constructions of followership, rather than leadership, it called for further research to focus on followership using a qualitative approach and multiple methods in doing so. In their study, involving participants across a range of industries in both public and private sectors, Carsten et al (2010) focused on the effectiveness of followers and considered the ways in which personal characteristics and the context influenced this. They found that followership tended to be constructed according to passiveness and activeness of followers, and that these constructions then aligned with what they thought of as effective followership. Issues raised by the study included followers expressing their opinions, how obedient they were, as well as preferences and comfortableness of working in more structured or unstructured contexts (Carsten et al, 2010). Carsten et al (2010) also pose several interesting questions and areas for future research, including looking further into constructions of followership and the "matches and mismatches" (p.557) that may be apparent between individuals. Furthermore, they suggest that more needs to be understood about the ways in which contexts affect constructions of followership, and to "more actively develop and explore" (p.559) this overlooked concept.

Harter (2012) applied a points of view (POV) perspective to summarise the ways in which the leadership and followership fields have incorporated leaders and followers, as well as researchers. They identify that there is much literature on leader perspectives of followers (Leader>Follower) and of follower perspectives of leaders (Follower>Leader). They argue that researchers have begun to try and understand followers (Investigator>Follower) after calls from seminal author Kelley (1980) at the start of the followership field, but that there remains a lack of attention on how followers understand themselves (Follower>Follower). This supports calls previously discussed, to overcome the infatuation with leadership (Hurwitz and Hurwitz, 2009a; Hurwitz & Hurwitz, 2009b) and consider the other "half of the

story” (Hurwitz and Hurwitz, 2015). Emphasis needs to be placed on recognising followers as active individuals, furthering understandings of their ability to enact agency rather than conforming to “conventionally docile notions of followership” (Cunha, Rego, Clegg and Neves, 2013, p.89), and to influence others and their organisations (Blanchard, Welbourne, Gilmore and Bullock, 2009). Cunha et al (2013) argue that the meaning of followership is becoming more balanced, with recognition that followers engage in more of a “collective endeavour” and are able to have influence in numerous ways (Cunha et al, 2013, p.89). This is useful in recognising followers as having agency, able to have impact, and demonstrating “the capacity to take action” (Tourish, 2014, p.80).

Having considered the rising of contemporary perspectives of followership, the notion of a constructionist and relational perspective of followership will now be discussed.

Constructionist and Relational Perspectives of Followership

Within contemporary understandings of followership, perspectives from a constructionist and relational perspective are also apparent. Within this there is focus on how individuals construct followership (and leadership), on the relationships between followers and leaders, as well as on a process view of followership.

In line with this study, constructionist perspectives of followership are concerned with a processual view (Uhl-Bien et al, 2014), understanding individuals as existing in relation to others and to contexts (Burr, 2003). With this perspective, followers are seen as having agency. For instance both Shamir (2007) and Collinson (2006) recognise followers as having an active role in the process of leadership, discussing them as helping to achieve leader goals as well as being able to enact different identities to suit the situation. In their review of the followership literature, Uhl-Bien et al (2014) produce a diagram to depict constructionist approaches, with the process of leadership and outcomes from this consisting of leader and follower behaviours. However, their use of the term subordinate in their discussion of this approach may risk restricting understandings of followers as hierarchically determined.

DeRue and Ashford’s (2010) claiming and granting theory is of relevance to this thesis. They suggest that leaders are legitimised by followers, thus putting followers in a position of control within leadership. Also, usefully, they indicate that followers too claim and are granted legitimacy by the self and others, therefore further removing differences between followers and leaders. When considering followers as granting the roles of leaders to

others, this indicates followers' choice and agency, which is more in line with contemporary perspectives of followership as discussed earlier in this chapter.

Fairhurst and Uhl-Bien (2012) carried forward the notion of followers and leaders co-constructing leadership, through their relational perspective. In their paper they argued for a need to focus on the interactions between followers and leaders to be able to recognise instances where leadership is constructed. Again, here, followers are recognised as having active roles in the process of leadership. In her work, Vondey (2012) considered how followers understood followership, adopting a phenomenological approach in analysing the interview data collected. Her emphasis was however on advancing identity theories, and linking emerging meanings to typical followership types rather than moving away from this early perspective of followership. Key to a phenomenological approach is the context in which experiences take place, which Ford and Lawler (2007) considered important for constructionist studies of leadership to truly understand the complexities. Whilst Ford and Lawler's (2007) study was based on leadership, it can arguably be considered relevant for followership and, due to the lack of empirical research on followership, exploring the experiences of followers is an area requiring further research. Uhl-Bien (2006) also places emphasis on the contexts for leadership, referring to this as the space in which followers and leaders engage in relational leadership, which will be discussed next.

The relational view of leadership and, more recently, followership first emerged around the late 1950s with Hollander (1958) publishing some of the first works from this perspective. This perspective considers followers and leaders as engaging in a "mutual influence process" (Uhl-Bien et al, 2014, p.85), and emphasises the existence of leaders as being in relation to others and continuously interacting (Cunliffe and Eriksen, 2011, p.1425). This has been maintained and furthered by several authors, including Uhl-Bien working collaboratively with others (Fairhurst and Uhl-Bien, 2012; Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995; Uhl-Bien, 2006; Uhl-Bien, 2011; Uhl-Bien and Ospina, 2012) to develop understandings of leadership from a relational perspective. In her paper, Uhl-Bien (2006) provides a clear overview of the focus of relational leadership and how this differs from other theoretical perspectives. In this she states that relational leadership is a constructionist perspective on understandings of social reality, and communication between individuals.

An area that recognises the importance of relationships between followers and leaders is that of leader-member exchange (LMX) theory. LMX theory argues that, when leaders and followers develop effective relationships, effective leadership and multiple beneficial

outcomes for the organisation result (Barbuto and Hayden, 2011; Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1991, 1995). This field of thought emerged in the 1980s (Graen, Novak and Sommerkamp, 1982) although earlier works did look at relationships and led to this theorising (Barbuto and Hayden, 2011). With its focus on positive outcomes resulting from the leader-member (or follower) relationship, much of the research conducted in this area is of a positivist nature aimed at identifying direct links between antecedents and outcomes to produce “instruments” (Sheer, 2014, p.1) which are then measured in practice. Sheer (2014) problematises LMX theory and calls for future research, with claims that it needs “retesting” (p.14) following this reconceptualisation of the construct. Interestingly, LMX research is often based on follower perceptions (van Gils, van Quaquebeke and van Knippenberg, 2010) and clearly recognises followers as part of the leadership relationship. However the theory positions leaders as driving the relationship and thus its outcomes (Uhl-Bien et al, 2014), a point further supported by Subramanian, Othman and Sambasivan (2010) who argue that leaders choose who to develop effective relationships with.

Constructionist and relational perspectives within followership offer a progression in understanding meanings of followership and incorporating followers’ views. They also enable a more balanced view of followers and leaders, although this is still unbalanced in places, with the “infatuation” (Hurwitz and Hurwitz, 2009a, p.81) meaning that leadership is still focused on to a greater extent.

The constructs of followership and follower will now be explored to clearly distinguish between the conceptually different but closely related constructs, and to align this study with a chosen understanding.

2.1.4 Understanding Followership

The terms followership and follower are increasingly being discussed within the literature, however there remains limited understanding and agreement of what the concepts mean. In fact, studies have often overlooked this and have neglected to provide an explanation of what the concepts mean – for instance Crossman and Crossman’s study reviewed the work of thirty writers on followership and found that only five within this sample provided a “concrete definition” (Crossman and Crossman, 2011, p.482). Recognising that there will be multiple understandings of this phenomenon, further support for the need to develop conceptual clarity is offered by Tanoff and Barlow (2002) and Vondey (2012). This is

important for this thesis, which recognises that individuals will have different understandings of followership, as they construct their own meanings.

In this section the concepts of followership and follower will be explored to consider the similarities and differences between some of the understandings offered in the literature to date. The understandings that then inform the study will be highlighted.

Conceptual Development

Understandings offered for followership share similarities and differentiate between perspectives. Overall these similarities and distinctions appear to be in relation to time, and so a comparison will be drawn between initial understandings offered and more contemporary understandings.

It is important to draw attention here to the lack of understandings from earlier periods, for instance in the first publication on followership in 1955 (Hollander and Webb, 1955). This is partially due to the tendency to use alternative concepts for followers, such as subordinates, and so there was perhaps less focus on the broader term of followership for this reason. Such works will however be drawn upon in the next section where the focus turns to the construct of 'follower'.

The earliest understandings of followership found are from 1982 and are:

“Leaders and followers, in any context, share a common fate of responsibilities for their family, group, organization, or nation. From their joint participation emerges the success or failure of their enterprise” (Heller and Van Til, 1982, p. 406)

“The process of attaining one’s individual goals by being influenced by a leader into participating in individual or group efforts towards organizational goals in a given situation. Followership therefore becomes a function of the follower, the leader and the situational variables” (Wortman, 1982, p. 373)

With their references to families, groups, organisations and nations, Heller and Van Til (1982) provide a relatively broad understanding of followership. Their decision to widen followership contexts may be reflective of the tendencies for followership to be considered in other domains rather than just business (Bjugstad et al, 2006). Wortman (1982), however, restricts his understandings to the organisational context. The literature now seems to be returning to understandings of followership across multiple contexts and is

placing more emphasis upon the importance of the context for followership within the organisational field (Carsten, et al, 2010; Fairhurst and Uhl-Bien, 2012).

Both of the above understandings make reference to followership as resulting in something, with the suggestion that success or failure will result from followership (Heller and Van Til, 1982), but that goal attainment may be at the individual or organisational level (Wortman, 1982). This is reflected in more contemporary understandings. For instance Bjugstad et al (2006) refer to maintaining the structured organisation through followership, and Whitlock (2013) refers to the maintenance of safety and performance levels as a result of followership. Wortman (1982), however, infers that reaching individual goals is the priority and a key outcome for achieving organisational goals. This perspective demonstrates a more favourable outlook for followers compared to the negative stigma evident (Kellerman, 2008; Rost, 1995, 2008) in understandings in the field, which view followers as passive individuals who are simply told what to do (Kellerman, 2008). However, Townsend and Gebhardt (1997) demonstrate that there has not been a complete change in attitudes, when they later go on use the term *subordinate*, and make no reference to or suggestion of goals being met on an individual level:

“A process in which subordinates recognize their responsibility to comply with the orders of leaders and take appropriate action consistent with the situation to carry out those orders to the best of their ability” (Townsend and Gebhardt, 1997, p.52)

By using terms such as ‘comply’, ‘orders’ and ‘responsibility’, this understanding indicates that followership is not about what can be done and what can be achieved but rather what *must* be done. However, the reference to joint responsibility does imply some level of equality, and this is carried forward through contemporary perspectives. For instance, Whitlock (2013, p.20) refers to followership as being “alongside leadership”, and Carsten et al (2010) refer to followers as being able to influence leaders. This is perhaps reflective of the new movement towards a more relational approach to meaning making (McNamee and Hosking, 2012) and therefore of followership (Carsten et al, 2010; Malakyan, 2014; DeRue and Ashford, 2010) (and leadership) which was highlighted in Uhl-Bien et al’s (2014) recent literature review as a growing area in the field. This is further reflected in Carsten et al’s (2014, p.14) description of followership as being “the behaviours one engages in while interacting with leaders in an effort to meet organisational objectives”, as well as Baker, Mathis and Stites-Doe’s (2014, p.77) work which uses terms such as “active” and “participative” whilst also emphasising the importance of followers’ support for meeting goals shared with the organisation and leaders. The above discussion enables an

appreciation of the ways in which understandings have transformed, with an earlier focus on hierarchical positioning and powerlessness, moving forward to beginning to accept the importance of followers and their activeness.

Followers are referred to using various terms, and these will be discussed in the next section. However there has been little opposition or challenge to the term followership, which is perhaps a result of being the “natural complement to leadership” (Brown and Thornburrow, 1996, p.5). An alternative term that is offered however is ‘teamship’ (Townsend and Gebhardt, 2003). Teamship implies a blending of followership and leadership, is based on the taking of responsibility for leading roles, and is deemed appropriate for situations in which definitive follower and leader roles are unidentifiable. In recognising a process whereby leaders and followers are working together and interchangeably, teamship encompasses more contemporary understandings of followership and is relevant to this thesis as it allows for recognition that individuals may take on following and leading roles depending on the situation. It does however assume that individuals taking on responsibilities will be practicing leading roles, and thus undermines recognition of agency within processes of following. As a relatively new concept, it has received limited attention in academia. For instance, during the ten-year period from 2003 to 2013 the term teamship returns just 582 results, compared to 14,6000 for followership and 2,550,000 for leadership respectively (Google Scholar search results, 2013). Whilst teamship may not have received traction in academia, the notions upon which it is based appear to have been maintained by current authors in the field. For instance, Malakyan (2014, p.17) summarises followership as: not static; not occurring in isolation; requiring relationships; and as being situational. This understanding resonates with the thesis, demonstrating that followership is a complex term and that the process will be experienced differently (is not static) depending upon the context (situation), and involves both followers and leaders (cannot occur in isolation). However the goals being attained are multiple and the interactions (relationships) involved are multi-directional and complex. It is with this conceptualisation in mind that the focus now turns to understanding how followers are constructed within the existing literature.

Follower as a Concept

There has been a tendency for the term *follower* to be viewed negatively and, as a result, it now carries with it stigma (Bjugstad et al, 2006; Kellerman, 2008; Rost, 1995), associated with a lack of desirability or aspirations. As identified by Alcorn (1992) the term follower has attracted negativity and consequently those who are classed as followers

seem to have been devalued. This trend appears to have continued through from the interchangeable use of the term follower and subordinate, as they have become “intermingled” (Hinrichs and Hinrichs, 2014, p.91). The term subordinate dominated much of the organisational literature prior to the introduction of followership, and it is this term that naturally attracts a position of inferiority with regards to levels within organisations. Whilst some find it acceptable to still use the two terms interchangeably (Hertig, 2010; Kellerman, 2008) overall the term subordinate has lost its presence and is viewed as different to followers. Reflecting upon the work of Chaleff (1995), Dixon & Westbrook (2003) distinguished between the two terms: “Being a subordinate is mechanical or physical; it is being under the control of superiors as if in some hypnotic trance. Being a follower is a condition, not a position” (Dixon and Westbrook, 2003: 20). Here the term subordinate is described as a passive position with a lack of power, whereas followers are described as unrestricted by physical and hierarchical positioning. Whilst this allows for some distinction between the two terms, the reliance upon hierarchical positioning can also be seen in understandings of followers. Kellerman (2007) explicitly stated that her understandings of followers are directly associated with their ranking in organisational structures, and refers to them as having less power, influence and authority than their leaders (Kellerman, 2008). Whilst this provides an indication of the effects of the lower hierarchical position for followers, it does not allow for followers to be found at different levels of the organisation, which is naïve (Kean et al, 2011) and overly simplistic (Baker, 2007). Opposing these basic perspectives, Dixon (2009) argues that followers can be found throughout the organisation and that they will not necessarily always be positioned below leaders. This thought is progressed with the view that followers come about through an active choice; they have the freedom to decide whom they follow (Johnson, 2009) and the choice to position themselves as followers (Uhl-Bien and Pillai, 2007), as opposed to other positions such as leaders. Furthermore, Uhl-Bien and Pillai (2007) also view followers as highly influential, as actually constructing leadership. This is reflective of social constructionist understandings of this thesis, but seems over-optimistic and places emphasis on individualism. Instead, a relational constructionist perspective would allow acknowledgement of the role of contexts in determining how influential they (or their leaders) are.

As evident when looking at understandings of followership, there has been an abundance of attempts to move away from the tainted follower term and to replace it. Suggestions for alternative follower terms include *non-leaders* (Hollander, 1974), *agents* (Rost, 1995), *partners*, *participants*, *co-leaders* (Chaleff, 1995), *collaborators*, *contributors*, *members*, *associates* (Rost, 2008) and more loosely *people* or *individuals* (Frisina, 2005; Johnson,

2009). Returning to understandings of the term follower, Frisina (2005) suggested that they are understood as "...a homogenous group of uncritical, unreflective, obedient people following unquestioningly the directives of their leaders" (Frisina, 2005, cited by Kean et al, 2011 .p. 508). When comparing the alternative terms to this understanding of followers there is a significant difference in the extent to which they are described as being active and more equal to leaders. Whilst followers may well need to "comply" (Townsend and Gebhardt, 1997, p.52) at times, as do leaders, there is also growing recognition for followers to have their say and to be listened to by their leaders. In other words, through a process of empowerment, followers are encouraged to question their leaders and to have less reliance upon directives from leaders. Therefore, whilst the term follower need not be made redundant, the way in which it is understood should continue to transform in line with the contexts in which it is occurring. For instance, the UK public sector has traditionally had rigid hierarchical structures with control at the top (Greener, 2009); here, understandings offered by the likes of Frisina (2005) and Kellerman (2007; 2008) may seem appropriate. However, the UK public sector context has since undergone significant transformations (Palermo et al, 2010; Pederson and Hartley, 2008) with an emphasis now placed upon individualisation (Lawler, 2008), decentralisation of power (Pinnington, 2011) and empowerment of employees (Diefenbach, 2009; Goldfinch and Wallis, 2010). Therefore, the understandings of Dixon (2009), Baker (2007) and Uhl-Bien and Pillai (2007) may have more resonance and alternative terms proposed, as discussed above, could be drawn upon to describe the way in which followers behave. Moving the conceptualisation forward to include ways in which followers behave, processes of *following* will now be considered.

Following as a Concept

This study places emphasis upon the process of following. However, existing understandings of *followership* and *follower* will be used to inform the conceptualisation of following for this study.

In a recent review of the followership literature, Uhl-Bien et al (2014) provided a detailed overview of the extant literature in the field, and proposed their overall understanding of followership to be "The study of how followers view and enact following behaviours in relation to leaders" (Uhl-Bien et al, 2014. p.14). Within the same review they refer to followership as being centred on *characteristics* (of followers), *behaviours* (of following) and *processes* (of following) involving *relations and outcomes*. From this perspective, following can be understood to be: processual and relational in nature; inclusive of

followers and leaders; and based on the enactment of behaviours and the achievement of outcomes that result from following. Each of these aspects of following will now be discussed to further develop and position this study's conceptualisation of following.

Within the followership, and indeed leadership, literature it has become more commonly accepted that the role of both followers and leaders needs to be understood when examining leadership (Uhl-Bien et al, 2014). This has however been a more recent school of thought within the followership field and is recognised as an approach requiring further work, as highlighted by Uhl-Bien et al's (2014) mapping of the existing field. Aligning with the epistemological commitments of the study, constructionist perspectives place particular emphasis on the processual nature of following (DeRue and Ashford, 2010). From this approach following is understood as being created through "...social processes and interactions in which people are constantly engaged with each other" (Burr, 2003, p.5). Therefore, returning to Malakyan (2014), the implication of this perspective is to view following as not a static concept occurring in isolation but as a relational process.

The constructionist approach to followership studies has been progressed within the last ten years by several authors. For instance Collinson (2006), Shamir (2007), DeRue and Ashford (2010) and Fairhurst and Uhl-Bien (2012) have all offered interpretations from a social constructionist perspective. However, across these studies there is particular focus on identity work and also on progressing understandings of leadership more than followership. There is also a tendency to use the construct followership, as opposed to *following*. Uhl-Bien et al's (2014) acknowledge this also and place blame on the semantics of the constructs followership and follower, which direct attention to the individual. This concern is reflected in this thesis, which although focused at the individual level of people's experiences of following, does not view following as individualistic, but instead as relational. This is further acknowledged and associated with ontological tensions by Fairhurst and Antonakis (2012), who suggest that often followership studies are misaligned with regards to what is being observed (followers) and what understandings (of following) are being progressed. Therefore despite increasing efforts with regards to constructionist perspectives on followership, there is a need to move away from the focus on individual followers and individual identity construction, and to begin to consciously maintain focus on the "critical role of following" (Uhl-Bien et al, 2014, p.13). This study therefore looks to conceptualise following through a review of the literature and through analysis of empirical data. Throughout this the concept of 'following' will be prioritised to maintain alignment with the ontological and epistemological premises of the study; for instance from the research title and objectives, to the design of the interview schedule and

discussions with participants. It is hoped that this will allow for progress to be made with understandings of following processes and an avoidance of semantic confusion and ontological tensions.

Another aspect of following is the enactment of behaviours and the outcomes that are associated with this. This is identified by DeRue and Ashford (2010) who describe followers as partaking in a process of claiming and granting, where they legitimise the role and identities of leaders. The focus on influence is likely because of dominant understandings of leadership as a process of influence. The behaviours to which they refer are restricted to granting legitimacy and being influenced. This seems overly simplistic by failing to explore, or at least recognise, that following may be enacted in multiple ways. Influence is described here in such a way as to imply that followers are influenced by the leader. However, the use of the term 'another's' rather than leader does allow for some flexibility, and for the potential for fluidity and inclusivity of followers' *and* leaders' influence. Furthermore, the granting of legitimacy seems an alternative perspective to that of mainstream thinking, portraying following as a process of power in which followers can control or influence, to some extent, how others are able to have influence upon them. With less emphasis on followers holding the power to *grant* others to be able to influence them, Kean et al (2011) refer to this granting of legitimacy as a process of socially co-constructing leaders. A more dyadic process is depicted, where both followers and leaders will have input into the granting or constructing of influence and of becoming a leader. This reflects the emergent and fluid nature of following (and leading), and moves away from essentialist understandings associated with having traits. As previously mentioned, relational aspects of social constructionism place emphasis on co-constructing and togetherness (McNamee, 2012), rather than on the individual. However, Kean et al (2011) do not address how followers are co-constructed. Based on the focus of followers and leaders, and aligning with the perspective that provides both followers and leaders with opportunities for influencing, it seems logical that followers are co-constructed through processes of following. It is believed that followers and leaders are intertwined and interdependent, in other words to be/become a leader there must be followers (Chaleff, 2009) and vice versa. Illustrative examples offered in the literature include students and teachers and their interactions (Chaleff, 2009); a teacher needs individuals to teach, and a student relies on a teacher to learn from. Students and teachers together construct their roles, with this process of granting of legitimacy occurring, for instance, within a classroom context. Therefore, in line with social constructionist premises (Burr, 2003), being a follower is not something a person is or is not, it is a process (of following) that people *do* together.

Within these relational processes individuals enact what can be described as following (and leading) behaviours. Kean et al (2011) refer to behaviours such as supporting, being diplomatic, suggesting, standing by, and indicating engagement. Similarly Tepper, Duffy and Shaw (2001) also proposed that following behaviours include complying and resisting. The important distinction between drawing upon following behaviours and those characteristics described within the typologies domain (discussed in Section 2.1.3) of the literature is that here they are recognised as behaviours rather than descriptive characteristics (Townsend and Gebhardt, 2003) possessed by individuals thought to be followers. Closely aligned are the outcomes that result from such following behaviours and processes. Uhl-Bien et al (2014) refer to these as followership outcomes, and include how others react and relate to those following, whether they achieve a change in role or change in power and contributions to leadership. Rather than followership outcomes, this study proposes the continuous use of the term *following* and thus refers to *following* outcomes. As identified for the construct of followership, following behaviours are not static (Malakyan, 2014) and so neither are following outcomes. In this sense the outcomes, and following on the whole, are viewed as a process that is situational and will be influenced not only through the ways in which it is enacted but also by the context in which performed.

Drawing on the above discussions, the way in which following is conceptualised for this thesis will now be outlined.

2.1.5 Conceptualisation of Following for the Study

This thesis, as discussed in the previous sections, recognises that concepts within the followership field are experiencing a transition (Cunha et al, 2013) and epistemological commitments from the time of the emergence of the field are now shifting. An example of this is in the belief that distinctions between leadership and followership may be less clear-cut than initially portrayed (Ladkin, 2010; Brown and Thornburrow, 1996). This thesis therefore supports the view of followership not as a simple opposition to leadership, but instead as needing “new ways of thinking, new types of theorizing and operationalizing” (Uhl-Bien et al, 2014, p.18). As outlined throughout Section 2.1, various concepts are prevalent within the followership field, including followership, followers, and following. The latter is adopted for the purpose of this study, in line with the current ontological and epistemological commitments of the author. This thesis aligns with more contemporary

perspectives, viewing following as a social process (Malakyan, 2014) in which individuals interact with others and are active (Baker et al, 2011 Collinson, 2006; Shamir, 2007) and enact behaviours to support others (Uhl-Bien et al, 2014). It is considered a process that is engaged in through choice, and in multiple ways, in relation to others and to contexts.

This section has reviewed the followership field and positioned this thesis accordingly, as well as outlining the conceptualisation of following to be taken forward for the study. Next, the emerging area of authentic followership will be discussed and related to the previous discussions.

2.2 Authentic Followership (and Leadership)

This section will place focus on the contemporary area of leadership and followership literature, which looks at authenticity. As a relatively new area in these fields, multiple publications have sought to understand and form a basis for research; within this there are areas that have received traction and those that remain neglected. This section of the chapter will provide an overview of the emergence of authenticity in leadership studies, and will highlight the various ways in which followers have begun to be incorporated into this. Next, this section will discuss further follower specific studies of authenticity.

Throughout the extant understandings will be critically reviewed to indicate assumptions and overlooked aspects, before summarising and outlining the relevance for this study.

Authentic followership is a developing concept, incorporated into recent publications of followership (Lapierre and Carsten, 2014; Riggio et al, 2008). As a highly topical area in the leadership field, there is potential for this to be mirrored within the followership field also. With authenticity having central premises of being true to the self and of truth and integrity (Zilwa, 2014) there is the potential for this to enable recognition of followers having agency, in the sense that they are aware of exercising choice and behaving in particular ways, and are not expected to be powerless and under the influence of leaders (Kellerman, 2007). However, the ways in which followers have been incorporated and portrayed within the authentic leadership and followership fields is not necessarily aligned with this. It is therefore important to explore this theoretical base and to consider it through a contemporary followership lens.

2.2.1 The Emergence of Authenticity within Authentic Leadership Research

The earliest articles published on authentic leadership were around 2003 (Northouse, 2013), and despite there being a “proliferation of literature” (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012, p.118) in this field, it remains in the early stages of conceptual development (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing & Peterson, 2008). The concept of authenticity has Greek origins (Trilling, 1972) and is thought to have re-emerged in the literature in the early 1900s (Erickson, 1995) with its meaning and application to management and leadership transforming over the years. One of the earliest understandings of authenticity offered is by Harter (2002) who found it to be centred, historically, on notions of being true to the self; “to thine own self be true” (Harter, 2002, p.382). Others have also gone on to reflect this focus on the self, with understandings based around knowing the self (Parke and Wormell, 1956), and more recently with alignment of an individual’s values and beliefs and their behaviours (Endrissat et al, 2007). Restricted to the self, these perspectives suggest that authenticity is an individual-focused concept based upon notions of *being* true and honest and ensuring that these are reflected in the enacted behaviours of individuals. So, in the context of followership and leadership, individuals would be expected to allow their own values and beliefs to influence the ways in which they do following and leading. This neglects any consideration of other influences upon these processes, such as the contexts and others in which they are located.

Acknowledging a social perspective, in contrast to the individual perspective in the previous paragraph, Goffee and Jones (2006, p. 1) argued that authenticity is a “quality that others must attribute to you”, acknowledging therefore the complexity of this. This progresses understandings to not only acknowledge the influence of others, but to place emphasis on others as having control over the extent to which individuals can consider themselves as being authentic. The importance of followers’ views of authentic leaders is a significant part of the authentic leadership literature, and will be discussed in more detail later. Others support this perspective, suggesting that authenticity needs to be applied to understandings of the self as being social (Patterson, 2011; Woods, 2007).

Discussions of authentic leadership have also emphasised the alignment between the individual and the organisation and, thereby, acknowledged the role of context. For instance, Ford and Harding (2011, p.468) critique authentic leadership for its insinuation that, “authenticity refers to the inability to distinguish between the self and the organisation”. Encapsulating the above points regarding being true, and also acknowledging others and contexts, Ferrara (1994, cited in Novicevic, Harvey, Ronald &

Brown-Radford, 2006, p.67) describes authenticity as being “one’s genuine moral judgment about the value of the conflicting goals that are pursued individually and collectively”. This understanding allows recognition that goals may differ between the individual, others and contexts, and places emphasis on the individual as having active thoughts to ‘judge’ the situation and perhaps make decisions accordingly, although this is not explicitly stated. With added emphasis on an individual’s values and beliefs, the application of authenticity to leadership and followership had the potential to illustrate activeness and choice for individuals. Whilst this has been discussed in part, the concept of authenticity has not been transferred to followers to a great extent. There remains a lack of discussion of authentic followers, or following, with an almost idealised form of leadership and followership becoming apparent instead.

When reviewing understandings of authentic leadership, the key themes centre around: a strong sense of self-awareness and commitment to self development (George, 2003; Ilies, Morgeson & Nahrgang, 2005; Walumbwa et al, 2008; Whitehead, 2009); a strong sense and commitment to ethics and morals (Avolio, Luthans and Walumbwa, 2004; Begley, 2011; May, Chan, Hodges & Avolio, 2003; Whitehead, 2009); consistency between inner thoughts and values and behaviours (Harter, 2002; Shamir and Eilam, 2005); openness (Leary and Kowalski, 1990; Walumbwa et al, 2010a); and, a commitment towards organisational improvements and successes (Whitehead, 2009). Furthermore, there is agreement within the literature regarding the reasons why authenticity has been applied to leadership studies, aligning this leader type as addressing times of crisis (Champy, 2009), organisational collapses (Harvey, Martinko and Gardner, 2006) and organisational contexts of “increasing pressure, uncertainty, tension and stress” (Turner, 2009, p.1). The above themes support Luthens and Avolio’s (2003) argument for the need to have an appropriate individual and context in order for authentic leadership to occur, further emphasising the idealised, and individualised, nature of authentic leadership theory.

The above discussions have considered understandings of both authenticity and authentic leadership. Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012) provide a useful comparison of understandings of authenticity, which they refer to as an existentialist perspective, and of authentic leadership, which they refer to as an authentic leadership (AL) perspective. They pose understandings from an existentialist perspective (columns one and two) which challenge those from an authentic leadership perspective (column three), and go on to demonstrate how this sheds light on the issues with central premises of authentic leadership literature (column one). The key points from their comparison are summarised in Table 2.2:

Table 2.2: Assumptions of Authenticity and Authentic Leadership [source: Algera & Lips-Wiersma, 2012, p.125]

Existentialist theme	Existentialist perspective	AL perspective
Inauthenticity is unavoidable	The nature of everyday life challenges the ability to be authentic.	Authentic leaders are seen to be permanently in an authentic state.
Authenticity requires creating own meaning	Each individual is responsible for and capable of creating their own meanings.	Leaders have a great influence upon followers, who need their influence and guidance.
Authenticity does not imply goal and value congruence	Goals of individuals and organisations do not always align.	Authenticity enables alignment between leaders, followers and their organisation.
Authenticity is not intrinsically ethical	Authenticity does not necessarily imply ethical natures of objectives for individuals.	Authentic leaders and followers are more ethical and moral than those who are inauthentic.

Algera and Lips-Wiersma's (2012) work helps to illustrate the ways in which the concept of authenticity has taken on new meanings when incorporated into authentic leadership theorising. What seems clear is the process of idealisation occurring within the authentic leadership perspective, and yet there is a lack of reasoning or justification as to why this is the case and how this has happened. Much of the criticism that the authentic leadership literature receives is based on this overly positive perspective and failure to accept imperfections or the "dark side" (Ford & Harding, 2011, p.467) of individuals, and so it is useful to now return to the concept of authenticity and understand the origins of the concept for the purposes of challenging this field rather than continuing the use of existing perspectives.

2.2.2 Underlying Themes within the Authentic Leadership Field

Authenticity, as previously mentioned, has had presence within the leadership literature for a number of years, and has been applied in several different ways. Both Novicevic et al (2006) and Baron and Parent (2015) summarise these different ways as:

- Philosophically – took place during the 1960s and focused on organisational authenticity being linked to the authenticity of the leaders. Also placed emphasis

on the ethics and virtues of leaders; “according to this perspective, someone who is authentic is ethical and exhibits integrity” (Baron and Parent, 2015, p.2)

- Psychologically – took place during the 1990s and 2000s and focused on authenticity within other forms of leadership such as transformational leadership, and more recently on processes of authentic leadership development.

The ways in which authenticity has been integrated into leadership studies is very much from the psychological perspective, with emphasis on how individuals can be authentic and have this as a trait. Authentic leadership differentiated itself from former leadership styles, with a movement away from reliance on power and coercion, to that of building trusting relationships as a way of earning “the allegiance of others” (Duignan and Bhindi, 1997, p.206). The Leadership Quarterly published a special edition on authentic leadership in 2005; in this, numerous authors published models based on their empirical data to progress the field. Since then, interest in the field has been sustained and empirical research in particular has become more applied. Several authors (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May & Walumbwa, 2005; Gardner, Cogliser, Davis & Dickens, 2011; Ilies et al, 2005; Kernis, 2003; Shamir and Eilam, 2005;) both before and within this special issue have proposed key premises on which authentic leadership is based, and these have been referred to and built upon in future models, thus being important grounding for understandings within the field. Such works will now be discussed.

Kernis (2003) proposed that authenticity is centred on the following four aspects: self-awareness, unbiased processing, relational transparency, and authentic behaviour. Ilies et al (2005) applied Kernis’s framework to describe authentic leadership with very similar aspects, but placed greater emphasis on leadership (Walumbwa et al, 2008). Shamir and Eilam (2005) describe what individual authentic leaders might ‘look’ like, including: being a leader is central to who they are; they are highly self-aware; their goals are aligned with their personal beliefs; and, their thoughts and actions are reflective of one another. Whilst the above models applied the extant understandings of what authenticity means and summarised some key premises in defining authentic leadership, they did not consider the processes behind these premises i.e. how an individual becomes highly self-aware, or how likely it is for individuals to maintain alignment between their thoughts and actions. Gardner et al (2005) developed one of the most detailed models of authentic leadership, and one that incorporates followers on an almost equal par with leaders, and is thus deemed particularly relevant for this study.

Gardner et al (2005) proposed what they called the conceptual framework for authentic leader and follower development. In this framework, followers are incorporated with a mirrored development process to that of their leaders, as role modelling their leaders, and as having specific outcomes and performances as a result of such developments. This framework considers the antecedents to the development of authentic leaders and followers. Emphasis is placed upon personal histories and specific events that have occurred, as well as the ways in which leaders act as role models. This assumes, however, that processes of following are based on individual leaders. As previously proposed, this thesis rejects an individualised approach in favour of a relational approach. The conceptualisation of following adopted by this study argues that following can be centred on following others, organisations and ideologies. In this case, the extent to which role modelling of leaders comes into play may be less significant than this model suggests. Furthermore, this framework does not acknowledge that role modelling may also come from previous experiences, and that it may not necessarily always be role modelling of positive behaviours, nor a direct copying, or mirroring, of behaviours.

The model considers self-awareness next, with the argument that authentic followers will be aware of their values, identity, motives, goals and emotions. Values that are expected to be encouraged and demonstrated by authentic followers include “integrity, trust, transparency, openness, respect for others, and fairness” (Gardner et al, 2005, p.361). Whilst these values may well inform in part ways of behaving, there is a lack of recognition in the model that followers may at times choose or have to amend their values or even to go against them due to reasons associated with the situation. In that sense this framework would deem them to be acting inauthentically, however it could be argued instead that they are acting less authentically in that particular instance however may still hold that value as important to them. For instance, even though the value of openness and transparency may be important for an individual, they may be unable to uphold this value in what they are doing due to reasons such as self-protection, or perhaps inapproachability. Gardner et al (2005) also suggest that this awareness will be nurtured by their leaders, and that through this “followers are developed into leaders...not necessarily because the leader set out to do so...but because of the nature and modelling of the leader” (p.360). Issues with this lie around the assumption that individuals will have a leader who is able to ‘nurture’ them, and suggesting that if this is lacking then it will have consequences for followers in terms of being authentic. In contrast, the process of leaders becoming authentic places no such restrictions or reliance upon others. It seems strange therefore to suggest a mirroring of processes and yet to then restrict it in this way.

Next, the model considers self-regulation with regards to how followers are able to be their actual and ideal selves. Gardner et al's (2005) model posits that leaders will have a significant influence upon this, and there is suggestion that the alignment between leaders and followers needs to work for followers to become their actual selves and thus be fully aware and true to self. This does not however reflect the possibility that a follower's actual and ideal selves may change over time and across contexts continuously, rather authentic followership is depicted as an end goal towards which leaders help followers work. It is important to note that in Gardner et al's (2005) paper, each of the aspects within self-regulation is not discussed for the development of authentic followers. This framework suggests that through this, and within a supportive and ethical organisational context, followers will demonstrate the outcomes including: trust; engagement; workplace well-being. Furthermore, they will demonstrate a "sustainable" and "veritable" (Gardner et al, 2005, p.346) performance as a result, due to a felt increase in job satisfaction and commitment to the organisation. This does not however take into account changes that may occur both internal and external to the organisation, or an individual's change in goals – for instance deciding to change careers or move to another organisation due to a lack of progression opportunities being available or a threat to the stability of their positions. Assumptions are also made that individuals who enact these outcomes will be contagious to others (Ilies et al, 2005). This, however, undermines the complexities of individuals and removes the element of choice and contexts.

The models discussed above highlight the central premises of authenticity for its application to leadership and followership. Key themes arising are of the importance of openness and transparency. Leaders and followers who are deemed to be authentic should be able to develop these tendencies and display them in their daily interactions with others. Furthermore, followers specifically are expected to demonstrate effective, sustainable behaviours and feel an increase in their workplace wellbeing. Overall issues with these premises centre on a lack of flexibility, in recognising that individuals may alter their behaviour in different situations and when in relation to different others and contexts. There is also a great emphasis placed on the leader within this literature base; for instance, Gardner et al's (2005) model does include a process of developing authentic followers, but places less emphasis on this and also suggests that leaders will be the key influence. Finally, there is a sense of authentic leadership and followership being idealised; Patterson (2011, p.137) refers to this as the "utopian" nature of authentic leadership depiction in the literature. As a positive form of leadership (Luthans and Avolio, 2003) the focus has remained on achieving such types of leaders and followers, resulting in a lack of consideration of issues that may be faced through this and also of recognition

that, rather than being completely authentic or inauthentic, the extent to which this may be achieved might vary.

The ways in which followers have been incorporated into authentic leadership theory will now be considered in further detail.

2.2.3 Incorporating Followers into Models of Authentic Leadership

For the purposes of this literature review for this study, which is focused on followers in particular, the authentic leadership literature has been clustered into the ways in which followers have been incorporated. This is not a typical approach taken, for instance in Gardner et al's (2011) review of the literature they focused on factors such as the type of publication, the theoretical foundations and the types of methods adopted. However, given this study's central focus and the structure of the earlier review of the followership literature, this chosen approach is deemed appropriate. The identified clusters for this review are: pure focus on authentic leaders; *followers'* perceptions of authentic leaders; the impact of authentic leaders on *followers*; and, an equal focus or pure focus on authentic *followers*.

The first cluster, pure focus on authentic leaders, is made up of studies that have focused primarily on leaders and have given no significant consideration to followers. Work within this area has tended to discuss authentic leadership as a conceptual model and has focused on developing guides for individuals to become authentic. In other words, there is a focus upon authentic leader development processes (George, Sims, McLean and Mayer, 2007; Turner, 2009). Additionally, there has been a focus on the measurement of authentic leadership, aiming to achieve a way of identifying and knowing who is an authentic leader. For instance, Neider and Schreisheim (2011) developed the Authentic Leadership Inventory (ALI), and Walumbwa et al (2008) the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ). Černe, Jaklič, & Škerlavaj (2013) focus on authentic leaders and how they enable creativity and innovation in their working context; they do refer to the team in their model, but this is with regards to how they become more or less innovative and creative, as opposed to authentic. The focus on the team is also different to others who specifically focus on followers. Tate (2008) considered self-ratings of leadership and incorporated authentic leadership premises into his measurements. This was based on undergraduate students working on group tasks and so lacks applicability to organisational contexts. However it did find that ratings changed over time, something that is not fully recognised in much of the authentic leadership literature, as previously

highlighted. Similarly, Heppner, Kernis, Nezelek, Foster, Lakey and Goldman (2008) conducted a self-rating study with undergraduate students and found that, when able to be true to the self during daily activities, a greater sense of esteem and satisfaction resulted.

The second cluster, followers' perceptions of authentic leaders, consists of multiple studies that have been conducted to investigate how others perceive authentic leaders, with the aim of identifying and measuring a leader's authenticity as discussed in the previous paragraph. With an emphasis placed on a leader's interest in the development of others to help achieve organisational success, views of followers have been considered important for empirical research. With the positive nature of authentic leadership pervading this literature base, studies that relied upon leaders' self-reporting could potentially be impacted by bias; individuals may engage in a form of impression management, over-reporting themselves as showing the characteristics of authentic leaders. Gardner, Fischer and Hunt (2009) proposed another model of authentic leadership, linking it to the consistency between desired and felt emotions. In this model, they argue that the extent to which followers perceive these emotions as being genuine will impact how favourable and authentic they view their leaders to be and then determine the level of trust that they have in them. Other studies that have found links between followers' perceptions of leader authenticity and trust include Norman, Avolio and Luthans's (2010) work, which argued that this acclaimed trust can be highly beneficial, for example in maintaining trust in leaders during times of change. Whilst followers are incorporated into Gardner et al's (2009) model as a judge of a leader's authenticity, there is a lack of recognition that followers may bring with them previous understandings and experiences to partially form their judgments. Fields does support the notion that external factors may influence this, but this resides with the context and "variables connected to the leader's actions or statements" (Fields, 2007, p.203), and thus overlooks what followers may also draw upon from past and other experiences. Similarly, Weischer, Weibler and Peterson (2013) proposed two antecedents to influence followers' perceptions of authentic leaders, but again this remained closely centred on the leader in question as they identified the actions of the leader as well as the leader's shared life stories as being influential. Eagly (2005) suggests that it may be difficult to get some followers to "accord leaders the legitimacy" (p.459) they desire for authentic leadership. She argues that the legitimising process has been over simplified and assumed, without challenges, to be universal, and uses the example of gender to problematise this. Here the emphasis is placed on the followers' perceptions of leaders, but rather than focusing on how followers enable and confirm leaders as being authentic, Eagly's perspective

views followers as offering a challenge to the legitimacy process and to considering the self as authentic. In spite of a lack of empirical research, Eagly's work offers a critique and further highlights the assumption-based nature of the authentic leadership models. Spitzmuller and Ilies (2010) also indicate that the followers' critical thinking tendencies will influence perceptions of leaders. However their work was based on transformational leadership and relational authenticity more specifically.

The third cluster, the impact of authentic leader on followers, is one of the areas that has received the most attention, addressing calls for further development of understanding made by leading authors in the field Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans & May (2004). Through this further idealising, authentic leadership as something individuals and organisation should strive for has occurred. Peterson, Walumbwa, Avolio and Hannah (2012) looked at the links between authentic leadership and follower job performances within extreme conditions including the police and military. Others have gone on to investigate the impact of authentic leaders on follower commitment (Woolley, Caza and levy, 2011; Leroy, Palanski and Simons, 2012; Emuwa, 2013; Rego, Vitoria, Magalhaer, Ribeiro & Cunha, 2013), engagement (Alok and Israel, 2012; Giallonardo, Wong & Iwasiw, 2010; Walumbwa et al, 2010), job satisfaction (Giallonardo et al, 2010; Černe et al, 2013), and psychological capacity (Rego, Sousa, Marques and Pina e Cunha, 2012 to name a few. Evidently, this has been a key area of research with more empirical work in comparison to the former two clusters. Most studies have however adopted a quantitative approach, focusing on establishing causal relationships between authentic leadership and follower outcomes, and have thus lacked insight into the experiences of individuals in behaving authentically, as well as understanding the relationship in more detail.

Finally, the fourth cluster, which places emphasis on authentic followers, as either a central or an equal focus of research, is a newly emerging area with very limited empirical research to date. This is reflective of the tendency to date for authors to focus more on authentic leadership rather than authentic followership (Avolio and Reichard, 2008; Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012). Whilst the use of the term followership carries with it issues of passivity into the authentic leadership models (Shamir, 2007), Leroy et al (2012) suggest that it also enables a sense of activeness, perhaps in comparison to alternative terms used, for instance employees or subordinates. Much of the authentic followership literature shares tendencies with authentic leadership, and is even referred to as mirroring (Hsiung, 2012). However, the implied nature of authentic followership from the term authenticity suggests notions of openness and transparency (see earlier discussion), but

this may be different for followers than leaders given issues of power and organisational positioning that are commonly distinguishable between these two groups.

In one of the major books on followership, *The Art of Followership*, Avolio and Reichard (2008) wrote a chapter based on notions of authentic followership. They discuss the importance of transparency between followers and leaders, and suggest that leaders will have a “contagion” (p.333) effect upon followers so that they model their behaviour based on what they have observed. This was based upon a conceptual discussion and therefore arguably lacks contextual application, seeming to neglect followers as having independence and choice over the ways in which they act and engage in following processes.

Leroy et al (2012) conducted a study to explore the ways in which authentic followership and authentic leadership help to achieve individuals’ satisfaction needs. Through their quantitative research, they confirmed this relationship and proposed that, through achieving authentic followership and leadership, understood in their study as individuals being able to be their true selves, the overall performance of followers will improve. This reaffirms the framework by Gardner et al (2005) as previously discussed, which posits the outcomes of authentic leader and authentic follower development processes being sustainable follower performances. Leroy et al’s (2012) study was however conducted using an online survey to individuals working in a range of Belgian organisations; participants were asked to rate themselves, drawing upon various previously designed scales and inventories from the literature. The contacts to participants were accessed via the Human Resources departments of the organisations, who informed their employees of the study. Due to the nature of the research being centred on performance, this may have restricted the sample recruited and may also have affected the ways in which self-ratings occurred. A missed opportunity is also apparent, in that the reasons behind the ratings were not explored. For instance, one item of self-rating related to feeling able to be free and to express their views openly. Various aspects are important in understanding this process alone, such as what enables or hinders the individual from expressing views openly, and how this is experienced in terms of both when they are and are not able to express those views. This is acknowledged in their calls for further research, with a recognised need to explore influences such as culture upon authentic leadership and authentic followership.

Zilwa (2014) describes authentic followership as being “grounded in the values of truth and integrity...not self-centred or selfish; rather it involves workers having strong organisational identification, commitment, and engagement” and emphasises this form of

followership as being “active, engaged and constructively critical” (p.48). This understanding of authentic followership has resonance with those previously discussed, touching upon activeness and truthfulness. However, it also describes what it is *not*, with selfishness or self-centeredness not being associated with it. As noted previously, authenticity models tend to focus on the self, and to emphasise the importance of the alignment between the self and the organisation. Furthermore, Zilwa (2014) describes authentic followers as being constructively critical, which is an important emphasis in comparison to others. Whilst other understandings and models have suggested that those who are authentic will be open and honest about their thoughts, there has been less emphasis on ensuring that this is constructively critical. She also suggests that authentic followership is a way for employees to “learn how to place the needs and goals of the organisation above their own needs” (Zilwa, 2014, p.51). This therefore differentiates from being a follower and *being* authentic more generally, and authentic followership; the former being centred on individuals being true to themselves and arguably putting their own interests first, and the latter centred on being true to the organisation as a follower of the organisation. Clearly, conflicts in prioritizing personal and organisational interests may arise here. In line with this thesis’ argument, individuals are conceptualised as doing following rather than being a follower. Therefore, being an authentic follower is an idealised and unrealistic state that organisations and leaders attempt to develop. However, individuals will have interests and opinions and the assumption that these can be put aside seems problematic. However, adopting the lens of individuals doing following authentically enables a return to understandings of authenticity rather than being authentic (see column two, Table 2.1), which acknowledges that there will be challenges in being authentic and that goals between individuals and organisations do not always align. However, as Zilwa (2014) points out, authentic followers will constructively challenge leaders and their organisations; therefore their own thoughts and opinions cannot be completely overridden and instead can be used to improve and build on current workplace ideas and processes. In her framework, Zilwa (2014) proposes that authentic followership is made up of the individual, dyad and organisational levels within the firm, and that through these authentic followers will emerge. Individuals will have their own ability psychologically to be authentic (individual), individuals will have effective relationships with others (dyads), and individuals will be located within effective organisational and political contexts (organisational). The model suggests that certain contexts will influence the ability to achieve authenticity at each/all levels. For instance hierarchical structures and issues of power differences between individuals are identified, and are relevant to this study. What the model offers is progress in focusing upon authentic followership and building frameworks of this to move away from tendencies to assume a mirroring

processes between authentic leaders and followers. However, the simplicity of the model and lack of application to context, as well as their use of language, has been identified as problematic for this study as it does not allow for recognition of authenticity as a process which may be demonstrated to a greater or lesser extent; for instance she states that for authentic followership to be possible the organisational context “must be positive” with “an absence of negative political conditions” (Zilwa, 2014, p.64), not allowing for any fluidity.

In the same text collection, Rodgers and Bligh (2014) discuss whether leaders need authentic followers. Interestingly for the emergent findings of this thesis, they discuss links between being an authentic follower and engaging in voice behaviours, which will be discussed further in the next section. They suggest that voice behaviours are a key element of the balanced processing component of authentic leadership and followership. However, their focus is upon the checking of ethics. As Table 2.1 identified, authenticity is not intrinsically moral. However, their work is useful in understanding the ways in which individuals engage in voice behaviours and the benefits that this can have to others and to the organisation. As discussed in the next section of this chapter, however, voice is a highly complex process, which suggests that the balanced processing aspect of authentic leadership/followership will be too.

A further study to consider follower authenticity is that of Yagil and Medler-Liraz (2014), who recognised the lack of focus on authentic followership within the field and supported the need for further research. They found that authentic leaders can enable employees to become more authentic in their behaviours. Interestingly they switch between referring to authentic employees and following authentically; this is more in line with this study, considering following as a process that can be done more or less authentically, rather than individuals as being or not being authentic. Through using diaries amongst other data collection methods, they encouraged participants to complete a scoring of a range of measures for authenticity after their days in the workplace. Their results suggest that individuals who are exposed to authentic leadership are more likely to engage in “self-expression” (Yagil and Medler-Liraz, 2014, p.8). That said, as proposed by others, authentic leaders are viewed here as an antecedent to authentic followership, and more specifically to followers’ felt ability to engage in the openness of authenticity. Issues regarding the sample selection processes as well as the types of participants, due to them being selected by their leaders, may have adversely affected the results, and the authors call for more research in this area.

Hinojosa, McCauley, Randolph-Seng and Gardner's (2014) study of authentic leader-follower relationships also balances followers within models of authenticity and authentic leadership. In their paper, they apply attachment theory, based on early attachment styles for individuals with others and how these influence future interactions (Ainsworth, Bell and Stayton, 1972). Furthermore, they consider this as influencing the formation of authentic leader-follower relationships between individuals, shedding light on what causes authentic leaders and followers.

Despite not referring to authenticity so specifically, Carsten and Uhl-Bien (2015) discussed issues of ethical followership and referred to "crimes of obedience" (p.49) in exploring the likelihood of individuals to obey or challenge an unethical request from others. What this study does offer is a pure focus on followers and consideration of the process of followers engaging in unethical behaviours because of inability to be open and honest about how they felt. However, as recognised in their call for further research, their study was based upon participants' responses to hypothetical situations and so cannot be understood as actual reactions nor can they shed light on participants' experiences at the time and afterwards.

In summary, this section has provided an overview of the key premises of authentic leadership and authentic followership, and has outlined the ways in which followers have been incorporated into this growing literature base. The understandings taken forward for this study are around openness and honesty (Leroy et al, 2012; Yagil and Medler-Liraz, 2014), and of being actively engaged and constructively critical (Zilwa, 2014). Such behaviours are reflective of individuals doing following authentically. Rather than striving for a utopian state (Patterson, 2011, p.137) of authentic followers, who are expected to put aside without difficulty their own interests for the sake of the organisation, this thesis argues that individuals may focus on doing following authentically. As a result, they may feel engaged and active in being able to act on these beliefs when needed, and to constructively challenge others and the organisation.

This section of this chapter has discussed authenticity and applied it to processes of following, identifying its key premises whilst also problematising the ways in which authenticity has been conceptualised to date. The emphasis placed on openness, honesty and being constructively critical raises questions regarding the ease of behaving in such a way and how this may be influenced. This is related to the ability and willingness of individuals to speak up and share their thoughts with others, otherwise referred to by

some as employee voice and employee silence. This body of literature will now be reviewed and related to the discussions so far.

2.3 Employee Voice and Silence

Employee voice and employee silence are concepts that were first introduced into management literature around 1970. There are multiple perspectives of such concepts, and understandings have progressed over time in line with changes in management literature as well as organisational contexts. First, the two concepts will be discussed with regards to how they have been interpreted in the literature, drawing upon similarities and differences amongst and between them. Next, the major works in the field will be discussed to outline research conducted to date, problematising this and current understandings, before indicating the relevance of this area for this study.

2.3.1 An Introduction to Employee Voice and Employee Silence

Employee voice

Employee voice was first introduced by Hirschman in 1970, and has since attracted attention in the management and more recently in the leadership literature. There are similarities and differences in the ways in which authors interpret this concept, as well as the focus they place on it in conceptual and empirical work.

As mentioned, Hirschman (1970) is known as the leading author on employee voice, and his understanding of employee voice was centred on the expressing of opinions and thoughts to bring about organisational change. This placed emphasis on voice as having an end goal of organisational change, which is maintained in subsequent understandings as will be discussed. What is being voiced is broad in nature, with references to ‘opinions’ and ‘thoughts’; this does not suggest much of a focus in terms of whether it is positive or negative, nor does it indicate the individual or collective nature of such thoughts and opinions. Van Dyne and LePine (1998) did however distinguish this, by describing voice as being “...intended to improve rather than merely criticize” (p.109). They also refer to opinions as being “constructive” (p.109) rather than criticising only. Rather than employee voice, Premeaux and Bedeian (2003) describe the sharing of opinions to address issues and achieve changes as ‘speaking up’. However, this is arguably an aspect of employee voice, as suggested by Dyne, Ang & Botero’s (2003) distinction between voice as

speaking up rather than following organisational procedures. Others portray voice as something that occurs as a result of dissatisfaction. For instance Cortina and Magley (2003) describe voice as “a means of active resistance to mistreatment” (p.247) and as occurring as a result of dissatisfaction. The two areas in which voice seems to be focused on, therefore, are the felt need for change, and feelings of dissatisfaction. This is reflected in much of the literature that focuses on the antecedents for employee voice, which will be discussed in the next section (2.3.2 The Development of Employee Voice and Silence Theory).

A further trend identifiable in understandings of employee voice is the suggestion of choice. For instance, Detert and Burris (2007) describe employee voice as “the discretionary provision of information intended to improve organisational functioning” (p.869). The use of the term discretionary here suggests that those who voice, or rather “use voice” (Cortina and Magley, 2003, p.247), have decided to do so. Similarly, Caldwell and Canuto-Carraco (2010) referred to voice as an “option” (p.159), indicating that there are alternatives and therefore that sharing opinions and thoughts is a choice an individual makes. This will, of course, depend upon multiple aspects at the individual, relational and organisational level, which is reflective of Gao, Janssen and Shi’s (2011) discussion of employee voice as a “broad and complex construct” (p.788). Whilst the above work has placed emphasis on employee voice as being *verbal*, as explicitly does Rusbelt, Farrell, Rogers and Mainous’s (1988) understanding, others have described a wider range of ways in which voice may be done, referring to these as *voice behaviours*, which seems less restrictive.

Voice Behaviours

Voice behaviours is one of several terms used interchangeably within the employee voice literature. The use of the term voice behaviours allows appreciation of the variety of ways in which voice might be done, or as Gao et al (2011) suggest the ways that this is engaged in. Employee voice has previously been described as speaking up, or as verbally expressing opinions. However, not surprisingly, there are many different ways that employees might have or do voice without speaking a single word. Describing voice behaviours, LePine and Van Dyne (2001, p.328) refer to them as “requiring that individuals expend effort speaking up and expressing suggestions that they may have”. This understanding recognises the activeness of individuals in engaging in this process and, whilst it does explicitly refer to speaking up, they widen their understanding with the term “expressing” which can reflect a variety of behaviours. For instance, alternative

means of expression include emails, or formally arranged channels to provide written feedback such as staff surveys. Both of these instances would still enable employees to share their thoughts and opinions without doing so verbally. Furthermore, use of the term 'behaviours' allows for acceptance of multiple ways of having voice, with actions, activities and manners being implied by the term.

Liu, Zhu and Yang (2010, p.198) propose that voice behaviours are "...the behaviour that proactively challenges the status quo and makes constructive changes". There is explicit reference to voice behaviours as being proactive here, whereas Dyne et al (2003) suggested that voice behaviours would depend upon two aspects: 1) the activeness or passiveness of an individual, and 2) whether the voice was focused on self-protection or on the interests of others. This latter work allows the phenomenon to be understood as occurring in multiple ways, avoiding a return to restricted understandings of voice as verbal. Dyne et al (2003) model will be discussed in further detail below, however it is useful to mention here its emphasis on the fluidity and complexity of voice behaviours. Clearly, then, there is a need to broaden understandings of employee voice to consider the multiple ways in which this is engaged in within organisations.

Employee Silence

An adjacent body of literature to employee voice is that of employee silence. Some researchers discuss this as simply being the absence of employee voice, whereas others suggest that the two concepts are either linked or should be considered as separate.

Employee silence is defined as "the withholding of any form of genuine expression...to persons who are perceived to be capable of effecting change" (Pinder and Harlos, 2001, p.334). In contrast to employee voice, here the effort lies in the employees avoiding the sharing of their thoughts and opinions. This is further supported by Knoll and van Dick's (2013, p.349) reference to "refrain" and by Detert and Edmondson's (2007, p.23) reference to "self-censorship". This body of literature is focused on understanding why employees choose not to raise issues and is often attributed to moral or legal wrong doings (Knoll and van Dick, 2013). This is a different focus to that of employee voice, which, as previously highlighted, tends to focus on dissatisfaction and change. However, neither area places much focus on having voice or remaining silent about more positive issues, and so could arguably be portraying an unbalanced understanding.

In their work on employee voice, Milliken, Morrison and Hewlin (2003) suggested that employee silence was one potential result of individuals' perceptions of the consequences of having voice. By that, they mean that during the decision making stage, that is whether to share their thoughts and opinions on a particular matter, they will look forward to the potential consequences and take these into consideration before deciding. If the perceived consequences are deemed too great then, according to Milliken et al (2003), individuals may choose to withhold their thoughts and instead enact employee silence. However, Dyne et al (2003, p.1361) disagree and argue for a separation of the two "multidimensional constructs". From this perspective, they argue, employee voice and employee silence can be understood in more depth, with recognition of the multiple ways in which they can occur as well as the different influences on and consequences for each. This thesis views voice as a fluid process, which can be done to a greater or lesser extent. This thesis also recognises the links between employee voice and employee silence and proposes they be understood as separate but interrelated multidimensional concepts (Dyne et al, 2003). Multidimensionality also acknowledges that 'doing' voice or silence behaviours in a given context may influence an individual's decision about whether to have voice or to be silent and how to engage in doing so (Gao et al, 2011) in future contexts.

The next section will provide further detail about existing research and conceptual discussions within the literature bases of employee voice and employee silence.

2.3.2 The Development of Employee Voice and Employee Silence Theory

There are several identifiable trends within the existing literature on employee voice and employee silence. The first is the use of conceptual arguments, as well as the imbalance of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Second is the focus on the leader as well as the individual, rather than other aspects such as context. Third, is the tendency to focus on the antecedents of voice and silence as opposed to the consequences of such behaviours. Finally, there is a disproportionate amount of attention on voice over silence.

The fields of employee voice and employee silence seem to comprise a balance of conceptual discussions and models, and empirical. Hirschman's (1970) conceptual model of 'Exit-Voice-Loyalty' was furthered by Farrell's (1983) model of 'Exit-Voice-Loyalty-Neglect'. These theoretical models were prompted by the crisis of declining of organisations, and the potential ways in which employees might respond to their

dissatisfaction with this. Hirschman (1970) and Farrell (1983) referred to the various aspects of their models (for instance voice and exit) as “options”, which suggests an element of choice and variety in the ways that employees react. This is supported by Farrell (1983, p.599), whose model recognised that “workers make decisions and select options much differently than has been suggested”. Voice is identified as one of these options, and is defined as “...any attempt at all to challenge rather than to escape from an objectionable state of affairs” (Hirschman, 1970, p. 30). These works were based on conceptual discussions (Hirschman, 1970) as well as a study where Hirschman (1970) asked participants to rank behavioural response cards, with a comparison of those they considered subject experts and non-experts as participants. Therefore this method did not allow for the model’s exploration within an organisational context, nor did it allow for insights to be gained from employees’ perspectives. Furthermore, silence was not considered as an option. These models are also focused on responses to dissatisfaction specifically, which arguably fails to consider other issues or events that may give rise to these options. As seminal work within these theory bases, though, they were useful in identifying voice as one of several options, and are referred to in future studies.

Several other studies have adopted a similar approach in providing scenarios for participants to comment on and categorise. In other words, these are lab type experiments rather than phenomenon based research on the lived experiences of individuals. For instance, Islam and Zyphur (2005) looked at the reasons why employees refrain from voicing their opinions, and provided a group of undergraduate students with a series of hypothetical scenarios to discuss as well as self-reporting questionnaires regarding voice. They found that, despite recent organisational removal of hierarchical barriers, individuals still tend to refrain from sharing their thoughts and opinions, and they suggest that future research needs to consider more than just barriers to voice but also consider social and attitudinal aspects that influence this. A further study of relevance is that of Gross and Levenson (1997) who focused on the hiding of feelings, demonstrating the negative ways in which this ‘emotional inhibition’ can affect individuals’ well being. Whilst this shows the importance of being emotionally expressive, which could arguably be done through the sharing of thoughts and opinions, the study was based on a female sample base only, taken from a cohort of undergraduate psychology students. Participants were shown video clips and asked to self-report on their emotions during the video clips, with researchers also observing participants’ reactions. This study highlights the consequences of not sharing thoughts and opinions, and therefore implies that employees who choose not to have voice for whatever reason might also experience such negative effects.

Other studies have applied the concepts of voice and silence to management and organisational research, with quantitative approaches being used more commonly and in particular self-reporting surveys. These will now be discussed whilst also identifying the areas under-researched.

Emphasis is given to understanding what influences why individuals voice or silence their thoughts and opinions and how this affects the ways of 'doing', with focus on verbal methods rather than voice or silence behaviours more broadly. Detert and Burris (2007) completed two studies and found that leadership had a significant influence upon voice behaviours. From this work, they called for future studies to place greater emphasis on who individuals are targeting their voice behaviours at in order to understand the reasons behind choosing and avoiding specific individuals. Addressing this, Liu et al (2010) conducted a study in China using a survey approach which was focused on who individuals were speaking to when engaging in voice behaviours. They differentiated between individuals sharing their thoughts and opinions with their leaders ('speaking up') and with their peers ('speaking out'). However the quantitative nature of this study limits further insight into the experiences of speaking out and speaking up as well as deeper understandings of how individuals may engage in both types of voice behaviours in different contexts and with different leaders or peers.

The influence of leaders has been refined, through the identification of specific leadership characteristics or styles. For instance, Gao et al (2011) also conducted a survey-based study in China, and linked the empowering nature of leadership to the likeliness of employees to engage in having voice. Similarly, Hsiung (2012) adopted a quantitative research approach on the value of authentic leadership, specifically, in encouraging employee voice. As discussed in the previous section (2.2 Authentic Followership (and Leadership)), this model of leadership emphasises openness and transparency, and so it seems appropriate to consider this form of leadership style with employees engaging in voice behaviours. What these studies do not consider however is the link between employee voice and authentic followership, nor the restrictions and constraints that followers may face in having voice, regardless of their type of leader.

A couple of studies within this field have considered more specifically the role of the line manager/immediate manager on employee voice. In their study, Nikolaou, Vakola & Bourantas (2008) considered the links between employee personality and employee voice behaviours. They found positive correlation between the two measurements for the study,

however they had limited evidence for the influence of those at the very top of the organisation. The findings from this study were further supported by Tangirala and Ramanujam (2012), who found a positive relationship between management communication and employee voice within a nursing context in America. As they identify, the majority of the literature on employee voice has focused on the importance of managers and the role that employees play in having voice. Seemingly, then, their study further contributes to this existing theory base. No recognition of the influence of context on voice is given in their model, and the restricted sample focus on the healthcare context limits appreciation of how employee voice may occur in different organisations.

One study that has incorporated a greater focus on context is that of Carsten and Uhl-Bien (2015) who highlighted of the 'moderating' influence of contexts for upward communication. Adopting a focus on followers rather than employees, they conceive followers as being more active individuals and they claim their work as the first to consider a follower's perception of their ability to influence as an antecedent to upward communication. This was an important development in the field, moving away from emphasis on the leader as the main influence as much of the existing literature does. They suggest that those who consider themselves as having greater influence will be more likely to engage in upward communication or, as others may refer to it, in follower voice. In contrast to Liu et al's (2010) study, emphasis is placed on speaking up rather than speaking out or a combination of the two. As Carsten and Uhl-Bien's (2015) quantitative study restricted participant responses to experiences within the last six months, it would be useful to extend the time dimension and employ qualitative methods to gain insight into how voice is done over time, across multiple contexts, in relation to multiple others and to identify any subsequent impacts between such events.

Locke (2008) also refers to follower voice but returns to the focus on the leader. Locke's (2008) study looked at the ways in which leaders can act as a barrier to upward communication through their verbal and non-verbal communication. Despite this retained focus on the leader, the study's findings introduced the categories of "reactive" and "active" as a new way of understanding voice. This enables recognition that followers may engage in voice behaviours when invited (reactive) but also from their own initiative or felt need (active). This further way of categorising voice highlights the complexity of the concept (Milliken et al, 2003). Milliken et al (2003) argue that there are differences between voice and silence, and their study illustrates how individuals choose whether to have voice or to remain silent. Whilst they engaged in interviews and progressed the field in this sense, they suggested that further research was needed on the behavioural

consequences of feeling unable to have voice or to share thoughts and, in particular, concerns.

Adopting a more critical perspective, Caldwell and Canuto-Carranco (2010) draw upon the Exit-Voice-Loyalty-Neglect framework (Hirschman, 1970; Farrell, 1983) and focus on employees' morals as well as how they engage in risk-taking. They argue that the leader can in fact be viewed as a "problem" for employee voice to occur; that is, rather than encouraging and enabling voice, leaders can be *the* central problem in preventing this process. This conceptual paper is yet to be used in empirical studies, providing opportunities for further consideration of the ways in which leaders can enable and constrain follower voice. Following this line of research, some studies consider the consequences of a lack of ability to have voice for individuals. This area is however limited, with a reliance on psychology-focused studies with lab and quantitative designs and, therefore, a lack of richness of insight of the organisational contexts. Gross and Levenson (1997) conducted a study that looked at the consequences for individuals of keeping thoughts and emotions hidden, referring to this as "emotional inhibition" (Gross and Levenson, 1997, p.95). Whilst this was focused on a woman only sample, their conceptualisation of emotional inhibition is interesting and could be transferred to the follower voice literature base. The term 'inhibition' denotes self-consciousness or embarrassment and implies a sense of vulnerability, which might complement understandings of a lack of voice due to leader-induced fear. Cortina and Magley (2003) also conducted a study of not being able to have voice and found that there could be negative impacts upon the health and wellbeing of individuals when this is the case. Clearly this is an important area to understand further, however the relationship between follower voice and wellbeing is outside the scope of this thesis.

Compared with employee voice, fewer studies focus on employee silence (Dyne et al, 2003). However, these studies offer insights into the different ways in which employees do silence. For instance, Knoll and van Dick (2013) furthered understandings from the employee voice field by adding an additional type of silence that they refer to as "opportunistic silence" (Knoll and van Dick, 2013, p.347), which again implies choice and of using silence to benefit the individual. Knoll and van Dick (2013) called for this concept to be explored, by unpicking it and exploring the role of employees in contributing to a culture of silence in organisations.

2.3.3 Follower Voice – An Underexplored Concept

The extant research seems to offer further opportunities to progress understandings of followers' doing of voice and silence, which this study will take up. The main focus in the employee voice and silence literatures has been on the causes or focus of employee voice and silence rather than the lived experiences of individuals' 'doing' of voice and/or silence. This focus is reflective of the dominant quantitative research approaches and their interests in measuring and establishing causal relationships between various antecedents and the likeliness of voice. Within this body of work, the majority of emphasis has been placed on the leader as having the main influence as an antecedent. As demonstrated by Carsten and Uhl-Bien (2015) in adopting a follower perspective, voice can be understood as involving agency for those who are engaging in doing it. As an initial study, further work is needed from such an approach to more fully understand the agency of followers and the impact of other contextual influences, beyond leaders alone (Cunha et al, 2013).

In those papers that did focus on follower voice, no definition or distinctions between the two concepts of employee voice and follower voice are provided. The lack of qualitative research has had a consequential impact on a lack of insight into how the process of having/doing voice or silence is experienced by individuals. Furthermore, to date, in depth studies of follower voice within UK contexts have not yet been undertaken, and across the literature there is a lack of understanding of how voice occurs across multiple organisational contexts. With the UK public sector being typified as bureaucratic and hierarchically structured, there is an opportunity to explore how individuals do voice and silence and to consider the contextual influences on their agency.

However, through bringing forward the conceptualisation of following for this thesis, voice within processes of following is understood as the process of individuals expressing their opinions and thoughts, looking to support or constructively criticise.

2.4 Implications of the Literature Review for the Thesis

This literature review has considered the theory bases of followership, authentic followership and leadership, as well as employee voice and silence. Through this it has enabled insight and clarification of the ways in which these fields have emerged and developed, as well as forming links between them.

The review of the followership field has highlighted the imbalance in attention to followers, and the tendency for studies holding a central interest in leadership despite incorporating followers to some extent. This has reinforced the need for studies alike this, adopting a follower focused approach (Kean et al, 2011) and the need to build on the work of Carsten et al (2010) who introduced the notion of individuals having different understandings of followership. Furthermore, the review has identified related and emerging concepts including teamship (Townsend & Gebhardt, 2003), which offers interesting points for consideration and may have the potential to enable followership to be understood in a more contemporary way.

The review of authentic followership and leadership literature has enabled an appreciation of the rise of this field, and of the ways in which followers are depicted within this. Through the review, an alternative perspective of the field has been achieved, considering the ways in which followers are incorporated into authentic followership and leadership studies; an important step in understanding the ongoing areas for consideration in this field. Furthermore, a range of key premises have also been identified for understanding authentic followership, drawing upon Zilwa (2014), Leroy et al (2012), and Yagil & Medler-Liraz (2014). Through this review, the idealised and assumption based nature of studies within this field has become apparent and has highlighted the need to explore authentic followership further to understand what challenges may be faced in this.

Finally, the review of employee voice and silence studies has enabled links to be formed between followership, authentic followership and voice to be made. The notion of voice in line with followership highlights the need for understandings to take further consideration of contemporary understandings of followership, in which individuals enact agency, to further explore the potential reasons for individuals engaging in voice to greater and lesser extents.

2.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed the literature bases of followership, authentic followership (and leadership), and employee voice. It has critiqued existing studies within these areas and related understandings and drawn upon these to conceptualise following, following authentically, and voice within following for the purpose of this thesis. This review has also highlighted areas of interest for further research, some of which this study aims to address, as identified in the discussion of the implications of this literature review for the study. The research methodology and design for this study will now be outlined in Chapter Three – Research Methodology.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

3.0 Chapter Introduction

This chapter details the philosophical and methodological considerations that have been taken and applied in the development and design of this research. It will detail the journey of becoming aware, as a researcher, of my own underlying philosophical commitments and how these have then influenced the choices made during the design of the research.

This chapter will be structured to provide an overview of the overarching research philosophy, and ontological and epistemological commitments. Next, the research methodology will be outlined, with discussion of each of the data generation methods used. An outline of the ethical considerations and evaluative framework to be applied will then be discussed, before concluding the chapter.

The design of the research is an important stage in addressing the overall research aim, and so it is done in such a way as to remain appropriate for the thesis, as will be discussed throughout this chapter. As a researcher, I recognise my own impact upon the research design throughout all stages, from selection of the topic, through design and conduct of the data gathering to interpretation of the data. This chapter therefore highlights decisions I have made and reflections that I have had, to remain open and honest about the evolution of the research methodology of the study. In recognition of my personal impact, I use the personal pronoun at times throughout the chapter.

This chapter will address the third research objective: *to develop an appropriate methodological approach and design a multiple method data generation process, to gain rich insights into participants' experiences of following.*

3.1 Overarching Research Philosophy

This research is underpinned by my overarching research philosophy; at the time of writing this chapter I position myself as a naturalistic researcher, holding the belief that there are constantly changing multiple realities to explore and that these can only be understood through interactions with individuals to gain insight into their own interpretations (Rubin and Rubin, 2011). Within this naturalistic approach, I would position myself as an Interpretive Constructionist, as proposed by Rubin and Rubin (2011, p.20). They describe this research approach as “...[constructionists] try to elicit the interviewees’ views of their worlds, their work, and the events they have experienced or observed”. This resonates with my belief that there is no single truth to discover (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). In addition to eliciting others’ experiences and worldviews, I embrace my role as the researcher and the influence of my own experiences, opinions and interpretations on what I am researching. Similarly, I recognise and value that my participants will each have their own understandings of phenomena and will have engaged in different relational experiences, which will have influenced their constructions. However, where I differ from this perspective is with regards to the nature of reality. Whereas an interpretive-constructionist perspective sees the nature of reality as subjective, I argue that this lacks recognition of the relational nature of knowledge creation, and will now discuss this as my ontological positioning.

3.1.1 Ontological and Epistemological Choices

When referring to ontological positioning I am indicating my beliefs about the nature of reality (Sarantakos, 1993) and the “study of being” (Blaikie, 1993, p.6). I position myself ontologically within intersubjectivism, which views the nature of reality as occurring through our interactions with others; “our worlds are created in what we do together” (McNamee, 2012, np). This perspective emerged in the early 1900s within the philosophy discipline and has since been adopted by researchers including Cunliffe (2008), Gallagher (2008), Gillespie and Cornish (2010), McNamee and Hosking (2012), and Schwartz (2012). Like McNamee (2012), Cunliffe (2008) argues that “our sense of our social world emerges continually as we interact with others” (p. 128). There are several key facets within this understanding of intersubjectivism that are central to my commitments to this approach. Firstly, it describes the social world not as a fact but in terms of how we sense and perceive it; this places emphasis on individuals as drivers in constructing their realities. Secondly, it describes the creation of their world as an on-going process, which suggests that past constructions of realities will influence current and future constructions.

Finally, it suggests that the construction of realities occurs through interactions with others; this recognises the importance of language (McNamee, 2012), communication and dialogue (Hosking, n.d.) and of “being-in-relation-to-others” (Cunliffe and Eriksen, 2011, p.1430). Where intersubjectivism can therefore be understood as differing from subjectivism is with regards to the emphasis placed upon individualistic and relational interpretations. My relational constructionist positioning is further reflected through my epistemological stance, which will now be discussed.

The epistemological positioning that I hold is reflective of how I conceive the nature of knowledge. As previously discussed, I place emphasis on the interactions between individuals and the importance of such relations in building knowledge and constructions of our world(s). I adopt a relational constructionist approach and draw upon the broader framework of social constructionism, with particular emphasis upon processes of relating and the construction of relational realities (McNamee and Hosking, 2012). In picking and “think[ing] through” (Crotty, 1998, p.215) this perspective I have lent upon McNamee and Hosking’s (2012) text *Research and Social Change: A Relational Constructionist Approach*. This, along with my attendance at a seminar by McNamee (2012), has significantly influenced the development of my own ontological and epistemological commitments, and enabled my alignment with a perspective to emerge. The focus and nature of investigation of my research has adapted during the research process in line with the developments and transitions with regards to my own epistemological positioning. For example the broadening of selection criteria of participants, and the inclusion of multiple methods that encourages reflection to enable past experiences to be captured in the building of constructions of following. I argue that relational constructionism is a form of social constructionism, as does Cunliffe (2008, p.128) when she describes social constructionism as the “broad umbrella” within which there are choices to make as researchers.

The social constructionist perspective has emerged from a range of disciplines (Burr, 2003) and has begun to increase in its application to qualitative studies within the organisational field, as discussed in Chapter Two. The approach has been described as a “continuum” of choices (Cunliffe, 2008, p.125); this is reflective of the multiple ways in which it can be applied in research according to the researcher’s beliefs about the nature of reality (ontology) and the nature of knowledge (epistemology). I will first outline those aspects that have influenced my alignment with the broader social constructionism perspective, as well as relational constructionism.

Burr (2003) proposes a series of beliefs that should be maintained when choosing to align with social constructionism – these include becoming critical of taken for granted knowledge. Social constructionism instils the need to become critical, challenging of assumptions made and knowledge seen to be ‘true’. From this approach, there is no single discoverable truth (Guba and Lincoln, 2005); instead meanings are constructed through social processes and interactions between individuals. In application to this thesis, this allows me to consider following as a complex process that will have different meanings based upon individuals’ experiences. Understandings and the doing of following will be influenced by, amongst other things, context, previous experiences and interactions of individuals. A second belief is that our constructions of reality are in relation to historical and cultural context (McNamee and Hosking, 2012). However, there remains a focus here on the individual and the notion of reality being constructed by individuals through these interactions, with their world being isolated and separate to them. It is at this point that I move towards a relational constructionist approach, which purposefully places the term ‘relational’ at its forefront to encourage focus on relational processes, rather than the individuals and their surroundings, as part of this radical relational perspective (McNamee and Hosking, 2012).

Similar to Burr (2003), McNamee and Hosking (2012) propose several facets that are central to relational constructionism. Those most influential upon my own choices include: “not individual self...but relational processes”; “not self-existing entities and knowledge, but relational processes making multiple local rationalities” (McNamee and Hosking, 2012, p.37). This clearly demonstrates a more relational focused approach, with a movement away from viewing individuals as creating meaning through interactions for their own understandings of reality, and towards a view of interdependence and recognition of connectedness both between individuals and also the contexts in which they are located. This has influenced the way in which this thesis has been theoretically positioned as well as the way in which the research has been designed, as outlined below:

Following as a complex process: following is understood and explored in this thesis as a complex process involving multiple individuals, and is constructed through interactions between followers, leaders and contexts as detailed in Chapter Two. For instance, participants may have constructed their understandings through following others, following with others, and also being followed themselves across different contexts. Questions used during data generation therefore looked to explore such processes, and allowed for participants’ responses to naturally touch upon those individuals and contexts for processes of following.

Following as situated in local and historical contexts: I also actively acknowledge that participants' understandings of realities are influenced by interactions that they have had in the past (historical) and in contexts both internal and external to their workplace (local cultural). Therefore, I encouraged participants to draw upon past experiences and interactions with others from a range of contexts, despite the primary focus being on public sector contexts. I therefore deem it important to enable participants' contextual descriptions and reflective accounts from previous experiences to be captured during research, which is facilitated in this study through the use of narrative interviews and reflective diaries as means of data generation. The term data *generation* is used throughout the thesis, as opposed to data *collection*, to reflect the view that through the research myself and participants are engaging in meaning making, rather than there being discoverable truths to find or collect. This was also achieved through the use of visual data, and furthermore processes of photo-voice and photo-elicitation, which will be discussed later in this chapter (3.4 Data Generation Methods).

Co-constructing following: I interacted with my participants on multiple occasions and in multiple ways, in recognition that our realities are constructed together through our dialogue in the social setting of the interviews (King and Horrocks, 2010). I strived to achieve interactions that were mutual and conversational, as opposed to a strict schedule of questions and one-sided responses, through the appropriate design and conduct of data generation methods. Again, the multiple methods used enabled this and empowered participants within the research process, as will be discussed in the next section.

3.2 Methodological Choices

The methodological approach of a study is aligned with the epistemological and ontological positioning, as well as the overall research aim. This study adopts a case study approach, exploring the experiences of a "contemporary phenomenon in its real-world context" (Yin, 2013, p.2); it is based on cases of individuals, focusing on exploring them in depth through the use of multiple methods. This is described by Creswell (2012) as a key characteristic of case study research, to seek detailed (Creswell, 2012) insights into the phenomenon under study. The case study approach with multiple methods of data generation was deemed suitable for this study to enable greater insight (Speziale and Carpenter, 2003) into processes of following, a concept and experience lacking exploration empirically. Through adopting a case study approach, the use of multiple

methods acts as a form of triangulation (Guion, Diehl and McDonald, 2011) and as a way to achieve high quality data (Hall and Rist, 1999).

The ways in which individuals were invited and engaged to participate in the study will now be outlined

3.3 Methods of Engaging Participants in the Study

As Coyne (1997, p.623) states, the ways in which participants are selected can have a “profound effect on the ultimate quality of the research”. To ensure that I was making informed decisions I was keen to add rigour to this process. I compiled a database of the most significant studies to me within the fields of followership and authentic leadership, where studies included empirical research, from a qualitative approach. This allowed me to become familiar with the sampling strategies typically used within the fields, and enabled me to begin to make my own choices and to justify these too. The main ones that tended to be used were convenience and self-selection strategies.

The context of the study will first be outlined, providing justification for the ways in which participants were invited and the ways in which they were engaged in the data generation process.

3.3.1 The Research Context

This study is based in the UK public sector context, across multiple areas. The reasons for conducting this research were outlined in Chapter One, and will be briefly discussed here to remind the reader.

Much of the existing research on followership and leadership has been based in America (Baker, 2007; Bryman, 2004). There have been calls for further research on followership to be conducted in the UK public sector specifically. For instance, Collinson (2005) called for research on follower identities in the UK public sector due to the belief that they would be “required to act as calculable followers” in upcoming challenging times (p.1426). Pederson and Hartley (2008) claim that the UK’s public sector should be further studied, with regards to management and leadership, due to the extreme reforms that they have engaged in. It was therefore deemed inappropriate to restrict the selection of participants to a specific area within the public sector. Within the area of authentic followership and

leadership more specifically, existing studies have called for further research to be conducted in a variety of contexts to broaden understandings. For instance, Walumbwa et al (2010) referred to Western Europe in their recommendations for future research. In line with this, the notion of authenticity is often associated with organisations who are experiencing difficult times and “highly disruptive change” (Bunker and Wakefield, 2004, p.18), with the belief that during such times authenticity becomes desirable in organisational leaders (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Luthans and Avolio, 2003). Whilst this was based on the leaders’ authenticity, this research aims to give attention to authenticity during processes of following, within the challenging context of the UK Public Sector. Previous studies focusing on authentic leadership have also tended to include multiple industries in their samples, such as Walumbwa et al (2010), Endrissat et al (2007) and Woolley et al (2011). It is also in line with my research approach, with the belief that participants’ understandings and experiences will be influenced by their local cultural and historical surroundings (McNamee and Hosking, 2012). This is further supported by Carsten, Uhl-Bien et al (2010) who encouraged further research on followership and its constructions in different contexts, as well as Shamir and Eilam (2005) who proposed that the concept of authenticity may carry different meanings in different cultures and contexts.

3.3.2 Participant Selection Strategies

The term *strategies* is used rather than *strategy*, to align with the way that this study draws upon several types of sampling strategy, reflecting the flexible and iterative nature of qualitative research. There are numerous sampling strategies to choose from and this is considered an important stage in the design of social research (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005).

One of the sampling strategies deemed most appropriate for this study was Purposive Sampling. Babbie (2007, p.200) defines this as “A type of non-probability sampling in which the units to be observed are selected on the basis of the researcher’s judgement about which ones will be the most useful or representative”. However, this understanding of purposive sampling suggests intent to achieve a representative sample, which is not in line with this study’s approach. This study does not intend to achieve generalisable findings; rather, it hopes to explore experiences of following, in the UK public sector, and through this shed light on the social processes and concepts, through the experiences of individuals. More appropriate to the philosophy of this study, purposive sampling is an approach that is centred on choosing participants who will be most useful and information-

rich (Patton, 2005), and meet the “key criterion” (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam, 2003, p.79). This understanding aligns with this thesis, with the use of less positivist language being used (e.g. Babbie (2007) refers to ‘units’ and representation). Similarly others define it as “Members of a sample are chosen with a ‘purpose’ to represent a location or type in relation to a key criterion” (Ritchie et al, 2003, p. 79).

This sampling approach was deemed most suitable for this study as it lends itself well to research with an exploratory nature (Denscombe, 2014), allowing the criteria for selecting participants to be refined throughout the research process. For instance, in the initial stages I was interested in speaking with individuals within public sector organisations at a low hierarchical level – I did not specify which types of organisations I was interested in, nor did I place restrictions on how many I was looking for specifically from each organisation. Once I had completed some initial interviews I then decided to purposively select participants from a range of organisational types within the public sector, partially determined by feasibility of access, as well as aiming to provide breadth of insight in recognition of the importance of contexts from both the epistemological and theoretical positioning of this thesis. Referring back to Patton’s (2005) understanding, this thesis aims to explore followers’ experiences of following, and so I believed that speaking to employees at non-senior management levels in organisations would best provide me with these insights. However, through the initial stages of data generation I was able to recognise following as an ongoing process occurring at all levels of organisations. The sample criteria were then relaxed and broadened, incorporating individuals working in public sectors not restricted by their level or hierarchical positioning.

Patton (2005) proposes that all sampling is in fact purposeful and goes on to distinguish between fifteen types of purposeful sampling, one of which has been adapted for this study. Heterogeneous sampling involves selecting participants who have different characteristics and experiences (Wilson, 2014), to enable insight into a phenomenon from a variety of perspectives, and this provides a broader insight. This is typically used at the beginning of the research process and when there is a lack of empirical research previously conducted (Endrissat et al, 2007); this may then transform into other forms such as homogeneous, extreme or typical cases for example. The relational approach to followership is limited and the area of authentic followership is lacking in qualitative, empirical research, as identified in Chapter Two. There are broader aspects of the sampling framework that may appear homogeneous (organisational sector, hierarchical level) however, within these there are also practices of heterogeneous sampling applied by aiming for variety with regards to the specific characteristics of participants (backgrounds, job roles, organisational contexts, working teams etc.). Through including

participants from a variety of organisations and areas within the public sector, this exploratory study intends to gain insight into the constructions and experiences of following across multiple contexts within the UK public sector. This will be further outlined in Section 3.3.4 (Sampling Framework for the Study).

3.3.3 Access and Engagement of Participants

With regards to the ways in which participants were accessed and engaged in the study, I drew upon the methods of self-selection and also snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is where initial contacts relevant to the research are made who then allow the researcher to create further contacts through them (Bryman and Bell, 2011). This sampling approach is typically regarded as being used where access may be difficult or perhaps sensitive (Abrams, 2010; Harding, 2013), however this study's use is due rather to opportunities. For instance, when completing the initial interviews it became apparent that when participants had been discussing this study with colleagues it was resulting in expressions of interest to become involved. Furthermore participants were also asked if they would be happy to be contacted at a later point to be put in touch with colleagues as potential participants, which several agreed to do. This is discussed by Marshall (1996) as a potential outcome from initial participants sought out through purposeful sampling. Finally, when discussing my research with my own colleagues it became apparent that I could access potential participants through their personal networks. Therefore this demonstrates the use of snowball sampling methods as a way to utilise my context and opportunities for access within my social and personal networks.

Self-selection methods for recruiting participants were also drawn upon, referred to as advertising for participants (King and Horrocks, 2010). An invitation email was sent to several current and former students to introduce the study, and myself, and to encourage them to get in touch if they were interested in finding out more and potentially participating. Three participants were successfully recruited for the initial interviews using this approach, and so it was deemed a suitable approach to take forward for future access. This participant recruitment approach has been used in studies within the followership field, such as Vondey's (2012) work on followership where she accessed individuals through personal networks, and also in Kean et al's (2011) work on followership where they accessed community-based nurses through their positioning and links within this profession and context. This demonstrates the appropriateness of the selection strategy, in line with thesis's theoretical positioning. Furthermore this was also

used by various other studies within the authentic leadership field, although like much of the extant literature in this field, these were quantitative studies (see Emuwa, 2013; Walumbwa et al, 2010; Yagil and Medler-Liraz, 2014).

King and Horrocks (2010) warn that such approaches can detract from achieving an appropriate sample, however applying principles of purposive sampling, as I have, it can help to achieve this. They also encourage researchers to reply to all those who respond positively even if they do not end up being involved as participants the study. This is something that was practised in the initial interviews, with one participant informing me that he could only do the first stage of the interview, and another informing me that he actually worked within the private sector. In both cases the individuals were thanked for getting in touch, and I politely explained why I felt they would not be suitable participants, based on the study's purposive sampling approach and the guiding criterion. This demonstrated professionalism as a researcher to avoid the loss of any participants for this and future studies. As I engaged in the transcribing and analysing of the data iteratively, I felt that I had reached saturation, with repetition of emerging themes (Marshall, 1996; Suri, 2011) at fourteen participants and had achieved breadth of contexts.

3.3.4 Sampling Framework for the Study

The final sampling framework for this study is illustrated in Table 3.1. This has been influenced by the choice of sampling strategy and participant recruitment methods. I engaged in ongoing analysis of the data as it was collected (See Figure 3.5), to enable me to remain aware of the emerging findings and to realise the point of data saturation for this study. At the point of reaching fourteen participants I felt that I had sufficient data to work with and to ultimately address my overall research aim and sub-questions. An overview of the sampling framework for the study is available below in Table 3.1:

Table 3.1: Sampling Framework

Organisational Type	Number of Participants	Gender Split of Participants	
		Female	Male
Local Government Services	5	4	1
Central Government Services	2	0	2
Healthcare	2	2	0
Education	2	1	1
Defence Services	3	1	2
Total	14	8	6

During the data generation period, there were several issues related to access to participants. Responses were stronger from certain areas of the public sector context, and weaker from others. The study had initially hoped for an equal balance between the types of organisations represented by participants, however it became apparent that this would restrict the process of engaging potential participants in the research, which I wanted to avoid. Furthermore, the nature of this thesis is focused on individuals and their experiences, with the public sector as their background context, and so this was not deemed an issue due to the focus not being on the specific organisational type and context. Furthermore, access was also restricted in one area when a participant was leaving her organisation, resulting in the need to return to access methods through my networks. Finally, a third issue identified was that of concerns regarding the time required for participation. As participants were all working full time and some were also completing part-time degrees at the time of data generation, I was very aware that they may perceive my research as being too time consuming due to the multi-method design. To address this issue the time commitments were clearly outlined to all participants when initially inviting them to become involved, and so I ensured that I was being ethical in terms of making them aware of what to expect (appendix E). Following emails expressing interest in becoming involved, I then arranged a call with the relevant individuals to discuss the research further and to provide a clear explanation of the research diary and photo-elicitation interview in particular; this was something which several potential participants raised queries about, and so I was keen to address this to reduce the impact upon recruitment.

During the research process, there were three participants who did not either remain in the sample or were removed from the study. The first was due to time commitments, the second was due to not responding to follow up communications to organise phase three of the research, and the final was a participant who requested to be removed. In line with the ethical practices of this study this was done, with her removal from the process.

An overview of the participant profiles is provided in Table 3.2 below:

Table 3.2: Participant Profiles

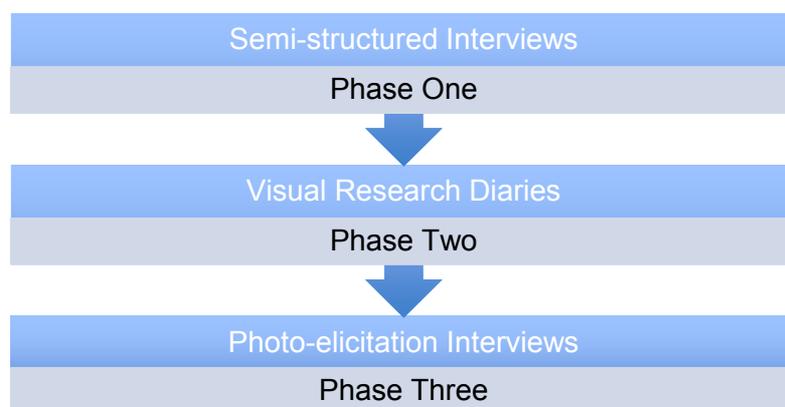
Pseudonym	Gender	Organisation Type	Biography
Michelle	Female	Local Government	Michelle has been in her current role for five years, and prior to that has experience in other public sector roles over the period a five years. At the time of research she was engaged in a part-time degree and talked about her enjoyment of this in developing her knowledge and skills.
Taylor	Female	Defence Services	Prior to engaging in the research Taylor had recently moved departments and reflected upon how she was finding this a struggle in our conversations. She has worked within this organisation for 19 years and in her current role for the past three years, but during the process of the data generation her role was put at risk of redundancy and so she was considering new roles both within and external to the organisation.
Debbie	Female	Healthcare	Debbie has a role with a specific focus on designing and developing training and development for staff. Debbie has been in her current role for 10 years and prior to that she was involved in training at a local college. During the time of data generation she was completing a part time business degree and was in the final stages of this.
Sophie	Female	Local Government	Sophie has been in her current role for four years, and undertakes a supervisory role as part of her job, supporting a small team of staff in their roles.
Megan	Female	Local Government	Megan is located within a team of around 15 people. Megan reflected upon her experiences at work and seemed to be having a difficult time due to relations with her peers and with her line manager. Prior to this role she worked in the private sector, which she felt had taught her many transferrable skills for her current role.
Callum	Male	Local Government	Callum has worked in several roles over the past eight years, with a short period of time spent in the private sector after graduating from university. Callum's role is largely centred on project management, and so he is constantly involved in and a part of multiple teams.
Kathryn	Female	Local Government	Kathryn has a professional background and current role related to finance and accountancy. She is involved in several internal and external groups related to her profession and placed emphasis on the importance of this to her. Prior to her current role, Kathryn has had several financial roles within public sector organisations.
Brian	Male	Central Government	Brian manages a team of staff as part of his role and has worked there for the past three years. Prior to that he had occupied several other roles within the public sector, with an overall length of service of approximately 14 years.

Karen	Female	Healthcare	Karen manages a group of around 30 staff on a daily basis. Karen had recently completed her part time Masters degree at the time of data generation, and suggested that she was keen to continue this post-graduation.
Nick	Male	Education	Nick holds a senior position and teaches on topics surrounding leadership but is interested in exploring the area of followership and to potentially incorporate this into teaching materials going forward. He has been in his current role for around 10 years and has worked within education for 24 years. In addition to this, he also feels as though he has a good understanding of the private sector, due to his family owning several businesses within this sector. During the data generation process Nick lost engagement in the research and seemed to remove himself from the process without informing the researcher first. The data collected for Nick is therefore drawn from his initial semi-structured interview only.
Danielle	Female	Education	Danielle has undertaken several short-term positions on fixed term contracts since graduating. The temporary nature of the roles does seem to impact the experiences that she has had, however this is not reflective of any reduction in workload, and she felt that she was currently lacking a healthy and sustainable work/life balance.
Ben	Male	Defence Services	Ben has worked at his organisation for 28 years. Having previously completed a Masters degree, he has now returned to higher education to complete a distance learning business degree. Ben has travelled around with his job over the years and worked in multiple different teams and areas of the organisation.
Luke	Male	Defence Services	Luke has worked at his organisation for 20 years. He currently occupies a middle-ranking role and is completing a distance learning business degree. Luke is around three years away from retirement from the organisation and is looking at relocating with his family in advance of this to begin the next phase of his career.
Chris	Male	Central Government	Prior to his current role Chris worked in the private sector within retail but left due to a lack of fit with his career ambitions and personal passion and interests. In his current role, Chris is a team leader for around seven staff and has recently experienced a change in senior management to whom he indirectly reports.

3.4 Data Generation Methods

The research design of this study is described as multi-method, combining a variety of data generation methods to obtain “different but complementary information” (Darbyshire, MacDougall and Schiller, 2005, p.424). Interviews were initially chosen as the method of data generation, to explore the understandings and experiences of participants with regards to following, and to address the overall research aim. I had previous experience of using them in my undergraduate dissertation, and felt that they would be appropriate for this study. However, I then came across visual methodologies and in particular the use of photographs within research. I was fascinated with this approach, and felt that this may enable richer insights into participants’ understandings rather than simply relying upon their ability to express this through verbal responses alone. Having attended a seminar by Dr. Gina Grandy (2012), who also drew upon visual methods, and immersing myself within the visual methodologies literature, I felt comfortable in deciding to incorporate this into my research design, and recognised it as a suitable method to explore the non-familiar concept (Mannay, 2010) of following, also addressing calls from the followership field for a variety of methods to be used in research (Carsten et al, 2010). The data generation process is illustrated in Figure 3.1, and consists of three methods; *semi-structured interviews* (phase one), *visual research diaries* (phase two), and *photo-elicitation interviews* (phase three).

Figure 3.1: Data Generation Process



As the findings emerge from each data generation approach they will be synthesised to build bigger, richer understandings (Srivastava and Thomson, 2009). In the first stages of data generation three participants were recruited for the study, each from different organisations, and I conducted my initial data generation phase between April and July 2013; here they participated in the whole multi-method data generation process. Due to this being the first time of employing the methods I was keen to reflect upon this extensively, and so I then went on to analyse the data to understand what the emerging themes were and how suitable each stage of the data generation felt. This is reflective of an abductive research approach, which argues for a “back and forth” process (Morgan, 2007.p.71) between theory and data to allow for surprising (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012) and unexpected themes to be understood in relation to existing theories as well as through further exploration during subsequent data generation. This is a relatively new approach within qualitative research (Mirza, Akhtar-Danesh, Nosegaard, Martin & Staples, 2014) but is one that is considered to be key for the construction of theory through empirical research (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012) overcoming restrictions faced through inductive and deductive approaches. I regard these initial interviews therefore not as a pilot but as the initial stages of data generation, and through the abductive approach I am able to recognise the importance of designing my research as an iterative process. This enabled me to amend my data generation methods and to ensure that I remained focused and aligned with reaching my overall research aim. Furthermore, it also enabled concepts that rose through the data to be explored in the theory base and then built upon for the remainder of the data generation; this was the case for employee voice and silence, as an illustrative example. Following this I amended the interview schedule as well as other materials used in the data generation process between September and December 2013. I then immersed myself back into the field and began to invite and engage participants again between January 2014 and June 2014.

Each phase of data generation will now be outlined and justified in relation to this study’s epistemological and theoretical positioning.

3.4.1 Phase One: Semi-structured Interviews

In line with the qualitative approach to the study, interviews were chosen for phase one of the data generation process, drawing upon a semi-structured format. Through some initial knowledge of the literature in the followership field, and through reflecting upon my own constructions and experiences, there were several areas of interest that were incorporated into the design of the initial interviews with participants. Semi-structured interviews allow for the combination of covering certain topics of the researcher's interest, whilst also allowing some flexibility and for participants' to share their stories (Rabionet, 2011). An interview schedule was prepared, which is commonly used in qualitative research (Schulz and Ruddat, 2012), and typically consists of "...a series of broad themes to help direct the conversation towards topics and issues about which the interview wants to learn" (Qu and Dumay, 2011, p. 246). This differs from a more structured list of questions in that it was intended for use as a supportive guide during the interview to ensure that the main areas of interest were covered at some point, whilst also maintaining some flexibility based on the natural direction of the dialogue with participants (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). The initial interviews conducted consisted of ten broad questions, with probing and follow up questions being added during the dialogue within each interview. As previously discussed, the abductive nature of the study meant that after completing the data generation process for a few participants, the data was briefly analysed and I returned to the theory base and to my research design subsequently to ensure that it was appropriate by reflecting any additions or amendments felt necessary. At this point the interview schedule was amended and some further areas of interest were built, as well as drawing upon Carsten et al's (2010) interview guide and incorporating aspects of this, as outlined at Appendix A. This was a key piece from the theory base informing this study, as one of the only qualitative studies conducted that acknowledged that individuals may have different understandings of followership and thus guided this study in building on this further.

When developing the interview schedule, Patton's (1990) question types were used as a structural guide, to enable a range of issues to be covered and to draw out different types of information. Patton (1990) suggests that there are several types of questions for use in qualitative interviews, including: background/demographic, opinion, knowledge, experience, value, sensory, and behavioural questions. The interview schedule developed for this study consists of some background questions at the start (for example: *can you tell me a little bit about yourself?*), and then moves on to a combination of experience, behavioural and opinion questions (for example: *what do you understand by the term 'following'?*, and *what's*

it [the working environment] like in reality for you?). This is reflective of the nature of the study, focused on gaining insight into the experiences (experience, behaviour) of participants and their own perceptions of phenomena (opinion). In addition to this I also drew upon Kvale's (2008) follow-up question style, to encourage participants' responses to be expanded upon and to allow for the natural co-construction of data throughout the interview itself. Each interview began with some general conversation to help build rapport with participants, with an aim of feeling comfortable interacting with each other during the interviews. Upon reflection this was achieved in most instances, with the second interview in particular often feeling enjoyable and as though we were engaging in natural conversation as opposed to a more formal, detached interview situation. Approaches such as appearing friendly and enthusiastic were valuable ways to build a relationship with participants, and to help them feel happy to participate. Again, at the end the interviews were closed by thanking participants for their time and by clearly explaining the next steps of the process.

The interviews were conducted face to face in most instances, either taking place on the participants' organisational premises or at the researcher's university institution. This was intended to help build rapport with participants (Irvine, Drew and Sainsbury, 2013), a preferred approach within qualitative interviewing (Cachia and Millward (2011). All interviews were held in private meeting rooms with only the participant and myself present. This was intended to help participants feel relaxed and comfortable in sharing their views, as well as minimising the chances of distractions and disruptions during the interview (McNamara, 2009). Where distractions did occur they were actively managed in an attempt to reduce the impact; for instance one room used had heavy traffic noise due to the window being open, and so the Dictaphone was moved closer and I ensured that I spoke in a louder tone, which resulted in a comprehensible recording and thus full use of the data. All interviews were recorded using an electronic Dictaphone, which participants were informed of in advance, and each recording was subsequently backed up on to a computer for transcription purposes. Through this I was able to fully engage in the conversation with participants, asking probing questions and commenting on responses, as opposed to being distracted by detailed note taking of participants responses (Britten, 2006).

For some participants however the interviews were conducted using videoconferencing software. This method was useful in allowing participants who were not located nearby to be included, whilst also reducing any time and monetary costs associated with travel (Sturges and Hanrahan, 2004). However due to not being face to face, at times there were pauses and perhaps less rapport built with participants; the use of video was therefore used to overcome, or minimise the impact of this (Hanna, 2012) rather than simply relying on a

telephone conversation. As a result, I utilised this format of interview only in cases where I was unable to arrange for a face-to-face interview with participants, a common practice within qualitative research (Irvine et al, 2013). I have also reflected upon this as a researcher and referred to my notes during the analysis of data, reminding myself of the social setting of the interview (King and Horrocks, 2010).

At the end of phase one, participants were provided with a hard copy or electronic copy of their diary, which will now be discussed.

3.4.2 Phase Two: Visual Research Diaries

The second phase of the data generation process is the use of visual research diaries. Participants were provided with a blank diary, with some brief notes of guidance on the front pages (Appendix B), which were discussed at the end of phase one. In the diary participants were asked to take photographs and select images that reflected their understandings and experiences of following and the topics discussed in their first interview. They were also encouraged to annotate the images with words or phrases, for recall purposes in the subsequent interview. Each participant was given approximately four weeks to complete this, before a mutually convenient time was agreed for the final interview to take place.

Participants where the initial interview was conducted via videoconference were provided with a word document containing the same guidance as in the diaries, and were asked to populate this document with their images. The main issue with this was not being able to provide a hard copy diary to participants to complete, and to have consistency across participants for phase two. As Jorgenson and Sullivan (2009) describe, actually providing participants with their own materials, for instance the diary, can help to get active participation and engagement in the research process through a feeling of ownership, and as if they are benefitting from the process too.

Research diaries in their traditional form are intended to collect an “autobiographical account of events, thoughts and feelings [that] we have experienced” (Symon, 2004, p.98). The benefits of using this method are that they can provide rich, detailed descriptions of participants’ lived experiences (Radcliffe, 2013) as opposed to participants being removed from such contexts in the interview setting, where they may struggle to provide as much detail. Through the use of such diaries this study hoped to gain rich, in-depth access to the participants’ constructions and experiences in a “relatively non-obtrusive manner” (Symon, 2004, p.28). However they can become, or at least be perceived as, a time-intensive exercise, they may produce a large amount of complex data that is challenging to analyse,

and they require much dedication from participants (Radcliffe, 2013). This poses a risk of reluctance for individuals to become involved. However, the nature of the diaries in this study is slightly different, in that rather than asking participants to provide records of events or feelings over a period of time through extensive written narratives, they are instead asked to include photographs and images with brief annotations. I was aware that this may put potential participants off agreeing to take part in the study, and so I actively discussed this part of the process with potential participants to reassure them. Furthermore, I also personally pre-piloting this part of the research design. I decided to complete a visual diary myself based on my own understandings and experiences of following – I then met with my principal supervisor to discuss the contents. This enabled me to be empathetic towards my participants when completing and sharing their diaries with me, and it also meant that I was able to briefly show some examples to my participants for reassurance and clarity on what they were being asked to do. This was also a key way for me to remain reflexive as a researcher, capturing my own thoughts around following and how I construct it and have experienced it at the early stages of the study. The ways in which I have engaged in reflexive practice will be reviewed in Chapter Seven (7.2 Reflexivity).

When including photos or visual images in research, two processes occur for participants: *photo-voice* and *photo-elicitation*. The research diaries represent the photo-voice aspect, with the subsequent interviews representing photo-elicitation. Photo-voice refers to the empowering of individuals through the use of visuals in research (Warren, 2005), allowing participants to share their experiences through the use of images (Slutskaya, Simpson & Hughes, 2012) enabling them to be heard and seen by others. Photo-voice can thus be seen as participants capturing or portraying their thoughts and experiences through visual data. The ways in which they then go on to discuss and explain this refers to photo-elicitation, which will be discussed in the next section as the method of interview used for phase three of this study.

Through being able to take photographs or select images, participants are able to reflect and express their understandings and experiences through the use of visual data. Therefore, they have *voice* by controlling this part of the process. Ray and Smith (2012) outline four ways in which the use of photographs can be incorporated into research:

- Researcher-only photo creation – researcher's take and select photographs
- Participant-only photo creation – participant's take and select photographs
- Archival-only photo creation – existing photographs used

- Hybrid approach – a combination of the above used collectively

For the purposes of this study the hybrid approach was selected, with the main input being from participants. They were enabled to create new images as well as use pre-existing ones (Rose, 2012). During the pre-pilot that I conducted, I came across photographs that I had taken previously, but that struck me when thinking about the process of following. In addition, the ability to use pre-existing photographs and images taken and created by others meant that I could extend my thinking to various contexts; for instance below are two pages from my own diary. A hybrid approach was adopted so that participants had more freedom and fluidity in the use of this method, to avoid minimal input and unwillingness to be become involved. Furthermore, it broadened the contexts as discussed and meant that participants could overcome organisational restrictions in terms of approval, maintaining ethical practice for the study. It also reflects a contemporary approach to this method; many publications using visual data focus on printed photographs and providing participants with disposable cameras. However, I was keen to provide flexibility and to not restrict participants as I was aware of the wealth of access to existing images also, for instance through the internet in comparison to when the field first emerged.

In the pre-pilot, to capture my own thoughts on the processes of following I drew upon a photograph I had taken (Figure 3.2) of my fiancé and our dog:

Figure 3.2: Pre-pilot diary extract

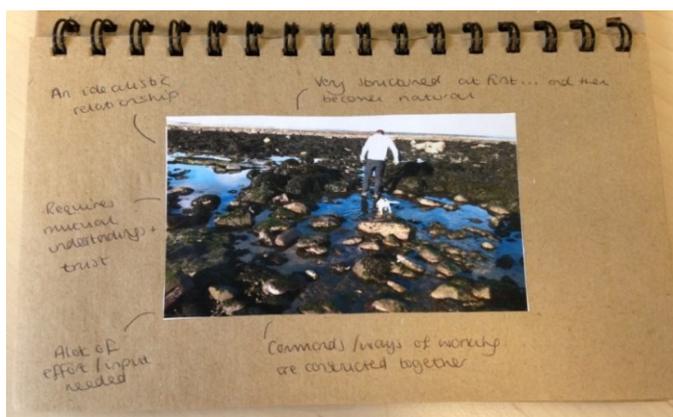
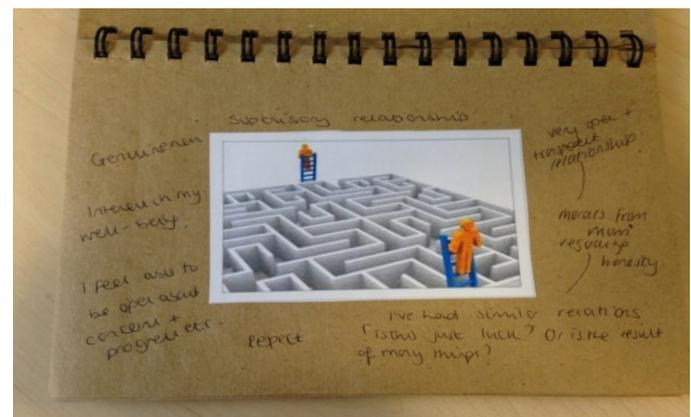


Figure 3.3: Pre-pilot diary extract



Whilst this was removed from my work context, it enabled me to consider ideal ways for following to occur and to think about how this does or does not work well. Then, in discussions with my supervisor I related this back to my experiences in the workplace, reflecting upon experiences that had mirrored and contrasted what I had described in the photograph. It struck me as an ideal form of following, with complete trust between them as well as the importance of understanding one another through their own way of communicating. As evident from Figure 3.2, I annotated the image with terms including “idealistic”, “mutual understandings”, and “trust”. These then aided discussions with my supervisor in the pre-pilot photo-elicitation interview. Similarly, Figure 3.3 illustrates a further extract from my diary, where I used an animated image to portray a situation when I was following during my undergraduate studies. As mentioned, I briefly shared an example (Figure 3.2) with my participants. Apart from the previously mentioned benefits of helping participants to see an example and understand what is being asked of them, this may also add further engagement with my participants (Ray and Smith, 2012), helping to achieve openness and transparency between with participants.

As with any research method there were logistical issues to consider for this method. Clark-Ibanez (2007) regards the main logistical issues of using photographs in research to be the purchasing of cameras, the cost to develop photographs and also the time required for both activities. Previous studies have used disposable cameras for participants (Rose, 2012), providing them with them and collecting them afterwards. Whilst this is a low-risk option due to the low cost of disposable cameras in comparison to digital for instance, it would also add time to the process by having to collect the cameras and develop the photos externally and there would then only be hard copies for the researcher’s use. An alternative option that I adopted is to encourage participants to utilise their own means of taking photographs, with many modern devices such as mobile phones having integrated cameras. This approach carried with it the risk of inconsistent quality of the images, which could adversely impact the analysis and interpretation of the data. This was however overcome by ensuring that participants provided a detailed verbal description of their visual diary content in phase three of the data generation process, as well as encouraging written annotations in the diaries.

Once the participants had completed their diaries a second interview was then arranged to discuss the contents of the diaries in the form of a photo-elicitation interview. The diaries were brought to phase three of the data generation process, and I retained them subsequently. This will now be discussed regarding the structure, the benefits and suitability of this method, as well as outlining the issues considered and managed throughout.

3.4.3 Phase Three: Photo-Elicitation Interviews

The final stage of the data generation process is in the form of a photo-elicitation interview (PEI). Photo-elicitation is defined as “the interpretation of photographs by research participants” (Collier, 1967; Collier and Collier, 1986). However as the field has progressed this has been critiqued as failing to recognise the flexibility of this method and the multiple ways that it can be applied (Prosser and Schwartz, 2004; Ray and Smith, 2012). Harper (2002, p.13) offers a more detailed understanding, “Photo elicitation is based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview”; this is effective in acknowledging the complexity of the method, with the reference to ‘levels’, indicating that there are multiple ways and degrees to which photographs can be incorporated into research. However, it offers no consideration of what will happen in the interview or how the photographs might be used. Zenkov and Harmon (2009) address this by describing this as a process that explores individuals’ reactions and reflections upon their own experiences through the images. This latter understanding of the method clearly incorporates all aspects of the PEI process, as opposed to focusing purely on the photographs themselves. I chose to refer to diaries as ‘visual’ research diaries, and was less prescriptive in participants’ choice of the format of the content of their visual research diaries. This was partially as a result of reflecting on my pre-pilot, where I felt that there was more than just photographs that I wanted to include in my own diary, and so I felt it important not to restrict participants either.

The use of photographs in research first emerged in the fields of sociology and anthropology (Ray and Smith, 2012; Bateson and Mead, 1942), with Collier (1967) conducting and classifying the method of photo-elicitation for the first time in the 1950s (Parker, 2009). However it was not until the 1980s that it was applied to organisational studies (Warren, 2009), and many argue that it still remains largely “underleveraged” (Ray and Smith, 2012, p.289). The number of studies utilising this method remain limited (Parker, 2009), with support for the value of such methods reflected in comments regarding this neglect as strange (Davison, McLean and Warren, 2012). In their review of existing studies using this method, Ray and Smith (2012) identify the typical focuses to date. However, there appears to be an imbalance in the attention on leaders and followers. For instance, Guthey and Jackson (2005) used PEIs and focused on the CEOs and how their images are portrayed and perceived by others. However, there is a lack of research applying this method to followers and members of the organisations who are lower, in hierarchical terms, than CEOs

(Guthey and Jackson, 2005). Perhaps this has followed the trend in organisational studies generally, which has been discussed throughout Chapter Two.

As outlined earlier in the chapter, this study follows a relational social constructionist approach, with a focus on ongoing, interactive processes and co-constructed meaning making. The use of photographs in research is understood to be a process of constructing meanings, with particular emphasis on the way in which they enable contextual attachments to be captured (Page and Gaggiotti, 2012; Parker, 2009; Steyaert, Marti and Michels, 2012). Photo-elicitation interviews are flexible in the ways that they can be designed and conducted (Clark-Ibanez, 2007; Prosser and Schwartz, 2004; Ray and Smith, 2012). In line with Wall's (2014) framework of incorporating the visual into research, as illustrated in Figure 3.4 below, this study has placed focus on the use of visual for "Generating new understandings from the data" (Wall, 2014, n.p).

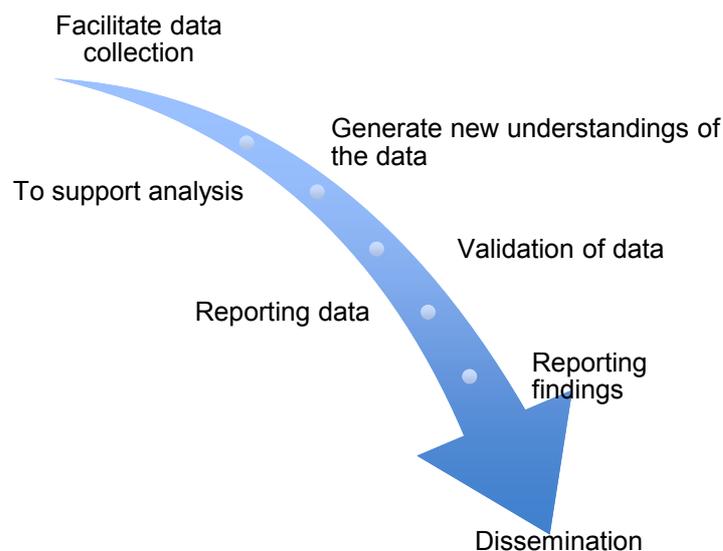


Figure 3.4: Incorporating the visual (Adapted from Wall, 2014)

Wall (2014) suggests that as visual is integrated into research to a greater extent, the complexity also increases; thus, as visual becomes integrated into reporting and analysis methods it can become complex. Due to the early stage of my research career, the use of visual is an area that I am becoming aware of through this thesis and so as I progress I anticipate moving along this continuum with the use of visual in my research to greater extents. However, for the purposes of this study, visual has been incorporated as a way to enable co-construction of meaning making, as a "communicative tool" (Warren, 2005, p.864)

to achieve rich insights into non-familiar concepts, and to encourage the capturing of local and historical contexts in participants' reflections for meaning making.

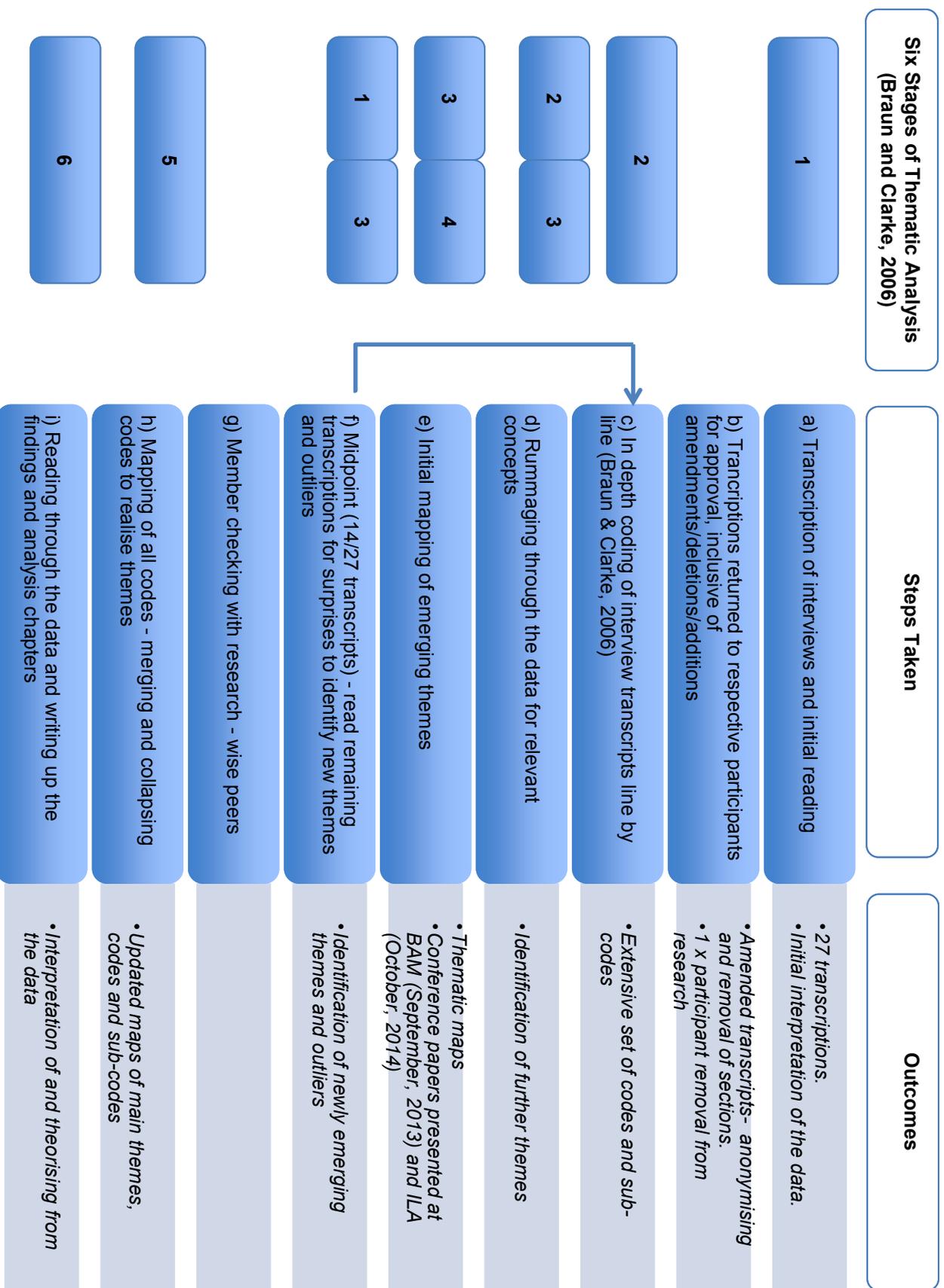
As mentioned, the PEI can enable enhanced relations between the researcher and participants. The interview is centred on the contexts of participants' diary contents, and involved non-structured conversations between participants and myself. Through such dialogue, we co-constructed understandings of following (Van Auken, Frisvoll and Stewart, 2010). Participants were enabled to feel like co-researchers and more active (Steyaert et al, 2012), Furthermore, this benefitted relationships between myself and participants (Warren, 2009); with activeness (Steyaert et al, 2012) enabling openness, and the removal of power imbalances, using this approach may have reduced the likelihood of participants feeling exploited from less personal and more intense one-directional interview approaches. The use of the visual research diaries provided participants with "individual space" (Ortega-Alcazar and Dyck, 2011, p.109) and time away from an "intrusive researcher voice" to consider their experiences of following and to reflect on previous experiences of this process.

Furthermore, there are now numerous calls for research to incorporate visual methods, and in particular for PEI within the organisational field (Ray and Smith, 2012). This research has addressed these calls for the use of PEI and visual methods in the organisational studies field, incorporated as the third form of data generation method within this study. The inclusion of such methods is hoped to bring about new understandings about the methods (Davison et al, 2012) as well as enabling this study to gather *different* types of data (Harper, 2002) from the field to enrich empirical understandings, and to promote more active involvement of participants in research (Steyaert et al, 2012).

3.5 Data Preparation, Interpretation and Analysis

This section will provide an overview of the process of preparing, interpreting and analysing the data. This is split into sections of data preparation stages (3.5.1) and interpretation and analysis of the data (3.5.2). The data interpretation and analysis process for this study is illustrated in Figure 3.5, which will be referred to throughout this section:

Figure 3.5: Data Interpretation and Analysis Process



3.5.1 Data Preparation Stages

Each interview was recorded using a Dictaphone as well as brief researcher field notes. Once both interviews had taken place for each participant, they were then transcribed into an electronic word-processed document (Step a, Figure 3.5). The process of transcribing is considered by many as an integral stage in qualitative research (Halcomb and Davidson, 2006; Kvale, 1996; Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999), and so various factors were considered before deciding how to approach it. Such considerations included the style of transcription, who should complete the transcriptions, and also the measures that could be taken to ensure that they were a true reflection of the interviews.

The style of transcription adopted was *denaturalised* (Bucholtz, 2000; Davidson, 2009; Mero-Jaffe, 2011) whereby the interview is depicted verbatim and where there is less focus upon specific language and more upon the “meanings and perceptions created and shared within a conversation” (Oliver, Serovich and Mason, 2005, np). This style enabled the natural conversation to be recorded and retained for analysis, whilst also allowing the data to not be overloaded with details that may detract from interpreting underlying meanings, unlike naturalised transcriptions that look to focus upon specific details of language (Kvale, 2008). This, as Halcomb and Davidson (2006) suggest, is aligned with the philosophical approach of the study through its focus upon processes of constructing meaning. I chose to include details such as laughter and significant pauses, as well as making researcher field notes to record any significant reactions or body language during the interviews that may be “particularly powerful in conveying meaning” (King and Horrocks, 2010, p.48). These were then referred to during the analysis stages.

At first, I chose to self-transcribe the interviews as opposed to outsourcing this task to a third party. This decision was made for several reasons, the main one being that through previous research experience I understood this part of the process as a valuable way to get closer to the data and an additional interpretation stage in the process, (Halcomb and Davidson, 2006). For instance, I would have begun to interpret what was being said during the interview, straight after the interview when I wrote in my reflective diary, during the transcribing of the recording and each time I returned to re-read the transcription as part of the analysis stage. In order to reduce the impact of this process I utilised resources such as transcription pedals and also

voice recognition software. This enabled me to familiarise myself with the data through both listening and verbally repeating the interview conversations. This was however, still a very time-consuming process to undertake (Maclean, Meyer and Estable, 2004), and so as the study progressed the design was adapted to incorporate some of the transcriptions being completed by a third party. This decision was made through reflection at my second annual review in May 2014, and through the review of my time plan, where I recognised the time constraints that I faced. As a precautionary measure, I had stated in my ethical forms and consent forms that myself or a third party would complete the transcriptions, and so there was no need to change this or get re-approval from participants. Whilst using a third party to complete transcriptions can result in errors or even changes being made to the data (Poland, 1995), I managed this actively by reading through each transcript whilst listening to the recording to check them, which also acted as a further stage of interpretation and analysis of the data (Flick, 2008).

The transcriptions from both interviews were then sent to participants via email and they were asked to review them to confirm that they were a true reflection of the interviews and the conversations that had taken place (Step b). I reassured participants that I was not focusing upon the grammatical errors in the transcriptions and encouraged them to avoid making such changes, so as to not detract from the natural way in which our conversations took place. A couple of the participants asked for specific sections to be removed from the transcripts, for instance one participant had since reflected upon her interview and decided that she no longer wished to include a certain section in the data, which I then removed.

This process of data preparation was ongoing from the first stages of data generation in April 2013, through to June 2014 when the final interviews were conducted. I engaged in transcribing iteratively at various points, conducting several interviews and then transcribing and beginning to interpret the data, before then arranging further interviews. Due to time lapses between conducting interviews and completing the transcriptions I felt unable to return to participants to ask them to look over my interpretations of the data, for instance sharing with them extracts from Chapter Four. I explored instead the option of sharing the transcriptions and my interpretations with fellow researchers. This was done to reassure the credibility of my interpretations of the data, and will be discussed later in this chapter (Section 3.7 Research Quality and Reflexivity).

The data generation phases resulted in data as detailed below in Table 3.3. The approach taken to analyse this data will now be discussed in the next section.

Table 3.3: Data Set by Phase and Participant

Participant	Phase One: Interview 1 (Word Count)	Phase Three: PEI (Word Count)	Total Word Count	Phase Two: Visual Research Diary (Image Count)
Michelle	10, 331	13, 531	23, 862	13
Taylor	8, 317	7, 730	16, 047	5
Debbie	5, 225	5, 780	11, 005	6
Sophie	9, 839	17, 669	27, 508	20
Megan	12, 260	16, 991	29, 251	23
Callum	10, 636	10, 551	21, 187	6
Kathryn	12, 749	7, 904	20, 653	15
Brian	9, 673	8, 778	18, 451	4
Karen	13, 137	14, 742	27, 879	18
Nick	9776	-	9776	-
Danielle	10, 359	19, 051	29, 410	16
Ben	12, 948	10, 710	23, 658	10
Luke	9, 124	9, 591	18, 715	13
Chris	12, 374	13, 918	26, 292	5
Total per data collection phase	146, 748	156, 946	303, 694	154

3.5.2 Interpretation and Analysis of Data

As previously discussed, each interview recording was transcribed either by myself or by a third party. The model of Braun and Clarke (2006) was used for this study, providing a framework for thematic analysis of the data. Their work encourages in depth coding, and enables themes to be realised through their phases. Thematic analysis was deemed appropriate for the qualitative nature of this study, allowing for a flexible approach to analysing the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It was a particularly useful method in enabling processes of clustering and mapping of codes to realise themes. Due to the significant amount of data and the iterative approach taken for the study, this helped to work through the codes that had been built up throughout the research. Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework propose six stages for thematic analysis:

- 1) Familiarising self with the data
- 2) Generating initial codes
- 3) Searching for themes
- 4) Reviewing themes
- 5) Defining and naming themes
- 6) Producing the report

This framework was adopted and applied for the analysis of the interview transcripts. The annotations in participants' diaries were also reviewed in line with the themes produced as a result of this. As Figure 3.5 earlier in this chapter illustrates, the various stages of thematic analysis were applied throughout the data interpretation and analysis process, however not always necessarily in the order as outlined above. For instance, I engaged in Stage one at several points as and when the data was collected. As detailed in the overview of data generation and analysis process, there were various stages that I engaged before realising the main themes from my data.

Once transcribed, I read through each transcript by participant and engaged in the line by line coding approach, as identified by Braun and Clarke (2006) and as illustrated in Figure 3.5 at stage c). For each transcript this returned a set of codes, some of which began to be categorised and clustered together. At various points throughout the data generation period this was engaged in with some initial searching of themes thus taking place; for instance, as illustrated in Figure 3.5, step e) took place both in 2013 and 2014. The emergent themes from this were then incorporated into conference papers, which I wrote up into papers and presented at external conferences including British Academy of Management (Morris, 2013) and International Leadership Association (Morris, 2014b). This was a useful process in becoming aware of emergent themes and of receiving feedback and having the opportunity to discuss this with others. I chose not to use a template for the coding of the transcripts, as I wanted to remain open to what may emerge from the data. Whilst this removed restrictions upon the emerging themes, it was also difficult due to the numerous codes produced through this. At the point of analysing all transcriptions, most of which had been completed on NVivo software to manage the amount of data, I then engaged in a process of mapping and collapsing codes into themes.

This was done through a physical process of mapping, using post-it notes and large sheets of paper, as illustrated in Figure 3.6. The codes were clustered together in

broad groups at first; this grouped repetitions or codes with similarities and links together. Next, each cluster of codes was then mapped out in further detail, and through this instances of collapsing codes were enabled. Figure 3.6 illustrates these processes taking place, and figure 3.7 illustrates an example of the outcome from the clustering processes for one them.

Figure 3.6: Mapping and collapsing codes



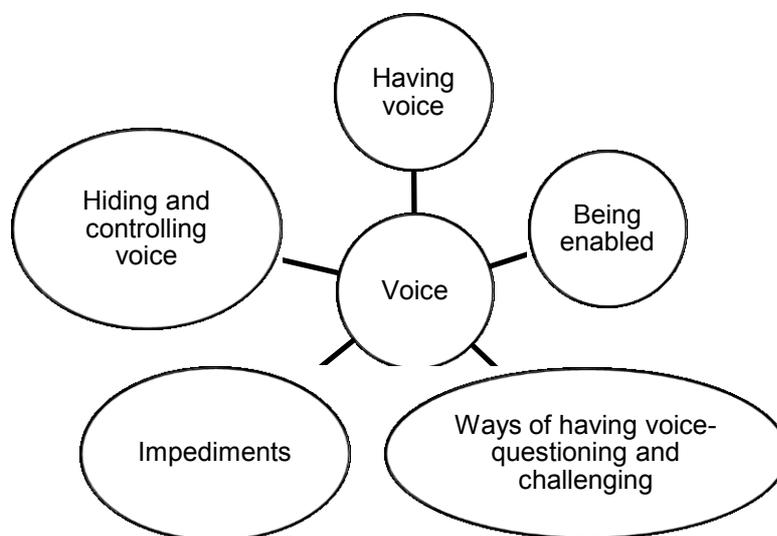
Figure 3.7: Collapsing of codes

1) Individual codes on transcripts	2) Grouping/merging of codes	3 and 4) Revised codes	3 and 4) Fitting with Theme
challenge	challenging	Ways of having voice	Voice
challenging		Being enabled to have voice	
formal opportunities	formal opportunities	Having voice	
feedback	feedback		
feedback			
constructive criticism			
questioning			
questioning worthwhile of task	questioning		
questioning enablers			
questioning feedback			
continuous improvement	continuous improvement		

As figure 3.7 demonstrates, individual codes were created on the transcripts. These were then written on to post it notes (see stage 1, figure 3.6) and were then mapped out into groups that shared similarities or relationships in the focus of the codes (see stage 2, figure 3.6). For example, as figure 3.7 illustrates there were several codes across transcripts related to the notion of questioning, including: questioning, questioning worthwhile of task, questioning enablers, and questioning feedback. There were then clustered to form a code of questioning (see figure 3.7). Through this process the number of initial codes were collapsed into groupings, which then allowed for structure to begin forming within each group of coding (figure 3.6, stage 4).

The overarching themes were revised and structured throughout this process, and the researcher created thematic maps in line with Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach. The thematic maps were then the central focus in structuring Chapter Four; an example is illustrated in Figure 3.8 below:

Figure 3.8: Thematic map



As I engaged in the reading of the data and writing up of chapters four and five (Figure 3.5, step i), extracts were taken from the transcripts to reflect and discuss each of the themes. Each page of the participants' visual research diaries was photographed and saved electronically, and was then also referred to when reading through the transcripts, in particular for phase three which consisted of the supporting narratives. Whilst extracting data to illustrate the themes from the transcripts, this was also done for participants' visual research diaries. In the writing

up of Chapter Four, Braun and Clarke's (2006) production of the 'report', data from all three phases of the data generation process was incorporated and used collectively to build up a rich reflection of the themes from the data.

This section has outlined the ways in which the data was generated, as well as interpreted and analysed. Next, the ethical considerations for the study will be discussed.

3.6 Research Ethics

This study has been designed and conducted in accordance with Northumbria University's Ethical Guidelines, having undergone ethical approval in 2012. A student ethical issues form was completed and approved at an early stage in the research (appendix C), and as changes were made to the design of the study this was re-approved to ensure sustained ethical practice (appendix D). Individual Informed Consent forms (appendix E) were used for all participants of the study, which detailed the focus of the study as well as an honest overview of the expected commitments of participants to become involved. For example, the use of a multiple method research design meant that I was conscious of individuals struggling to dedicate the time for this, and the use of diaries may have put some individuals off. Through making this clear from the outset and in the informed consent forms it was hoped that this would reduce the likelihood of participants withdrawing themselves during the data collection process or spending minimal time on the diary phase. Furthermore, once the interviews were completed and transcribed, participants were sent their respective transcriptions and provided with the opportunity to request any amendments or removals of data before it was analysed and used in the thesis. Several participants asked for small sections of the transcripts to be removed or further anonymised, which was done and then resent to the participants for final approval. One participant decided that they no longer wished to be included in the research after receiving their transcriptions, and whilst reluctant to lose them from the research, this was stated in the informed consent forms as an option and so I respected the participants wishes and removed them and their data from the study. Finally, in the writing up of the thesis and of the findings in conference papers and publications all participants names have been replaced with pseudonyms with only brief biographies provided to give some context for the reader and to remind myself during the analysis and interpretation of the data.

As aforementioned, when the research design changed to include visual methods I recognised the need to take into consideration ethical issues specific to this type of research approach and to this type of data. In comparison to a standard qualitative and verbal interview, the use of visual data requires more pro-active consideration in relation to ethical issues. In terms of consent, this can be applied to the participant, but also to those who are included in their chosen photographs. Firstly, it is important to explain the requirements of the PEI process and pre-work that they can expect to engage in- this method is arguably quite intimate of individuals lives (Clark-Ibanez, 2007) and the contexts that they are involved in, and so they should be made aware of this ahead of agreeing to take part. Participants must also have the right to remove themselves, or perhaps some of their photographs from the research too. Giving participants control over what images they included in their diaries, and which ones they discussed in the PEI meant that I was able to reduce the potential for participants to feel embarrassment or regret of including certain images (Clark-Ibanez, 2007). With regards to the actual photographs and the individuals within them, Stayaert et al (2012) encourage researchers to obtain permission from participants to include their photographs in the final thesis. Participants were provided with clear instructions regarding the need to obtain consent from any individuals who are identifiable in their photographs and of taking any photographs in the workplace, to minimise issues of consent from 3rd party individuals. This is reflected in the individual informed consent form, and was also discussed with each participant when provided with their diary.

3.7 Research Quality and Reflexivity

This study has been designed with consideration of the quality of the data to be collected, to enhance the extent to which the research question(s) and objectives can be addressed. Lincoln & Guba's (1985) framework was referred to when designing the study, and is used as an evaluative tool at the end of the study (Chapter Six). Through this approach of applying an evaluative framework both prior and after the study, it enables insight and confirmation of the quality of the findings (Stige, Malterud & Midtgarden, 2009).

The framework applied to this study considers the way in which findings have: *credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This is useful in providing alternative criteria to that typically used in traditional scientific studies, such as reliability and credibility.

As a qualitative study, and as discussed in chapter one briefly, I adopt a reflexive approach and recognise my role in the design and conducting of the research (Burr, 2003), and so find the criteria of reliability and credibility restrictive for this. In line with the philosophical approach taken for this study, I understand knowledge as emerging through “interact[tions] with others” (Cunliffe, 2008, p.128), and so understand that through my interactions with participants we will co-construct meaning together and so would not expect others to be able to replicate this with the same findings emerging. However, given the active role that I play in the research and the importance of ensuring quality findings, Guba & Lincoln’s (1985) framework is useful in ensuring this.

A review of the ways in which I have practiced reflexivity as well as the application of Lincoln & Guba’s (1985) quality criteria will be provided in Chapter Six (6.2 Reflexivity, 6.3 Evaluative Framework).

3.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided an outline of the philosophical and methodological considerations for this thesis. It has provided a detailed outline of the ways in which the study was designed, discussing each method used and outlining the ways in which the data generated was then prepared, analysed and interpreted. The findings emergent from this process will now be discussed in Chapter Four – Insights into Experiences of Following.

Chapter Four

Insights into Experiences of Following

4.0 Chapter Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the research design and the underpinning methodological positioning of the researcher. This chapter focuses on the findings from the study. It will briefly provide clarity on how the themes developed were realised and will present each theme with supporting data and analytical discussions. Through this the overall research question *What can individual's experiences, within UK public sector contexts, tell us about processes of following?* will be addressed.

This chapter addresses research objective four: *To offer in depth insights into experiences of following, presenting illustrative data and interpretations from thematic analysis.* Throughout the chapter the data from each of the three data generation methods will be drawn upon and distinguished for the reader, with a commentary of how they have complemented each other where appropriate. This chapter will begin by briefly outlining how the findings have been presented in this chapter. Next each theme will be discussed, drawing upon illustrative quotes from the data as well as some brief links to the relevant literature from Chapter Two – Followership, Authenticity and Voice. A summary will then be provided before moving on to Chapter Five (Discourses of Following), which will present the emerging discourses for following from the data, to develop a strong understanding of how following is constructed.

4.1 The Presentation of Themes

The data presented in this chapter are drawn from all three stages of the data generation process, and from all fourteen participants. The data thus includes direct extracts from interview transcripts, as well as visual data from the diaries. Where appropriate, the supporting narratives for the visual data are clearly presented for the reader. The data types are distinguished throughout for clarity of reading and interpretation.

The data presented in this chapter are reflective of that collected during the research. As outlined in Chapter Three, the interviews were all transcribed verbatim, with participants' language and precise wording as well as significant pauses and symbols of emotion, such as laughter, retained for effect where appropriate. The names of participants have been replaced with pseudonyms, and any specific information considered too personally revealing has been removed in line with the ethical considerations of the research design. I will offer my interpretation of the data and discuss the responses of participants in relation to each other where appropriate, with some brief links being formed with the relevant literature. More significant links between data and literature will be discussed in Chapter Five (Discussion and Conclusions).

An overview of the personal biographies of each participant is available in Chapter Three – Methodology (Table 3.2) and may be a useful reference in enhancing the reading of this chapter.

The remainder of the chapter will now discuss the emergent themes from this study, including: *visibility*; (being) *valuable*; *voice*; *choice and power*. A contextual overview of how participants understood following is provided initially, with details of how this transformed throughout the data generation process.

4.2 How Participants Understood Following

The research participants were asked to explain what they understood by the term 'following'; they were explicitly asked to respond to this at the beginning of the semi-structured interview (phase one), they were encouraged to consider this in their visual research diaries (phase two), and thus subsequently touched upon in the PEI (phase three). This enabled rich insights into the understandings of this concept to be captured, and provided multiple ways (Darbyshire et al, 2005) to collect these understandings i.e. through verbal, visual and reflective responses. By the latter I refer to the photo-elicitation interview responses, which occur after participants have had time to reflect upon understandings (reflective) and have visual aids that they have selected to support this. An overview of the ways in which participants responded will now be provided, to shed light on their understandings and set a context for the experiences and thoughts shared by participants during the data generation process. This theme provides insights into how the term following is

understood, and demonstrates the difficulties that are experienced in explaining this (4.2.1. Reliance on assumptions; 4.2.2 Rich reflections), as well as the fluid nature of following (4.2.3 Fluctuating between Following and Being Followed).

4.2.1 Reliance on Assumptions

Difficulties and Assumptions

Participants were asked to explain at the start of their first interview what they understood by the term “following”. A significant proportion of participants struggled to provide detailed responses to this and reacted with an element of surprise or shock at being asked. This difficulty and unfamiliarity is illustrated in the below responses:

I’ve never really thought about it, I’ll be completely honest with you (Kathryn)

I don’t know a huge amount I suppose about that...I assume that it’s something to do with kind of sheep (Danielle)

I would presume it is, erm, looking up to someone as either a role model or somebody that you respect (Chris)

It’s not one that I would use normally...[there is] less discussion about what actually a follower is (Sophie)

Participants’ responses denote a sense of difficulty in explaining what they understand by the concept of following. Kathryn suggests that it is not something that she has consciously considered until now, and Danielle acknowledges her lack of awareness of what following means. This was also similar to how I had felt when presenting my research at a conference during my first year of research. When asked, by a member of the audience, what I understood following to mean it became apparent that I struggled to ‘find’ the words to do so. Interestingly, several participants also make references to assumptions as illustrated in the above quotations from Danielle and Chris, with the use of words including “presume” and “assume”.

This is reflective of Carsten et al’s (2010) discussions regarding the lack of understanding around what followership terms actually mean to individuals. Due to the lack of focus on followership within organisations and indeed education (Morris, 2014a) it is likely that the traditional understandings and “stigma” (Alcorn, 1992; Kellerman, 2008; Rost, 2008) attached to followership concepts is what participants

may hold on to when responding to this question. This is reflective of the followership academic field lacking sufficient attention to date (Bjugstad et al, 2006; Carsten et al, 2010).

Aligned to this, notions of complexity were evident across participants' responses to this question. Perhaps not helped by the lack of understanding, there was admittance of following as being a complicated process to become involved in:

It can be quite a complicated process...lots of different opinions, lots of different people from different backgrounds, different skills, so that adds to the complexity (Sophie)

Comments drawing upon terms including “complex”, and “not that simple” reinforced others' descriptions as they began to unpick the process. The lack of focus on followership in research, and its often-overlooked nature (Crossman & Crossman, 2011) is thought by many to be problematic (Tanoff & Barlow, 2002; Vondey, 2012). Engaging in research that enables participants to describe their understandings and experiences of following, adds to Carsten et al's (2010) study, which reinforced the view of followership as being complex and having multiple meanings for individuals.

In describing what they understood by the term “following”, participants often relied upon other concepts and labels, for example their understandings of leading were often drawn upon. **Sophie's** description below illustrates this clearly, with the suggestion that followers are defined by the fact that they have a leader:

You are the person that has a leader or somebody that you're taking notice of (Sophie)

Sophie places great emphasis on the leader in understanding what a follower is, implying through her response that in order to be a follower there must be a leader present. There is also recognition of an element of control here, with Sophie's use of the term “taking notice of”; this is described as a given, as though the control over a follower would not be questioned. Further emphasis is given to notions of control that leaders have over followers in **Chris's** response as he describes following as being based on “looking up to someone as a role model”. Further ways in which participants tended to draw upon alternative concepts included for comparative purposes. For example, both **Kathryn** and **Sophie** distinguished between what they

understood a subordinate and a follower to be, emphasising subordinates less favourably:

to me that can be quite patronising being called a subordinate (Kathryn)

for me a subordinate means someone or you have to do what you're told... that word isn't particularly great (Sophie)

The subordinate term did not resonate positively with participants. They reflected the views of Dixon & Westbrook (2003) who suggested that this term carries with it much stigma regarding a trance-like state and a lack of control compared to their superiors. As discussed in Chapter Two there has been a transformation in understandings progressing from *subordination* to *followership*, with a current movement towards processes of *following*. This study specifically used the terminology of *following* within the data generation process to retain its focus as the central concept of this follower-focused study (Kean et al, 2011). It is interesting therefore that participants' made associations with the subordinate term, as Hertig (2010) did too, despite its diminishing use within organisational terminology and the literature. This comparative tendency of participants appears to be central to their construction of the following concept, considering how it is similar and different.

Having compared following to notions of being a subordinate, others went on to then draw upon understandings of teams and shared leadership. **Luke's** response below introduces these thoughts:

feel more even, you know, so not so much follower, but this kind of, this supporting role along the, the way. That of being taken along, I don't, no, I would suggest that I'm not a great follower, I'm a great supporter... Erm, you can be a follower and support, but if you're just, if you're just following, if you're just doing as you're told, if you're just, then you're not, then you're not really supporting, you're not giving the best you can to the, to whatever the plan is (Luke)

Here, there is comparison between being a follower and a supporter, rather than a follower who is obedient in following orders and directions. When comparing following against being part of a team, there was an indication that the latter consisted more of equality in terms of involvement and contributions amongst individuals. Similarly there was also further emphasis placed on shared goal and beliefs in teams compared to following. Townsend & Gebhardt's (2003) concept *teamship* argues for this more mutual working approach, with individuals having

neutral status within the team, adopting more or less responsibility depending upon the situation and appropriateness of the situation. The insight into the feasibility or presence of teamship within organisations is limited, however, as a newly introduced concept lacking empirical exploration, as critiqued in Chapter Two.

A further way in which **Sophie** reflected on her understandings of following was by considering her preferences:

I find following more complex because if I'm the leader then I know what I want as such...I've got these goals in mind...I'm more clear about what I'm trying to achieve (Sophie)

In Sophie's response, she draws comparisons between following and leading, identifying them as different processes. There is a sense of ease associated with leading for Sophie, due to having clarity and goals in mind. This could be understood as being due to the decision-making tendencies perhaps lying with those leading, at least in Sophie's experience. However, this would be arguably dependent upon the context and on those leading. For instance the size of an organisation may affect the input that individuals can have, or perhaps a leader in another instance may be very good at providing direction and clarity on goals, thus reinforcing the non rigid or simplistic nature of following (Bjugstad et al, 2006; Kellerman, 2007). This is taken forward by participants explaining a further complexity in that it can be difficult to be clear about who is following (and leading) in practice. This therefore suggests that there is recognition that the claiming and granting of following and leading roles (DeRue & Ashford, 2010) is not purely hierarchical and is more complex.

Leading was seen as a key way to understand following, with strong recognition that there are differences between the two concepts. This opposes calls to get rid of follower and leader concepts altogether (see Chaleff, 1995; Frisina, 2005; Hollander, 1974; Johnson, 2009; Rost, 1995, 2008) and instead indicates that they are interrelated concepts and processes, supporting the newly emerging relational perspective within the followership field as identified by Uhl-Bien et al (2014).

4.2.2 Rich Reflections

As mentioned, in the initial phases of the data collection participants' understandings of following began as relatively limited and reliant upon assumptions as well as related concepts. This study's design enabled participants' understandings to develop and to be accessed at multiple points and in multiple ways, for example through verbal responses (phase one and phase three), diary annotations (phase two), as well as images and supporting narratives (phase three). Through this there emerged a sense of deepened and richer constructions occurring.

For instance, as illustrated in the previous section through Sophie's responses, they are brief responses with reliance upon the leader; "you are the person being led by the leader". However, as participants began to reflect upon their understandings of following in phases two and three, their responses became more detailed and personally applicable:

"I'm definitely a follower there, I'm being told exactly what to do, I just take my mind away from it and do basically what I'm told to do, erm, so I'm definitely not a leader in that situation and its quite nice to be disempowered in that situation, erm, because if it was left to me I would probably not do half the things that they tell me to do" (Michelle)

"...we all felt as though we were just running around like headless chickens really...just in like a field not knowing where to go, there was no leadership...like penguins walk[ing] behind" (Taylor).

In comparison to the initial responses given, as discussed in the previous section, the illustrative extracts here show the ways in which participants began to construct their understandings of following through their personal experiences having had the opportunity to reflect upon this through their visual research diaries and time between phases one and three of the data collection process. There is a sense of considering the ways in which they felt during following, for example Taylor's reference to feeling lost and Michelle's recalling of feeling disempowered. Furthermore the use of comparisons as well as metaphors became apparent, with Michelle recognising and clearly distinguishing why she considered herself to be following and not leading, and Taylor's reference to "headless chickens", "penguins" and to being lost in a field. Ford & Harding (2009) explored the use of metaphors for participants telling their story of what it is like to be a follower, and claim the importance of this for individuals constructing their selves and their experiences. As illustrated through the findings, in

this study participants have drawn upon metaphors, more so in later phases, supporting the notion that the multiple method research design has enabled participants to consider their understandings and experiences of following and to make sense of this (Srivistava & Thomson, 2009) in greater depth and to share this in depth (Radcliffe, 2013) through the data collection process.

4.2.3 Fluctuating between Following and Being Followed

When the research began I did not fully appreciate the processual nature of following or related concepts of following and leading as processes that individuals engaged in. However, as participants shed light on their understandings of following and their experiences, the processual nature became apparent. Following was described by some as being a process that occurs simultaneously *with* leading:

leading and following is almost concurrent activity...the switch between leading something and following might flip flop numerous times in a very short period of time. (Ben)

There is suggestion here however that they are not processes that an individual will do simultaneously at any one time, but that they may switch between frequently and rapidly. Several other participants also identified this notion:

It's like invisible in this department whereby if you're deemed to have more knowledge or experience and expertise in a field it's almost like, right no questions asked, you're automatically put into that position (Megan)

And so as you went through your training you were given more autonomy where you'd go and start leading a bit of the care with the junior students, where you'd be telling them what to do...And so I think from a work point of view I've always had that, from being a student where you looked up to the third years and they would tell you what to do and give you guidance, and then as you started going up, you started doing the same to them...so you've always had that leader and follower behaviour to a certain degree. (Karen)

Yes, slipping between a follower, a follower and a leader depending on who he's following. So if I'm following an officer, then, yes, I'm a follower, but I have, I still have input, but their decision is their decision. Erm, if I am a leader, yes, then those junior to me will, you know, I will meet them, I will listen to them, right, but then the decision is mine (Luke)

I'm the most senior bloke in rank, but the most junior person in the formation... Yeah, yeah, I remember. Yeah. ... so throughout that whole time on the ship, I was either following, being followed or simply another member of the team. (Ben)

In Ben's response, shown above, it is interesting to note that an additional stance of neither following nor leading was also identified – “simply another member of the team”. Additionally the use of language in avoiding the term leading is also interesting – he remains focused on following. However, this may be a result of the focus of the interview and the subsequent language used. This notion of switching between roles and the definitiveness of this is further questioned by **Chris**:

The only question I had there was “Well, who's the follower? Who's the leader?” Does it matter? And does, I mean, does it matter for you when you're in a situation like that when there's not, there might not necessarily be a formal or consistent follower-leader role? I don't think so... (Chris)

Here Chris suggests difficulty in identifying followers and leaders, as well as questioning the need to do so. This is reflective of more contemporary literature, which questions the definitiveness of follower and leader roles and proposes a processual perspective, as does this research. Townsend & Gebhardt (2003) proposed their solution for this as teamship, whereby individuals are seen to be situated in teams and take on responsibility as and when appropriate and needed, as opposed to having pre-determined or labelled roles of follower and leader. This is aligned with the study's conceptualisation of following, focusing on following as a social process that occurs in multiple ways.

The above discussions shed light on the difficulties experienced in explaining how following is understood. Furthermore it also provides links to related and oppositional concepts, including leaders, leading and subordinates. Despite the difficulties faced in explaining what they understood by following, participants were able to talk and reflect in depth about their own experiences of following, perhaps demonstrating it as more of a sub-conscious process that they engage in without reflection.

The next theme, *Visibility*, will now be discussed.

4.3 Visibility

Visibility emerged as a theme across the data, and is concerned with both the extent to which participants felt that they were visible *to* others as well as having visibility *of* others. This theme is centred on the interactions between individuals, and the impact this can have upon processes of following (4.3.1 Interactions and Openness). It considers various ways in which individuals may respond to both high and low levels

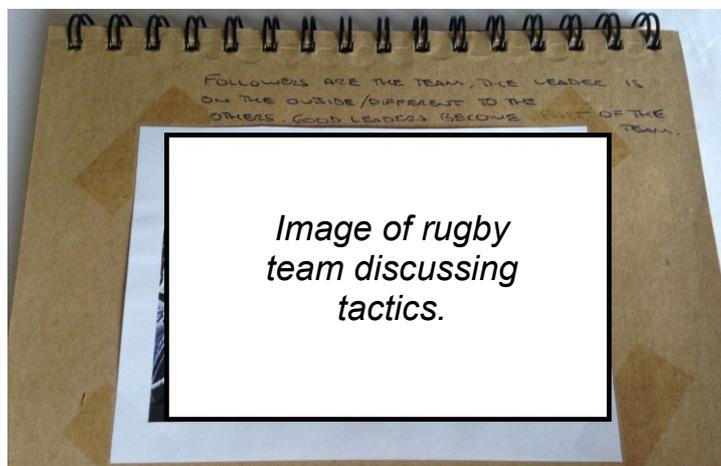
of visibility (4.3.2 Implications of Restricted Visibility; 4.3.3 Role models, Mirroring and Adapting Self).

4.3.1 Interactions and Openness

Participants were asked to describe times when they had been following, and also to consider how they thought those following and those leading should interact with each other. I chose to phrase this as “should” to encourage participants to consider how it actually occurs for them and the ways in which this may feel different from their expectations. Onus was placed on leaders to drive these interactions and processes of building effective relations by some participants, for instance **Ben** suggested that leaders should get to know their followers “as much as is humanly possible”, drawing upon extreme language to describe this.

Brian drew upon teams within a sporting context to depict effective interactions, describing those leading and following being part of the same team rather than us and them:

Figure 4.1: Brian depicting effective relationships and teams



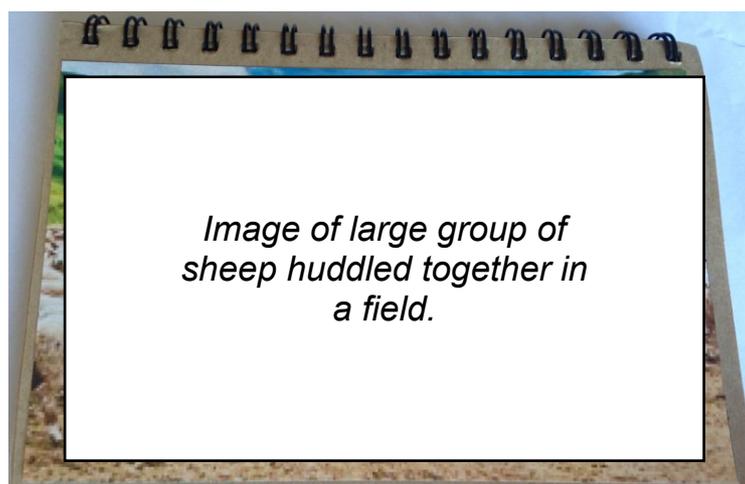
In describing the image, Brian’s reference to this as being how interactions *should* happen denotes an idealised state, which aligns with Gardner et al’s (2005) suggestion of a supportive climate being needed for the development of authentic leaders and followers. As a result of this, they argue that followers will have trust in their leaders, feel engaged and have overall workplace wellbeing.

As participants drew upon their own experiences of interactions occurring with specific individuals and within their organisations more broadly, a less idyllic state became apparent. **Taylor's** response below suggests that in her organisation, a lack of interactions and openness between levels of the hierarchy is common and almost expected:

Uh once maybe once a year we'll have a visit from someone erm who's higher up the chain but they don't, they'll come round and say hello they don't really engage with you...that's just the way it is (laughs) that's the actual culture of the organisation. You know you don't really get to see anybody really. They're certainly not interested. (Taylor)

With her statement of "that's just the way it is", Taylor talks about the lack of interactions as being an ongoing pattern. She also presented this within her visual diary, with the inclusion of an image of sheep (Fig.4.2), and with accompanying explanations regarding the sense of feeling lost and wandering around aimlessly, due to a lack of interaction with those leading and the subsequent lack of direction. The display of laughter, in the above extract from Taylor, suggests that this is less of an issue that troubles or upsets her; rather it is perhaps something that she has become used to.

Figure 4.2: Taylor depicting a lack of interaction and feeling lost



Taylor also indicates, through her response "that's the actual culture", that the lack of interactions summarises her perception of the culture of the organisation. Working in

a defence services organisation, **Chris** shared a similar experience and described the more distant types of communications that he observes and partakes in:

Erm, at a local level, we get face-to-face interactions. Not always passionate, but we have that face-to-face sort of interaction, and, and contact. But nationally, it's much more like written comms. It's bulletins, it's briefings, it's e-mail, newsletters and things rather than anything face to face. (Chris)

Chris differentiates between local level interactions and organisational interactions more broadly. It seems from this, and Taylor's responses, that interactions with those at higher levels of their organisations are felt as being removed and distanced. Public sector organisations are typically large in size (Agho, 2009), which seems to be reflected in the lack of proximity felt between those at the top of the organisation and those at lower levels. The extent to which this has an influence was notable from several responses, including **Brian's**:

...because no one's ever seen him, everybody just thought "Who's he to tell us what to do? He doesn't know what's going on." it was an attachment in an e-mail and it wasn't even direct to everybody, it was through his PA effectively, who'd sent it out to some of the managers and then it had gone down the various levels...You just feel he's just completely removed from the situation. (Brian)

Brian highlights the effect of a lack of interaction and visibility, with those more senior, in generating further questioning from those following and, consequently, a lack of belief and buy in. For instance, "who's he to tell us what to do?" suggests a questioning of power and influence and a resultant reluctance to engage in a process of following them, or of legitimising their roles (DeRue & Ashford, 2010).

Furthermore, Brian perceives messages being cascaded down through hierarchical levels, and rather than buying into this due to the positioning of the source of information, he describes this as being a barrier in itself for him to feel involved and aligned with his leaders. Tensions are thus present here, and a reluctance to sustain construction (Uhl-Bien & Pillai, 2007) and co-construction (Kean et al, 2011) as leaders is becoming evident. This contradicts the ways in which participants placed emphasis on those leading as driving the relations and as being responsible for interacting; rather, here those following appear to be demonstrating agency in acting upon the lack of interactions, inflicting consequences for their leaders. The notion of implications from restricted visibility will be discussed further in the next subtheme.

4.3.2 Implications of Restricted Visibility

This subtheme is based on the ways in which poor contact with others can impact engagement in following. One of the implications identified from the data is that of feeling unsupported and lacking guidance, as described by **Michelle**:

I prefer being left to my own devices but I do like to have some visibility of management there, I'd like to have more than what I've got...if you are having issues it's good to speak to somebody who knows the work that you're doing, whereas if I go and speak to my manager now I feel like I would have to explain the whole context and it might not be as clear as if they'd been involved a little bit. So it can be difficult if you're kind of left on your own sometimes (Michelle)

Michelle highlights the importance of achieving a balance with regards to interactions with those leading, suggesting that she enjoys being independent in her work, perhaps indicative of an empowering work approach. However when issues arise, a lack of interactions and visibility with those leading has caused difficulties for her, suggested by her use of language including "it can be difficult", and "I'd like to have more than what I've got". A sense of being valued through being trusted to have independence but also through involvement and input from others is desired. Michelle also demonstrates, through her response, a sense of awareness of what she thinks is right and reluctance to involve others at times of limited interactions. This was a theme also apparent in **Debbie's** experiences. She reflected upon and shared with me some feedback that she had recently received from her line manager:

When I'm thinking about it, on a day to day basis, because of where I'm located and the distance and the contact that I have with my line manager and the head of service, on a day to day basis follower to follower the conversations tend to be more frequent so you gain that comfort and safety...what's been fed back to me is that they have to ask rather than me volunteer it...my line manager said to me just recently that actually I'm probably a little bit more guarded in what I share (Debbie)

Debbie's response suggests an ongoing, reciprocal effect. By this I mean that a lack of regular contact may influence a willingness to share thoughts, opinions and issues as they arise. However, it is important to note that this is not depicted as a *complete* lack of openness, but instead more of a suggestion that Debbie will control what she

shares and what she hides. This will be discussed in more depth later in the chapter as part of the theme *Voice*. In **Michelle's** visual diary she also indicated feelings of difficulty due to lacking openness and interactions:

Figure 4.3: Michelle depicting physical barriers to openness



Michelle's choice of image portrays the presence of physical barriers to communication. In her narrative, Michelle drew comparisons between her image and the room that our interview took place in:

the reason I took this boardroom picture with the plaque is the new chief executive has decided that she wants to be more of a learning organisation like this building here (referring to the interview location), erm and so she's going open plan she's going to knock down all of these. Get rid of all the name plaques...big solid wooden doors...it's very difficult, because I work directly with them. Erm, and you need to see them all the time (laughs) and you're having to put your ear up against the door to see if they've got somebody in there and it's, it's really, makes life very difficult (Michelle)

Michelle refers to "big solid wooden doors" and a lack of sight of others at work, and contrasts this to the glass walls and felt openness where we were located. In doing so Michelle was able to expand on this to discuss why she found it difficult at work to feel as those she had effective and close relations with those leading. Interestingly, as Michelle explained, her organisation was embarking on changing the office layouts since a new director was appointed. This organisation wide change suggests that others had noticed and felt these difficulties and that there is an aim towards openness and visibility across the organisation. As described in the public sector theory base, such organisations are thought to be moving towards decentralised

(Gultekin, 2011) and empowering (Diefenbach, 2009; Goldfinch & Wallis, 2010) cultures and so, if achieved, this could potentially alleviate some of these issues. Michelle went on to consider other moments where she felt this distance was particularly strong, and chose to include an image of a room that is used for organisational meetings and consultations:

Figure 4.4: Michelle depicting distance in the interactions between levels in her organisation.



Michelle described the inability to communicate with those more senior to her in such situations, having to press buttons to signal that she has something to say and then to wait to be offered the opportunity to share this. In discussing this image together, she commented on the power differences that it created and how these then influenced the lack of closeness outside of such situations, as also felt and illustrated in the previous responses from participants. Unlike Debbie's realisation of her subconscious control over what she is open about and with whom, Michelle focuses on the structural restrictions that she feels acting upon her ability to experience openness with others. The differences apparent in the experiences of participants and their perceptions is also likely to be reflected in the ways in which they go on to adapt their behaviours and engagement in following, which will be discussed as part of the next subtheme.

4.3.3 Role Models, Mirroring and Adapting Self

This subtheme is based on the ways in which interactions and accessibility influence behaviours for following. In the first phases of data collection when explaining what enabled them to follow others, points were raised regarding leaders' levels of experience and credibility. In later phases, for instance the photo-elicitation interviews (phase three, Figure 3.1) this was also apparent with further detail being given in the reflective stories shared by participants. It seemed important to some that they were able to look at others as role models for processes of following. For instance, **Brian** discussed his observations of respect as being important for following and how this was attainable through experience:

They've been there, they know what they're talking about. And that's a big one for me... she started at two or three grades below me and she just worked her way up, so she knew all the process. So if somebody said "This is a problem", she went, "Well actually I used to do that, but if you try doing it this way, this is how I sort of resolved it". And people respected it, because you can't argue with it – she'd been there and sort of done that. (Brian)

As Brian describes, in his organisation there is a tendency for internal promotions. Seemingly, this has allowed employees to progress up the hierarchy and to earn their places and be accepted by others in doing so. This is reflective of DeRue & Ashford's (2010) claiming and granting theory, whereby individuals engage in the claiming and granting of leader and follower roles. Brian demonstrates the process of legitimising others, suggesting that knowledge and experience were "big one[s]" for this to occur. He goes on to claim that the empathetic approach and appreciation of others' roles enabled this leader to earn respect from others and be granted their role. In doing so, she became a role model to her followers and continued to receive their engagement and support. This is the case for **Karen**, who having started as a trainee nurse a significant number of years ago is now in a senior position, and talked about how she not only looks to others as role models but, because of this awareness, she also ensures that she acts as one herself:

I always think, try to think of myself as a role model for the junior staff and the students to think, "Right, I can see a person that's professional, caring, erm, that's respectful of people and works with their colleagues" (Karen)

Karen too picks up on issues of respect and expertise, as she refers to professionalism. In this response, there is also further support of notions of

fluctuating between following and leading as discussed in Chapter Two. She is able to view herself as following and as being followed, reinforcing the fluid nature of such processes.

Interactions and access to others is thus important for individuals in following why they desire someone to look up to, as well as getting the engagement and buy in to support leaders for following. However, in addition to being able to recognise the expertise and knowledge of leaders enabling following, there are other ways in which visibility can have influences. Visibility also encompasses the ways in which attitudes and behaviours are displayed and perceived by others, resulting in perhaps mirroring or some sort of adaptation of behaviour. **Danielle**, who described an experience whereby those leading demonstrated panic and concern as a result of a sudden inspection of her educational institution being announced, illustrates an instance of mirroring below:

...he said that the school is open all night. Erm, and he was e-mailing us stuff that we needed to remember for the next day at two o'clock in the morning. And then again he e-mailed us at 05:32 or whatever the next morning saying that school's back open. Erm, so I kind of, like, I picked up on the fact that he was panicking. (Danielle)

Danielle describes the ways in which she was able to sense the panic and worry from her leader; the use of direct emails during out of working hours indicates their ongoing work and was seen as making others feel that they too should be doing so. In this instance there does not seem to be any attempt to hide or control the concerns from others, which could result in others perceiving them as demonstrating negativity. It does however also suggest a sense of authenticity, in being open and honest regardless as to whether this may incur signs of weakness. Here, there is a sense of viewing visibility negatively, which was also reflected across several participants' visual diaries, including **Megan** and **Kathryn's**:

Figure 4.5: Megan depicting the links between behaviours and attitudes of those leading and those following

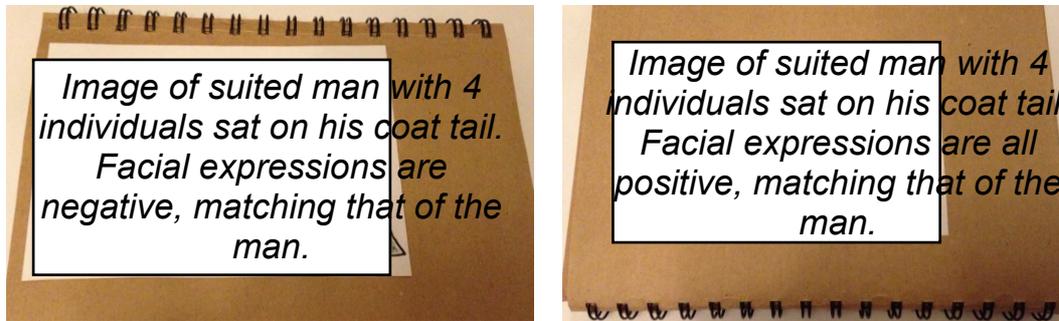
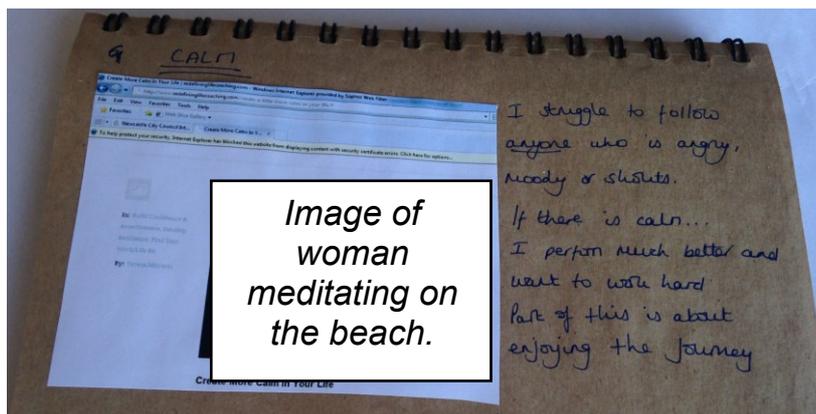


Figure 4.6: Kathryn depicting the links between behaviours and attitudes of those leading upon herself



The above images both reflect times of negativity being portrayed by leaders, for example the use of the angry face in Figure 4.5 and the annotations of terms including “angry” and “moody”. **Kathryn** described the difficulties that she felt when seeing stress from those she is following:

If I have a manager who is stressed, sets unclear priorities and is just fire fighting all the time, I just, I get really stressed. If I, if you have a manager who is calm in a crisis, I find it much easier to follow them because you have clear vision about what needs to be done. There might be things going on that are quite chaotic, you know, at the moment we’ve got a lot going on, but actually, you can still, you still feel like you can follow them. (Kathryn)

Here Kathryn described both positive and negative instances, indicating the mirroring of behaviours in both. When positive she suggests that it enables following as a

process to become easier, even within difficult contexts. This reflects a mirroring process of positivity. In their idealised model of leadership, Gardner et al (2005) also indicate an element of mirroring between followers and leaders, incorporating a role modelling process from leaders to followers. However, as the model depicts, this is viewed as a one way process and emphasis is placed on those leading as driving this positivity on to those following, rather than allowing for the possibility of a more active seeking behaviour as described in the data.

An emerging issue seems to be getting the right balance between being influenced by others and controlling the extent of this influence, particularly in negative instances. Those individuals following are beginning to be more commonly understood as having control and more power than traditionally thought in academia, and so these findings seem to suggest that the relationships between those following and those leading remain very significant, also supporting constructions of following and leading as interdependent relational processes based on interactions between individuals.

This theme has outlined the importance of visibility for processes of following, highlighting the need for openness and also considering the implications of lacking visibility. Visibility emerged as a key theme for processes of following, in that the interactions between individuals were seen and felt as important for buying into and deciding to follow others, and of the implications when not felt. Organisational contexts also emerged as acting upon this, both favourably and adversely. Finally, like much of the followership literature, for instance authentic followership, a sense of role modelling emerged and this study also found that it was not always positive and that followers could and did make active decisions and changes to their behaviours consequently. The second theme, (being) Valuable, will now be discussed.

4.4 (being) Valuable

As aforementioned, participants were asked to consider how they felt those following and those leading should interact with one another. Arising from this, as well as through reflections upon past experiences in the diaries, the theme of being valuable also emerged across the data. This includes the importance of being valued by the self and others (4.4.1 Feeling Valued by Self and Others), as well as the impacts this can have for individuals (4.4.2 The Importance of Support and Togetherness).

4.4.1 Feeling Valued by Self and Others

When reflecting upon times of engaging in supporting and active followership, participants talked about the importance of feeling valued by others but also by themselves. Feeling valued was described in a number of ways, including with reference to professional pride. Participants explained the importance to them of doing their jobs well and being professional in the workplace. Currently experiencing a difficult relationship with her line manager, **Megan** told me how her professionalism was the primary reason for doing what is asked and thus following orders from others:

It's purely professional pride that makes me want to do what I do...I certainly wouldn't do it for him, I do it purely to be able to say that I have done the best I can and regardless of how my leader views me and if it costs me time and money, fine. (Megan)

Megan appears to deem the personal sacrifice of time and effort as justifiable in maintaining professionalism. She prioritises being valuable to the organisation and to the work that she is set, despite her difficult relations with her manager. In fact, she directly states that this is not due to a desire to follow her manager, with multiple statements across her responses emphasising this. For Megan, her manager's opinion as her leader is disregarded in comparison to professionalism and her value to the organisation. It seems then that she is following her own personal expectations and standards, as well as perhaps those expectations at an organisational level (e.g. her job requirements). Others also indicated this importance of fulfilling their roles fully and of doing their jobs well:

And I thought, you know, with everything else at the moment about what's going on about nurses and lack of caring, you thought "No, I'm still proud to be, say, I'm a nurse" so there was still that part of me there that I thought, you know, that's still sort of makes you want to make it work, makes you want to be that person, the respectful person and have that duty of care. (Karen)

For me that was important, if it's to do with my work (Sophie)

Both responses above highlight their work as being important to them, with Karen referring to feelings of pride associated with her profession, "I'm still proud to be, say, I'm a nurse", and Sophie explaining why she had acted in a certain way due to it

being work related. As described above in Karen's example, the nature of the organisation is also thought to be significant. The notion of being committed and valuable in achieving the cause of the organisation emerged across participants' responses:

I think there are differences in as much as I think that the targets and the objectives are different. Just simply by nature of public service and public money and doing the best you can with the public's money as much as we can and making the service that we deliver value for money as well (Megan)

We've all got a shared vision and you don't come to the [organisation] to get rich, you come there because you believe in what the organisation is trying to do (Chris)

This document was talking about commitment and courage and communication. And so I put that in there because I thought "That's really important" ...we've got it pinned up in the coffee room and laminated to remind people 'this is what we have to do every day', and again it was like the crown and respect and loyalty that you know, you are a public servant, you're a public servant for the country (Karen)

From the above extracts, there is clear recognition and appreciation of why participants' respective organisations exist and what their main purpose is. Participants indicate comfortableness with such purposes and awareness of this too, with a sense of pride in supporting this; for example "...you care because you believe in what the organisation is trying to achieve". It seems here that participants identify themselves as buying into and supporting the organisation, with a belief in what it is aiming to achieve. This is reflective of Kean et al's (2011) descriptions of following behaviours as being supporting and engaging. This is a key premise of following, as conceptualised in this thesis and referred to at several points.

Continuing this focus at an organisational level, there was a sense that participants had a desire to feel that they were having an impact in their roles, not only for their immediate manager/leader, but also for the organisation on the whole. Feeling empowered was generally regarded as a positive aspect of their roles:

I can see now that the work that I do relates to them. As before, all the way through my career, it's been very difficult to have a tangible link between the work that I do and the people that I follow, being able to link all the way to the top...I think what it does, it just adds an element of, erm, seriousness to it. Because what you're, what you're doing is you're, you're genuinely having an impact on the people at the top of that organisation, so, as a follower, you feel as though you have more ability to affect change. (Ben)

If I'm following an organisation's aims or that person's leadership, I need to feel that my contribution is going to make a difference...I want to feel like there's a relationship there. And feel valued, that somebody actually cares about me so that if I didn't come in to work for a month, I'd be missed, like "Where he is?" You know, someone would notice, you know? (Laughs.) Cos there are places I've been where you are just a number on a piece of paper...they don't know who you are (Callum)

The above extracts illustrate the benefits felt by participants for having impact and being able to contribute to their organisations in a meaningful way. Whilst Ben appears to focus on impact and the significance of his work, Callum leans more towards being valued by others and a sense of belonging in terms of his contributions. He referred to this point when discussing an image in his diary as shown below:

Figure 4.7: Callum portraying the importance of being recognised and having impact



Callums' image reflects his comments above regarding being valued in his organisation to the extent that he would be missed if he was not there, that he is not just "a number on a piece of paper". Ben's response above also suggests that this feeling of having impact has been built up over time and was therefore not an immediate occurrence. Impact is thus portrayed as a state that adapts and changes over time or perhaps in different contexts.

Others continued this idea of impact and contribution as being changeable, but placed greater emphasis on their ability to choose how much involvement they had

and therefore to what extent they were contributing. **Brian** and **Callum** also discussed how they tend to put in less effort if they are struggling to engage in and buy into the task or change:

But if I'm not fully bought into it, I'll just wait until I'm told what they want me to do with it and I'll hold it back...so there's a difference between what I will, what effort I will put into that... I won't say no. I won't ever say no, I won't do that but it's the amount of effort that I will go to do that...I don't try and make it visible. I do try and keep it subtle. (Callum)

You might not necessarily believe in the process initially, but if you think you can change it, you're going to want to follow it. But if that's not being listened to, then there's just going to be a lack of motivation there...You just sort of go along with it, become the person who just puts their head down and does their job (Brian)

Neither suggest that a struggle to buy in would stop them following altogether, but that it would detract from the effort that they exert, in other words the extent to which they are actively engaged. Furthermore, both indicate that the ways in which they went about this reduction in effort would be kept subtle, which is an interesting point and will be explored further within the theme *Voice*.

The above extracts indicate agency in the sense that participants are able to independently choose what they are supporting and the extent to which they do so, with another participant distinguishing his engagement between things that they must do and could do (**Nick**). This recognises the choice that individuals have in terms of the effort they put into following, but also recognises the boundaries by identifying what they must (or feel obliged) to do. The notion of actively engaging in following is thus influenced by the self as well as others and contexts, and it changes over time, further reinforcing following as a fluid process.

This subtheme has highlighted the importance to individuals of being valued by the self and others, meeting both personal and organisational expectations. The ways in which individuals felt they were having impact also emerged as important for feeling valued by others and in their roles, and also affected engagement in following. The importance of others for feeling valued was also apparent in the next subtheme, which focuses on support and shared approaches.

4.4.2 The Importance of Support and Togetherness

As previously outlined, this theme encompasses being valued by the self, as well as being valued by others. Issues of feeling supported by others and working together became apparent through the stories shared by participants. Interestingly, many were able to reflect upon times when this feeling of being supported, or valued, by others had been lacking more than when it had been present for them. However, **Chris** did tell me about a time that stood out for him as a particularly positive experience, where he had faced a stressful problem at work and had felt well supported throughout:

on that initial sit-down with him, “Right, this is what’s happening. It can’t carry on. What can we do?” He then shares his experience of a similar issue that he dealt with and then we agreed this plan... that collaborative approach, sort of shared responsibility...his involvement with it as well, I think, made it work well. So he didn’t just tell me to go away and do these things, he actually worked with me, so he came to some of the meetings with me, he came to meetings with MPs Mm. ... erm, it just made the ownership feel a little bit more shared. (Chris)

Chris’s experience here clearly describes very positive interactions with his leader, where he was well supported and as a result he is now able to reflect on this difficult situation in a positive manner. Throughout the description there is a strong sense of togetherness and of a supportive relationship, with the use of terms such as: “we”; “shared”; “collaborative”; “worked *with*”. This language strongly illustrates a shared approach, reflective of similar perspectives in the literature, which describe followers as collaborators, contributors, members (Rost, 2008), partners, and collaborators (Chaleff, 1995).

Chris’s reflection was triggered by an image of four individuals climbing a mountain together, with links between them using ropes. To Chris, the image represented effective relationships and a good way for following to occur:

That’s what I picked up on the image, I mean, they normally have a bit of rope on them between them or whatever. Yeah. But they’re all pretty much the same distance between each other, so you can tell they’re working really well as a team. Team, yeah, yeah. And this guy at the front isn’t wanting to march off the fastest and say “I’ll beat you” sort of thing, up to the top (Chris)

In Chris’s responses he suggests that for following to occur effectively there is a need for a collective team approach rather than an individual one. Despite describing

the image as reflecting, for him, an idealised scenario, it enabled him to consider similar situations that he had faced, as discussed above, and to thus realise times when he *had* felt valued by others when doing following.

Providing insight into the consequential feelings of *not* being valued by others, **Danielle** told me about an experience where she had felt unsupported. As a teacher, Danielle faced a difficult conversation with parents, in this instance with tensions rising:

...the Head Teacher actually walked past at that point and said “Oh, what’s happening?” And they said, oh, you know, and she said “Well, it is school policy that we need to get things finished” and she just kept walking. Whereas to me, it kind of left me quite vulnerable...I thought there she should have stuck up for me a bit more. (Danielle)

Danielle indicates recalling feelings of vulnerability and of being undermined during this disagreement. To Danielle the lack of support resulted in feelings of disappointment and the situation went against her expectations, with her indication that she disagrees with the approach taken. This expectation and differing of opinion is reflective of having agency, of Danielle as being aware of what is right and of her opinions and her lack of comfort at being done to. Danielle feels as though she is being done to, but rather than accept this, she acknowledges her disagreement and is aware that it is not the right approach in her eyes. Reflections upon negative consequential feelings, from not being valued by others, were also prevalent in accounts given by other participants:

...so I ended up going to a meeting that normally I wouldn’t have gone to in that position but that I had to go to...so I was in that sort of limbo position I suppose, “Right, I’m one of the people implicated but I’ve got to also be the manager and take that on”, and the Head of Nursing was there. And she got up and walked out at the end of the meeting and didn’t ask how the ward was, how any of us felt and I suppose in some ways I felt let down. (Karen)

When I don’t feel like I’ve got his full attention, or he’s fully, you know, understanding or interested in what the team’s doing...you feel undervalued as someone following that person. (Chris)

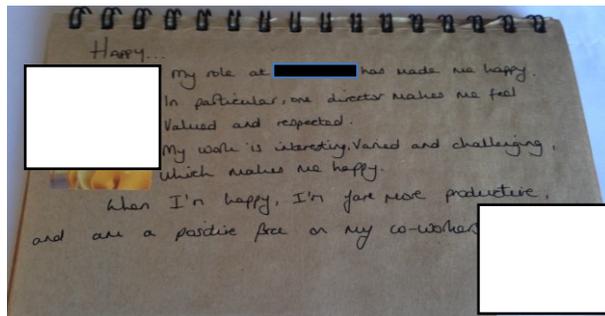
Again, negative resulting feelings are also apparent in these two accounts with references to feeling *let down* and *undervalued*. There is also a sense of expecting a different outcome, a different reaction or response from their leader, as Danielle also

demonstrated above. **Megan** and **Kathryn** also touched upon this in their visual diaries, reflecting feelings of being under valued:

Figure 4.8: Megan depicting the importance of feeling appreciated and valued by others.



Figure 4.9: Kathryn depicting feelings of happiness as a result of being valued by others.



Megan chose to include the image to show the importance to her of feeling valued by others, and of being recognised by being thanked by others. This was currently lacking in her role and was resulting in feelings of disappointment and of being under-appreciated. I asked Megan about the simplicity of the image and the clarity of the sky, which led on to conversations regarding the simplistic nature of thanking someone for what they have done, also emphasising the importance yet ease of this act. Having changed roles, Kathryn was able to reflect upon feelings of happiness and enjoyment in her current role where she is experiencing a positive situation. Her annotations include *“my director makes me feel valued and respected. My work is interesting, varied and challenging, which makes me happy”*. This highlights the importance to Kathryn of feeling valued by her director, not only the nature of her role. She then goes on to explain the impact of feelings of happiness, and suggests that her levels of productivity increase. This further highlights the importance of being valued and the positive ways in which this can influence individuals.

In summary, this subtheme has highlighted the importance of feeling valued by others for processes of following – with expectations formed (for example, of working together) lack of value can leave individuals feeling vulnerable and let down, thus affecting their willingness to buy into and actually engage in following. Being valuable emerged as important for following, influencing participants’ active engagement and support for others. There were expectations of being supported and recognised by

others, and implications for their engagement in following when this was lacking. Ultimately being valued is key for active engagement and support of others, and thus for following. The third theme, Voice, will now be discussed.

4.5 Voice

Voice emerged as a major theme within this study, focused on how participants feel, and are able to be open and share their thoughts, opinions and feelings with others. This theme explores approaches to having voice, the consequential feelings as well as the complexities throughout. Questions asked during the interviews relevant to this theme include; *“How do you believe followers and leaders should engage with each other?”*, *“Do you feel you are able to be yourself at work?”* and *“Thinking about concepts such as openness, trust and transparency – can you give me some examples of when you have/haven’t been able to be each of these when following?”* Sub-themes are focused on what enables and restricts individuals in having voice (4.5.1. Strength of Feeling for Having Voice; 4.5.2 Being Enabled, by Others, to Have Voice; 4.5.4 Impediments to Having Voice and Being Heard; 4.5.5 Keeping Quiet-Hiding and Controlling Voice), and the ways in which having voice is engaged in (4.5.3 Ways of Having Voice- Challenging and Questioning).

4.5.1 Strength of Feeling for Having Voice

The decision to voice, or at least desire to do so, seemed to emerge for participants as a result of some sort of disagreement with others or with, for instance, a process. Several participants reflected on personal experiences and observations that have pushed them to have voice and to stand up for their thoughts and beliefs in future scenarios. Chris differentiated between times when he had and had not had voice, understanding this as due to levels of passion:

If I’m not so engaged, I’m not so passionate, then I may just sit quietly in the background and not stand up and voice my opinions. If it’s something I’ve got a strong view on and I’m passionate about, then I will stand up and I will express my views even if it’s different to the majority’s. Erm, cos I think well, we should all be entitled to express your views, as long as you do it in the right way...if it’s a subject I’m passionate about, or I feel strongly about – whether I agree or disagree – I’d want to voice my views. (Chris)

Chris talks about the differences between times when he has and has not had voice, identifying the ways in which this may have been influenced by his feelings at the

time, for instance when he referred to being “passionate” and having a “strong view”. This is moving away from the theory base on voice, which focuses on dissatisfaction (Cortina & Magley, 2003), with a broadening of other reasons for desiring to have voice. It suggests an awareness of what is important to the self and a recognised felt need to act upon this. This is reflective of theoretical perspectives which suggest that followers are constructively critical individuals; this is emergent in some general followership theory, for instance Chaleff’s (2009) reference to courageous followers standing up to their leaders, but is emphasised further in the authentic followership literature. For instance Zilwa (2014) describes authentic followers as being constructively critical. Furthermore there is a sense of expectations of what is ‘right’ arising here, with Chris’s reference to “we should all be entitled to”.

A further instance of passion and entitlement is reflected by **Michelle**, referring to her interactions with male colleagues and how seeing inequality in her organisation had made her more aware and inclined to be conscious of not allowing this to happen to her:

I’ve seen lots of examples where for instance there’ll be erm a senior management which is very male orientated and I can see them belittling women in senior management sometimes, and I find that really hard to take, so I don’t just sit back and take that anymore, whereas in the past I might have just thought it was the norm (Michelle)

When she states that she finds it “really hard to take”, it is clear that Michelle finds it difficult to observe such situations and behaviours and, because of this lack of comfortableness, she now feels compelled and seemingly passionate to address subsequent occurrences. A notable change in behaviour as a result is indicated with the response of “I don’t sit back and take it anymore”, suggesting that she has made some sort of choice and taken control to no longer allow herself to be done *to* by others in this way. Interestingly, two other female participants also reflected on times when they had experienced similar feelings and how they had chosen not to allow it to continue:

I think it’s partly the profession...but it’s also the director there as well. He’s very, erm, he can be very patronising, erm, he can shout and, erm, you know, he can be quite upsetting as well. So I’ve been in a meeting, where he’s asked me to go along to a meeting and talk about cost pressures, so I’ve gone into the meeting and you know everybody’s glaring at you, it’s not welcoming... you feel intimidated straightaway...You feel, you get that fight or flight response. And you think, “I just want to get out of here”. And then, you

know, I have a director say “Why are you here?” and I said, “Well you’ve invited me to talk about cost pressures”...he banged his notes on the table “Do you think this is an effective use of my time?”...And when I came out of the meeting, I felt really upset, I thought “No, I’m not going to cry, I’m not going to cry or get upset.” I thought I’m going to go and talk to him and say, “Look, please don’t talk to me like that because I’m on your side”. (Kathryn)

I didn’t react to it and just thought “I’m not bothered”...she would say things sometimes “Shush” and I did once say to her, “I’ve not been told to shush since I was a child and I will not be told now at my age”. But it was never loud, it was, you know, in this tone type of thing...I’m not going to be embarrassed by you and I’m not going to let you try and treat me the way you try and treat the others. Yeah. So I think sometimes it was trying to just keep your tone of voice down and be very aware that it could have got out of hand. (Karen)

In each of these approaches of dealing with disagreements and conflict there are striking differences in the ways in which they describe the behaviours and attitudes of their leaders. For instance Kathryn and Karen, who took the less assertive approaches, seem to have experienced leaders who are almost abusive or bullying in a sense. It seems understandable therefore that those following may experience greater fear when facing conflict with them. This may also be affected by the levels of confidence and comfort of followers in being assertive and dealing with those above them. There seems to be greater confidence demonstrated by Karen in comparison to Kathryn, who suggests feelings of emotion and vulnerability in the situation despite formulating a response afterwards outside the meeting context. She had been made to feel embarrassed and so felt that she needed to address the issue rather than avoid it. However rather than deal with it at the time, it felt more comfortable to deal with this after the heat of the moment had passed. Instead, Karen assertively states that she would not be done to, “I’m not going to let you try and treat me...”, refusing to become the victim and being sure of her disagreement with this behaviour. Through this, Karen demonstrates “active resistance to mistreatment” (Cortina & Magley, 2003, p.247), a key descriptor of employee voice. However, as Kathryn demonstrated, this may not always be as active in the moment and may require time or transfer to a different context before engaging in this.

Unlike much of the literature, what seems to be emerging from this study is a sense of voicing over both positive and negative issues. For instance earlier works of Kelley (1992) argued that ‘star’ followers would put forward initiatives, however little emphasis was placed on the putting forward of problems and disagreements as

described by participants. The focus of what is being voiced will therefore likely vary to different extents and in different contexts.

Chris shared a further instance of voicing a disagreement of opinion. During his involvement in a recruitment process, he strongly argued for the rejection of a candidate due to a concern of appropriateness, opposing his colleagues' perspectives:

I don't know. I think it's for me where people are involved, so recruitment you're work[ing]-, you're dealing with people. I feel more passionate where those subjects are concerned rather than where are we gonna put this desk or... I'm not gonna put myself out and put effort into things like that. It's gotta be something, you know, that's gonna have a real impact on someone or something externally for me to think "Yeah. I'm gonna, I'm gonna share my views on this." (Chris)

The driver to persuade Chris to voice his disagreement is centred around the nature of the issue and the severity of the impact upon individuals if he chooses not to withhold his thoughts; "that's gonna have a real impact on someone". In doing this he knowingly isolated himself and arguably brought about a sense of vulnerability upon himself. Seemingly, this risk of becoming isolated was worth avoiding regret from not sharing his thoughts and opinions. Furthermore, through engaging in voice, he has arguably avoided feelings of emotional inhibition (Gross & Levenson, 1997). Reflecting further on the situation retrospectively though, Chris confirmed his confidence in his decision and commented that he felt "vindicated" in his decision to speak up. This highlights the importance of disagreement within processes of following, described as an inhibitor, or even a reason to leave (Farrell, 1983; Hirschman, 1970) if unresolved. Perhaps this is why it has risen as a key focus for voicing thoughts and opinions, identified by those in following positions as worth taking the risk.

4.5.2 Being Enabled, by Others, to Have Voice

The previous sub-section focused on the ways in which voice is self-initiated, however also emerging from this study was a sense of being enabled by others to engage in having voice. Opposing the sense of risk referred to in the previous section, some participants emphasised the importance of being provided with opportunities for having voice from others. **Karen** was able to reflect on her

experiences of following and leading, with an understanding of the need for relationships to work well for followers to feel able to have voice.

...and I suppose it's that, trying to build up those relationships amongst your own staff as well, that they feel comfortable because then they're not worried about coming to tell you things. (Karen)

Karen highlights the need for reciprocal relationships here, with both sides having a mutual need to ensure that there is openness and an ability to share thoughts and raise issues. There is a return to the issue around fear of having voice and a suggestion that, through such relationships being built, followers will feel able to, and be *comfortable* in, opening up and sharing their thoughts and feelings. Thus, the structure and nature of the managerial relationship may be an enabler for having voice. This opposes the findings from Caldwell & Canuto-Carranco's (2010) study, which explored the ways in which leaders can negatively influence employees' ability to have voice. Whilst this building up of relationships may occur quite subtly and sub-consciously, others spoke about being invited and formal opportunities as useful in encouraging them to have voice. Several participants referred to organisational measures that were in place that acted as formal opportunities. These included specific invites, for example surveys, as well as ongoing initiatives, for example during times of change:

We often have staff surveys from higher up but we never ever see any results, we never really get any feedback. ...I thought well what's the point in doing the survey you know nobody listens or looks at them...I do hope that somebody somewhere is reading it and compiling statistics about how people do actually feel. (Taylor)

In local government, you're encouraged to ask questions and find improvement because you're so short-staffed and you have to make such big budget cuts that any kind of solution is welcomed. (Kathryn)

Taylor's comment suggests an element of doubt as to whether individuals are being listened to when completing such surveys. This notion emerged across the data set and will be discussed later within this theme. The extent to which it is worthwhile taking up such opportunities is questioned, which could arguably reduce their likelihood of voicing their thoughts when not invited. On the other hand, Kathryn's experience of having voice appears to be more positive. Due to the difficulties that her organisation is facing, followers seem to be viewed as valuable resources for suggestions and ideas, and so are therefore not only listened to when they choose to

voice their thoughts, but are actively encouraged to do so. In other words, the invitation is intended as a prompt and as encouragement. Instances of formal opportunities and invites to having voice were also raised by Debbie in her visual diary:

Figure 4.10: Debbie depicting a recent staff survey and the positive impact this had on her



In Debbie's diary she included a word cloud of the results from a staff survey, and has annotated the page with positive comments regarding the ways that being offered this opportunity to voice had made her feel. Comments included "respect", "freedom of expression", and "valued". I asked Debbie to explain her annotations "all levels" and "acting on feedback" in more detail. She described the importance of such opportunities as the only way to ensure all employees could have their say, due to the large and widespread nature of the organisation set-up. Debbie also felt that she was confident that the views collected in these surveys were taken into consideration and acted upon where possible. Interestingly, though, there is more emphasis placed on the tangible and verbal invitations, with a lack of presence of non-verbal behaviours in participants' responses, in contrast to Locke's (2008) perspective that both verbal and non-verbal leader behaviours will have influence. This may be due to a lack of awareness or a lack of presence, and so further research would need to explore this in more depth to gain a better understanding.

However, it is also questionable as to how followers may feel about this and whether they will voice all thoughts and suggestions or perhaps those they feel most strongly about, or perhaps even those that will have the least detrimental effect on themselves in their roles. With reductions in employee numbers and multiple cost

cutting exercises being launched, there may be a sense of self-interest to protect, which could affect the ways in which and the extent to which followers have voice. This is highly reflective of more recent understandings of followership, viewing followers as active individuals (Baker, 2007; Whitlock, 2013) who are given opportunities to have input into decisions rather than being cast as passive unknowledgeable individuals as in previous times. For instance, Zilwa (2014) describes authentic followers as being able to challenge others and be active. Whilst this was recognised in earlier works of leading authors in the followership field, including Kelley (1988; 1992; 2008) and Chaleff (1995; 2003; 2009), these were conceptual discussions and are talked about as the ideal state for followers. Clearly, then, the notion of togetherness can be seen as desirable for followers but perhaps less rare and more reflective of the nature of processes of following in modern organisations, with higher levels of influence and activeness for employees throughout the hierarchy. Furthermore, the notion of being given and taking opportunities for having voice is also apparent within this sub-theme.

The different ways in which individuals engage in having voice will now be considered for processes of following.

4.5.3 Ways of Having Voice – Challenging and Questioning

Through the data collected, several forms of having voice were identified, including questioning and challenging, with the former being the most common type raised by participants.

Questioning was depicted as a way for individuals to understand the purpose of what they are doing, as well as figuring out the extent of choice that they have in doing it.

Ben supported the link between questioning and understanding, whilst also distinguishing it from other instances:

what happens when you feel that you don't agree or don't understand ... they're two different things, understand is easy, you just keep asking questions until you do understand and if you don't agree with it, then you come to a, to a classic public service issue of "If I don't like it that much, then I resign." (Ben)

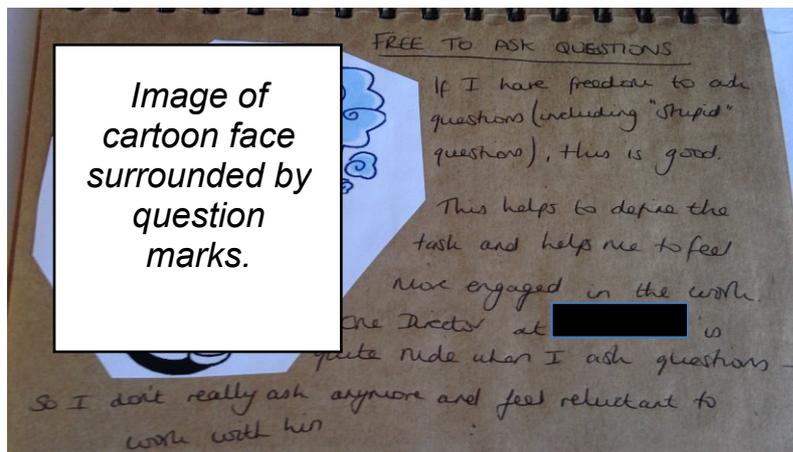
Questioning may therefore be perceived as an initial step to take in having voice – a way to clarify and to understand further. This is central to following, relying upon

having belief in supporting something or someone. Overall the process of questioning was viewed by participants as resulting in positive feelings, as described by **Kathryn**:

...having that ability to ask, and even asking stupid questions, erm is quite liberating, really. It's quite a strong feeling to have. You know, you feel more supported if you can ask those stupid questions. (Kathryn)

This description was provided upon reflection of an image that Kathryn included in her diary, and denotes a sense of support, also apparent within the theme of (being) Valuable, emerging through being able to question.

Figure 4.11: Kathryn depicting her preference to be able to question



In Kathryn's annotations and through her chosen image, she highlights the importance of questioning to her. The inclusion of numerous question marks in this image perhaps suggests the continuity of this as an on going process and way of thinking and behaving. However, Kathryn also suggests this as being ideal and not so apparent in her current role, which she argues is resulting in reluctance to work with the director in question. Clearly then, the ability to be able to question is important for individuals and when lacking or removed completely engagement in following may decline.

Sharing the opinion of gaining satisfaction from being able to ask questions, **Karen** observed her colleagues and struggled to understand how they could follow orders without questioning what they were being asked to do:

...if she'd said "Oh, go and do this", they would have just done it without questioning even if they thought "Oh, I don't think this is right"...Not questioning, I found that difficult.... I always think "Why are we doing this?" and "Do we have to do this?" (Karen)

Karen's response illustrates the sense of norm that she places on questioning others, finding it unusual when others do not. Also emerging from the data was a sense of challenging others, which tended to arise around differences in opinions or disagreements. The importance of feeling able to challenge leaders, ideas and changes proposed within organisations was perceived as very important to participants when reflecting on times they had been following:

I think from a follower's point of view, if you have a really good leader, when you want to, to change something or you've got an opinion about something, they actually give you the confidence to stand up and say "I think this needs to be changed" and "I think this is maybe how we do it" or they can say "Well, that's a good idea. How are you going to do it?" ... They give you the space to actually look at how to do it and don't impose their thoughts on, they might guide you in that, but they offer you the avenue to explore that...they've given you that opportunity to explore that yourself and learn from that. (**Karen**)

Karen describes this as an effective way for her to engage with others, being able to challenge existing processes. Having experienced both positive and negative instances of this, she considered above what enabled her to be able to challenge. As evident in the responses, and also reflected in the literature, the nature of the individual leading has a large influence upon this process (Detert & Burris, 2007; Gao et al, 2011; Hsiung, 2012; Locke, 2008; Nickolaou et al, 2008; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012). The way in which leaders empowered Karen was thought to be particularly effective and a reinforcement of the benefits that challenging others can have; this can be related to the previous theme of being enabled by others to have voice. For example, further involvement, engagement and an ability to contribute towards designing the new process, influencing change (Hirschman, 1970) or coming up with new suggestions to the current approaches (Liu et al, 2010). However, this may be purely due to the nature of the leading style and may not be replicated elsewhere in the organisation for all individuals to experience.

Aside from leaders, the culture of an organisation may also influence the ability to challenge, as described by **Kathryn**:

I think having a culture that's quite open and, erm, welcoming to new ideas and to you know, kind of being able to challenge but in a positive way... if you're able to voice that and talk about it in an adult way and somebody doesn't see it as a threat, then you can get on much easier. I found that within certain areas with some of the managers where I've gone in and asked questions, they see it as a challenge...and automatically it's like the shutters go down and you can't continue with certain things. (Kathryn)

Kathryn refers to the importance of mature approaches and ways of challenging others to avoid a defensive reaction. This may of course be dependent upon both individuals in terms of behaviours as well as other potential factors such as experience, expertise and confidence in the role, reflective of the complex nature of the concept of voice (Gao et al, 2011). Each of these, amongst other factors, may affect an individual's ability and desire to challenge others and voice her/his opinions in this form. The relationship between those following and those leading is clearly important and influential upon the way in which challenging is done, and the way in which it is received and responded to. The previous extracts allude to the importance of the right context and support from others to feel able to challenge. Looking back to the previous form of voice, questioning may be more appropriate in situations with unfamiliar or ineffective relationships, allowing individuals to voice their thoughts but to come across in a less critical way perhaps, and thus incur a less defensive response with the "shutters" coming down as a result. Clearly, then, the ways in which individuals challenge their leaders is a sensitive issue that needs to be approached carefully, as further supported by **Karen**:

It would be easy just to sit back and be a Staff Nurse's role and just say, that, "That wouldn't work, you don't want to try that, that won't work". And that, I think, I suppose, is taking on this role you've got to be there, supportive to the directorate and be a follower for your Directorate Management Team to try and make these work because they get told from higher up "This has to work" ... you can look and say "It won't work like this, but we'll try and see how we can work it on the ward to suit us." (Karen)

Here, Karen depicts challenging as something that is not easy to do, and so something which some may defer. It is also depicted as involving an element of responsibility. Karen suggests that challenging results in more involvement of the individual, as if they are signing up to seeing their question or challenge through to a resolution with the support of others. Karen is engaging in following the change, and

despite not agreeing with the way in which it was proposed to be done, agrees to try it out and make it work.

Despite being supported and encouraged to challenge, there are still difficulties and issues felt by participants in the above extracts. Others went on to describe times when they have felt restricted in their ability to challenge. Understandably, feeling restricted was not described as something participants enjoyed or got satisfaction from. Rather, notions of frustration and powerlessness emerged, emphasised particularly in Karen's extract regarding power in challenging others. For **Chris** his lack of ability to challenge was due to the hierarchal structure and his positioning below his "boss". A lack of flexibility and receptiveness to suggestions and challenging the current approach to tasks was resulting from the leading style used:

But she seems to have these hard and fast rules. How she wants things done...it makes me feel, erm, restricted...and frustrated because I can't challenge it even if, if there's a better way of doing things, it would be nice to be able to challenge...even if they are your boss, to be able to have a conversation with them about "Do you think this is the best use of our time?" or "Is this the best way to handle this situation?" Rather than just feeling like you've got to do it because they're the boss...it feels a little bit like it's their way or the highway. There's no real scope to sort of challenge the ways decisions are reached and how we do things...and that's what I find is frustrating. (Chris)

Chris's description of how he would approach challenging others, if he felt able to, lends itself to previous discussions around adopting a calm, mature approach. Rather than challenging ideas and individuals in an aggressive way, Chris recognises that there are more suitable approaches, and yet still felt as though he was unable to due to felt power differentials and organisational positionings. The use of the term "boss" is interesting, a term lacking common use today and synonymous with *superior*, *supervisor*, *command*, and *bully*. This reinforces Chris's implication of power differences and almost a return to the term subordination, where rather than being active contributors there is a return to passiveness and being under the "hypnotic trance" of leaders (Dixon & Westbrook, 2003, p.20).

Further examples of feeling restricted in being able to challenge their tasks and their leaders were included in some participants' visual research diaries. The below example depicts a broader issue of feeling restricted by the organisation overall, with regards to the rules and ways in which they were expected to be at work:

Figure 4.12: Callum reflecting on difficulties in challenging ideas

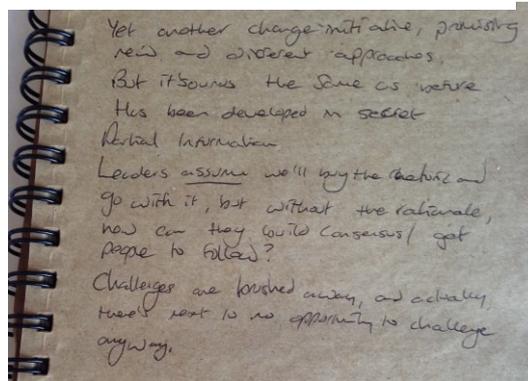


Figure 4.13: Callum depicting the restrictions felt upon being able to

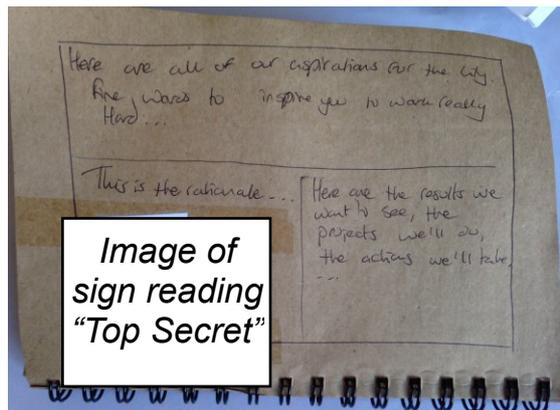
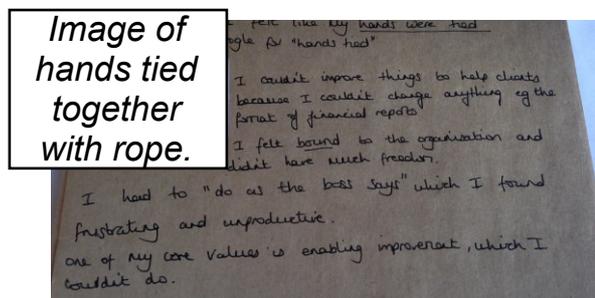


Figure 4.14: Kathryn depicting feeling restricted in having input



The three images above shed light on the restrictions upon being able to challenge others, ideas and changes due to not being informed or involved early enough.

Callum described the ways that his organisation felt very "secretive" in terms of the

rationale of why changes are proposed and that he does not feel able to challenge these. In his diary he noted “Challenges are brushed away, and actually there’s next to no opportunity to challenge anyway”. Similarly, Kathryn’s notes also reflect inabilities to challenge: “I couldn’t improve things...I couldn’t change anything...I had to do as the boss says, which I found frustrating and unproductive”. Furthermore, Kathryn described deeper feelings about the ways in which this made her feel:

And when I suggested ways of making improvements, I was kind of beaten down and told, “Oh well, we’ve just got to get on with it”...so it really felt like, and in another way when I was looking at this yesterday, I thought I did feel a little bit like a slave. (Callum)

Kathryn’s use of the terms “beaten down” and “I did feel a little bit like a slave” are strong metaphors to draw upon and convey the negative impact that this was having upon her. The lack of welcoming challenges is thus perhaps more complex here than for questioning. Through this it seems understandable that voice may not happen in the form of challenging so often, and may have more thought behind it before choosing to engage in challenging others.

This subtheme has highlighted the complexities and ways in which having voice is engaged in, through the approaches of questioning and challenging. Having voice will be further discussed in the next subtheme, considering the difficulties faced in doing so.

4.5.4 Impediments to Having Voice and Being Heard

As indicated in the previous subtheme, individuals may face restrictions in having voice, posed by others and the contexts they are in relation to. Issues that seemed to emerge for restricting individuals from having voice and being heard centred on feelings of intimidation and approachability, as well as preventing structural barriers. These not only influenced whether participants chose to voice their thoughts, but also who they chose to direct their voice at.

When faced with issues in the workplace and in particular feelings of dissatisfaction, **Danielle** spoke about how she would want to voice these to management to ensure that they had impact, but not too high up the hierarchy to avoid feelings of intimidation. One way that her inclination to have voice was increased was through

familiarity and the amount of contact, as previously discussed within the theme

Visibility:

I feel that my current head is a lot more approachable.... the current head sits in the staff room, the old head never did...you can talk to her, the current head, about you know what you did at the weekend, we've actually got mutual friends that my parents are friends with... we'll talk about general things you know because she lives in ***, like local area and stuff whereas the other head, you couldn't speak to about things like that. But even you know if there was problems and things I would tend to go to my tutor last year rather than the head...it's the same kind of, they're up there and don't bother them. (Danielle)

From this it is identifiable that despite the growth of familiarity and ease of interactions with senior management, a feeling of distance may still affect the likelihood of Danielle voicing her thoughts to them. She describes not being able to say much due to being lower down the "food chain", supportive of Carsten & Uhl-Bien's (2015) argument of a link between followers' perceptions of their ability to have influence and their inclination to engage in upward communication. Several participants did however demonstrate recognition of their ability to voice up the hierarchy, suggesting perhaps that rather than an inability, personal preference may influence such interactions:

I feel more intimidated to approach the director...I don't really have many opportunities to speak to him on a daily basis. But if I did need anything you would, he's always said his door's open. So he's quite (pause) welcoming. (Sophie)

I wouldn't necessarily talk to the head of department in the same, about the same things as I would follower to follower...my line manager said to me just recently is that actually I'm probably a bit more guarded with what I share with them. Although if they asked, I would be straight out with it. (Megan)

Sophie and Megan both indicate feelings of a lack of comfortableness in voicing to those more senior, despite encouragements and invitations being offered; "he's always said his door's open", "if they asked, I would be straight out with it". However they both suggest that they would have voice if needed, returning to the importance of the issue. Opposing this, however, others experienced an actual inability to have voice to those higher up, which seemed to be centred on fear:

There's only one manager who I've really disagreed with. And there was an element of being scared to raise any issue with him. Erm and I can remember raising an issue a couple of times and my heart going, and it shouldn't, it just shouldn't be like that...you just tried to avoid them...you just didn't raise that

issue, because it wasn't worth the argument... I still don't have any respect for that manager, even though they've retired. I have a huge grudge against that manager. (Brian)

I can't complain to him, I can't complain to his manager because as far as I'm concerned that route is completely shut. (Megan)

In these responses, there is a strong element of fearing those above, and a lack of ability to then go and voice issues to them because of this. For instance Brian refers to a raised heart rate, and others' reflective comments include "You just tried to avoid them", "that route is completely shut". What this highlights is that voicing relies not only on those following to take up the effort (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001) or to be courageous enough (Chaleff, 2003; 2009) but also upon those leading and the relations that they have. Issues of structure are also apparent in Megan's response, referring to "routes" and the different levels of hierarchical management, as did Danielle earlier with her reference to the "food chain". Issues with the structure itself and the complications that it raises when having voice were also prevalent in **Chris's** response:

Well, I can't feed it back to him directly, erm, cos we're such a big organisation. There's a formal mechanism to do it through, an e-mail, which to me is rubbish...there's a process to put in place to feedback and that, that's how I've told my team that they need to feedback things through so if I was just to go against it and ring him up then, I think it would upset the hierarchy within my office because they'd be saying "Well, why didn't you come through us? This is the process. Don't start going to the Chief Exec when you can just have a chat with us" sort of thing, first. Like a courtesy thing, etiquette whatever, in terms of hierarchy so that's probably why I wouldn't do that. And that fear of consequences as well if I do it then. Big black mark against my name. That would screw you for the rest of your career, sort of thing. (Chris)

The size of the organisation appears to be an issue here, as well as the culture and expectations of individuals. Chris is aware of the potential consequences of going against the norm and the expected approach to voicing issues. He also talks about the knock-on effect that it would have for those below him and how they may then act. This returns to the notion of shifting between following and leading roles, as well as role modelling, and places emphasis on how an individual's behaviour has impact when engaging in both processes of following and leading. However, despite these difficulties in having voice in the organisation, some perceive it as a more appropriate approach, however uncomfortable it might be, compared to voicing outwards to a

wider and perhaps detached audience instead. **Luke** uses an example of voicing out using social media to illustrate the potential, damaging, consequences:

Social media as a whole – it has a, proper detrimental effect on the chain of command, so if I was to tell somebody, you know, you’re going to be on duty at the weekend, cos you’ve done something. They then, you know, rather than it being a “Yeah, you’re being punished for that, you do that duty”, they go on social media and it then becomes a huge issue and they start swearing about you, they, they, and you know, and try and undermine you. (Luke)

This extract illustrates the potential implications of contexts where individuals feel unable to have voice with those relevant, and instead have to ‘speak out’ as Liu et al (2010) refer to it. In this instance, however, rather than speaking out to peers as the literature suggests, Luke has chosen to speak out to removed others. Luke is located within a defence services organisation, where the hierarchy has a strong presence. Here, followers seem to be feeling the need to voice their thoughts, but have avoided doing this directly within the organisation, perhaps for fear of consequences and because of intimidation, as previously discussed. However, the decision to voice in a public forum seems significant, seeking support and sympathy from individuals who do not share a commitment nor advanced understanding of the organisation. This is further reflective of the benefits of engaging in voice, venting out rather than internalising and suffering from emotional inhibition. An interesting story shared by Michelle provides an example of speaking up via speaking out. That is, an individual has chosen to engage in voicing to those higher up but, rather than approaching them directly, they have spoken out to the organisation knowing that the message will reach their intended audience without the anticipated consequences of making themselves identifiable:

Figure 4.15: Michelle depicting the direction of voice in her organization



The image reminded Michelle of an instance at work which was centred on the inability to speak up to those at the top of her organisation. During an Easter competition employees submitted entries of decorated eggs to be judged by a panel made up of the executive team. One entry was submitted anonymously and was designed in a way to mock the leader at the top of the organisation, and to show the dissatisfaction with the ways in which they had been leading the organisation. I was taken aback by this story, and Michelle also commented on her surprise when this happened. However, through discussion we began to recognise this as an instance of an employee sharing thoughts and opinions but not feeling able to do this directly to the leader, or to accept association with what was being said. Reasons for this, as suggested by Michelle, included intimidation and actual access restrictions. What this further highlights is the choice that individuals have in engaging in voice, and also that speaking out is not necessarily the approach with the least impact, but instead can be a way for individuals to have power whilst not taking ownership for this to avoid the adverse consequences of speaking out against those more senior to them.

The decision to have voice is undertaken by individuals, and for those following there are many influential factors upon this as previously discussed. However, the extent to which voice is heard and responded to is also important in understanding how individuals experience voice within processes of following. Participants recalled times when they had and had not been listened to, and went on to explain the implications of this in terms of how they felt, as well as for future instances of following and choosing whether to voice their thoughts – a cyclical effect.

Change has been reflected on by several participants as an instance of initiating the desire to have voice, be that through questioning or challenging as previously discussed. When there is a sense of not being listened to however, this can result in feelings of disappointment and resentment as **Sophie** describes:

I have had discussions with my manager about erm changing some of the work I do and taking on other work and it was quite an informal meeting and I feel like it wasn't very clear, so I did follow it up with an email erm which I never had a reply to. So I feel a bit let down by that...it did change my attitude actually because I felt well if you can't be bothered to tell me what I need to be doing, then really I can't be bothered to do it. (Sophie)

The implication here of not being listened to leans towards a desire for withdrawal. Sophie directly asserts that this experience changed her attitude and that her

behaviours were adapted to mirror those of her leader to a certain extent. This is reflective of Gardner et al's (2005) framework, which, however, limits its focus to positive aspects being mirrored. **Brian** also described this with implications for him of feelings of powerless, which seemingly are emphasised through the hierarchical structures in place, as described by **Danielle**:

If a leader is unwilling to listen, then you just feel as if you haven't got any power over it, but a good leader wouldn't do that. Erm, the feeling that you can't change something, you can't change a process because you're not part of it. But again, if you want to follow something, you want to be part of it, you'll feel as if you can change something, your leader will do that. (Brian)

It depends on the hierarchy and it depends on who's at the top of the hierarchy as to whether they're gonna bother listening or not (laughs) (Danielle)

Both Brian and Danielle refer to the organisational structure as affecting the ways in which they interact with others during processes of following, with the belief from their experiences that this influences the extent to which they are listened to by others. As Bennis (2010, p.3) suggested, "Followers who tell the truth, and leaders who listen to it are an unbeatable combination". However, Bennis does not explore how and when this might be achievable or impeded. For instance, who the individuals are that are following and leading and the relationship that they have may well be influenced by the hierarchical positionings. **Taylor** described this and distinguished between being heard at a local level and at a "top" level:

We've had an example today where a new process was coming in and the manager put together some ideas that weren't that well he (pause) he sort of critiqued the new process and he sent down all his notes to some captain or other and he got an email "thanks very much but it's changing anyway", so it didn't matter what he said, so that's a manager saying that so you know we're further down the chain we've got absolutely no influence ...everybody has their say locally but then it'll go up...it was totally ignored and that's quite a regular thing and he just said this morning "well we know how it is you know" and that's how it is. (Taylor)

Much like the initial discussions around what following meant to participants, here Taylor describes a desire to be involved and to have a say. Therefore, being heard occurs differently depending on the situation, context and those involved. Being heard and being listened to has influence upon feelings of satisfaction in participants' roles as well as their desires to engage in following. Brian places emphasis on it being the responsibility of those leading, to ensure that they are listening to others

and therefore making them feel involved. However, in such reciprocal relationships, there are arguably ways that this can be encouraged by those trying to be heard. From the data this includes the level of experience and expertise possessed by individuals, as well as the use of in depth explanations to achieve understanding and reasoning. **Debbie** described how she used to question why others chose to listen to her despite them being higher in the organisational structure. This seemed strange to her, against her expectations:

I was almost questioning, you know they're listening to me but how can they when they're either a higher band or whatever you know more senior management in the organisation but I've learnt over time that really doesn't particularly matter as such. It's more the credibility comes from your, the expertise, the knowledge, that you have and even the more senior people in the organisation don't know everything (Debbie)

Through reflection, Debbie realised the importance of knowledge in being heard and getting others to follow her. Taking this issue forward **Luke** describes, from his experience, the importance of having reasoning and strong arguments when challenging leaders. From his perspective this not only brings about a sense of confidence but also increases the chances of being heard and being listened to.

When you're following, you'll be happy to speak to your leader and say to them "Actually that's not right because of this", as long as you've got the arguments there then there's a better chance of listening to you. (Luke)

In summary, this subtheme explored the importance of being heard - not only recognising the need for those following to choose to have voice, but also for others to listen to them, and the impact this can have if not.

4.5.5 Keeping Quiet – Hiding and Controlling Voice

As previously discussed, voice has emerged as a theme and it has been understood as encompassing an element of choice in the extent and ways of doing it. An interesting area that emerged during the data analysis was around hiding and controlling thoughts when having voice. This affects the ways in which individuals choose to share their thoughts and what to hold back. This sub-theme includes ways of hiding and controlling thoughts, the reasons why some choose to hide and control what they voice, as well as the sense of regret experienced by those who keep their thoughts hidden and choose not to have voice.

Participants explained the ways in which they had withheld their thoughts and feelings in several different ways, which can be categorised into hiding partially or completely, according to whether they might share some or none of their thoughts. Moments of hiding completely were viewed as not what they should be doing, but more as something that is deemed necessary in certain circumstances, indicating expectations that others may have of them and therefore limits on their agency.

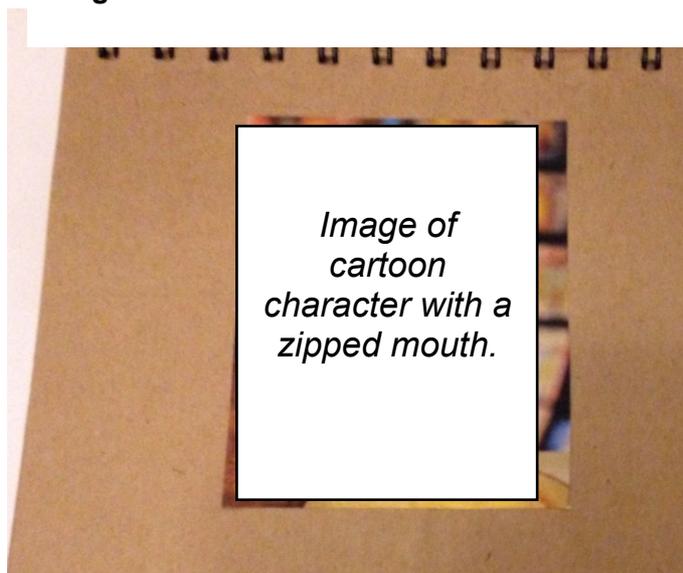
Megan drew upon her current team and spoke about the conflicts and divides that had been, and are still, taking place. Despite this, she felt it important to control and withhold her feelings towards others in order to work effectively together:

You have to present a positive front...you cannot let that person see how you really feel, you just have to smile and you just have to get on with it, doesn't matter what your personal feelings are, keep them to yourself. (Megan)

Megan spoke about the importance of doing her job well and of maintaining professionalism in the workplace at other points in the data generation phases (see theme *(being) Valuable*). To her it is a priority to maintain this, seemingly over being open and honest with others. This contradicts the discussions of Kelley (1988) and Chaleff (2003) as well as more recent models of authentic followership. For instance, Shamir & Eilam (2005), like many others in their field, argue for the importance of behaviours and feelings being reflective of one another. Early models proposed by Kelley and Chaleff described typologies as discussed in Chapter Two - Followership, Authenticity and Voice. In this they shared a tendency to describe 'good' followers as being those who, amongst other behaviours, were confident and responsible enough to be honest and speak up to their leaders. Furthermore, Agho (2009) later found that honesty was perceived as being important for both followers and leaders to demonstrate. It is important to note however that this was based upon a follower centric study and therefore, unlike this study, did not take into consideration followers' views of experiencing honesty. The findings here provide appreciation and acknowledgement of the challenges faced in being open and honest, and the choices that followers have through this and in hiding and controlling.

Megan talked about her own approach in choosing when to be open and honest and when to withhold her thoughts and feelings or information:

Figure 4.16: Megan depicting the withholding of thoughts and of information



Megan describes this as a choice that she makes depending on the situation, rather than being unable to because of others, as previously discussed. This is reflective of some perspectives within the employee voice literature, which place emphasis on voice as being “optional” (Caldwell & Conuto-Carraco, 2010, p.159) and based on choosing what or how much information to provide (Cortina & Magley, 2003). The reasons why individuals chose to withhold some or all of their thoughts seemed to be centred on an ulterior self-interest motive, avoidance of conflicts, and setting an example to others. This was pertinent for **Danielle**, who raised the issue of hiding and controlling voice on several occasions throughout the data generation process. Below are two extracts from the interviews with Danielle reflective of this:

we were talking about a previous job role, which was part of my university placement and like how the manager spoke to me and stuff. I was very much classed as like bottom of the food chain. Erm quote by manager ‘the dogsbody’ she actually introduced me to somebody else as the dogsbody. And my sister is very loud and outspoken and confident and you know she was like “I’d have given it straight back” and I was like “well yes but then I wouldn’t have passed my university year”, so again it was putting up to get somewhere. (Danielle)

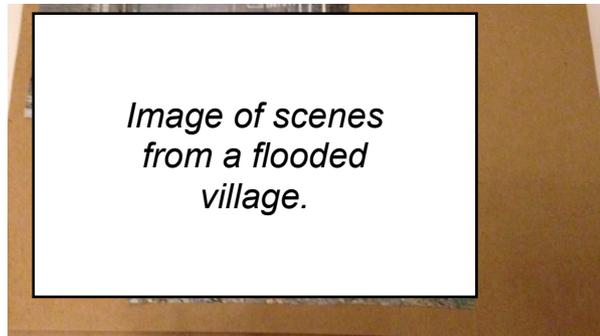
I do internally disagree at the fact that I’m getting kids palmed on to me and can’t really say very much about it because it would be frowned upon and they’re my references and things like that ...I’m not there that long... in the grand scheme of things that you know just take it on the chin, get a decent reference, I think if you start trying to mess things up is that going to mess up your reference and stuff? Which is I know, a kind of the wrong way I suppose to look at it, but the right way for getting to where you need to be. (Danielle)

Danielle referred to the early stage in her career as well as her non-permanent positions within the organisations she has worked in to date. Without probe, this emerged as her explanations for not wanting to be open and voice her thoughts on issues or disagreements. Danielle's lack of a permanent position and her limited experience seems to affect her confidence in challenging others and having voice. For instance with her workload issues, she comments on being aware that what is happening is not right and that she does disagree with it, albeit internally. However she maintains her focus on getting a positive reference to then enable her to move on and progress in her career. Knoll & Van Dick (2013) refer to this as 'opportunity silence', whereby individuals remain silent to further a personal interest or reach a personal benefit. In their work, however, this is discussed and portrayed as being selfish, whereas in this instance it appears to be centred around protection and defensiveness. Therefore, opportunity silence may need to be reconsidered to acknowledge the surrounding context and situation to more truly understand whether it is a selfish act or more of a defensive one. Danielle also demonstrates her decision to put up with being disrespected publicly (see first quote above). She compares her own approach to that of a family member, but draws upon concepts such as personality and confidence in explaining her behaviours, as well as individual effort to engage (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001). **Karen** supported this notion as enabling individuals to feel more able to control or even hide their thoughts from others.

Some young girls that were there just couldn't stand it and left very quickly, but then there were some women there, similar age to me, similar situation, had young children, and they just decided, well, they were general nurses, and it was either working at the infirmary in town or working there and these hours suited them better, so I think for some of them, they probably felt not trapped but just felt they were coming to do the shifts and look after their patients and that was it. Whereas that wasn't me, I can't do that. I can't step back and, and just let people do that. (Karen)

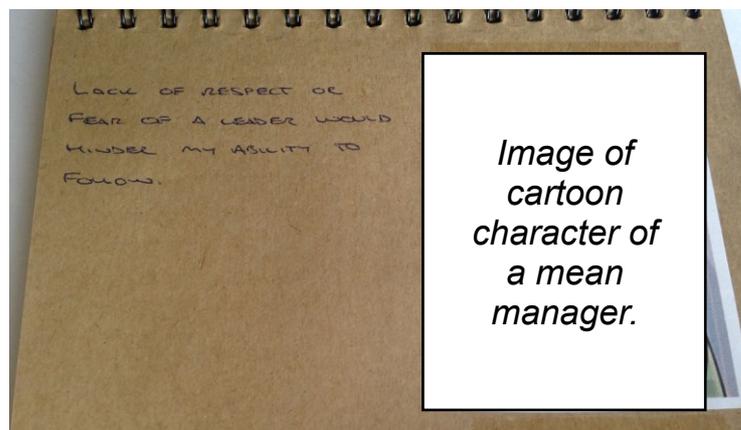
Here Karen discloses how she finds it difficult to "stand back" and withhold her thoughts and to not challenge what she is being asked to do. This denotes a sense of unnatural behaviours, which is further emphasised by Brian's use of the term "robotic" which was also a metaphor used by Kathryn in her visual research diary, to explain times when they felt they were unable to be themselves and express their thoughts. This recognition that withholding is a conscious and perhaps uncomfortable process was also apparent in Megan's diary where she reflected on this, with the use of the image below and metaphor of a flood to describe the implications of restricting her voice to avoid interactions with her line manager:

Figure 4.17: Megan depicting the impact of withholding information, through the use of the metaphor of a flood.



Clearly a negative association, Megan described the impact of withholding information and not wanting to raise issues with her current manager as being similar to flooding that occurred to a town. The build up of material caused banks to break and thus resulted in a flood, and so she is concerned that her lack of willingness to raise issues with her manager resulting in a build up of work, which is beginning to 'flood' her desk. Brian also shared thoughts regarding the inapproachability of managers, linking this to feelings of dissatisfaction in the narrative that he used to accompany his visual diary:

Figure 4.18: Brian depicting an unapproachable manager



When showing me this image in his diary, I enquired why he had chosen this character to represent what he described as a lack of respect for a leader:

He was just the worst example of what would hinder me as a manager. A lack of respect or fear of the leader. Just completely unapproachable. You don't, if you're scared of a manager, you, you don't want to speak to them; you just keep out of their way. And again you go back to being one of those people who just puts their head down and just wants to stay under the radar. But as you get a bit more experience and you get a bit more confident, then you feel you can challenge things. But if the manager or leader is not willing to do that, you just think, I don't want to follow, you just wait for 5 o'clock each day, Monday to Friday, and just want the weekend. (Brian)

From this image and complementary narrative there is a sense of fear, returning to potential causes of this related to power and authority as described in much of the traditional literature, including Kellerman (2007) and more towards that of subordination. There is also clear indication of an impact on behaviours resulting from this type of relationship, with suggestions around becoming less active and withdrawing the self as well as feeling unable to have confidence to challenge others; these are two areas that have emerged from the data analysed, as previously discussed in other places.

Finally, within this subtheme there emerged a sense of regret from participants, both at times of not having voice but also in the way that they approached it when they did.

I've had managers where they talk at you, rather than trying to get you involved, and they talk and talk and talk and talk, and although you do things, it's not begrudgingly that you do them, erm you just accept that you have to do them, rather than willingly doing them. (Brian)

What is notable from Brian's narrative is his tendency to speak of the collective *they*, which suggests a sense of detachment and also collectiveness. In other words, Brian is able to group together different leaders and refer to them collectively perhaps due to the similarities in how they have behaved and made others follow. Furthermore, the repetition of the term "talk" four times may emphasise the extent, duration and consistency of this, and perhaps the way in which followers have been made to feel. There is a sense of a lack of space to have voice.

Megan and Kathryn shared stories of times when they had not been able to share their thoughts and opinions and how this has made them feel as a result:

If he tells me leave it I have to leave it...it does have me gnashing my teeth sometimes...the important thing is to be able to accept that you have to follow, in the end. You can give your reasons but in the end you know you have to follow, or you have to leave. (Megan)

You know I wasn't allowed to show any kind of individuality about things, so the way they saw a follower was like a sheep "you must do what I say...if you stray away from that field, then you're the black sheep...you're not really a follower, you're not really part of us if you're not doing as we say". (Kathryn)

Megan indicates feelings of frustration and discomfort, anger even, with her reference to her "gnashing" her teeth. She also suggests that from her view, she can voice her thoughts and arguments but that this would not achieve a change, rather the two outcomes, almost described as inevitable, will still result. She closes with her two outcomes of following or leaving, or exiting as described in the literature (Hirschman, 1970; Farrell, 1983), and links this to her current experience as being dissatisfied and unhappy because of her manager but having to continue and keep her thoughts to herself to avoid repercussions and having to find a new job. Similarly, **Kathryn's** narrative also indicates a sense of dissatisfaction as she described being restricted in having individuality in her role. Her use of the term "black sheep" brings about notions of being adversely distinguished from others. Also, her manager's perceptions on Kathryn indicates the potential threat for the follower label to be removed. DeRue & Ashford (2010) propose that follower and leader roles are both claimed and granted by individuals in organisations. However, what Kathryn's experience illustrates is that the follower role could in fact be removed or at least threatened for removal once claimed and granted. Perhaps then the processes of claiming and granting do not coincide and can be reversed if deemed necessary, perhaps better understood as being temporary and fluid. DeRue & Ashford (2010) called for exploratory work on their claiming and granting model, and this study gives insights into these processes and resultant feelings of lack of having voice.

Often participants felt regretful for not being more assertive in challenging others and voicing their opinions more openly. **Karen** and **Chris** both blame themselves for such situations:

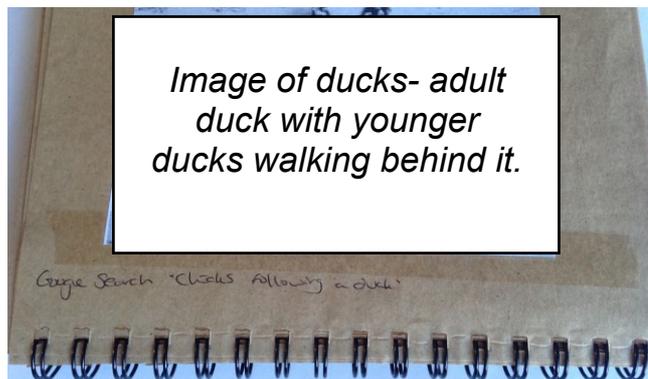
I get angry with myself, thinking "Why did I not stand up and say I don't want to do that?" I think it's just, sometimes just the harmony of the group you're in and just thinking "Is it worth it?" is the reason. (Karen)

We've been far too helpful, too helpful, too accessible...And I think it was a really bad experience for me and the team that we got pushed down that route and now we're getting a load of criticism as a result. And we should

have, I suppose – I kick myself as the sole leader of that team – I should have challenged more at the beginning that this just wasn't the right thing to do. And been a bit more forceful as to why it wasn't...the right approach. (Chris)

Both Karen and Chris identify an element of judging whether it is worthwhile for them to have voice and to challenge or question others. Callum reflected on this further in his visual research diary as below:

Figure 4.19: Callum depicting stepping out of line



When showing me this image, Callum provided the following narrative:

I might disagree with something, but I wouldn't feel strongly enough to step out of, of the line of ducklings and voice it...I regret it actually most of the time. And sometimes that's when I come home from work after a day or a week and think "I should have said something there", and I get annoyed with myself that I didn't, but I must have a cut-off where I feel strongly enough to stand up and say something and sometimes I just resign myself and just say "Well, fine. Yeah. If that's what everyone thinks, then go ahead". (Callum)

Callum refers to the strength of his feelings as influencing his inclination to have voice, a point previously discussed, as well as feelings that result from not having voice in his experience. Callum, Kathryn and Chris all demonstrate feelings of regret through their use of phrases including "I kick myself", and "I get angry with myself", "I get annoyed with myself" as well as "I should" and "We should". This reflects the findings of Gross & Levenson's (1997) study, which argued that hiding feelings and opinions could cause emotional reactions for individuals. Furthermore, Cortina & Magley (2003) also found that refraining from voicing thoughts can have negative impacts on employee well being. However both studies place emphasis on this lack of voice as a result of being unable to, for example leaders placing restrictions on

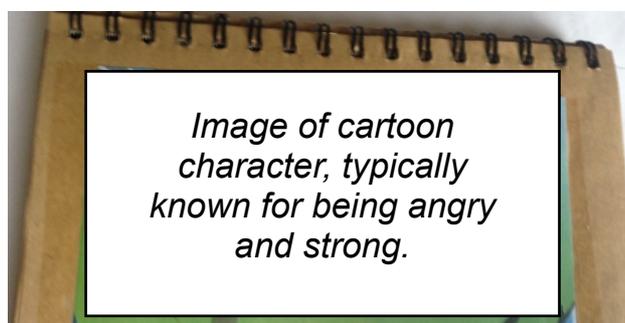
them or other contextual influences, rather than also choosing not to engage. Knoll & van Dick (2013) offer the term of “opportunistic silence” for this, however they recognise that this lacks detailed conceptualisation or exploration in practice. In this study instances of opportunistic silence may be seen in Callum’s responses for example: “but I wouldn’t feel strongly enough to step out of line” and “sometimes I just resign myself”, whereby he is still making a choice to instead to remain silent. Returning to the above responses, there is a sense of what should be the case or expectation, by the image showing all travelling in the same direction, however a desire is felt to move out of this at times. Whether or not this is engaged in is dependent upon the value of doing so, and can result in avoiding such feelings of regret and instead bring satisfaction and self-esteem to individuals (Heppner et al, 2008).

On the other hand, there were also feelings of regret from voicing in a way that could be perceived as aggressive. When reflecting afterwards, these moments seem to strike individuals and impact how they have voice in future situations:

I’ve snapped a couple of times in however many years. Once I remember thinking “You really shouldn’t have said that”, erm, knowing I could have worded it differently, and that made me think that sort of affected how I behaved after that. (Brian)

Reflecting this outburst of emotion, Sophie talked about how she struggled to refrain from speaking up or out in an appropriate way. She referred to the below image in her diary as she spoke about this:

Figure 4.20: Sophie depicting struggling to control the ways in which she has voice



Brian and Sophie both highlight the ways in which their feelings and behaviours can be affected after engaging in voice in certain ways- in these instances there is regret from being forceful perhaps. Furthermore, Sophie’s image and supporting narrative raised the issue of controlling the ways in which she engaged in having voice as being very much a conscious and sometimes difficult process. The process of

engaging in voice is depicted therefore as complex and centred on the ways in which individuals interact and the demonstration of individuals agency in controlling or hiding within processes of voice.

This theme has discussed the ways in which individuals have voice, as well as the ways in which this is enabled and restricted. Next, a overarching theme of choice and power is discussed, taking notions forward from this and previous themes in the chapter.

4.6 Choice and Power

This final section of this chapter is focused on choice and power, which are apparent through the previous themes discussed as a common theme throughout the data collection process and subsequent findings. Whilst the data collection process was not designed to explore this specifically, as participants reflected upon their experiences and understandings of following they naturally touched upon issues of power and spoke about times when they had varying extents of choice when following. Furthermore, this also uncovered the ways in which choice and power can affect the self and others in various ways.

This section will (re) present a series of examples from across this chapter for illustrative purposes.

4.6.1 Choosing to Engage in Following and How

Choice emerged initially in some participants' explanations of what they understood following to mean. For instance, Luke and Sophie describe following as being driven by desire and beliefs:

You have to have the belief, if you don't then you're not really following them, you're just doing as you're told (Luke)

a follower to me I think would mean you want to do it (Sophie)

Luke and Sophie's responses are in line with understandings of followership as being concerned with being engaged (Kellerman, 2007), as discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Furthermore, it supports Dixon & Westbrook's (2003) distinction between followers and subordinates.

Notions of having choice for engaging in following was further reflected in several participants' use of the metaphor of following as a *journey* that they decided to join. This was illustrated by several images in participants' diaries, including that of Sophie's and Kathryn's as shown below:

Figure 4.21: Sophie depicting following as a journey



Figure 4.22: Kathryn depicting following as a journey

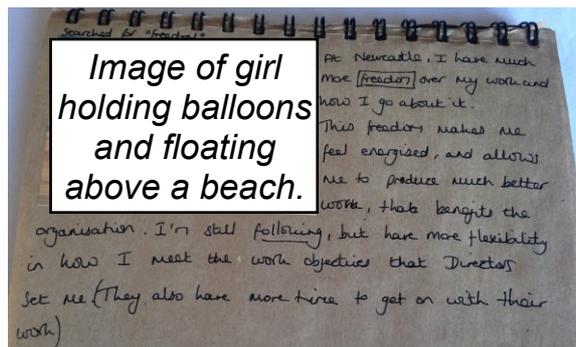
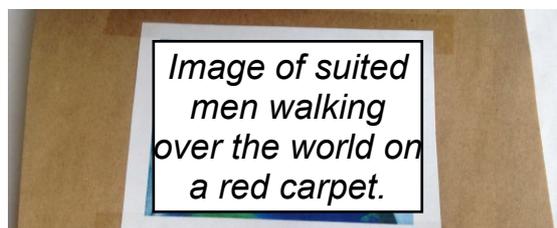


Figure 4.23: Kathryn depicting following as a journey



The images in Sophie and Kathryn's diaries show above show individuals travelling, floating and moving by holding on to the balloons. Kathryn also portrayed a sense of movement and travelling through figure 4.23, and in discussing this image she spoke about moving forward, being helped by others and feeling valued, reflected by the red carpet in the image and what she understood as a leader laying the path for their

followers. The use of the term and images reflecting a journey denotes thoughts around movement, which is aligned with understandings of following as a fluid process and as being on a continuum. **Kathryn** refers to a journey on three occasions throughout the data generation process:

...but we're on that shared journey together, so, you know, we've got an identifiable start point and an identifiable end point and it could continue beyond as well, but actually it's quite a clear journey.
I guess it's buying into the journey, so you, you're kind of together and with them. (Kathryn)

I just find that they just grate me, so I just think, I'm not gonna help you any more, or I'm not part of your journey, you know, you've done this too many times. (Kathryn)

Within the above data extracts it is notable that Kathryn refers to this journey as being “shared”, indicating the relational nature of following, which is then reinforced in her second reference to a journey where she places emphasis on support and togetherness. Kathryn extends this perspective of following as a metaphor when she describes how she would not be part of the journey when dissatisfied. This suggests the journey as being something to become involved in and to be part of. Sophie also used the metaphor of a journey in her visual diary shown above, and in her accompanying narrative in the photo-elicitation interview, as illustrated below

...as a follower you're always on a journey because you're always erm trying to achieve something new once you achieve one goal you have another one consecutively... I think the balloons would represent sort of things that you found inspiring or interesting or challenging as well you know all that mix of things that you're trying to hold on...I was thinking about the water underneath. I don't know whether that's like the danger area where if you do let go of these balloons you're gonna fall into that water, and can you swim is sort of the question in my mind...so if you can swim you'll be fine but you could sink as well so...if you do let go of being the follower the only way is down really (Sophie)

Sophie chose to include the above image (figure 4.20) within her visual diary and, in discussion, it uncovered several interesting points. Early on when describing this image to me, Sophie suggested that from her understanding followers are constantly on a journey. This is aligned with Kathryn's views, as previously discussed, of the journey of following as on going. I probed Sophie to explain what certain aspects represented for her, for instance the balloons and also the water beneath. I was

interested to understand whether this image had been chosen for those elements specifically too. As visible from the above extract, Sophie drew upon notions of inspirations and fears for both elements. Interestingly Sophie, perceived followers as having an active choice in their continuation on this journey, which again resonates with Kathryn's views that followers could choose to remove themselves from a journey upon disagreements. This is further reflected in the literature by authors including Johnson (2009) who conceive following as something that is not forced and is instead an informed choice for individuals.

However, what was seen to be causing difficulties for many participants in having choice was the organizational set-up and nature, centred on processes and hierarchical structures. **Ben** describes this below:

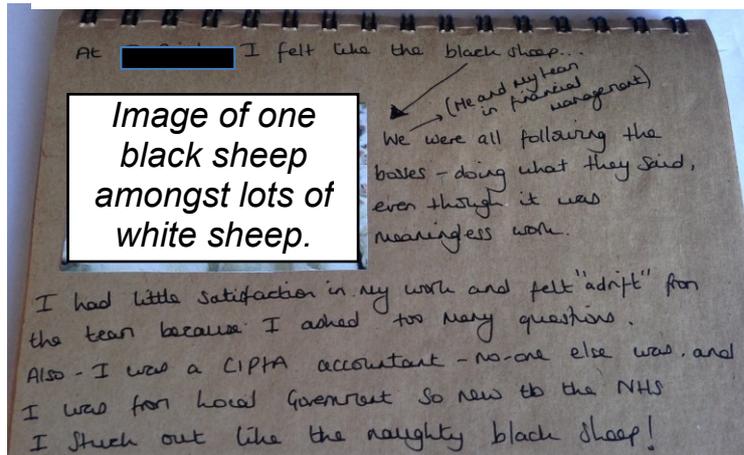
but the bottom line is there are some very bureaucratic, dogmatic, vertically-aligned, totally stove-piped individuals who if you do not follow the process, that's it – it's all over. They just can't, they can't compute anything other than process... it's stifling. It's excruciating. They're the two words I would use for the process that I have to work under. (Ben)

Ben refers to restrictions within his working context with negativity, in particular the rigidity and lack of flexibility in processes. Processes were seen by Ben as being restrictive, as illustrated by his use of the terms "stifling" and "excruciating", as well as by Chris who reflected on his organisation as being "obsessed with process". Therefore, hierarchies seem to be restrictive for following, and participants find them to be a conscious hindrance rather than an unconscious help. However, there were also instances where participants chose to withdraw themselves from processes of following, further reinforcing them as having choice as opposed to being determined by restrictions only, which will now be discussed in the next section.

4.6.2 Choosing to Withdraw from Following

Participants were asked whether they had ever felt like or actually withdrawn their support in the workplace. The responses shed light on the likelihood of followers of withdrawing support and on how they might go about this. **Kathryn** reflected on this after the initial interview and included the below image and annotations in her diary:

Figure 4.24: Kathryn depicting feeling restricted

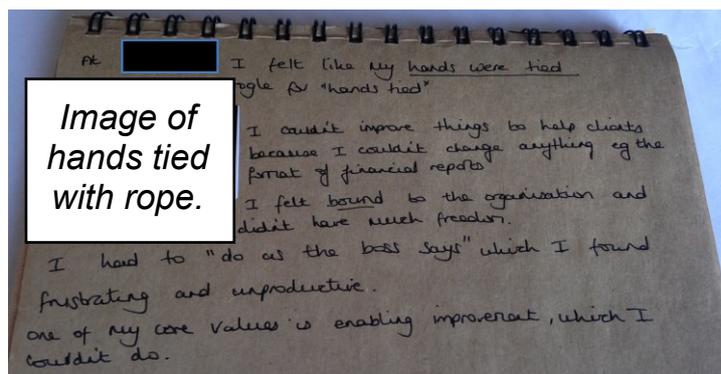


In explaining this page in her diary, Kathryn told me that this was how she had felt in a former role:

I didn't really agree with how the organisation was running. Erm, and I wasn't allowed to disagree with certain things. You know I wasn't allowed to show any kind of individuality about things, so the way that they saw a follower was like a sheep, "You must do as I say" and "If you stray away from that field, then you're the black sheep". "You're not really a follower, you're not really part of us if you're not doing as we say"...Erm, but it then compounded the stress and the feeling that I wasn't part of that organisation. (Kathryn)

There is a sense of restrictions upon Kathryn, as well as isolation and a lack of effective working relationships. She describes how she began to feel that she did not belong to the organisation and so in this case she decided to withdraw herself by actually leaving that role and organisation. Kathryn went on to metaphorically depict herself as having her "hands tied", furthering this notion of helplessness and lacking power:

Figure 4.25: Kathryn depicting feeling powerless



This image is used to portray feelings of powerlessness and through this Kathryn suggests that this was frustrating for her and that it resulted in changes and improvements not occurring for the organisation. An extreme reflection of withdrawing support for the organisation (Hirschman, 1970; Farrell, 1983). A further example of withdrawing support is provided by **Ben**, who refused to be part of a plan due to a lack of belief in the success of it:

And whilst nothing is springing to my mind, I can picture myself in a situation where I have literally as part of, and it's normally in the planning, it's not when you're doing something...it's when you're planning to do something that it would simply be a case of, you know, this, you know, this whatever this process is, is just not going to work. You know, I can't be a part of it; I can't follow this process anymore because it is doomed to failure. (Ben)

It is not clear from this whether withdrawal was or was not made noticeable to others. However, other responses did go on to clarify this. **Luke** explained that he would prefer to adopt a more silent approach in withdrawing, as he felt that this would prevent any harm to the self:

Well, I won't say no. I won't ever say no, I won't do that but it's the amount of effort that I will go to to do that...I don't try and make it visible. I do try and keep it subtle. Erm, I know many people who will voice that and, you know, be quite open about it, but I don't see why that would benefit me, so I don't. (Luke)

However, he also goes on to suggest that if there was a strong enough disagreement for him he would need to leave the organisation; "me I couldn't be part of the organisation, you'd have to, you know, you'd have to go and do something else", what other have referred to as exiting the organisation (Hirshman, 1970; Farrell, 1983). Less of an extreme approach, Ben describes how he regularly feels the desire to withdraw himself from processes that he is following. However how this is done is more subtle and, as he refers to it more a case of "shutting out". However, the implications of withdrawing were not always as subtle and unfelt, as Brian reveals:

If I saw them again, I wouldn't even say hello. Err, to that sort of extent and that, I just think that's a really bad, there is no way I would want to work for them ever. If they asked me to do something, I would be doing everything I could to get out of that office. (Brian)

What these responses show is the differences in extent of withdrawal, from giving less attention, impacting relationships going forward and to actually removing themselves from the organisation. It also indicates a preference for keeping such withdrawals subtle where possible, which may be difficult in some circumstances. Withdrawing from processes of following is thus an act of choice, with regards to when this occurs and how this is done. Individuals are demonstrating agency, making active decisions, about their engagement in and withdrawing from processes of following.

In particular, this theme has highlighted the ways in which individuals have choice within processes of following, in the extent to which they engage in following as well as withdrawing from this process. Notions of engagement and activeness were apparent, with the findings demonstrating the ways in which individuals choose how they demonstrate this. Furthermore, the ways in which this changes and is fluid was also emphasised, with indication of some of the influences up this such as organisational set-ups. Rather than viewing withdrawing as a passive and submissive behaviour, as do Hirschman (1970 and Farrell (1983) in their models of employee voice, from a followership lens it can be understood as an active choice that individuals make and a form of resistance as opposed to something that they are forced into, an important distinction for this theme of choice and power.

An overview of the themes within this chapter is provided in the next section.

4.7 Overview of Themes

This section provides an overview of the themes and subthemes arising through the data analysis process, as discussed throughout this chapter. Table 4.1 summarises and provides descriptors for each theme and subtheme, to be taken forward into Chapter Five.

Table 4.1: Overview of Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subtheme	Subtheme description
4.2 How participants understood following <i>This theme provides insight into how the term following is understood, and demonstrates the difficulties that are experienced.</i>	4.2.1 Reliance on assumptions	The ways in which individuals find it difficult to explain what following means to them, and how assumptions and related concepts are leaned on in doing so.
	4.2.2 Rich reflections	The ways in which participants' constructions of following are enhanced through reflective practice
	4.2.3 Fluctuations between following and being followed	The ways in which following is understood as an on-going and fluid process, in which individuals move in and out of.
4.3 Visibility <i>This theme is centred on the interactions between individuals and the impact that this can have upon processes of following. It considers the various ways in which individuals may respond to both high and low levels of visibility.</i>	4.3.1 Interactions and openness	The importance of having contact and communicating with others, in particular between hierarchical levels.
	4.3.2 Implications of restricted visibility	The ways in which a felt lack of contact with others can impact engagement in following.
	4.3.3 Role models, mirroring and adapting self	Through interactions and access to others, the ways in which this influences the behaviours of those following; mirroring or adapting self.
4.4 (being) Valuable <i>This theme raises the importance of feeling valued for processes of following. It encompasses being valued by the self and by others, as well as the impacts that this can have for individuals.</i>	4.4.1 Feeling valued by self and others	The ways in which both the self and others influence active engagement in processes of following.
	4.4.2 The importance of support and togetherness	The importance of support and a shared approach for individuals and how this has impacted upon following when present and when lacking.
4.5 Voice <i>This theme is based on how individuals feel and are able to be open and share their thoughts, opinions and feelings. This theme illustrates the ways in which voice</i>	4.5.1 Strength of feeling for having voice	The ways in which individuals have self-initiated desire to engage in having voice
	4.5.2 Being enabled, by others, to have voice	The ways in which individuals are enabled by others to engage in having voice.
	4.5.3 Ways of having voice- challenging and questioning	The different ways in which individuals can engage in having voice, and how their

<i>occurs within processes of following, and the complex nature of this process.</i>		positioning as following can affect this.
	4.5.4 Impediments to having voice and being heard	The difficulties and restrictions faced in having voice and also being heard.
	4.5.5 Keeping quiet-hiding and controlling voice	The range of influences that can incur a decision to withhold voice, as well as the implications of this.
4.6 Choice and Power <i>This theme provides insight into the presence of choice within processes of following, and the various ways that this can influence individuals' behaviours.</i>	4.6.1 Choosing to engage in following and how	The ways in which choice is embedded within processes of following.
	4.6.2 Choosing to withdraw from following	The ways in which choice can result in reduced engagement, leaning towards withdrawals and resistance.

4.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided insight into the emergent findings from the study. It has presented each of the key themes, including a range of data extracts as well as my interpretations and analysis. Links have been made with the relevant literature throughout, however this will be done in more detail in Chapter Six. The next chapter will present the emerging discourses for following.

Chapter Five (Post-Viva Chapter)

Discourses of Following

5.0 Chapter Introduction

This chapter focuses on the findings from the study, with a specific interest upon the construction of following. The chapter is in response to requirements from the examiners of this thesis, to interrogate the data to provide a strong sense of how, through this study, participants moved from a position of unawareness of followership to using it as part of their accounting and retelling of their everyday working experiences. Through this the sub-question of *How do individuals within the UK public sector understand following?* will be addressed, as well as the overall research question for the thesis, *What can individuals' experiences, within public sector contexts, tell us about processes of following?*

This chapter will begin by outlining the approach taken to analyse the data post-viva examination. Next, the chapter will outline the emerging discourses of following before discussing each one in further detail, providing illustrative extracts from the data throughout. The reconceptualization of following will then be considered and interlinked, highlighting the ways in which this thesis adds to and extends existing understandings of following, before concluding the chapter.

5.1 Interrogation of the Data

In response to the requirements from the examiners, I have engaged in further analysis of the data, with an aim of going beyond thematic analysis to more closely consider the ways that participants constructed their understandings. This section will outline the preparation that was undertaken for this, as well as detailing the chosen approaches.

5.1.1 Preparation

In preparation for this phase of data analysis various sources were drawn upon, with a focus upon social constructionist studies as well as discourse and narrative analysis methods. Various works including those by Lieblich, Tuval-Maschiach &

Zilber (1998), Philips & Hardy (2002), Oswick (2012), Cunliffe (2008) and Kenny (2010) were drawn upon to develop my understandings and to assist in engaging in further interrogation of the data.

In addition, I also returned to the data within the thesis to re-read and to select extracts for the purpose of this chapter. The criteria that I used for selecting the data extracts were changes in the participants' use of terms such as following, followership or their synonyms and antonyms. For example in their initial responses to how their language changed during the remainder of phases one, two and three of the data collection process. Chapter Four, *Section 4.2 How Participants Understood Following*, provides an overview of the lack of understanding and familiarity with the concept of following. This chapter will illustrate the shift in participants' responses to them using following as part of the language in constructing their understandings and accounting for their everyday working life experiences.

5.1.2 Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is a form of qualitative data analysis, with emphasis more specifically on "the processes of social construction through the study of language and language-use" (Oswick, 2012, p.473). It presents an opportunity to consider the "...expressions, themes, routine ways of talking" (Cunliffe, 2008, p.81) in more detail, to understand how individuals both construct and are constructed by their worlds (Harding & Palfrey, 1997). Importantly, unlike forms of content analysis, the focus is not purely upon the language used and the content/themes conveyed by it but also upon the context. In other words, rather than focusing upon individual words and their isolated meanings, a broader and arguably fuller perspective is adopted to consider the ways in which meaning is constructed (Oswick, 2012).

Having limited experience of more detailed language analysis, I wanted to draw upon a framework to guide me in this process. As outlined above, discourse analysis places emphasis upon language and so it was important to engage in reading the data more closely. Having attended several workshops by Dr. Sandra Corlett at an earlier stage of my doctoral journey, I was aware of the framework that Corlett (2009) had adopted for discourse analysis (see appendix H). This framework is centered on analyzing the language used and the ways in which this constructs understandings. Corlett's framework was developed partially from Mauthner & Doucet's (1998) voice-

centered relational method, which proposed engaging in different readings of data, as well as Boje, Oswick & Ford's (2004) framework which similarly identified ways of reading data to *do* discourse analysis. Following these perspectives I engaged in reading the data for the following aspects:

- Cultural and political contexts, and social structures
- Structural and ideological forces
- Power relations and ideologies

Furthermore, I also used Lieblich et al's (1998) framework to facilitate me in becoming more observant of the language being used and get richer interpretations. Using this framework, the elements to be looked for when reading the data include:

- Adverbials
- Mental verbs
- Denotations of time and place
- Past, present and future forms of verbs
- Transitions between 1st, 2nd, 3rd person
- Passive and active forms of verbs
- Intensifiers and de-intensifiers
- Breaking the chronological order of events
- Repetitions
- Detailed descriptions of events

Once the data had been fully analysed, I engaged in member checking with my Principal Supervisor, as practiced for the previously conducted analysis for Chapter Four, to remain consistent with regards to ensuring quality assurance. The data and interpretations were looked at and discussed together, with additional interpretations being offered as well as further advice on elements to consider when reading for discourses. Following this, I returned to the data to examine the presence of identified discourses across the data set (Kenny, 2010), and wrote up the emerging findings. Appendix G demonstrates the movement in language across the three phases of data collection and Appendix H shows how I operationalized the above-mentioned frameworks across the data set. A selected range of illustrative extracts from this analysis are presented and discussed in the next section of this chapter.

5.2 Emerging Discourses of Following

Through the process of interrogating the data further, drawing upon the approaches previously outlined, several discourses became increasingly apparent and obvious across the data. These are referred to as the discourses of following, meaning that they are the key notions and ways in which understandings of following have been shaped by for participants' constructions of following. The discourses, I argue, became more apparent as the participants progressed through the phases of the study. They were able to benefit from the opportunity to co-construct understandings within the interviews, as well as the time and space in-between them to engage in self-reflection (Ortega-Alcazar & Dyck, 2011) and to depict understandings visually through their diaries and to discuss these verbally with me. The phases of the study enabled me to demonstrate the ways in which participants moved from a position of unawareness to beginning to use the term to account for their every-day working experiences. By drawing out and analysing the emerging discourses, it is hoped that a new way of conceptualising following can be offered, based on the understandings of this study's participants through their reflection on and retelling of their experiences.

Four main discourses struck the researcher, and also had resonance with a research peer who engaged in member checking for this process, as previously mentioned. The discourses are illustrated below in Figure 5.1, and include: *Positioning*, *Power*, *Adjustment* and *Approachability*.

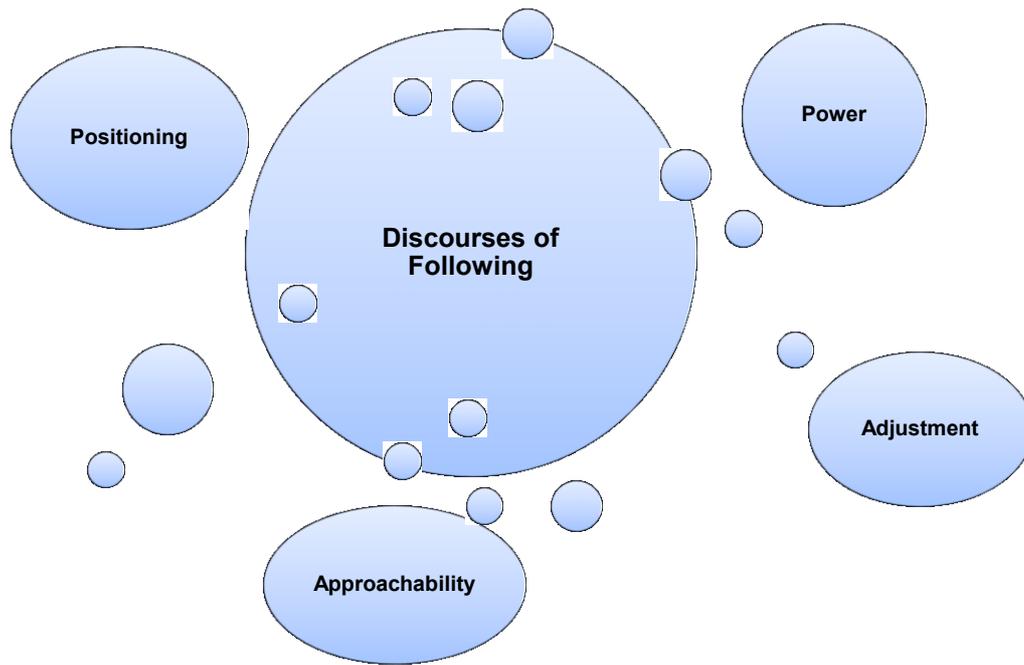


Figure 5.1: Discourses of Following

Figure 5.1 illustrates the discourses that were drawn upon by the participants in constructing understandings of following; their positioning within the illustration is intended to indicate movement and a non-linear formation. Each discourse may be drawn upon to a greater or lesser extent and in different ways depending on individual perspectives. Furthermore, the additional circles without text indicate that there may be other discourses that are drawn upon, for instance due to contextual differences, thus recognising the fluid nature of meaning making; the scope of this chapter however will remain focused on the four identified discourses arising from the data analysis. It is thus not the intent to provide a “concrete definition” (Crossman & Crossman, 2011, p.482) of following here because that would not be appropriate, but instead to offer insights into the discourses that informed understandings of following of individuals doing following as realised through this study’s primary qualitative data generation methods.

Each discourse will now be discussed alongside illustrative extracts from the data.

5.2.1 Positioning

When analysing the performative dialogue of the data, focusing on the language used by participants, participants positioned selves and others within structures as well as in relation to one another. Across the data, it became apparent that participants had a tendency to use the concept of position to make sense of the position of themselves, others and to the hypothetical or generic individuals such as “they” or “people”, which they incorporated into their responses. Positioning was often related to hierarchical structures, with following being located as being below others; for instance extracts from Danielle and Ben’s responses reflect this notion:

they’re up there and don’t bother them (Danielle)

It depends on who’s at the top of the hierarchy as to whether they’re gonna bother listening or not (Danielle)

I was very much classed as the bottom of the food chain (Danielle)

you’re genuinely having an impact on the people at the top of the organisation (Ben)

being able to link all the way to the top (Ben)

The above extracts depict the self as being a follower and as being in lower positions compared to others; for example, “they’re up there” and “at the top”, which is used on several occasions. This suggests that individuals form their constructions of themselves as followers by locating themselves within the structure of the organisation. In particular, there seems to be an emphasis on the distance between the self and the very top of organisational structures as opposed to those positions in between, which is evident through the use of intensifiers such as “all the way” and “very much”. This is interesting in that a lot of the time in extant literature followership is discussed in terms of an individual and their manager, as opposed to those at the top of organisations. Overall there seems to be a negative feeling about this distance, for instance the notion of the *food chain* denotes a sense of structures as being constraining. In addition to this, Danielle’s expression “don’t bother them” indicates not being allowed access to others, bringing about notions of power and a lack of agency more specifically. Ben’s use of language does however indicate that when individuals can have impact on those at the top of organizations then that would bring about positive feelings. This is not however something that he is drawing upon from personal experience, but instead from his understandings of what doings of following would be ideal, indicated by his use of “you” as opposed to first person

thus removing himself and speaking more generally. Furthermore, other responses indicate a perceived lack of desire and effort from others to address this distance, for instance comments about being seen as a *bother* conveys a sense of feeling like an annoyance or inconvenience. The use of such terms indicate perceptions of inequality with others and of belittling of the self, further supporting the sense of lacking agency. This highlights the perceived distance and nature of the distance between themselves and those higher in organisational structures. Clearly then, positioning is important for following and has been used to construct participants' understanding of following, considering their relations with others and identifying the ways in which this has impact upon their doing of following. Within this there is a real sense of imbalance of power, highlighted through the performative dialogue in the responses and their choice of terms, which is the discourse to be discussed in the next section.

5.2.2 Power

A second discourse that emerged from the analysis of the data is that of power; this is interrelated to the other three discourses offered here, and so links will be highlighted in this section where appropriate. Across participants' responses power was a key part of their understandings. For instance, notions of power were drawn upon in a sense of having a desire to have impact, as well as the extent of power they felt that they and others had.

Most strongly, participants demonstrated a clear desire to have some sort of impact through their roles, and to the organisation and others. An example of this is where Ben spoke about wanting to “genuinely” have an impact, indicating a sense of desire to have an important and real value to the organisation. He furthered this when he spoke about the importance, to him, of being able to see a “tangible link between the work that I do and the people that I follow, being able to link all the way to the top”. Ben's language suggests again a desire to have real impact through his use of the term “tangible”. This is interesting in understanding what is desired from a following perspective, and more so as this moves away from traditional perspectives and assumptions of following that were evident in the initial responses from participants, for instance, where it had been described as “doing as you're told” (Luke) and “taking notice” (Sophie). This is an illustration of how through reflection and researcher-participant discussion of following, participants began to consider and perhaps

verbalise more clearly what they desire when engaging in following. It is interesting to note, however, that Ben also described feelings of lacking the ability to such impact; “It’s stifling. It’s excruciating. They’re the two words I would use to describe the process that I have to work under”. Here Ben’s use of language is powerful and has performative effect, conveying being oppressed and personally being affected in an extremely painful way. This sense of oppression is continued where Ben talks about this process as being one that he “has[ve] to work under”, indicating a lack of choice and of being forced by others. Here Ben draws upon his thoughts and opinions of what the importance of having impact and what would be a best practice scenario for him, and then compares this against the scenario that he is currently facing in his workplace where this is seemingly lacking. Sense making is occurring through drawing upon personal experiences as well as existing knowledge and perhaps observations of best practice.

Drawing upon her personal experiences, another instance of having the desire to have impact but of being restricted when putting this into practice is apparent in Kathryn’s recalling of a situation where she “wasn’t allowed” to offer suggestions.

You know I wasn’t allowed to show any kind of individuality about things, so the way they saw a follower was like a sheep

This suggests that there was a desire again to have impact but of being restricted when putting this into practice. The use of language here is another indication of oppressiveness. Whilst the performative effect of these extracts do relate back to early definitions of followers centred around being under control (Dixon & Westbrook, 2003) and lacking influence and power (Kellerman, 2008), the individuals from the extracts in this section are clearly aware of this occurring and do not seem willing to passively accept this. Instead they are making active judgements about the situation and, in some cases, making changes to avoid such circumstances. For instance Kathryn was speaking here of a previous role that she had and how she had become motivated to leave. The extent to which individuals feel they and others have power will now be discussed in more depth.

In reflecting and telling of their experiences of following individuals tended to comment on and associate differing extents of power to themselves and to others. Perhaps non-surprisingly, individuals perceived themselves as having less power when engaging in following, in comparison to others who are leading. Well-known

phrases were incorporated into responses including “dogsbody” and “bottom of the food chain”. Overall this denotes perceiving the self as being lower than others, as being done to, and of being given unskilled and menial tasks to do. This clearly contrasts with the previous discussions in this section where individuals revealed a desire to have a “genuine” impact. However, when Danielle talks about being a dogsbody, she does not speak of this in a way that indicates irritation or annoyance, more so as passive acceptance.

we were talking about a previous job role (with sister)...and like how the manager spoke to me and stuff...she actually introduced me to somebody else as the dogsbody. And my sister is very loud and outspoken and confident and she was like “I’d have given it straight back” and I was like “well yes but then I wouldn’t have passed my university year”, so again it was putting up to get somewhere (Danielle)

Here Danielle is drawing upon the reactions and opinions of others to her being labelled as this, offering a comparison of them in her telling of the situation. Others also spoke about putting up with situations of feeling powerless, for fear of the consequences. For instance Chris spoke about being unable to go against the processes of the organisation or he would face a “big black mark against your name, that would screw you for the rest of your career”. The use of the phrase *big black mark* suggests that he feels that he is being judged and labelled by others. The repeated use of intensifiers – ‘big’ and referring to the long-term career emphasizes the perceived significant and ongoing effect of having agency and going against the processes. Furthermore, the use of “your”/“you” in Chris’s response implies the implications of acting in a perceived powerful manner are generic rather than person, that is they would apply to unspecified people who might attempt to act in the same way.

A final illustrative example for this discourse comes from Kathryn, who engaged extensively in the reflective process through the visual diary. When Kathryn initially answered the question of what her understandings of following were she responded in a way that seemed to be a form of admission or confession; “I’ve never really thought about it, I’ll be completely honest with you”. However as she continued to engage in the research process, she was able to identify with doing following and to unpick situations using changed language to understand them further. Kathryn drew heavily upon notions of power. Reflecting upon a previous role, Kathryn likened herself to a “*slave*” and talked about feeling like she was “beaten down” when trying to have an impact by suggesting improvements. Her use of these expressions

suggests a feeling of being owned by, and under the control of, others and forced to obey them. Slavery can be constructed as the opposite to freedom, and is thus a powerful notion for Kathryn to draw upon, suggesting that she was completely powerless to others. Furthermore, her use of the metaphor of being “beaten down” describes graphically the response to her putting ideas forward. Not only are the ideas not listened to or accepted, but conveys a sense of punishment and physical impact upon her. Like Chris’s discussion of a big impact in terms of everlasting effects, Kathryn also speaks about big impacts in terms of the significance and harm of them for her. Interestingly in her telling of this she rephrases others on several occasions, clearly drawing upon specific experiences and indicating that they have had a lasting impression upon her for her to be able to recall what was said. Again, there is a desire to have agency, by demonstrating independent thinking and making an impact, yet the “capacity” (Tourish, 2014, p.86) to do so is hindered by others.

Power has emerged as a central discourse for the ways in which individuals construct following, perhaps unsurprisingly given the ways in which following has been stigmatized by early theories (Rost, 2008). It is drawn upon in understanding the relationship between individuals for processes of following, and is also drawn upon in terms of the level of power and impact that individuals both aspire to have and actually have. The variances in power for following will understandably influence the doing of following, which will now be discussed for the discourse *Adjustment of Engagement*.

5.2.3 Adjustment of Engagement

In making sense of following, participants also referred to various ways of doing this, identifying times where they adapted their approach and adjusted the extent to which they were engaged in doing following. They recognised therefore that adjustment is an aspect of following, depending on the context that they are located in and others that they are in relation to.

There was a sense of being able and unable to engage in following across responses, and differences in the ease of this doing were expressed. Kathryn for instance spoke about the ways in which she could “still feel like you can follow” during chaotic times when she has someone leading her who is calm:

If I have a manager who is stressed, sets unclear priorities and is just fire fighting all the time, I just, I get really stressed. If I, if you have a manager who is calm in a crisis, I find it much easier to follow them because you have a clear vision about what needs to be done. There might be things going on that are quite chaotic, you know at the moment we've got a lot going on, but actually, you can still, you still feel like you can follow them

Here, Kathryn's switching between references to "I" and "you" suggests a sense of checking and comparing her own experiences against what she expects others to also have experienced or to think. Here Kathryn focuses on her understanding of what enables her to follow, however Ben spoke about being unable to follow, and in this case unable to follow a *process*:

...it would simply be a case of, you know, this whatever this process is, is just not going to work. You know, I can't be a part of it; I can't follow this process anymore because it is doomed to failure

Ben's use of the term "doomed" suggests a state of hopelessness, which he is completely unable to help resolve. There is a sense therefore of being able and unable to engage in following and that this comes from the individual's decision depending on the context that they are in. This indicates the enactment of agency through the demonstration of independent thinking and judgement about the process or individual they are following, and in these illustrative extracts where there is a lack of faith in the outcomes or the approach taken a lack of willingness and ability to engage in following results. Interestingly, Kathryn also speaks about others' opinions about when she is and is not following; she reports the speech of others:

...the way they saw following was like a sheep, "you must do what I say...if you stray away from the field, then you're the black sheep...you're not really part of us if you're not doing as we say"

The use of the black sheep metaphor, drawing upon a well known and undesirable label, is interesting and the reference to questioning or doubting that Kathryn is "*really*" a follower suggests an element of doubt placed upon her by others. Kathryn's use of the collective *them* suggests a feeling of detachment, which will be discussed under the discourse of Approachability. This does however indicate further the desire to be able to be individual and practice agency, and demonstrates Kathryn's belief about this as being an important aspect of following.

Whilst Kathryn and Ben's responses focus on being able and unable to engage in following, others indicated further ways in which following was done. For instance, in talking about his own practices Luke distinguishes between three approaches for following: "doing as you're told", "following", and "supporting".

I would suggest that I'm not a great follower, I'm a great supporter...you can be a follower and support but if you're just doing as you're told then you're not really supporting, you're not giving the best you can...you have to have the belief, if you don't then you're not really following them, you're just doing as you're told

Luke's response suggests movement of understanding following from "just doing as you're told" to a reconceptualization of "giving the best you can", with belief and support needing to be enacted in achieving this. Luke constructs both what following is and what it is not. Luke draws on notions such as trying hard and giving effort as well as having the belief, to construct following and to make sense of the processual relationship in which he follows "them".

Luke's switch from personal pronoun to "you" can be interpreted as his understanding of a generalised theory of following, as "giving the best you can". Luke's choice of terminology including "supporting" is interesting and can be related to perspectives that have proposed alternative words for followership (see Hollander, 1974; Rost, 1995; Chaleff, 1995; Rost, 2008; Frisina, 2005; Johnson, 2009). However, here Luke is distinguishing between following and supporting as being different in nature and as being reflected in the various ways that individuals behave in their everyday working lives and interactions. It is interesting that Luke has chosen supporting to contrast against following, as the typical comparative term in the field as well as in other participants' initial responses is that of leading. What this and the above extracts demonstrate is the variances in the ways that individuals do following and how they may adjust their approaches to suit the contextual factors as well as their preferences. As evident from the above discussions, a major influence upon the ways in which individuals adjust their approaches to following is dependent on those others that they are in relation to. This will be explored further for the next discourse, approachability.

5.2.4 Approachability

The final discourse to be considered in this chapter is that of Approachability. Approachability is understood, from the data analysis in this study, as being a relational dynamic between individuals and the extent of access to and distance from them. The discourse of approachability is linked to the discourse of positioning where, in constructing their understandings of following, participants placed emphasis on positioning the self in relation to others and in particular to those at the top of the organisation. The discourse of approachability also conveys the perceived distance and ability to interact with and have access to others.

In thinking about previous experiences of following, Danielle distinguished between times where she was more and less able to access others:

I feel that my current head is a lot more approachable...the current head sits in the staff room, the old head never did...you can talk to her, the current head...we'll talk about general things you know...whereas the other head, you couldn't speak to about things like that...it's the same kind of, they're up there and don't bother them

Danielle distinguishes between times where access has been more and less present within relations with others, using intensifiers and de-intensifiers such as “a lot” and “never” which indicate a significant difference between the experiences and her constructions of idealized following. In doing so she refers to the actions of others, in this instance the head, influencing this, perhaps suggesting a belief that the onus is on those leading to be approachable. Furthermore, Danielle's use of ‘you’ and ‘you know’ suggests that being able to talk to the ‘head’ is an accepted and generalised practice and/or expectation shared also by her peers. She continues to switch between the two experiences and their chronological order, using the two examples of best and worst practice to construct her understandings of following.

When Danielle's use of “the same” when talking about a lack of approachability between herself and those higher up the organisational structure implies a lack of surprise to her and something that she has perhaps experienced previously or habitually. This sense of normality and familiarity could thus be related to the cultural context of the organisation. Again, indicating her sense making from a broader context, over a range of instances to identify patterns across these.

The idea of approachability being embedded in the culture of the organisation is a feature of other responses. For instance, as previously discussed, Ben spoke about being restrained and unable to move from the set out processes in the organisation that he works in, and drew on a notion of functionalism as an ideology in making sense of his experiences. Chris's references to the mechanisms and processes within his organisation, as well as his use of terms such as courtesy, etiquette and "upset[ing] the hierarchy" bring about a sense of order and control as well as maintaining consensus, and therefore supports functionalism as an organisational ideology. Chris highlights, through his perceived, a lack of ability to interact and have relations throughout the hierarchy without causing some form of agitation or disturbance. Chris' use of the term 'etiquette', inferring a form of policy about how to behave in society, in this case the organisation, is interesting in that it suggests a constraint to align himself with a certain way of interacting. This suggests social structures are constraining for Ben and, with regards to approachability, impact upon the ways that individuals can interact with others. Chris also constructs an ideal following situation, which drawing on notions of collectivism. His construction uses terms such as shared responsibility and collaboration and expresses sharing or shared approaches as being important. This clearly contrasts with his description of his current working context, and yet he is able to underpin his understandings of what following is by drawing upon idealised notions of shared approaches which relate more broadly to the discourse of approachability.

Above, the four discourses from the analysis of the data have been presented alongside illustrative data extracts. The next section will consider the reconceptualization of following and provide links to the discourses presented as well as existing understandings in the field.

5.3 Reconceptualising Following

This section will provide a brief discussion of the links between the existing understandings of following as presented in Chapter Two and the discourses proposed in the previous section. The ways in which the discourses align with the reconceptualization of following in this thesis will also be identified and outlined.

The four discourses of following presented in the previous section emerged through the process of analysing the data of individuals' accounts about and reflections upon their experiences and, in doing so, co-constituting with me understandings of

following. Therefore this study has given rich insights into how following is constructed by individuals engaged in its practice. As a result, this study is able to offer a unique perspective of following, moving beyond the limited offering of “concrete definition[s]” (Crossman & Crossman, 2011, p.482) to address the call for developing conceptual clarity (Tanoff & Barlow, 2002; Vondey, 2012). Furthermore, unlike other constructionist studies on followership which have tendencies to place emphasis on developing further understandings of leadership, this study and this chapter in particular have maintained focus on how following is constructed and has identified discourses that have been drawn upon by participants, hence remaining aligned to a constructionist approach. Furthermore, the methods used and the emphasis placed on gaining insights from the lived experiences of individuals engaging in following has enabled contextual attachment (Page & Gaggiotti, 2012; Parker, 2009; Steyaert et al, 2012), important for the relational constructionist nature of this study and the discourse analysis of the data.

As outlined in Chapter Six, following is reconceptualised in this thesis as:

...a social process whereby individuals buy into others and to ideologies, responding to human and non-human others. By enacting agency, individuals do following in multiple ways and to varying extents of apparent proactivity. Following is interrelated with leading, with individuals fluctuating between these processes depending on those others they are in relation to.

The discourses identified from the analysis in this chapter support this and offer further conceptual clarity of following as a result. The first discourse presented in this chapter, *positioning*, can be aligned with the notion of individuals fluctuating between processes of following and leading in the above conceptualisation. The discourse of positioning also emphasises the relational and fluid nature of following. The second discourse, *power*, relates to the notion of individuals enacting agency as part of following, as well as the ways that individuals respond to other human and non-human others, for instance those that they are in relation to as well as the contexts that they are located within. The third discourse, *adjustment*, ties in with the understanding of following as occurring in multiple ways, as well as the notion of responding to others and adapting to the needs of the situation. Finally, the discourse of *approachability* is linked to following as a social process, and its emphasis on individuals as being in relation to and interacting with others. The four discourses shed light on how following is understood and constructed by individuals, taking into

account their previous experiences and pre-existing knowledge which is drawn upon in constructing their particular understandings of what following means to them.

Chapter Four (section 4.2 How participants understood following) clearly illustrated how the initial responses from participants regarding their understandings of following were brief and relied upon assumptions. This chapter has shown how introducing the concept of following to participants, through this study, and using different research methods giving participants time and space for reflection as well as a range of ways of communicating with me, developed their understandings of following. Whilst they seemed uncertain of the terms at the beginning of the process, there was a clear movement in participants' dialogue to them using following as part of their every-day accounting of their working experiences. The discourses presented in this chapter draw upon their personal experiences, observations of others and prior knowledge. The addition of this second data analysis chapter has provided further conceptual clarity of following for myself, the participants, and for the field going forward. It has also highlighted the value of reflection and of the use of multiple method approaches to research, and of empirical studies as powerful ways to access the lived experiences of individuals in developing beyond the infancy (Kelley, 2008) of the followership field.

5.4 Chapter Summary

As recommended by the thesis examiners, the responses and language used by participants in this study have been interrogated and analysed by drawing upon techniques of discourse analysis. This chapter has illustrated the emergent deepening understandings of processes of following for the participants in this study, and provided innovative insight into the discourses drawn upon in shaping their, and the field's, constructions of following. The discourses presented in this chapter have been linked to the re-conceptualisation of following offered by this thesis and underpin the conceptual clarity and theoretical contribution presented in the next chapter.

Chapter Six

Understanding Following Authentically through Voice, Visibility and (being) Valuable

6.0 Chapter Introduction

The previous two chapters presented the data from the study, highlighting the key emerging themes through the analysis. This chapter will expand discussions of the key emerging findings, and will ultimately confirm the central argument of the thesis. Through this the overall research question, *what can individuals' experiences, within public sector contexts, tell us about processes of following?*, will be addressed. This chapter will also address the research objective: *to make an original theoretical contribution to the followership and authentic followership theory bases.*

This chapter will begin with a discussion of how following is understood, drawing links between the data and perspectives within the literature to inform the conceptualisation of following for this thesis. A series of key findings was outlined in Chapter Four and in Chapter Five; after summarising these findings, each theme will be discussed in relation to existing theory bases to draw out theorisations from the study. The concept of Following Authentically will be (re)introduced by drawing upon the literature and discussed to position it within the study. The construction of followership from the data will then be drawn upon to show the impossibility of the achievement of authentic followership, with the central argument of the thesis being confirmed through this with the supporting theoretical framework: *A Theoretical Framework of Following Authentically: The Importance of Voice, Visibility and (being) Valuable*. Each aspect of the framework will be discussed, with examples provided from the data, and with (re)presentations of narratives from one participant for illustrative purposes. A summary of the ways in which this study contributes to theory will then be presented, before the chapter summary and the move to Chapter Seven (Conclusions).

6.1 Understandings of Following

This section is concerned with the ways in which the concept of following is understood. As outlined in Chapter Four, understanding following is influenced by the extent of familiarity as well as tendencies to lean on assumptions and related concepts, such as 'leadership' and subordinates. Furthermore, the fluid and processual nature of following is encompassed. The key findings for this theme, which emerged from the analysis of the data in Chapter Four, are presented in Table 6.1 and will be used to structure the discussions below.

Table 6.1: Key Findings - Understandings of Following

Understandings of Following
a) Initial understandings of following tend to place reliance on assumptions, stigma and related concepts.
b) Following was seen as a process that individuals moved in and out of, with participants reflecting on times where they had been following and times where they had been followed.
c) Having time, space and flexibility through a multiple-method engagement with the study enables reflection and deeper insights into how following is understood and the discourses that are drawn upon in constructing understandings.

6.1.1 Assumptions and the Stigma of Following

This thesis aimed to explore individuals' experiences of following, and as part of this was interested in how individuals understood the concept of following. This interest was expressed by the sub-question: *How do individuals within the UK public sector understand following?* As outlined in Chapter Three and Chapter Four, participants were given the opportunity to express their understandings on numerous occasions and in different ways. Through this a sense of reliance upon assumptions became apparent, as well as the presence of stigma for this concept (Key Finding a).

Participants' initial responses highlighted difficulties in providing an immediate and detailed explanation as to what they understood following to mean. Following was something that they "never really thought about" (Kathryn), didn't know "a huge amount" about (Danielle) and was not a term that they "would use normally" (Sophie). This highlights the lack of familiarity felt by participants, at the beginning of the research process in particular, and thus arguably the lack of use of this concept

in organisations, and in education (Morris, 2014a; Riggio, 2003). This lack of familiarity is reflective of the infancy of the followership field (Kelley, 2008), which has received significantly less attention in comparison to leadership (Bjugstad et al, 2006; Lundin & Lancaster, 1990). As identified by Crossman and Crossman (2011), many academic publications within the followership and leadership fields avoid articulating their conceptualisations, perhaps due to a difficulty in achieving such articulations, a lack of understanding or an assumption that early understandings of followership remains appropriate – that is focusing on a passive nature (Townsend and Gebhardt, 1997) and being ranking orientated (Kellerman, 2007). As discussed in Chapter Four, many initial explanations were heavily based on assumptions, with some participants using terms such as “assume” (Danielle) and “presume” (Chris) to begin their responses. This supports the notion that ideas associated with early definitions of followership continue to be carried through, as observed by Alcorn (1992) and more recently by Bjugstad et al (2006), Rost (1995) and Kellerman (2008). These observations and findings from this study suggest that, despite some growth in the followership field, familiarity as a concept has not achieved significant developments, and there non-contemporary constructions of following remain.

As outlined in Table 6.1, in sharing their understandings of following, participants also tended to rely upon the use of associated concepts. Constructing meanings of following was therefore done in relation to others, with many referring to leaders and subordinates in forming their understandings of following. This was particularly evident at Phase One of the data generation process – following was defined by what they understood a leader to be; “you are the person that has a leader or somebody that you’re taking notice of” (Sophie). This is an interesting approach to describing following, and is reflective of the structure of the followership field, as illustrated in Uhl-Bien et al’s (2014) review where they posit that the majority of followership research adopts a leader-centric approach (see Chapter Two). The terms *leadership* and *subordinates* were not incorporated into the interview from the outset, nor before for instance in email invitations and consent forms, and so the tendency for participants to draw upon such terms demonstrates their ease in recalling such terms arguably due to the “outpouring” (Ford and Harding, 2009, p.1) of leadership publications and the dominance of mainstream understandings of leadership. Interestingly some participants chose to use the subordinate term to distinguish following, whereas others used it interchangeably. However this was not consistent, with the two participants who did use the terms interchangeably coming from defence services organisations. This suggests that processes of following could

be more heavily influenced by subordinate-like constructions where power hierarchical structures remain strong. The constructions of following are therefore reliant on terms of subordinate and of leader, and this study supports the notion that there remains stigma over the following term (Rost, 2008), however perhaps in a less straightforward manner than depicted in the followership theory base. This tendency for participants to draw comparisons between the two concepts therefore supports this literature.

6.1.2 The Fluidity of Following and Being Followed

As discussed above, when considering following there was often a tendency to refer to and draw upon concepts from the leadership field. In Chapter Four, such concepts were viewed as being different but complementary to one another. In much of the followership and leadership theory bases individuals are thought to be a follower *or* a leader, with Kellerman (2007) arguing that individuals will be followers or leaders depending on their ranking in the organisational structure, and Rodgers and Bligh (2014) suggesting that authentic followers are those individuals who have chosen *not* to become leaders yet. This view was contradicted in this study with participants reflecting upon times of following and of leading, seemingly fluctuating between them depending on who and what they were in relation to. This was referred to as occurring continuously, “slipping” between following and leading (Luke), and as changing on a regular basis, “...might flip flop numerous times in a very short period of time” (Ben), and was mainly centred on experience and expertise (Megan). This is important in recognising individuals as engaging in processes of following and leading rather than being in a static and fixed role of follower *or* leader, supporting the conceptualisation for this study. This study builds on Townsend and Gebhardt’s (2003) ‘teamship’ concept, which they refer to as blending followership and leadership whereby individuals take on responsibility as and when appropriate for the situation. The premises of teamship are recognised as useful for transferring to understanding following, placing emphasis back on to an interactional process and avoiding a construction of following as passive and done to. However, teamship refers to individuals taking responsibility and thus being considered as enacting leadership, which fails to recognise responsibilities within processes of following and individuals’ agency within this. Teamship has yet to be discussed in depth or explored empirically, and so this study provides support to the premises of this

concept but argues for their transfer to contemporary understandings of following as a process in which individuals have agency.

6.1.3 Reflective and Deeper Understandings

As outlined in Chapter Three (Table 3.1) the design of this study consisted of three phases using a range of data generation methods, including semi-structured interviews, visual research diaries, and photo-elicitation interviews. Describing the concept of following emerged as a difficult and unfamiliar process, as discussed earlier in Section 6.1.1, and a key finding of the study was the ability to access richer understandings of following through the use of a reflective approach and multiple methods. Such an approach is lacking within the followership field, with the work of Carsten et al (2010) being the first to appreciate that individuals' understandings of followership will differ.

Participants were asked to explain what they understood following to be at the start of Phase One to gauge their level of comprehension and ease of explanation. This was included at first as a question to initiate discussions around the topic of following, and through the early stages of analysis of some transcriptions the issue of ease of explanation emerged through comparing initial explanations with subsequent ones given at Phases Two and Three of the data collection process. Most of the participants of this study had studied, at some point, or were currently studying towards a degree in the areas of business and management and also held full time jobs in public sector organisations at the time of data collection. However, this had seemingly not equipped them with a strong comprehension of how they understood following as identified in the findings (Table 6.1). Aware of the potential for a lack of familiarity with the concept of following, and as outlined in Chapter Three, the research was designed to minimise these issues by encouraging deep reflection as well as removing the reliance upon immediate and verbal responses from participants. Whilst participants did struggle when initially asked to explain following, this did not prevent their ability to engage in the remaining data collection phases. In fact, encouraging participants to reflect on times when they had themselves been following, and giving them time and space away from the researcher (Ortega-Alcazar and Dyck, 2012) provided a way to build on their initial understandings (Appendix G). The depth of responses and reflections upon personal experiences and observations of following that participants shared indicated that, when considering the self in context, individuals were able to identify when they have been following and to

become aware of what they understand by this. Through further analysis of such data, this thesis has provided insight into discourses of following (Chapter Five). For instance Michelle in a later interview provided a clear identification of when she was following and how she is able to identify this, “I’m definitely a follower there, I’m being told exactly what to do. I just take my mind away from it and do basically what I’m told”. Furthermore she goes on to reflect on how she felt during this, identifying what was positive and why, “...it’s quite nice to be disempowered in that situation, because if it was left to me I would probably not do half the things that they tell me to do”. The findings help therefore to complement understandings of following by accessing individuals’ thoughts, feelings and behaviours, recalled from experiences of following. This addresses Carsten et al’s (2010) call for further research on understanding followership through multiple methods and qualitative approaches.

Through removing restrictions on verbal and initial responses, participants were therefore enabled to explore following in more depth and the extent to which and how they engage in it. This allowed them to consider what following meant through both their own experiences of following and being followed, and by drawing on their observations of others. In doing so, the study builds on the followership field by providing insight into how following is experienced within UK public sector contexts.

The understandings of following from this study have been discussed, highlighting the ways in which they are centred on assumptions, are understood as a relational process, and how reflective practice enables richer understandings to be co-constructed. The themes of Visibility, (being) Valuable, Voice, as well as Choice and Power will now be discussed to build up the central argument of the thesis.

6.2 Visibility

Visibility is concerned with interactions between individuals within processes of following, referring to the extent to which individuals are able to see others and to be seen themselves. This theme touches upon the extent of openness as well as the ways in which interactions influence following actions. It also considers the ways in which a lack of visibility impacts levels of engagement in following. The main findings emerging from this study, as outlined in Table 6.2, will now be discussed.

Table 6.2: Key Findings- Visibility

Visibility
d) Participants placed emphasis on expecting those leading to build effective relationships with them, with the associated visibility enabling openness between them.
e) Participants experienced removed and distanced interactions, particularly between hierarchical levels.
f) The extent of interactions with, visibility of and access to others influenced the ways in which participants felt both supported and empowered.
g) Visibility of others can result in mirroring of or adaptation of behaviours and engagement in processes of following.

6.2.1 Interactions – Expectations and Experiences between Hierarchical Levels

During the data collection process, participants were encouraged to consider what they saw as ideal interactions with others when following. Participants commonly referred to what they expected from others, and then compared these expectations against their past experiences. There was a clear difference between how participants constructed ideal interactions, and how they had experienced these, and a sense of awareness about the impact that this had.

Interestingly, participants placed emphasis on those leading as being responsible for building effective relationships, with responses remarking on others not putting in enough effort to get to know them or to interact with them on a regular basis. When this was lacking, there was a sense of reluctance to engage in interactions and allow others to get to know them, or to be open with others. This was reflected in Taylor's responses, where she spoke about her current line manager who she felt often avoided interactions with her, which she found rude and offensive. Taylor spoke about the impact that this had on her willingness to go the "extra mile", and Sophie commented on the impact on her effort in doing tasks directly assigned to her, for instance when she said "well if you can't be bothered to tell me what I need to be doing, then really I can't be bothered to do it". Brian described how interactions between those following and leading *should* be, emphasising the need to get to know each other "as much as humanly possible". This is important for understandings of

following, as it identifies the ways in which engagement and support of others can be affected by interactions taking place and the extent of openness of interactions. This also offers insight in recognising that those following do have expectations of their interactions with those leading, therefore further reinforcing following as a social process (DeRue and Ashford, 2010).

With regards to the extent to which individuals felt they had visibility of others, a sense of getting an appropriate balance emerged as important for participants. Having openness and accessibility in their interactions with others was preferred to having either too much or too little, indicating a need for balance that enables individuals to feel empowered yet supported at the same time. On the one hand, participants referred to the frustrations and difficulties that they felt through a lack of support and feeling visible to others: “it can be difficult if you’re kind of left on your own sometimes” (Michelle). On the other hand, feelings of comfort and safety emerged when participants described experiences of regular interactions with those leading (Debbie), as discussed in Chapter Four. The findings in this study contradict early followership literature and support contemporary perspectives through empirical insights, with participants indicating preferences for empowerment and support depending on the situation. This allows for appreciation that those doing following have an awareness of what they prefer and what they find effective, contradicting much of the followership literature which tends to assume that the extent of empowerment and support is determined by what is required due to abilities or behaviours. This recognition that individuals doing following have awareness of their visibility allows for them to influence the way in which interactions with others occur, for example being more active and seeking opportunities to take on more responsibility to be empowered, or perhaps seeking closer interactions when they desire more support. Furthermore, what this perspective offers is a processual perspective of following, with visibility, as an aspect of the process, being subjective, fluid and changeable, and impacting on the ways in which individuals interact. Furthermore, this understanding of visibility also demonstrates the relational nature of it; for instance in the above illustrative extracts participants had visibility of others and yet felt that they lacked visibility to those same others, highlighting the complexity of the concept through this interpretation.

The findings indicated that interactions and accessibility to others at senior levels in the organisations were less frequent in comparison to those at a more local level, with whom they had more regular interactions. For instance, Danielle referred to the

food chain as a metaphor, and Chris distinguished between local and national level interactions within his organisation and how the forms of communication differentiated. This supports notions of gaps between hierarchical levels within organisations, and suggests that perceived distance between hierarchical levels has remained an issue, to some extent, within public sector organisations. This returns to understandings offered by Kellerman (2007) who constructed followers according to their rank in organisations. Interestingly this distance was discussed as being expected by individuals, which contradicts the literature within public sector management and leadership that suggests moves to decentralisation and empowerment have occurred in public sector organisations (Diefenbach, 2009; Goldfinch and Wallis, 2010; Gultekin, 2011). The continuing distance between hierarchical levels can be interpreted as structure acting upon individuals, generating feelings that the way in which the organisation is set up is restrictive for them. The findings also add to the followership and public sector organisational theory bases, by giving insights into the experiences of individuals doing following (Tanoff and Barlow, 2002; Vondey, 2010). In complementing reliance upon hypothetical situations, which has been the case to date, this study highlights the disparities between expectations of visibility and experiences.

Participants talk about how the recognised distance from others led to questioning of others influence and power as well as others roles. For instance, Brian reflected on an announcement of a change made within his organisation and how the general reaction to this was to question the right of this person to make this change: "...because no one's ever seen him, everybody just thought "who's he to tell us what to do?"". This study therefore highlights the active role of those doing following, in this case in legitimising others, supporting DeRue and Ashford's (2010) claiming and granting theory. Here the felt distance and lack of accessibility influence the willingness of individuals to grant the role of leader to others, demonstrating the importance of visibility in processes of following. Visibility also influences the extent to which they buy into others as well as the extent of engagement in following others. This further supports notions by Kean et al (2011) and Uhl-Bien and Pillau (2007) regarding the co-construction of leaders, but extends this through highlighting issues that may result in a reluctance to construct others as leaders. It also extends DeRue and Ashford's (2010) processes of claiming and granting by recognising the role of agency in processes of doing following, and providing empirical insights into how agency is enacted in practice.

6.2.2 Processes of Mirroring

As demonstrated by Table 6.2, one of the key findings from this study and for this theme of Visibility was centred on the ways in which others influenced individuals' following behaviours. As presented in Chapter Four, across the data there was a sense of those leading influencing the behaviours of those following, which is a commonly accepted principle in much of the followership and leadership theory bases. Participants, through reflecting, were able to recognise times when they had been influenced by others, and how this had impacted the ways in which they engaged in following. This was illustrated when Kathryn reflected upon various individuals she had followed, and how they had differed for her in terms of the ease of following; "If you have a manager who is calm in a crisis, I find it much easier to follow them". Further instances of impact from others upon the ways in which individuals do following was highlighted, with some interactions with those leading resulting in participants actively avoiding them, feeling like they wanted to leave them, and becoming more guarded and restricted in how open they might be. Whilst this does support the notion of those leading having influence on those following, for instance through role modelling (Gardner et al, 2005), this study also contradicts the positive nature of this role modelling process, suggesting that negative emotions and behaviours will also be transferred and will affect individuals' following. For instance, the authentic leadership and followership theory base in particular places great emphasis on the ways in which leaders who are authentic will develop followers who are also authentic. However there is a lack of recognition of negative instances, keeping in line with this theory base's tendency to reject the idea of individuals having a "dark side" (Ford and Harding, 2011, p.467).

The findings from this study provide further insight by challenging assumptions that behaviours will be replicated from those leading to those following (in that positive leader behaviours will create positive follower behaviours, and vice versa for negative behaviours). Rather, what may occur is a shift in following behaviour and in the constructions of that leader. This is evident in the above examples, for instance behaviours being influenced by them withdrawing and avoiding access to others and also managing others' access to themselves, and behaviours being influenced by withdrawing completely, thus removing access to and from others and no longer engaging in following those others to any extent. This highlights issues with models that assume a one directional mirroring processes between those leading and those following (Gardner et al, 2005), as behaviours may be influenced but in various ways.

Through adopting a relational constructionist perspective, which places emphasis not on what the individual does but what we do together (McNamee and Hosking, 2012), this study builds on models, such as Gardner et al's (2005), to show the agency of individuals following, in managing their interactions with others and through this the extent and ways in which they are influenced by others. From this relational constructionist perspective those doing following have agency, considering what we do together indicating the notion of both having the ability to have impact rather than being one sided. This is important for extending understandings of following, recognising the non-passive, as well as fluid, nature of this process. This relational constructionist perspective of following therefore extends understandings by recognising it as a process. It highlights the multiple others that individuals will engage with during this, and how their behaviours will thus change in relation to others. Furthermore, it also enables recognition of their responses to others' actions (McNamee and Hosking, 2012) as a demonstration of their ability to "make choices and to act upon them" (Burr, 2003, p.201), rather than assuming a mirroring process.

This section has discussed the ways in which this study has provided insights into how following is experienced within UK public sector contexts, and in particular the ways in which issues of structure such as organisational set ups are influential upon processes of following. It argues for following as a social process by adopting a relational constructionist perspective, illustrating the ways in which the actions of self and others influence responses (McNamee and Hosking, 2012). However through exploring the notion of mirroring and providing a critical perspective on this through the empirical insights of this study, the thesis builds on notions of role modelling for followership (Gardner et al, 2005) through recognition of the agency of individuals within this and the fluid nature of this process.

Having considered the theme of Visibility, the next section considers being Valuable.

6.3 (being) Valuable

Notions of (being) valuable are concerned with what individuals prioritise and what is important to them when following, considering both interests of the self and others, for example meeting self and others' expectations. The extent to which individuals felt valued was important for the ways in which they engaged in following. Table 6.3 summarises the key findings for this theme, which will now be discussed.

Table 6.3: Key Findings- (being) Valuable

(being) Valuable
h) Having an impact and meeting the expectations of self and others influence how participants do following.
i) Being supported and having contributions recognised by others were expected by participants, and when lacking had implications for engagement in following.

6.3.1 Meeting Expectations and Having Impact Recognised

Through participants' reflections on experiences of following, meeting expectations of others and also of the self emerged as being important. Having impact in the organisation and having this recognised by others made those doing following feel valued and more inclined to continue being active and engage in, for instance, what they had been asked to do. Expectations were apparent from the self and from others, with participants referring to standards that they set for themselves as well as what they perceived others to expect from them. For instance, Megan stated that it was not her manager who made her want to actively engage and contribute to the tasks she was doing, rather she did it "purely to be able to say that I have done the best that I can". Others also commented on the importance of doing a job well and meeting personal expectations. This illustrates the awareness that individuals have and indicates a sense of professional pride, and of being accountable to the self as opposed to, for instance, their leaders. This finding contradicts the typified perspective of followers as being passive (Kellerman, 2008), "victims of structures" (Leckenby and Hesse-Biber, 2007: 257). Adding to this, others talked about meeting the expectations of their organisations, and how they engaged in following at this level. This seemed most prominent for those within defence service organisations as well as from a healthcare context. This may be explained by the differences in organisational set up and the nature of the work, resulting in support for the organisation because of individual passion. For example Karen spoke about her enjoyment of helping and caring for others, and Luke referred to his becoming "indoctrinated" and struggling to separate work and life due to the importance that he placed on his role. This, as well as the previous illustration from Megan, moves the focus of following away from being centred on a leader, towards ways in which individuals may follow their own expectations as well as those set at a broader organisational level. This is reflective of Zilwa's (2014) model of authentic

followership, which claims that authentic followers will have a strong alignment with the organisation as well as demonstrating commitment and engagement towards it. The sense of following self or organisational expectations seemed to become more important when there was a felt lack of recognition from leaders of the impact and contributions that participants were having. This was particularly apparent within the visual diaries, where several participants included images reflecting not being thanked or recognised for what they had done. For instance in Chapter Four, Megan's diary included an image of 'thanks' being written across the sky in clouds, and she explained that she felt she suffered when recognition was missing, and how lack of recognition generated lack of effort in her engagement going forward, evidencing key finding i) (Table 6.3). This provides an alternative explanation to followership theory, which has a tendency to focus on the leader as being the driving force of effective followership, reflected in the sheer amount of leader-centric studies (Uhl-Bien et al, 2014). Instead, what is identifiable here is the potential for the drive to follow, and to follow actively, to come from individuals themselves as well as the organisation in which they are located. Furthermore, the findings indicate that drivers from the self and the organisation can override the leader's influence when there is a felt lack of recognition and support. This gives a more flexible perspective on followership, moving away from assumptions that there is the need for the 'perfect' leader to act as a role model to others, which is emphasised in the authentic leadership and followership theory base.

This section has shown how this study's findings build on understandings of following, challenging traditional perspectives of followers as being passive and done to, recognising their agency, and in particular the extent to which they are aware of and committed to what they see as important, for instance their pride and commitment to their profession. Furthermore the findings support the need for those following to feel valued by themselves and by others, having their contributions and impact recognised by others. Through this, recognition, or its lack, is highlighted as influencing responses to and ways of following.

Having considered the theme of (being) Valuable, the next section considers Voice.

6.4 Voice

Voice emerged as a major theme from this study, as depicted in Chapter Four. It is based on the ways in which individuals feel and are able to openly share their thoughts and feelings, and the findings from this study highlight the role of agency within this as well as the multiple ways in which voice occurs and how it is influenced. Table 5.4 summarises the key findings for this theme, which will be clustered to discuss why individuals engage in having voice, how this occurs, as well as the role of choice and restrictions within this.

Table 6.4: Key Findings- Voice

Voice
j) Reasons for desiring to and actually choosing to have voice were based on both positive and negative issues, and ranged from disagreeing to feeling passionate about such issues.
k) Voice is engaged in in various ways, with <i>questioning</i> and <i>challenging</i> approaches being used according to the context.
l) Having opportunities provided for voice was considered important to participants.
m) Feeling unable to have voice by challenging others can result in feelings of frustration and of being undervalued.
n) Barriers and restrictions to having voice and being heard include feelings of intimidation and difficulty of access.
o) Participants choose to control how and when they have voice, and the extent to which they engage or refrain from having voice has implications for ongoing interactions and their engagement in following.

6.4.1 Desiring and Choosing to Engage in Voice

As finding j) suggests (Table 6.4), when participants talked about times when they had wanted to or actually had engaged in having voice, the reasons behind this varied greatly both across participants and across experiences for individual participants. The findings from this study distinguish between having desire to have voice and actually engaging in having voice, to further emphasise the role of choice and of restrictions that may act upon the initial desire, which will be discussed later in this section.

Participants engaged in having voice for issues that they felt strongly about or felt that the impact would be high for themselves or others. For instance, Chris used the terms “engaged” and “passionate” when thinking about what made him want to “stand up” and share his opinions. Similarly, Chris spoke about pushing himself to say something about proposed changes within his office, due to feeling “strongly about it”, and to avoid being accused at a later date of not taking up the chance to put his opinions forward. This adds to the existing employee voice theory base, by broadening the focus from dissatisfaction and ill treatment (Cortina and Magley, 2003) as the main driver for having voice. Instead voice can be centred on various issues that allow for an expression of independent thinking and of self-awareness. In other words, rather than only speaking out when dissatisfied, participants also had a desire to do so when they felt strongly or passionate about something and were able to recognise the potential impact on them or others. This is an important movement in understandings of voice, supporting the need for a follower voice theory base to be developed more significantly, in order to recognise individuals as having agency in voice (Carsten and Uhl-Bien, 2015), being independent individuals able to understand and resist restrictions upon them (Burr, 2003) and to challenge them. In this instance, whilst the employee theory base assumes employees will engage in voice mainly as a result of dissatisfaction, by adopting a followership lens it is possible to expand the voice theory base and to gain a more contemporary understanding of voice by broadening the focus from dissatisfaction and ill treatment (Cortina and Magley, 2003; Hirschman, 1970; Farrell, 1983) as the main driver for having voice, instead allowing for an appreciation of independent thinking and self-awareness.

6.4.2 Ways of engaging in Voice

The findings of this study also highlighted that the ways in which individuals have voice varies. Being invited to have voice emerged as an important enabler of engaging in voice, helping individuals to feel safe and comfortable in doing so. Some participants recognised verbal invitations, although this did not always result in them engaging in voice due to other influences, for instance personal preferences or the nature of the issue. This helps to shed light on the ways in which individuals perceive invitations to have voice, and how this influences the extent and ways in which they do this, in line with premises of a relational constructionist perspective which

emphasises the actions and responses of individuals as they interact with others (McNamee and Hosking, 2012).

Amongst the stories shared by participants, various ways of having voice were apparent and were categorised as *questioning* and *challenging* (see Chapter Four). The ways of having voice and its direction varied for individual participants and in different contexts. Aspects including the individual, the context, the nature of the issue and the direction of voice for instance whether this was “speaking up” to those higher in the organisational structure or to peers, were referred to within the responses from participants, and appeared to be interdependent. For instance questioning may be used when experiencing a lack of understanding, which is related to buying into and supporting of others. Ben suggested, in his response, that questioning might occur to address a lack of understanding. He also went on to claim that when this lack of understanding continues despite questioning, then it would act as a restriction on his ability to remain engaged and supportive, and would instead result in him withdrawing his support. This is reflective of early theories on employee voice, which included exit as one option amongst voice (Hirschman, 1970; Farrell, 1983), when looking at dissatisfied employees and their reactions.

Challenging in particular was viewed as something that individuals would carefully consider before engaging in, requiring the right context and recipient to feel safe and able to do so. For instance, Karen spoke about the importance of their leader giving them space to think, and Chris commented on an experience of feeling unable to challenge and offer suggestions due to the felt distance between those above him in his organisational structure, linking back to the previously discussed theme of visibility.

These findings, related to the use of questioning and challenging for having voice k) (Table 6.4), build on theory bases of employee voice and of authentic followership, by considering the multiple approaches that may be engaged in when having voice, and by suggesting that those following can be constructively critical in a variety of ways and that they may approach this differently depending on personal preferences, as well as to suit the context and direction or recipient. It adds to the employee voice theory base, including studies referred to in Chapter Two such as Liu et al (2010), Hsiung (2012) as well as Carsten and Uhl-Bien’s (2015) initial but tentative conclusions, by understanding reasons behind the various ways of having voice as a result of gaining insight into participants’ experiences.

6.4.3 Choice and Restrictions on Voice

This remaining cluster of findings for this theme is concerned with the ways in which individuals have control and choice over having voice (o), as well as how they are enabled (l) and restricted (n). It also encompasses the resultant feelings from not having voice (m).

As already discussed throughout this chapter, the notion of individuals having agency when doing following was also apparent within the theme of voice. When discussing how they interact with those leading, there was a clear sense of participants being aware of the ways in which they share their thoughts and feelings to different extents at different times and in different contexts. Through this, tendencies to hide and control how they engaged in having voice began to surface. For instance, participants' responses revealed that individuals may choose to hide and control the expressing of their thoughts and opinions when they perceived the consequences to be negative for themselves (see Danielle's example in Chapter Four), which is supportive of Knoll and van Dick's (2013) concept of *opportunistic silence*. Other reasons that emerged included to avoid conflicts (see Chris's example in Chapter Four), or to set an example to others (see Karen's example in Chapter Four), addressing calls for future research from Islam and Zyphur (2005). This restricting of having voice was not experienced as a simplistic process, rather as one that required conscious effort, as described by Megan and Brian, who referred to putting on a positive front and using the metaphor of being "robotic" and having to really think about pulling themselves back from what they wanted to say. This highlights having voice as a conscious process, supporting the work of Detert and Burris (2007) and Caldwell and Canuto-Carraco (2010) who claim voice as a optional behaviour. Although this supports studies within the employee voice and silence theory bases, the findings provide new insights by accessing participants' experiences of engaging in having voice and in hiding or controlling this. Through adopting a followership lens, recognition of individuals as having choice and being able to make active decisions and have impact provides theoretical insights into processes of voice as being infused with choice and as a conscious behaviour which individuals tailor in response to their past experiences, the actions of others and in relation to the impacting issues of structure. Furthermore, this study enables a bridging between employee voice and employee silence literatures, viewing these as fluid and changeable processes,

depending on context, involving having voice, hiding and controlling voice, and silence. Whilst there is suggestion in the literature of the negative impacts silence can have for individuals emotionally (see Cortina and Magley, 2003; Gross and Levenson, 1997), existing understandings are mainly based on hypothetical studies as opposed to exploring lived experiences.

As briefly mentioned above, and as detailed in Chapter Four, the process of having voice is influenced by multiple issues, and not just the individual's decision whether and how to engage in it. Some participants talked about the ways in which having voice was enabled, for instance several participants referred to being invited and how feeling welcomed (Kathryn) to express their thoughts and suggestions made them feel "safe" and "comfortable" (Debbie) in openly expressing their thoughts (finding l). However, the main issues emerging from the data and seeming significant to participants in their verbal responses and visual diaries were around the restrictions that they faced, the ways that this made them feel, and the impact that this had for ongoing following. The way in which the organisation was set up and the structure seemed to be an important factor, often acting as a barrier to expressing thoughts to the relevant person. For instance Chris referred to upsetting the hierarchy by not following the process of communication channels typically used, and Danielle and Sophie spoke about the lack of contact and accessibility to those higher up in their organisations as being a restriction on their ability and willingness to "speak up" (Premeaux and Bedeian, 2003). This supports the limited studies within the employee voice theory base that place emphasis on context, rather than focusing on the leader, as for instance in Carsten and Uhl-Bien (2015). Furthermore, this adds to the employee voice and silence theory bases, which have a tendency to imply that individuals will either have voice or will enact silence. There is a lack of consideration of what happens once an individual engages in having voice, in other words there are assumptions that they will be heard. However, adopting a relational perspective allows recognition of interacting with multiple individuals and the role of contexts within such processes. Therefore, it extends the voice theory base to include being heard as an important part of the process. Islam and Zyphur (2005) called for further understanding of barriers, however they focused on how this impacts the refraining of having voice. This study extends this to illustrate the barriers of being heard when engaging in having voice (finding n).

The final finding (m) to present within this cluster is regarding the negative feelings that result for individuals from being unable to express their thoughts and to

challenge others or schemes proposed. In their diaries, participants reflected feelings of frustration (Kathryn) at having “next to no opportunity to challenge” and of these being “brushed away” when put forward (Callum). Furthermore there was an amplified reflection of this by Kathryn who referred to feeling “beaten down” and included an image of hands tied together along with a supporting narrative of feeling “a little bit like a slave”. This supports the conceptualisation of following for this thesis, by emphasising the frustrations of not being able to engage actively in following. Interestingly, participants also experienced negative feelings as a result of the ways in which they had engaged in having voice. For instance, as discussed in Chapter Four, Brian and Sophie spoke about regretting their expressing of opinions in a powerful and perhaps aggressive way, with Sophie including an image of the Hulk in her diary to depict this struggle to express herself calmly. These findings relate to the employee voice theory base, which claims that there are negative emotional consequences from not having have voice (Cortina and Magley, 2003; Gross and Levenson, 1997). However rather than focusing purely on when individuals “refrain” from having voice, this extends understandings to apply to not being heard or not being provided with the opportunities as previously referred to when discussing findings I and n. Furthermore it also extends the theory base by indicating the consequential feelings from the ways in which individuals engage in having voice, an area currently overlooked both conceptually and empirically.

A summary of the alignment of this study’s findings with the existing theory bases is provided in Table 6.5 below. In the table, the above discussions have been summarised and re-ordered drawing upon Colquitt and Zapeta-Phelan’s (2007) taxonomy of contributions to theory.

Table 6.5: Summary of Alignment to Extant Theory Bases

Theme	How the findings contribute to theory bases <i>(Adapted from Colquitt and Zapata-Phelan (2007))</i>
<p>How participants understood following</p> <p><i>This theme provides insight into how the term following is understood and constructed, and demonstrates the difficulties that are experienced in doing following.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the remaining stigma of subordination (Rost, 2008) and prevalence of negative associations of followership (Alcorn, 1992, Bjugstad et al, 2006; Kellerman, 2008). • Addresses calls for further research on followership using qualitative, multiple methods (Carsten et al, 2010), providing insight into the emerging discourses of following. • Challenges existing theory viewing followers and leaders as being separate and either/or roles (Kellerman, 2008; Rodgers and Bligh, 2014), proposing instead a relational process. • Builds on the concept of ‘teamship’ (Townsend and Gebhardt, 2003), highlighting how this occurs and adding empirical insight. • Builds on the followership field by exploring following within the UK public sector • Expands the followership field, to view following as a relational process.
<p>Visibility</p> <p><i>This theme is centred on the interactions between individuals and the impact that these have upon processes of following. It considers the various ways in which individuals may respond to both high and low levels of visibility.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges assumptions regarding positive role modelling processes for following (Gardner et al, 2005), suggesting that negative emotions and behaviours will also influence following. • Challenges theory of role modelling processes, as being a one-sided process from the leader (Gardner et al, 2005), by highlighting the agency of those following. • Expands the work of Kean et al (2011) and Uhl-Bien and Pillau (2007) by highlighting individual’s reluctance to construct others as leaders, based on their interactions with and access to others. • Expands DeRue and Ashford’s (2010) processes of claiming and granting, by recognising the activeness of followers within these processes and providing empirical insights into how this occurs in practice. • Expands understandings of following, highlighting visibility as a fluid and constantly changing process, as opposed to being an either/or condition, and recognising the ongoing implications for future interactions and the doing of following.
<p>(being) Valuable</p> <p><i>This theme raises the importance of feeling valued for processes of following. It encompasses being valued by the self</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges traditional perspectives of followers as being passive and done to, recognising their agency, and in particular the extent to which they are aware of and committed to what they see as important, for instance professional pride. • Expands the followership field by adopting a follower-focused approach (Kean et al, 2011), and highlights the ways in which following is influenced by the self and

<p>and by others, as well as the impacts that this can have for individuals.</p>	<p>others, including those that they are in relation to and contexts that they are located in. This moves focus away from the leader, as emphasised in authentic followership literature (Zilwa, 2014).</p>
<p>Voice</p> <p><i>This theme is based on how individuals feel and are able to be open and share their thoughts, opinions and feelings. This theme illustrates the ways in which voice occurs within processes of following, and the complex nature of this process.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the recognition of the need to consider leaders (Carsten and Uhl-Bien, 2015) but also the context in which voice occurs, recognising both agency and structure as acting upon voice for following. • Supports Knoll and van Dick's (2013) concept of <i>opportunistic silence</i>, recognising individuals as being able to choose whether and how they express their thoughts. • Builds on studies within the employee voice and silence theory bases, adding new insights through participants' experiences, and bridging employee voice and employee silence theory bases, by viewing these as fluid processes, involving having voice, hiding and controlling voice, and silence. • Builds on employee voice and authentic followership theory bases, by exploring individuals' experiences of following, shedding light on the reasons behind the various ways of having voice and of being constructively critical. • Expands the employee voice theory base, broadening the focus from dissatisfaction and ill treatment (Cortina and Magley, 2003; Farrell, 1983; Hirschman, 1970) as the main driver for having voice, by allowing for an appreciation of independent thinking and of self-awareness. • Expands understandings of the emotional consequences of having voice, by moving away from focusing on not having voice (Cortina and Magley, 2003; Gross and Levenson, 1997), to recognise the consequential feelings from the ways in which individuals engage in having voice, an area currently overlooked both conceptually and empirically. • Expands the employee voice and silence theory bases, shedding light on the processual nature of voice and thus the importance of being heard as a part of this process, by not only looking at barriers and how this restricts voice (Islam and Zyphur, 2005), but also how responses from others interacts with having voice.

6.5 (Re) conceptualising Following for the Thesis

Through the above synthesis of data and theory regarding understandings of following, the below conceptualisation of following is offered for this thesis:

Following is a social process whereby individuals buy in to others and to ideologies, responding to human and non-human others. By enacting agency, individuals do following in multiple ways and to varying extents of apparent proactivity. Following is interrelated with leading, with individuals fluctuating between these processes depending on those others they are in relation to.

The conceptualisation emphasises the processual nature of following, aligning with the philosophical orientation of the thesis as well as more contemporary perspectives on followership, as identified in Uhl-Bien et al's (2014) review of the field. The term following is used in order to avoid ontological tensions and misuses (Fairhurst and Antonakis, 2012), focusing on this as a process that individuals engage in rather than being a fixed role of a follower (or leader). From this perspective, individuals engage in processes of following and leading, and as illustrated through the findings this is a fluctuating process as described as *following* and *being followed*. This notion of process was demonstrated across participants' responses, where they naturally reflected on times when they had been following as well as leading despite the focus of the interview being on followership. The conceptualisation adds to existing understandings within the followership field by positioning those individuals doing following as having agency, with regards to being able to control and make independent choices over what and how they engage in following.

This re-conceptualisation also expands the view of following to recognise that it should not be restricted to being done in relation only to leaders. For instance, as detailed in Chapter Four, participants spoke about how they engaged in following their organisation's purpose or their profession and referred to buying in to these 'others'. This therefore broadens the conceptualisation of following to progress from focusing on an individual leader as being the relational 'other'. This conceptualisation accepts that individuals will engage in following individuals but also non-human others including visions and ideologies such as professionalism. In the latter two there may not necessarily be a desire to follow individuals advocating these but rather an ability to relate and buy in to what they mean for the individual doing the following. This places more emphasis on individuals as choosing what they align

themselves with and what they buy into and thus engage in following, challenging views within the field that consider followers to be passive and a “homogenous group of uncritical, unreflective, obedient people” (Frisina, 2005, cited in Kean et al, 2011, p.508).

Adopting this conceptualisation enables a renewed focus on following, moving away from tendencies to lean on other concepts. It also recognises the fluid nature of following rather than adding to out-dated and simplistic assumptions. A practice of following will now be considered in the next section: *Following Authentically – A Critical Perspective*.

6.6 Following Authentically – A Critical Perspective

This section will draw upon discussions of authentic followership from Chapter Two to remind the reader of the central premises of this form of followership. The themes arising from the data, that is from individuals’ constructions of following, and presented in Chapter Four and Chapter Five will be discussed in relation to the central premises from the literature, before presenting the conceptualisation of *following authentically* for this thesis. An illustrative example from the data will then be presented to highlight the complexities of following authentically. Therefore, in this thesis the theory of authentic followership emerges from close engagement with the relevant literature, whilst the data collected and analysed sheds light on the constructions of followership through individuals’ experiences and through this shows the impossibility of authentic followership.

6.6.1 The Emergence of Following Authentically

In the initial interviews, when exploring how participants experienced following, openness emerged as being an important factor, both in regards of being open to others and others being open with them. By this it is meant that individuals feel able and willing to share their thoughts and be honest about issues, building closer relations with others. Several participants went on to describe the difficulties and challenges that they faced in this however, as well as the ways in which they sometimes controlled it. Future interviews then incorporated some focus on openness to reflect this, exploring this for individuals when they were following. Openness was then a reoccurring theme in participants’ responses, as previously discussed within this chapter. It emerged as a major theme (see Chapter Four –

Voice, Section 4.5) and as a complex issue that participants faced. Participants spoke about the importance to them of being informed and having access to those higher up their organisations (Visibility), for instance in order to understand proposed changes and to support these. Examples of this include comments that they should be entitled to express their views (Chris), and that there will be positive implications through openness such as feelings of safety and comfort (Debbie), all demonstrating a preference towards being open with others and others being open with them. This is viewed as important for following, for buying into and supporting others and in this instance proposed changes. The visual diaries also captured notions of openness, with participants choosing images that reflected good interactions between those following and those leading (figure 4.5), and of negative feelings they had when they felt unable to be open with others (figures 4.12, 4.13, 4.14 and 4.16). Additionally, in the narratives provided it became clear that when this was missing for them it had implications for following with regards to the extent of engagement and support offered (being Valuable). For example, participants spoke about feelings of frustration (Megan), and of a lack of willingness to be enthusiastic and put effort into what they have been asked to do (Sophie). What this demonstrates is the need for those following to feel like they have effective relations with others, to the extent that they are kept appropriately informed to feel involved and to understand what is happening and what they are choosing to follow; in this sense there is a felt need of openness from others towards them. On the other hand, there is also a sense of a need to feel able to be open *with* others, and that through this they will feel comfortable and safe as opposed to feeling the need to be guarded and restrictive with others. This is reflective of the concept of authentic followership, which is considered as being centred on individuals being open (Leroy et al, 2012) and able to self-express (Yagil and Medler-Liraz, 2014). However, this study informs the concept of authentic followership, by highlighting the mutual and relational nature of openness, as well as the ways in which this can influence individuals' engagement and support of others, and thus their engagement in following, as previously discussed for the theme of Voice. This is important because previous understandings of authentic followership have focused on issues such as openness as a trait of individuals, rather than recognising the complex and multiple influences upon openness as a process, as demonstrated above and highlighted throughout this chapter.

Furthermore, through discussing openness, the issue of disagreeing or having suggestions to put forward became apparent. In some cases this was talked about in a positive way, with some participants talking about being provided with opportunities and invitations to put forward suggestions. For example as discussed in Chapter Four, Karen commented on the importance of feeling confident enough to “stand up” and put forward suggestions and to suggest improvements that need to be made, and considered this as key for effective interactions between those following and those leading (Voice). However, the actual experiences of participants did not always reflect this, and some spoke about the ways in which they were restricted in doing this. For instance Chris explained the presence of barriers and how going against the expected ways of interacting within his organisation “would upset the hierarchy”. Likewise, Kathryn reflected on times when she had tried to put forward ideas and was “kind of beaten down” by those leading, making her feel undervalued and unable to maintain her support and belief in what she was being asked to do. This supports understandings of authentic followership because it demonstrates the intentions of individuals wanting to put forward their suggestions and opinions, aligning with Zilwa’s (2014) association of being constructively critical for authentic followership. However it also extends this understanding by identifying issues that pose restrictions, in the above examples, and highlights the resultant feelings that those following can have, as outlined earlier in this chapter in the theme of Voice.

Emerging across the data set, and recognisable in the discussions within this section, notions of engagement and activeness also had strong presence, with participants reflecting upon experiences of following where they had engaged to a greater or lesser extent. They talked about withdrawing and choosing not to support others, as well as actively resisting others and ideologies proposed. For example Ben referred to a time where he doubted the way a project was planned and as a result of being unable to change this he felt unable to engage in it; “I can’t follow this process anymore because it’s doomed to failure”. This demonstrates a clear decision of his inability or lack of willingness to begin to follow, whereas Brian spoke about how previous experiences affected his ability to maintain following; “If they asked me to do something, I would be doing everything I could to get out of that office”. These illustrative extracts help to gain insight into times where this engagement and activeness for following is reduced, and also illuminate the enactment of agency; both extracts above indicate a form of choice and decision being made by participants, through the use of assertive language and certainty such as “I would”, “I can’t”. Interestingly also prevalent within the language used here is a level of

awareness and informed changes in behaviours, for example the perceived lack of success and planned avoidance of future interactions, reinforcing the enactment of agency active individuals (Linstead and Thomas, 2002) making informed decisions, rather than being done to. This reinforces Zilwa's (2014) claim of authentic followership involving individuals being typically active and engaged. It also demonstrates how the themes (voice, visibility, (being) valuable) arising from this study are interrelated. For instance, when looking at the above extracts for engagement they reflect the importance of being valued, in that they were not able to put forward suggestions and have involvement as well as having such poor relations with others that they would actively avoid them in the future. Here then the participants are taking control of the visibility that others have of them, again an active, agential choice that they have made. Furthermore, they were unable to understand how the proposed change would work successfully and were unable to achieve this understanding, as a result of a lack of interactions. Much of the followership and leadership literature assumes that agency lies with those leading only (Tourish, 2014), whereas this study has found that hiding and controlling, and supporting and withdrawing are also expressions of agency by those following.

As identified in Chapter Two, authentic followership is a contemporary area of the followership field, and one that is attracting attention in current publications; for instance the text *Followership – What is it and why do people follow?* (Lapierre and Carsten, 2014) includes two chapters on this area. It is, however, an area yet to be explored or understood in depth, with very little empirical research conducted, as recognised in Chapter Two. Models of authentic leadership explicitly incorporating followers in their frameworks and models (see Gardner et al, 2005), and authentic followership was also a key development in the followership field, giving some recognition of individuals being self-aware and able to challenge others. However the majority of authors in this area assume that authentic followers result from the presence of authentic leaders, and that such followers will be aligned to the goals of both their leader(s) and their organisation (Whitehead, 2009; Zilwa, 2014). There is further depiction of this form of followership and leadership as being idealistic with its emphasis on the surrounding environment as being positive and healthy (Zilwa, 2014; Gardner et al, 2005). Although there is some critique about the “utopian” like state (Patterson, 2011, p.137), which is presented in the existing literature, the dependency on leaders being authentic plays down the role of those following. The recognition of agency for individuals, emerging from this study, contradicts this, arguably providing a less idealised perspective for notions of authentic followership.

This is supportive of Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012) who critiqued authentic leadership models for several reasons, including the lack of recognition that individuals are capable of creating their own meanings and are not reliant on others, as well as the lack of recognition that there will be challenges from “everyday life” (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012) towards always being authentic. Aligned with Algera and Lips-Wiersma’s (2012) view that authenticity is momentary, the relational constructionist epistemological positioning of this study incorporates notions of authenticity into processes of following as something that individuals may be able to demonstrate in their behaviours to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the surrounding context, as opposed to a trait that they do or do not possess. This thesis introduces the notion and concept of *following authentically*, aligned with the underlying perspective of following as a process:

Following authentically arises in the doing of following when individuals feel able and willing to be open with others, and to express their self. Following authentically develops from individuals being active and engaged, and feeling able and willing to offer constructive criticism.

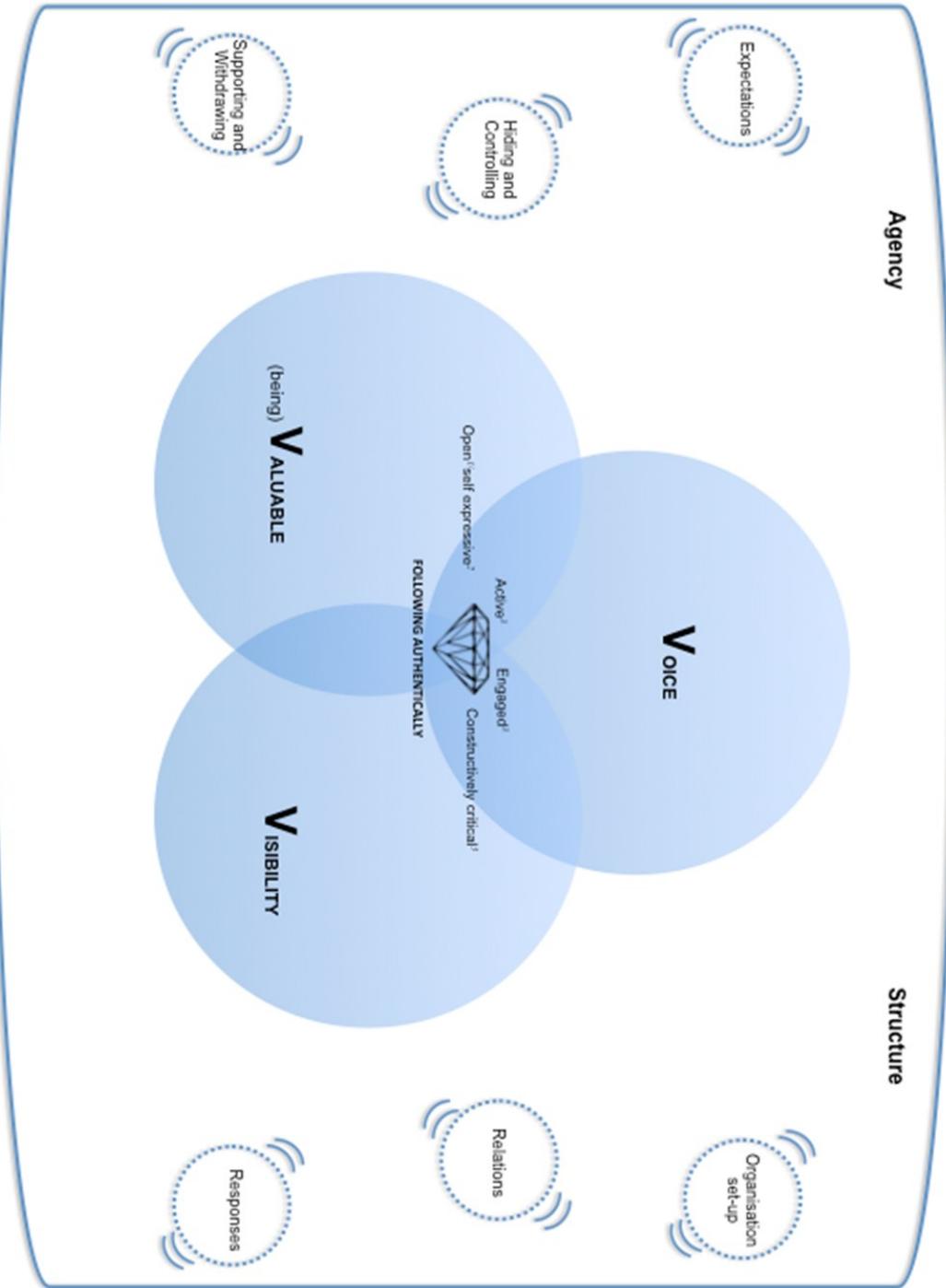
The conceptualisation has been built up from the data as well as key literature from the emerging academic theory base of authentic followership, as the above discussion has demonstrated. Aligning with the perspectives of Leroy et al (2012), Zilwa (2014) and Yagil and Medler-Liraz (2014) as previously referred to, it draws together and emphasises notions of openness, self-expression, and of being active, engaged, and constructively critical. It also emphasises individuals as being active and having agency; see terms such as *engaged*, *willing*, *able* and *active* in the above conceptualisation. This is pertinent for this thesis, in line with the conceptualisation of following as previously presented (*a social process in which individuals engage agentially, in multiple ways and to varying extents, in giving support to others and to ideologies*) and is considered as a way to challenge and advance existing authentic followership theory.

With this in mind, the central argument for the thesis can now be presented. Through exploring individuals’ experiences, following is conceived as a relational process, with both agency and structure impacting upon it, resulting in its fluid nature. As a relational process, interactions between individuals are fundamental to following. This study identified three key elements of interactions within processes of following, which are: the extent of openness and ability to see and be seen by others (visibility),

the extent to which individuals feel they meet expectations and are recognised by others ((being) valued), and the extent to which individuals feel able to and are willing to openly express their thoughts and opinions (voice). These elements are interrelated and combine in different ways and to different extents, depending on issues of agency and structure. Following authentically can be understood to emerge in terms of the various degrees to which the three elements are demonstrated. Through this understanding of following authentically, the idealised perspective in the authentic leadership and followership theory bases can be challenged. In challenging the idealised and trait perspectives, this study recognises and identifies issues of agency and structure as influencing these interactions and thus processes of following authentically. Through this, following authentically is viewed as an expression of following, in which individuals enact, to varying extents, openness and self-expression (Leroy et al, 2012; Yagil and Medler-Liraz, 2014), activeness and engagement, and constructive criticism (Zilwa, 2014). The theoretical framework for this thesis is presented in Figure 6.1 and will be discussed subsequently:

Figure 6.1: A Theoretical Framework of Following Authentically

1- Leroy et al (2012), 2- Yagil & Medler-Liraz (2014), 3- Zilwa (2014)



6.6.2 Beyond Understandings of Authentic Followership

Figure 6.1 provides an overview of the interrelationship of the key themes and concepts emerging from this study, and is a diagrammatical illustration of the theoretical contribution of this thesis. This section will provide discussion of the framework, and will give illustrative examples from Chapter Four.

Following authentically is depicted at the centre of the framework, and draws upon the central premises of this theory from the relevant literature. The diamond is symbolic of following authentically for several reasons. For instance, the desirability, valued and sought after associations of diamonds are reflective of the idealised, utopian-like (Patterson, 2011) and sought after nature of existing understandings of authentic followership and leadership. Furthermore, the classic clarity of a diamond is representative of the focus on openness as previously discussed, and the diamond's shape with its many edges and angles reflects the complex and multiple nature of how following authentically is conceptualised in this thesis (see previous section). Informed by the theoretical underpinning of following authentically from Chapter Two for this thesis, four key elements are incorporated and presented as the 'points' of the diamond: open/self expressive (Leroy et al, 2012; Yagil and Medler-Liraz, 2014), active, engaged, and constructively critical (Zilwa, 2014). The diamond is placed at the centre of the framework, reflective of the ways in which the surrounding elements and influences act upon the process of following authentically, affecting the extent to which authenticity is demonstrated within process of following. Naming the framework 'following authentically' removes a continuation of a leader-centric perspective, and is instead consistent with a processual perspective. As a process influenced by context, following authentically may be demonstrated to greater or lesser extents, as opposed to being an idealised state that individuals should or would be able to achieve, as the existing theory base would suggest.

Surrounding the diamond are the interrelated elements of voice, visibility and (being) valuable. As previously discussed throughout this chapter, these are considered as elements arising through the interactions occurring within processes of following. They are interrelated, as depicted by the interlocking circles, and influence the extent to which individuals are able to and are willing to enact following authentically, demonstrating the four 'points' as outlined above and in Figure 6.1. Furthermore, surrounding this are matters of agency and of structure, reflective of those arising

from this study. They are depicted in the theoretical framework as having movement, to suggest their movement closer to and further away from the central diamond, to reflect the varying extents to which they can influence processes of following authentically. The movement also conveys the fluidity of a processual view of following, which I will elaborate on below.

This framework moves away from extant understandings of authentic followership, viewing them as too rigid and idealised. Rather, it is argued that achieving a state of authentic followership is likely to be impossible, and instead a focus should be on understanding the ways in which individuals can do following more and less authentically and to understand how this is influenced further. This framework thus aligns with the views of Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012) and Patterson (2011) who suggest that authenticity should be considered as a fluid process rather than an either/or state. While both are critiquing understandings of authentic leadership, their arguments have relevance here for authentic followership. As outlined in table 2.2 in Chapter Two and discussed in the previous section of this chapter, authentic followership is often derived from models of authentic leadership, carrying through the trait perspective in describing followers as *being* authentic or inauthentic. However, adopting a processual perspective understands individuals as engaging in processes of following, and acknowledges the ways in which they *do* following as being more or less authentic, arguing instead that a state of complete authentic followership is neither achievable nor as desirable as it is depicted in the theory base. Doing authenticity is influenced by various aspects, as depicted in Figure 6.1, including the self (agency), and what they are in relation to (others, structure), as well as the nature and quality of the interactions (voice, visibility, and (being) valuable).

This framework is one of the first to lessen emphasis on the leader as being central to authenticity within the followership field. As highlighted in Chapter Two, the field of authentic leadership was one of the first to recognise followers as significant in their models and discussions. However, discussions regarding the development of authentic followers tend to place significant emphasis on leaders as being central to this, for instance as role models who followers mirror (Gardner et al, 2005). As evident in this study's findings, this notion of role modelling and mirroring can be challenged, and instead focus on the influence of actions and responses in line with the relational constructionist perspective of this thesis. This framework instead recognises individuals as engaging in following and behaving more or less authentically in doing so, and this being influenced by a range of aspects including

the self, others and contexts. In the theoretical framework for this thesis this is recognised through the fluid matters of agency and structure and the three elements visibility, voice and value. Thus, whilst leaders have been omitted as a direct focus in the framework, they are still recognised as having an influence but this is amongst other elements and is not necessarily most dominant. Therefore, the central focus on leaders is dissolved for following authentically, recognising instead the interplay of multiple influences including matters of agency and of structure.

Voice in particular has been linked previously to the authentic leadership theory base, with Yagil and Medler-Liraz (2014) focusing on the need to have an authentic leader for followers to have voice, and Rodgers and Bligh (2014) who viewed ethical issues as initiating voice. Voice is also considered as a central element in following authentically, as depicted in the theoretical framework. This thesis however offers a further unpicking of voice, for following, and through this sheds light on the complexities involved and the interacting of agency and structure in this. Through this it emphasises voice as one of the central elements for following, and as influencing the extent to which individuals can do following authentically.

An illustrative extract from this study, previously touched upon in Chapter Four, that has resonance for following authentically, is now presented as a way of illustrating the fluidity and complexity of following authentically as well as the interrelatedness of the elements included in the framework above.

6.6.3 The Diamond Metaphor – Moving between Clear, Tarnished and Blackened Practices of Following Authentically

Figure 6.2 is illustrative and supporting of the discussions below.

Figure 6.2: The Fluidity of Following Authentically

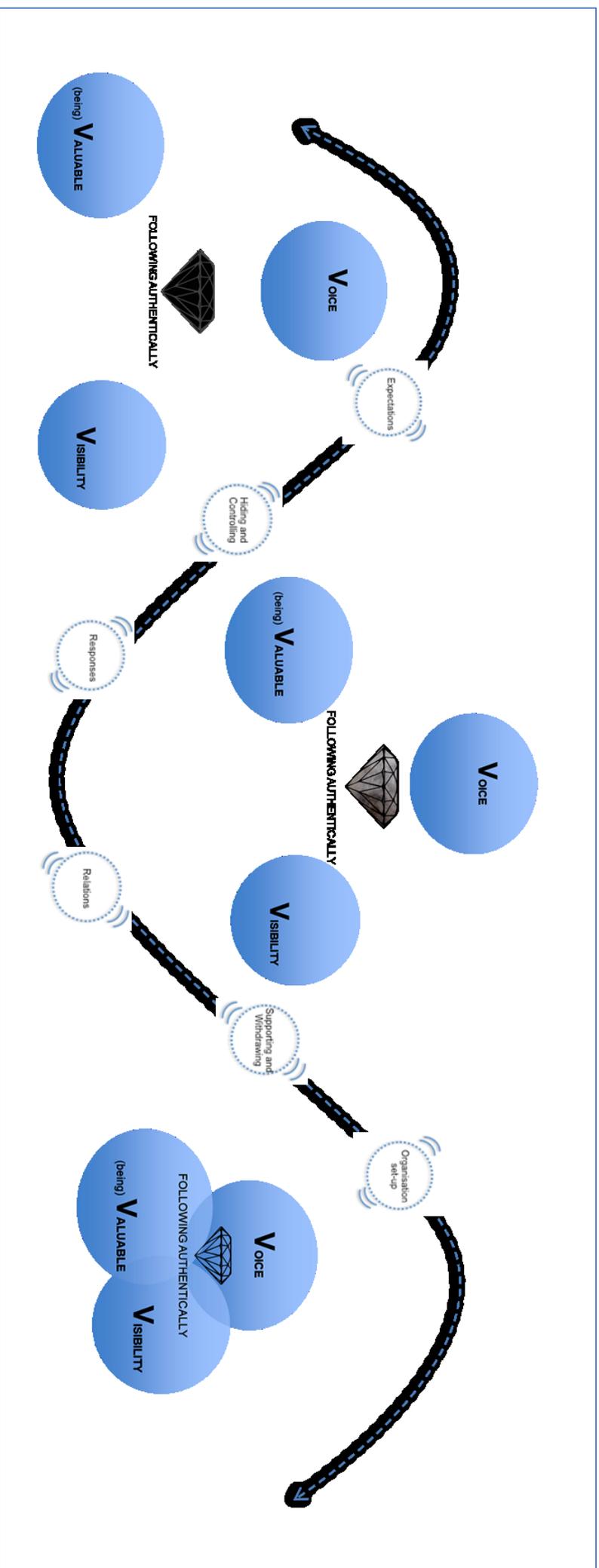


Figure 6.2 illustrates following authentically as a fluid process, continuously changing, as previously referred to in this chapter. In this sense, individuals engage in following authentically to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the individual as well as the surrounding contexts and those they are in relation to. The use of the three diamonds of different shades (clear, tarnished, blackened) is to indicate the lesser or greater extent of following authentically, recognising that the extent to which individuals do following authentically changes and is not an either/or state or a straight switch between such states. Rather, following authentically is done to greater or lesser extents. The differences in positioning of the three circles (representing the elements of voice, visibility, and (being) valuable) convey the extent to which the elements are apparent in the doing of following in a given relational context, and determine the extent to which the surrounding issues of agency and structure are impacting upon the process. The gaps between the circles close up as voice, visibility and (being) valued are present within following and help to limit the impact of surrounding structures and facilitate the enactment of agency in following authentically. The curved arrow is reflective of the ways in which individuals will move between these positionings when following, as they adapt their behaviours and as the extent to which the surrounding issues are present and enacting. This shows how the previously idealised form of authentic followership can become tarnished and even blackened, in line with the diamond metaphor.

The experiences of Kathryn illustrate the fluid and interactional fluctuating nature of following authentically. These will now be discussed briefly to illustrate the central argument and theoretical framework of the thesis, bringing this chapter to a close. The elements from Figures 6.1 and 6.2 will be highlighted throughout with the use of underlined and italicised text.

Kathryn has worked within a range of public sector departments. She spoke about her experiences of following, and about times that had been particularly difficult for her, as well as times more recently where this was becoming more comfortable for her. This transformation is a result of her active decision to change roles (agency), moving through the organisation set up, after experiencing negative relations with those leading, and struggling to the point of it affecting her health and well being ((being) Valuable). She reflected upon times of being shouted at in meetings and made to feel humiliated, clearly undermining the extent to which she felt valued by others. Linked to this Kathryn seemed to experience a top down leading style

(structure), and was often told what to do and restricted in her ability to have input and to suggest changes and improvements (Voice), which she noted in her diary as being important to her: “I had to do as the boss says, which I found frustrating and unproductive”. This demonstrates the impact of the organisational set up as a surrounding aspect of structure, and the negative feelings from being restricted in being open and constructively critical. As a result of this dominating style of leading she seemed to develop a reluctance to approach others (Visibility), and reflected upon several occasions where she had been shouted at in front of others but chose not to respond at the time, hiding and controlling her thoughts (Voice). However, through her reflections, Kathryn demonstrated a desire to be active and engaged in her role, as well as to improve things by suggesting changes and ideas, indicative of being constructively critical. Whilst she faced restraints in doing this, Kathryn made choices about how to engage in following, reflected in the ways that she was supportive and willing to buy into others. Through her reflections, Kathryn demonstrated following authentically, however this did seem to fluctuate. It differed between social settings involving many other people, for example in the meeting, and those more private settings, for example her one to one conversation with her line manager. For instance, whilst she did not respond to being shouted at within meetings (Voice), she did talk about how she spoke with her manager at a later point in private to try and understand and resolve the issue, thus demonstrating openness in expressing how she felt when she had an opportunity for better access and closer interactions (Visibility). She enacted her desire to put forward suggestions (Voice), which she deemed important in her role within the organisation due to her desire to be actively engaged, to feel valued and to meet her personal expectations ((being) Valuable). When this became too much of a struggle for Kathryn she made the active decision to leave and seek employment elsewhere, withdrawing herself from the organisation (agency).

Here, following authentically occurs for Kathryn in spite of the constraining aspects of structure acting upon her. She maintained her self-interests and demonstrated agency through awareness and choice, refusing to do tasks that went against her self-expectations aligned with her profession. She had a desire to help improve the way things were in her organisation ((being) Valuable), and she deemed it important to make constructive suggestions to others despite perhaps not always being heard (Voice).

Kathryn's example highlights the significance of interactions for the conceptualisation of following. In the above examples Kathryn interacts with others in various ways, further reinforcing the relational nature of following, and placing emphasis on the actions and responses of individuals (McNamee and Hosking, 2012). The ways in which Kathryn does following are in response to others' actions and in relation to those interacting with her. Kathryn's reflection on following provides insight into her ways of following within public sector contexts and how she engages in doing this in different ways depending on who this is in relation to and the context in which the following is located. For instance, the meeting was a scenario in which she felt the need to hide and control her thoughts, and where she was unable to be heard or be valued by others. However, her drive to be active and to express her thoughts, as well as awareness about her disagreement of how she was treated by others, meant that she sought out other opportunities to interact. The one to one scenario arguably improved visibility between levels of the organisation and reduced the felt distance between her and her line manager, enabling her to express her thoughts and feelings in that context. Kathryn was thus doing following authentically to a greater extent; being active, engaged, open and constructively critical. Considering Figure 6.2, through the various instances of interactions Kathryn moves between a blackened diamond and clear diamond of following authentically. In the meeting, following authentically occurred to a reduced extent, represented in Figure 6.2 by the black diamond and gaps between voice, visibility and (being) valuable, leaving her vulnerable to impacting structures and disempowered to enact agency. In the one to one meeting she demonstrates following authentically to a stronger extent, represented by the clear diamond, with interlocking voice, visibility and (being) valuable forming more of an agential resistance to the impact of surrounding aspects of structure. Figure 6.2 does however recognise that the surrounding aspects of structure will continue to impact upon following authentically, and this thesis therefore emphasises the importance of viewing this as a fluid process. This illustrative example is useful in highlighting the complexities of following authentically, as well as the ways in which it is influenced by multiple aspects, as outlined in Figure 6.1. The example also enables appreciation of the enactment of agency within following, as well as the surrounding structures impacting and at times restraining this enactment. The main contribution of this thesis will now be outlined, before bringing this chapter to a close.

6.7 The Theoretical Contribution of this Thesis

This thesis makes a theoretical contribution to knowledge by offering the concept of following authentically, and by depicting this as a complex and fluid process as opposed to an idealised state that individuals should try to achieve. It is argued in this thesis that individuals do following authentically to a greater or lesser extent across time and contexts. The relational nature of following places interactions and what “we” do collectively as central, enabling a movement away from leader centric perspectives on following. Through the empirical data collected and incorporation of illustrative data in Chapters Four, Five and Six, this thesis provides insight into the influences upon processes of following authentically, highlighting its complexity and fluidity whilst also showing the impossibility of achieving a state of complete authentic followership. The thesis proposes the metaphor of a diamond for the concept of following authentically, to reflect its idealised nature and associations of being sought after and valued. Through the conceptual framework presented, this metaphor acknowledges the ways in which following authentically may be engaged in to a greater or lesser extent, depicted by the clear, tarnished and blackened diamonds. The process of following authentically is influenced by the self (agency), the surrounding context (structure) and centred on elements of voice, visibility, (being) valued, which arise through interactions.

6.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has carried forward the findings from Chapter Four and Chapter Five, and has theorised from them in relation to the existing theory bases. Theorisations of the key concepts for following and for following authentically were provided. The conceptual framework emerging from this study was presented, and discussion and illustrative examples were provided. An outline of the ways in which this study contributes to theory was provided in Table 6.5, and the main theoretical contribution of this thesis was presented.

The next chapter (Chapter Seven – Conclusions) provides an overview of the thesis, a critical evaluation of the ways in which the research has been conducted, and an indication of the potential limitations and areas for future research

Chapter Seven

Conclusions

7.0 Chapter Introduction

This chapter will provide a review of the thesis. It will summarise the central argument and contributions of the thesis, demonstrating how the research aims and objectives have been addressed. The research will be reviewed using appropriate research quality criteria, acknowledging limitations and reflecting upon areas for further research. The thesis will then be drawn to a close through the summary of this chapter.

This chapter addresses two of the research objectives, including: *to make an original contribution to followership and authentic followership theory bases*; and, *to make an original methodological and empirical contribution to the followership field, through the use of visual research methods, enhancing reflective capabilities and depth of insight into participants' experiences of following*.

7.1 Review of Contributions of the Thesis

This thesis aimed to explore processes of following, and to extend understandings through gaining insight into how this is experienced within organisational contexts. Following has been explored within UK Public Sector contexts, in order to view this process in traditionally bureaucratic and rigidly structured contexts, with the overall research question of:

- *What can individuals' experiences, within public sector contexts, tell us about processes of following?*

The below sub-questions were posed to break this down further:

- *How do individuals within the UK public sector understand following?*

- *How are processes of following experienced?*
- *What can reflections on experiences of following tell us, to challenge and advance existing understandings of authentic followership?*

This thesis offers two central theoretical contributions to knowledge. First it offers a fusing of followership, authentic followership, and employee voice literatures to conceptualise and empirically explore how following is experienced. Through the application of contemporary perspectives, frameworks of authentic followership are critiqued, and issues of agency and structure are recognised as core challenges to existing understanding. Second, a contribution to studies of followership is made, by offering the concept of *following authentically* as a relational process, recognising interactions as central, and presenting this process metaphorically as a diamond. Through the conceptual framework presented, this metaphor acknowledges the ways in which following authentically may be engaged in to a greater or lesser extent, depicted by the clear, tarnished and blackened diamonds, which is influenced by the self (agency), the surrounding context (structure) and centred on notions arising through interactions for following (voice, visibility, (being) valuable).

Further contributions are outlined throughout this section, as each research objective is reviewed. Each contribution will be highlighted in italics.

7.1.1 Review of Theory Bases: Followership, Authentic Followership, and Employee Voice

The first and second objectives of this thesis were:

- To critically review the followership, authentic followership (and leadership), and employee voice theory bases to conceptualise key terms and identify gaps in existing understandings.
- To fuse followership, authentic followership (and leadership), and employee voice theory bases, as a theoretical framework for understanding individuals' experiences of following.

The achievement of the above objectives is demonstrated through *Chapter Two – Followership, Authenticity and Voice*. A brief discussion to support this will now be provided.

This thesis critically reviewed the theory bases of followership, authentic followership (and leadership), as well as employee voice. The main theoretical focus lay with the followership theory base, with an interest in the concept, and related concepts, of followership. Chapter Two gave an appreciation of the ways in which the field has emerged and transformed, and highlighted the under-developed nature of the field relative to leadership. This enabled insight into the perspectives within the field, including traditional perspectives such as typologies (see for instance Chaleff, 2003; De Vries, 1989; Kellerman, 2007; Kelley, 1992) and leader-centric studies (see for instance Brown and Fields, 2011), as well as follower centric (see for instance Rowe, 2006; Smollan and Parry, 2011), follower focused (see for instance Carsten et al, 2010; Kean et al, 2011) and relational studies (see for instance Uhl-Bien et al, 2014).

Alignment with contemporary relational perspectives enabled an understanding of followership as a social process (Malakyan, 2014) which individuals move into and out of (Townsend and Gebhardt, 2003). Such an understanding opposes trait perspectives that argue for roles of follower or leader (Kellerman, 2007; Rodgers and Bligh, 2014). This thesis highlights the imbalance of the followership field, and supports the need to progress understandings away from the stigma of subordination. Through reviewing and aligning with contemporary perspectives, this thesis argues for emphasis on processes of following, recognising the fluid nature of this.

The review of the followership field provided a lens through which to then view authentic followership as well as employee voice. Merging the three theory bases provided a way to critically view authentic followership and to begin to unpick the assumptions and naive understandings of this emerging concept. This thesis offers a new way of reviewing and clustering the authentic followership and leadership theory bases, by focusing on the ways in which followers are incorporated. This extends existing reviews of these relatively contemporary theory bases which have focused on aspects such as types of publication and methods used (Gardner et al, 2011), and instead introduces the categories of the ways in which followers are incorporated to align with the follower-focused approach of this study. Clusters identified included: *pure focus on authentic leaders, followers' perception of authentic leaders, the impact of authentic leaders on followers, and an equal balance or pure focus on followers* (see Chapter Two). This provides a useful contribution to the growing work on authentic followership, outlining and critiquing the ways in which the field has

been largely leader-centric and highlighting the need to move towards developing follower-focused perspectives too.

This thesis fused followership, authentic followership and employee voice theory bases, drawing links between the theory bases and recognising the need to explore authentic followership from a follower-focused perspective in more depth through empirical research.

Through reviewing the followership theory base, this thesis identified the need for explorations of followership through the experiences of those following, by adopting a follower-focused approach (Kean et al, 2011). The ways in which such an approach makes a contribution, as part of the methodological design, will now be discussed.

7.1.2 Methodological Design

The third and sixth research objectives of this thesis were:

- To develop an appropriate methodological approach and design a multiple method data collection process, to gain rich insights into participants' experiences of following.
- To make an original methodological and empirical contribution to the followership field, through the use of visual research methods, enhancing reflective capabilities and depth of insight into participants' experiences of following.

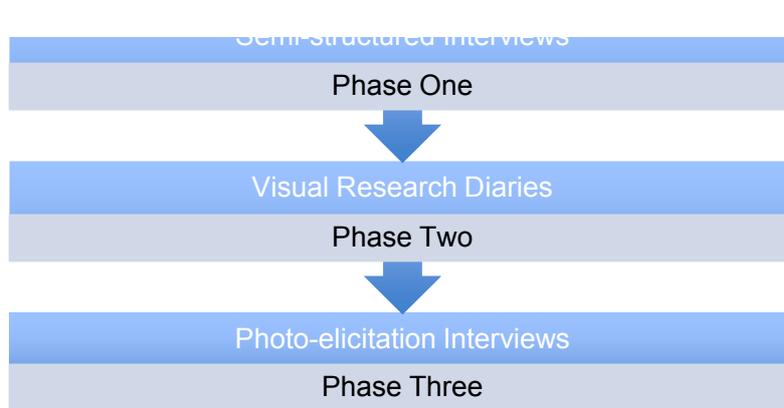
The achievement of the above objectives is demonstrated through *Chapter Three - Research Methodology* and *Chapter Six – Understanding Following Authentically through Voice, Visibility and (being) Valuable*. A brief discussion to support this will now be provided.

A relational social constructionist perspective was adopted for this thesis, and informed the design and conduct of the study. Through this, I understand realities and meaning making as social processes, and place emphasis on interactions and communications as processes of co-construction (Hosking, n.d) and “being-in-relation-to-others” (Cunliffe and Ericksen, 2011, p.1430). Given this perspective, the focus of the thesis was on processes of following, and described individuals as

engaging in doing following as opposed to much of the extant theory base which adopts a trait perspective describing individuals as being followers. Through this, ontological tensions (Fairhurst and Antonakis, 2012) in the use of language were also avoided, as previously discussed in Chapters One and Two.

A case study methodology was adopted with a multiple method design of qualitative methods. Interviews, visual research diaries, and photo-elicitation interviews were used in a three-phase design; see Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.3: Data Generation Process



Fourteen individuals, from a range of public sector organisations, were engaged in the research process. Multiple points and forms of interaction with participants were achieved through the research design; enabling “non-intrusive” (Symon, 2004, p.28) time away (Ortega-Alcazar and Dyck, 2012) and balanced power relations (Steyaert et al, 2012), to achieve rich reflective dialogue throughout the data collection process. Through this design the study has addressed Carsten et al’s (2010) call for the use of a range of qualitative research methods, building on their work to understand how individuals understand followership. As one of the first studies to acknowledge that individuals may have different understandings of followership, this thesis aimed to extend their work by gaining richer insights into how following is experienced by individuals.

The use of “under-leveraged” (Ray and Smith, 2012, p.289) and underused (Parker, 2009) visual research methods is also a way in which this thesis has made a contribution. As one of the first studies to apply photo-elicitation studies to the followership field, this study has built on the limited number of qualitative studies in the field (Crossman and Crossman, 2011). It has shown how the use of innovative

research methods can help to develop understandings, addressing a gap in the organisational field (Ray and Smith, 2012).

This thesis offers a methodological contribution in applying a relational social constructionist perspective, placing emphasis on gaining insight into experiences of following through the use of qualitative methods.

This thesis offers a methodological contribution of applying a multiple method research design, including the use of visual research methods, facilitating rich insights into the ways in which following is experienced by individuals.

The thesis offers empirical contributions in exploring following in UK public sector organisational contexts, which will now be discussed.

7.1.3 Experiences of Following

The fourth research objective of this thesis was:

- To offer in depth insights into experiences of following, presenting illustrative data and interpretations from thematic analysis.

The achievement of this objective is demonstrated through *Chapter Four- Insights into Experiences of Following*. A brief discussion to support this will now be provided.

This thesis has placed experiences of following as *the* focal point throughout, recognising this as key and yet lacking in extant research, and incorporating this into considerations regarding the design of the study as discussed in the previous section. The nature of the data collected was highly reflective, prompting thoughts, feelings and experiences of participants through multiple means and on multiple occasions. Data collected were used extensively to illustrate the emerging themes through Chapter Four, with presentation and interpretation of extracts to build up discussions throughout. This follower-focused approach to the study addressed a neglected approach (Kean et al, 2010). This thesis builds on Carsten et al (2010) who conducted one of the first qualitative studies, recognising that individuals could have different understandings of followership. This thesis has extended their work by putting individuals' experiences at the focal point and prioritising depth of insight into

the experiences of the fourteen participants. Through this, insights into following have been furthered, with comparisons across participants and across the multiple methods used. Therefore, the aim of designing methods to enable deeper reflection upon understandings and experiences of following has been achieved. To summarise:

This thesis offers rich insights into individuals' thoughts, feelings, and experiences of engaging in following, and through the reflective nature of the research design enables insight into the ways in which following fluctuates across time and contexts.

7.1.4 Processes of Following Authentically and Challenges Faced

The fifth research objective of this thesis was:

- To make an original contribution to followership and authentic followership theory bases.

The achievement of this objective is demonstrated through *Chapter Six – Understanding Following Authentically through Voice, Visibility and (being) Valuable*. A brief discussion to support this will now be provided.

This thesis offers a new perspective on the followership field, through challenging frameworks, and progressing understandings, of authentic followership. It views following authentically as a process, and recognises the ways in which individuals may enact this to a greater or lesser extent through certain ways of behaving. These ways include being active and engaged (Zilwa, 2014), being open (Leroy et al, 2012; Yagil and Medler-Liraz, 2014) and being constructively critical (Zilwa, 2014). It moves away from assumptions regarding authenticity as ideal and “utopian” (Patterson, 2011, p.137), and of authentic followership as being an either/or state and as having characteristics and contexts in the idealised and “necessary” way (Zilwa, 2014). Following authentically is depicted with a diamond metaphor, symbolic of the desirability of diamonds and the idealised existing understandings of authentic followership and leadership, and the inclusion of clear, tarnished and blackened diamonds in the second figure presented is reflective of the movement away from assumptions held as previously mentioned. Rather, the processual perspective of this thesis allows for recognition of doing following authentically to greater and lesser extents and therefore acknowledges that aspects from the context (structure) and

aspects of the self (agency) will vary in terms of their influence. It recognises structure as not only enabling following authentically but also as challenging this process. Furthermore it recognises individual agency as impacting on this, thus removing idealised perspectives of contexts and leaders for authentic followership. This thesis expands existing frameworks of authentic followership including that of Zilwa (2014) to place emphasis on interactions between individuals and in identifying those aspects that influence the process. Through the emergent themes from the study, and the subsequent theorising from them, three processes, not previously identified within the followership literature, are proposed as occurring through following interactions, and as impacting upon the extent to which following authentically occurs.

Specifically:

This thesis offers the concept of 'following authentically', recognising this as a process in which interactions are key. Following authentically is presented metaphorically as a diamond, reflective of its idealised and complex nature. This thesis demonstrates how the diamond can become tarnished and blackened, as individuals do following authentically to greater or lesser extents. By exploring following through individuals' experiences, the thesis, and the framework subsequently, offers insight into the ways in which individuals are both restricted by structure as well as able to enact agency during processes of following. Furthermore the ways in which voice, visibility and (being) valuable interrelate.

A conceptual framework for following authentically is proposed (see figure 5.1), placing emphasis on the individual within this process whilst also recognising the multiple influences acting upon the extent to which individuals are willing and able to do following authentically. A second framework is also presented (see figure 5.2) demonstrating the ways in which following authentically is fluid and will be engaged in to greater and lesser extents, reflected through the use of clear, tarnished and blackened diamonds.

7.2 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is an approach to research commonly adopted within the qualitative field, whereby researchers actively acknowledge “the personal and political perspectives informing the research” (Burr, 2003, p.157). It enables recognition that I will bring to the research project influences, interests and opinions from my own background, as will the participants. Rather than seeing this as a flaw, it is embraced in order to understand what happens in the study and why (Alvesson, Hardy and Harley, 2008). Adopting a relational constructionist perspective for the thesis, a reflexive approach to research is also important in recognising how both myself and participants of my research “co-produce” (Tedlock, 2000, p.467) or co-construct knowledge together. The ways in which I have influenced the focus of the study, the design of the data collection methods, the ways in which the data were collected and analysed are important aspects of reflexivity, as well as how I have had influence in writing up this research (McNamee and Hosking, 2012). I have adopted a reflexive approach to my research both during and after (Watt, 2007), and have indicated this throughout by referring to the self as “I” to reflect decisions and choices that I have made. The various ways in which I have ensured that I remain reflexive throughout my research will now be outlined.

7.2.1 Outlining my Background, Interests and the Scope of the Study

At the start of the thesis I provided an outline of the rationale for the focus of my research, as well as a clear discussion of the scope of the study. Here I acknowledged my own background and experiences, to enable appreciation of how these may impact upon the research. I was also open in Chapter Three – Methodology about the reasons why the study was designed in the way that it was, and how I had taken decisions to reach this. For instance I referred to the reasons behind choosing the methods that I did, and in this chapter I critique how these worked out. The limitations of the study were recognised, some of which are associated to limitations in my skills as a researcher, for instance in the analysis of visual data and how my lack of experience meant that I was reluctant and restricted in this.

7.2.2 Capturing My Thoughts in a Journal

When I began my Doctorate I decided to keep a journal, to capture my thoughts throughout. I found that I used this as a way to record my thoughts at particular stages or events, for example annual progression reviews, as well as at times when I sensed significant changes or heightening of emotions. In the writing up of my thesis I have returned to this journal and re-read my entries, which has been useful in understanding how the research journey has gone and in reminding myself of certain points I have experienced and thoughts that I have had. Watt (2007) supports the use of a journal for researchers, arguing that it has multiple benefits including acting as a “stimulus” (p.83) to recall how knowledge has grown and evolved, and as a checking system to question the self and decisions made throughout to enable changes to be made to the research. For instance one extract from my journal was completed after someone else interviewed me, where I wrote about what I had taken from this experience:

(Diary entry 08/01/2013 “Reflecting on a recent experience of being an interviewee”):
...I found myself observing the interviewer to see how he was asking questions/his body language etc. This was sub-conscious at first but then turned conscious as I realised it would be a good opportunity to see what I thought were effective and perhaps ineffective interviewing techniques.

Here I recall how I realised within the situation my role as an interviewee, and how I began consciously to evaluate the interviewer’s approach as I recognised this as potentially useful in informing my own upcoming data collection. In the entry I go on to list aspects that I found effective and ineffective, and I returned to this in the design of my own interview schedule. Through this I informed how I applied my methods (Hibbert, Sillince, Diefenbach and Cunliffe, 2014), an important element of reflexivity, by observing others in practice. The diary also acted as a therapeutic form of writing, where I often made notes of current feelings, with extracts including: *“Today I’m feeling much more positive”* (diary entry 05/03/2013); *“stressed...but getting on with it and feeling pleased”* (diary entry 10/10/2013); *“...I got a little torn apart!...I managed to hold myself together”* (diary entry 16/04/2014). Furthermore, it enabled me to track how my understandings were evolving over the course of the research journey, for instance in one entry I reflected upon a conversation with my supervisor:

(Diary entry 12/10/2013 “Reflecting on my understandings of followership”): “...my supervisor pointed out that she saw me as a student in relation to my PhD, but as a colleague at work. This was something I found strange at first and hadn’t thought about. But it really helped me to understand how I was engaging in following and leading with my supervisor...”

The above examples illustrate how the use of a journal has enabled me to capture the development of my knowledge, as well as the thoughts that I have had at various points, which will have impacted upon how I have made decisions and conducted the research. Taking the point forward regarding discussions with my supervisor, and others, I will now discuss how this has enabled a reflexive approach.

7.2.3 Interactions and Discussions with Others

As mentioned in the previous section, discussions with my supervisor have been influential upon the development of my knowledge and on the research process. I have actively engaged in interactions with multiple others throughout the research process, and through this have engaged in reflexivity in line with Corlett’s (2013) description of “telling, retelling and recalling of experiences” (p.454). Whilst Corlett (2013) is referring to this in terms of research participants, it is transferrable to the interactions between others and myself during the research. Discussing my research with and being challenged by others has enabled me to be critical of my approach and of myself as a researcher, allowing for changes to be made accordingly throughout as well as identifying development needs. Instances of interacting with others include my monthly supervision meetings, my annual progression review meetings, peer reviewing with fellow researcher(s), internal conferences at Northumbria University, the Postgraduate Research Community at Northumbria University, external conferences including the British Academy of Management (2013) and the International Leadership Association (2014), discussions with and presenting to key authors within my field at the Followership Symposium (2014), having my conference paper reviewed and then accepted for the Journal of Leadership Education, and having a co-authored case study chapter with Dr Corlett reviewed and accepted (forthcoming, 2015). These instances of interactions, amongst many others, provided opportunities for feedback and for critical reflection of myself as a researcher, demonstrating Flick’s (2008) identification of the need to

critically assess the research design and the researcher as part of a reflexive approach.

This section has provided an outline of the ways in which I have been reflexive as a researcher, and how this has been applied throughout the research journey in a range of ways. Next, an evaluative framework will be applied to critically assess the research process.

7.3 Evaluative Framework

It is essential to review the ways in which research is conducted in order to assess and ensure the quality of findings (Stige, et al, 2009). Whilst the terms validity, reliability and generalisability were traditionally applied to the review of research and the assessment of its quality, this is recognised as better suited to positivist research (Miyata and Kai, 2009). A popular framework within qualitative studies is that of Lincoln and Guba (1985), who offered a new way to assess the quality of research using alternative terms. The framework follows on from Guba's (1981) development of terminology to address the quality issues of research, as shown in Table 6.1:

Table 7.1: Alternative Quality Criteria (Guba, 1981)

Alternative Quality Criteria (Guba, 1981, p.80)	
Truth value	Credibility
Applicability	Transferability
Consistency	Dependability
Neutrality	Conformability

As discussed in Chapter Three, the quality criteria were used both proactively to inform the design and conduct of this study, and will now also be applied retrospectively to review the study. Through this, the trustworthiness (Guba, 1981) of the thesis will be outlined.

7.3.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which the presented findings are a believable representation. In this sense, it enables an assessment of the extent to which the ways in which data were collected, interpreted and presented are an honest

reflection of participants' perspectives. The main ways suggested to ensure credibility include member checking during and after data collection (Guba, 1981), as well as through providing detailed descriptions of data collected and through triangulation (Shenton, 2004). I have demonstrated credibility in various ways throughout the thesis, and will now provide some illustrative examples.

Triangulation – The research design used a multiple method approach, as outlined in Chapter Three. The use of multiple methods enabled data to be generated in various ways, and for this to build up rich insights. This avoided reliance upon one interaction with participants, as well as avoidance of one form of engagement. Instead, I collected data from participants across two interviews, as well as through their visual research diary. Furthermore, I collected data through a combination of verbal, visual and written forms through the use of interviews and visual research diaries. The data were then incorporated into the presentation of findings and in the build up of themes in Chapter Four.

Rich insights into data and provision of thick descriptions – Data was presented in depth using multiple extracts throughout, to allow for rich insights into participants' experiences of following. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, with only identifying information removed or anonymised, and there was significant use of data in the presentation of the findings as well as the development of the conceptual frameworks. Further examples include the provision of participant profiles (Chapter Three, Table 3.5), as well as detailed explanations regarding how I designed and conducted the data collection methods and the decisions that I made throughout the process. Through this, Shenton's (2004) call for thick descriptions of data for credible research is addressed.

Peer debriefing – I engaged in peer debriefing through regularly discussing my interpretations of data with my supervision team of established, research active academics. A research active colleague, also completing her PhD, and myself partnered for member checking, due to our mutual interest in wanting to discuss our emerging findings with others to gain fresh perspectives and to develop our thinking. As demonstrated in Chapter Three, my colleague coded extracts from a set of transcripts, which I also did for her. Through this I was able to gain confidence in my coding and interpretation of the data, with similarities in our coding (see Chapter Three, Figure 3.8) and also apparent in our conversations about the content of the transcripts.

Through my research journey I was challenged and questioned, which ultimately enabled checking for the credibility of the findings presented in Chapter Four and the emerging conceptual frameworks in Chapter Five. Peer debriefing was also demonstrated through the writing and presenting of papers, at several internal and external conferences, throughout my research journey between 2012 and 2015. External conferences included papers written and presented at the British Academy of Management (Morris, 2013), as well as the International Leadership Association (Morris, 2014a; Morris, 2014b). I also successfully published some of my initial interpretations in the Journal of Leadership Education (Morris, 2014), as a result of winning best paper at the Followership Symposium at the International Leadership Association conference (2014). As a result of winning best paper I was given the opportunity to present my research to the entire audience of the Followership Symposium, at the International Leadership Association conference, which consisted of established academics and research active peers who were also conducting research within the followership field, some of whom were leading authors within this field (including Robert Kelley, Ira Chaleff, Mary Uhl-Bien). This achievement of best paper and subsequent inclusion in conference proceedings demonstrates the value of my paper and thus my study to the followership field. Furthermore, Dr Corlett and I co-authored and submitted a chapter to a call for the forthcoming textbook *Followership in Action: Cases and Commentaries*. We received positive feedback from the reviewing panel, with comments specifically referring to the credibility of the case study that we had written, which was based on data compiled across the data set. This demonstrates credibility in the ability to present a believable case study of following within UK public sector contexts, from this study. These experiences enabled me to be exposed to the research community from a range of backgrounds and areas of expertise, offering critique and challenge through their questions, comments and through subsequent conversations.

Member checking – Participants were provided with their transcripts of raw data, and were given the opportunity to review and amend these. This enabled assurance that the transcripts were an honest reflection of the dialogue in our interviews, and also ensured that participants were comfortable to allow the data to be used in the thesis. Through this process, several participants asked for certain details or sections to be removed and anonymised further. One participant also decided that she wished to be removed from the research process at this point, which was done in line with the ethical design of the study.

7.3.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings from the study can be applied elsewhere, to other contexts and to other individuals (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). As discussed throughout this thesis, in particular in Chapter Three where I positioned myself epistemologically, this study recognises the importance of context in meaning making and, therefore, in processes of following. Whilst this study does not aim for a generalisation of findings, and recognises that this is not literally possible (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), it does aim for the development of theory through exploring the phenomena in the chosen context. It is thus concerned with the usefulness of the findings for understanding the phenomena across contexts other than that in which the study is located.

This thesis has extended the work of Carsten et al (2010) in recognising and exploring the differences in individuals' understandings of following, and by shedding light on how this is experienced. Through this it adds to existing conceptualisations within the followership field, providing a contemporary conceptualisation which others may draw upon in their work on followership. I have also introduced the concept of following into my teaching to cohorts on the BA Business Leadership and Corporate Management programme at Newcastle Business School, in both reflective discussions and in delivering lectures, inviting and encouraging students to consider their understandings of following and to challenge their assumptions. Furthermore, the individuals participating in this study have also undergone a process of being invited and encouraged to consider their understandings and experiences of following through the data collection process. The methods in particular encouraged reflection, as outlined in Chapter Three – Methodology, with participants commenting on how prior to this study they had not considered this concept in any depth, and others commenting on how the visual research diary in particular had been a “cathartic” experience for them in raising their awareness of how they do following and how others follow them. Readers of this thesis can consider their own understandings and experiences of following and determine their resonance with those of the participants of this study, enabled through rich data extracts and interpretive discussions.

7.3.3 Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability and confirmability are related to the fairness of the way in which data are presented and should be aimed for through the provision of detailed explanations of how the research was conducted as well as the choices that were made throughout (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Shenton (2004) proposes that an audit trail should be provided to achieve this, including information such as how the research was designed and implemented, as well as practical details of how data were gathered.

Clear explanations – I provided detailed explanations as to how the research was designed in Chapter Three. The outlining of my current epistemological and ontological positioning provided insight into how I understand reality, which provided justifications for the choice of research approach. I remained open about the changes that occurred to the design of the research and to the difficulties and challenges that I faced throughout and how I adapted to these as well as the impact on the data. An illustrative example is the need to include videoconferencing as a means of conducting interviews and the impact this had on phase two and three of the research design (see Chapter Three).

Audit trail – I have remained open and honest about the way in which I conducted the research from design through to writing up of the thesis; this was discussed and illustrated diagrammatically in Chapter Three (see Figure 3.5).

7.4 Limitations

This thesis has made contributions of a theoretical and of a methodological nature, as outlined throughout this chapter. However, through critically reflecting upon the study and through feedback and dialogue with others throughout the process several ways in which this study may be limited have been identified. Those that I have identified concern the scope of the study as well as the design of the data collection and analysis stages.

This thesis adopted a follower-focused research (Kean et al, 2011) approach, intent on speaking to those following about following, a neglected perspective and form of research within the field. The intention was also to move away from a focus on leadership, and so the language used throughout was focused on following – from

emails inviting individuals to participate, to the language that I used in the interview and diaries, through to the writing up of the thesis. Upon reflection, the use of the language of following may have put some individuals off participating or perhaps made them question or perceive the interest of the topic to be less than it is. Furthermore, individuals may have been reluctant to become involved if they did not want to consider themselves as having the follower 'label' applied to them. These thoughts have arisen through the conduct of the literature review and through the findings from this study, which reaffirmed the remaining stigma attached to followership and the ways in which this is a concept lacking familiarity for many. Through the conceptualisation offered subsequently by this study, I am now able to realise that it may have been better to have approached individuals within UK public sector organisations and to present the research as being interested in exploring their work life experiences. I could have then seen whether they went on to talk about times of following and leading during our conversations, using, say, a storytelling interview approach.

The way in which I incorporated visual research methods could also be considered as limiting the study in some ways. When beginning this study I was a relatively novice researcher, having only conducted research prior to this for my undergraduate dissertation. However, despite this I decided to adapt my research design to a multiple method approach, with phases two and three (figure 3.1) incorporating the use of visual data, as previously outlined and justified in Chapter Three – Methodology. As Wall (2014) suggests, integrating visual methods into research can become complex, and it is a form of design that is still considered to be lacking use (Davison et al, 2012) thus also arguably lacking a significant range of best practice examples. As described in Chapter Three, I chose to refer to the diaries as “visual research diaries” and I did not specify that participants needed to use photographs only, and instead allowed also the use of images that they found, for example on the internet. Whilst this still served the purpose of enabling participants to reflect upon their understandings and experiences of following and communicate this in a visual form and also directed our conversations at stage three of the data collection process, this may have implications for publications subsequent to my thesis. I may face copyright restrictions in being able to incorporate some of these images into publications going forward, a common issue associated with the use of visual methods (Warren, 2005). This may detract from the richness of the data presented in such publications, and would restrict which images I am able to incorporate. Nevertheless, for this study the incorporation of visual data has been as a

“communicative tool” (Warren, 2005, p. 864) and for “generating new understandings from the data” (Wall, 2014, n.p), and in future research I am keen to continue the use of visual research methods and will take into consideration the lessons learned from this study.

7.5 Areas for Further Research

There are several areas for future research that have arisen through the completion of this thesis.

This study has provided insight into how following is experienced within public sector contexts, and has incorporated a breadth of organisational types within this. This has been a useful step for extending research on followership to the UK, as to date it has been largely focused in North American contexts and by North American authors (Baker, 2007; Brown and Thornburrow, 1996). It would be useful for further research to be conducted on each of the organisational types in this study, to explore in more depth the issues of structure incorporated into the conceptual framework for this study. Furthermore, this study was focused on public sector organisations specifically, with an intention of exploring processes of following within contexts that, though traditionally hierarchical in nature, are regarded as having been transformed. However, further research could be conducted within the private sector and third sector, as well as different organisational structures. For example, Visibility emerged as an important element for following in this study, and so it would be useful to explore how this changes across organisational sectors and structures – for instance to compare this in a small, family owned business, or a charitable organisation.

This study has explored how individuals experience following, and through participants’ responses it has highlighted some of the difficulties and restrictions that they face, for example in their relations with others and lacking access to others higher in the organisational structure. Future research could focus more specifically on the development needs for individuals following. A report by Grint and Holt (2011), *Followership in the NHS*, concluded that it was important to engage with the organisation’s followers in order to achieve improvements over the coming years. They found that there were currently no training courses available that specifically targeted the development of followers. Participants of this study did not refer to any form of training provision for following, nor was this a focus of this study or an area of interest incorporated into the data collection process. However, through recognition

of the lack of followership focus in education (Raffo, 2013) this also seems the case within organisations too. It will therefore be interesting to explore further individuals' experiences of following, which may then provide useful understandings of what type of development they may benefit from.

7.6 Reflections on my Development as a Researcher

As I bring the thesis to a close I am able to look back over the last three years and over the thesis to acknowledge the ways in which I have developed as a researcher and as an individual. Studying for my doctorate has developed me in numerous ways, including the development of my knowledge and understandings, an increase in my awareness, and an increase in my confidence and resilience. These have been and will continue to be transferable across multiple contexts, as I will now briefly discuss.

This thesis has enabled me to develop my knowledge of following, a concept I had not had significant exposure to in my academic or professional life prior to my embarking on the doctoral journey. Through engaging in the theory bases and through co-constructing knowledge with my participants, amongst other ways, I have moved from a position of struggling to find the words to explain what I understood following to mean, to being able to offer a conceptualisation of this in Chapter Five. In line with this, I have also become more aware of the ways in which I and those around me do following, and how this changes depending on what and who it is in relation to. At the time I focused on the ways in which following occurred between them, however I am now able to realise that I neglected to consider the differences that may be present during this process. The completion of the thesis and the development of my understandings have therefore given me a revised perspective on following.

My confidence in presenting and discussing my research has also grown throughout my doctoral journey, and I am able to sense a building of resilience as I look back across the entries of my research journal. My continued engagement in discussing my research with others both formally and informally, and presenting it at various academic conferences, has opened me up to feedback and constructive criticism throughout. As I look back at early entries in my research journal I am able to recognise that the ways in which I am affected by feedback has transformed, for example early extracts in my reflective journal referred to feelings of being anxious

and unsure. As a result of this learning I am now able to take critique better by recognising it as an opportunity for improvement. This has developed alongside my confidence, which has been enhanced through aspirations and achievements that I have made. For instance, after attending my first external conference (British Academy of Management, 2013) I commented in my journal how I really enjoyed the conference in terms of presenting and watching others too. I also commented on how this had motivated me and given me aspirations: *“I imagine it would feel great to win the best paper awards – it sounds great and it was really celebrated back at work – I would love to win one this one year!”*. As previously mentioned, I went on to win the best paper at the Followership Symposium in 2014, and going back to read this journal entry from 2013 I feel a great sense of pride and achievement that I was able to do this, as it gave me a sense of tangible development from the first to third year of my doctorate journey. To me this, and the completion of my thesis, has reminded me of the importance of aspirations and of looking back at these to recognise achievements. Through these experiences I feel that I am building greater resilience as a researcher, which will be taken forward as I make the transition to an early career researcher and to a lecturer at Newcastle Business School. As I aim for further publications in journals I will continue to put in to practice and also develop my ability to take critique, and through this develop my resilience.

Finally, the completion of my thesis has resulted in several new ways of me engaging in following. For example, I am now a member of the Followership Learning Community, a network of academics and practitioners interested in the development of the field, in which I engage and support the discussions and proposals of others. This is a similar case for authors that I have come across, who have inspired and informed my research, whom I now engage with their work, and also through my writing offer critique of their work.

As I have progressed through my research, I have also moved from a new member of academic staff at Newcastle Business School to one who has taught for three years now. I am able to recognise the ways in which I experience the elements of voice, visibility and (being) valuable in my interactions with others and how this has changed over the years. For example, my own relationship with my supervision team has transformed over the years. I have moved from following them in a sense of their research expertise and having strong reliance on their guidance where I was more reluctant to voice my opinions and to disagree with suggestions, to becoming more able to voice my thoughts and opinions as I have developed my subject knowledge over the years. I now recognise the ways in which I do following differently in the

workplace, and how I transition from following and leading continuously across different contexts. As I continue to develop as an early academic researcher and as I progress through the organisation I will remain aware and reflexive about following, considering the ways in which this is done by myself and by others.

7.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a review of the thesis. It has summarised the ways in which this thesis has made a theoretical and methodological contribution. The research question and research objectives have been reviewed, as well as the quality of the study through the use of an evaluative framework. Potential limitations of the study have been identified and future areas for research proposed.

Furthermore it has provided a reflective statement of how the completion of this thesis has enabled my researcher development.

Appendices

Appendix A- Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule *Rachael Morris- PhD Research*

INTRODUCTIONS

- Thank participants for agreeing to becoming involved in the research and for their time
- Provide introduction to myself and the research focus and process
- Check that individual informed consent forms have been signed and answer any questions
- **Please tell me a little bit about yourself (*who you are/where you're from/your role/how long you've worked here for*)**

PROCESS

- **What do you understand by the terms 'following'?**
- **Imagine the details of the process for you to do well in following/as a follower- what does this look like?**
- **Can you tell me about a time when you were acting as a follower/subordinate and engaged in behaviours that resulted in successes or failures? (*Adapted from Carsten et al, 2010*).**
- **How do you believe followers and leaders should engage with each other?**
- **Have you ever felt like/or actually withdrawn your support from others when following?**
 - o How did this make you feel?
 - o What was it that drove you to feel like/do this?

CONTEXT

- **Imagine the ideal environment for following- can you tell me what this is like?**
- **What is it like in reality for you?**
- **In what sort of contexts outside of work are you a follower?**
 - o Do you think you behave differently? Why/why not?

SELF

- **How would you describe yourself as a follower?**
 - o How would others describe you? (*leaders, directors, co-followers etc.*)
 - o Why do you think *INSERT* knows you like that?
- **What behaviours do you think make followers more or less successful? Thinking about yourself, do you see yourself as a successful follower?** (*Adapted from Carsten et al, 2010*).
- **Do you feel you are able to be yourself at work?**
- **What role do your values play when following? Can you give me an example?**
- **Thinking about concepts such as openness, trust and transparency- can you give me some examples of when you have/haven't been able to be each of these when following?**

STATEMENT- OPINION ON THIS

- ***"Thousands of courageous acts by followers can, one by one, improve the world"* (Chaleff, 2009)- Can you please share your thoughts on this?**

CLOSING

- Thank participant for their time and engagement in the interview.
- Explain the next steps- the visual research diary in particular.
- Arrange a time for the second interview.

Appendix B- Visual Diary Insert

What to include in your visual diary...

PROCESS

Pick images that reflect your understandings of what following means

Pick images that illustrate your interactions with others when following

Pick images that show what you consider the best things about being a follower, and the worst things about being a follower

CONTEXT

Pick images that reflects the organisational influences upon how you follow

Pick images that illustrates what enables you in following, and what hinders you in following

SELF

Pick images that describes you in the process of following

Pick images that reflects your values when following

- *Please also feel free to include any additional images that demonstrate your understandings and experiences of following and of being authentic in the way that you do this.*
- *By images you may take photographs, use pre-existing photographs, or other forms of images from different sources. Please make a brief note of where the image came from and what you searched for e.g. if using internet searches, what were the terms that you searched with?*

Appendix C- Student Ethical Issues Form

Newcastle Business School



Student Research Ethical Issues Form

Student Name:	Rachael Morris
Portfolio Area:	PGR
Title of Research Project:	An exploration of the relational nature of authentic following: a follower-focused approach in the UK public sector.
Start Date of Research Project:	1 st July 2012

	Comments
Brief description of the proposed research methods including, in particular, whether human subjects will be involved and how	Human subjects will be directly involved as participants in semi-structured interviews (the first interview and a subsequent follow-up interview), as well as being asked to maintain a research diary. The research diary will encourage the participants to record their thoughts and experiences of following and authenticity, for a period of approximately 4-6 weeks, in between the first interview and the subsequent follow-up interview.
Ethical issues that may arise (if none, state "None" and give reasons)	<p>Due to the potentially sensitive nature of the data collected from participants (during the interviews or in the research diaries) the data will remain confidential and anonymous and will be protected from being circulated into the public domain. Methods such as locking hard copies of the data into a secure cupboard will be employed, and this will be stated on the individual consent forms for participants.</p> <p>The human subjects involved in the research will not include individuals under the age of 16 or any vulnerable adults. The researcher may gain access to participants via current student body (e.g. part time students who currently work in public sector organisations). However, the researchers involvement with such students (e.g. as the marker of assessed work that they undertake) will have ended or will be reallocated to another member of staff.</p>

<p><i>How will the ethical issues be addressed? (if none state n/a)</i></p>	<p>A proactive approach to managing ethical issues for this research will be adopted. Individual informed consent forms will be completed and provided to the participants ahead of the interview. All participants will be asked to sign the form before any data collection commences. This document will provide a brief overview of the main research aims and objectives, also outlining the anticipated data collection process, the requirements of the participants and the ethical considerations that have been applied to this research. A copy of this form will be retained by the researcher, and a second copy by the participant.</p> <p>All data collected during the primary research will be anonymised to ensure that the names of the participants are anonymous and replaced with pseudonyms (e.g. Participant A, or a fictitious name). Any references made to organisational names or other individuals will also be amended to retain anonymity.</p> <p>With regards to the second interview, which will take place in the format of a Photo Elicitation Interview (PEI), the following ethical considerations will be in effect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants will be informed, in advance, that if they choose to take photographs on their organisations' premises they will need to follow all relevant procedures in place in their organisation with regards to privacy. - Participants will be informed, in advance, that if the photographs that they take contain identifiable individuals then participants must seek permission from them verbally. - Participants will be informed, in advance, that if the photographs that they take contain members of the general public they should not include children or vulnerable adults. Unless members of the general public are identifiable they do not need to seek individual permission from them. <p>Electronic copies of the data will be stored securely on the computer, and will be backed up to a personal hard-drive which will be stored at a separate and secure location. All hard copies of the data will be locked away in a secure cupboard.</p> <p>Hard copy extracts of the data may be shared and viewed with the researcher's supervision team, and potentially to fellow postgraduate researchers to enable discussions around data analysis techniques. All documentation will be made anonymous prior to this, by replacing names with pseudonyms for instance, to maintain participant confidentiality. Through engaging in such discussions the</p>
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	<p>researcher hopes it will ensure that the data analysis techniques being applied are appropriate and being carried out effectively.</p> <p>The participants will be made aware in the individual informed consent forms that the data collected will be used for the purposes of this research primarily. However, it may also be included in future publications and presentations in a variety of forms and for a variety of audiences.</p>
<p><i>Has informed consent of research participants been considered?</i></p> <p>If appropriate, has an informed consent form been completed?</p>	<p>Informed consent of research participants has been considered and will be applied to all research participants of this study. The individual informed consent form will be reviewed with the researcher's supervision team beforehand to ensure that it is suitable. This document will be provided to research participants when approached to take part in the research, and will be signed before any data is collected.</p>
<p><i>Has organisational consent been considered?</i></p> <p>If appropriate, has an organisational consent form been completed?</p>	<p>Organisational consent has been considered, and as aforementioned any references to organisational names during the data collection stages will be made anonymous.</p> <p>An organisational informed consent form will not be utilised in this study, as individuals will be contacted directly as opposed to going through an organisation to gain access. The researcher will not be focusing upon the specific aspects of the organisations, with minimal focus on the meso-level when analysing the data.</p>

Appendix D- Project Amendment Form for Ethical Approval



Project Name: An exploration of the relational nature of authentic following: a follower-focused approach in the UK public sector	Date original ethical approval received: 10 th December 2012
Principal Investigator: Rachael Morris	School: Newcastle Business School
Date: 18 th December 2012	Project Ref:

<p>Description of Change:</p> <p>The principal investigator would like to propose changes to the format of the data collection methods used in her PhD research. The second interview will now take place as a Photo Elicitation Interview (PEI) whereby participants will be asked to bring images and photographs that they have taken or have found, to represent their understandings of phenomena being discussed. In addition, the period of time between the first and second interview with participants has been changed from approximately 5 months, to approximately 4-6 weeks.</p>
<p>Reasons for Change:</p> <p>The principal investigator has chosen to change the format of the second interviews with participants, and as a result has made amendments to the ethical issues form and individual informed consent form.</p> <p>The changes made to the period of time between the first and second interview are believed to provide a more realistic expectation of participants to engage with the research diary and with the research overall.</p>
<p>Anticipated Implications:</p> <p>Anticipated implications of the change surround the possibility of individuals being included in photographs and also of organisational premises being included in photographs taken. The principal investigator has engaged in conversations with several colleagues regarding this method, as well as with her principal supervisor and also Dr. Ron Beadle. Following such discussions and considerations by the author, the following points are proposed as ways in which the ethical considerations associated with this method will be managed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants will be informed, in advance, that if they choose to take photographs on their organisations' premises they will need to follow all relevant procedures in place in their organisation with regards to privacy. - Participants will be informed, in advance, that if the photographs that they take contain identifiable individuals then participants must seek permission from them verbally. - Participants will be informed, in advance, that if the photographs that they take contain members of the general public they should not include children or vulnerable adults. Unless members of the general public are identifiable they do not need to seek individual permission from them. - An additional section has been added to the ethical issues form (please see attached), to explain the above issues relating to the PEI. - An additional section has been added to the individual informed consent form (please see attached), to explain the above issues relating to the PEI, and to ensure that participants are fully informed ahead of the photograph and image selection. The principal investigator will also discuss this in detail with each participant at the end of the first interview.

Appendix E- Individual Informed Consent Form



Newcastle Business School Informed Consent Form for research participants

Title of Study:	An exploration of the relational nature of authentic following: a follower-focused approach in the UK public sector.
Person(s) conducting the research:	Rachael Morris
Programme of study:	PHD FT
Address of the researcher for correspondence:	Rachael Morris Newcastle Business School Northumbria University City Campus East 1- Room 212 Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8ST United Kingdom
Telephone:	+44 (0)191 227 3357
E-mail:	rachael.l.morris@northumbria.ac.uk
Description of the broad nature of the research:	This research aims to explore followers' experiences of authentic following and its relational nature, within the UK Public Sector.
Description of the involvement expected of participants including the broad nature of questions to be answered or events to be observed or activities to be undertaken, and the expected time commitment:	Please see below for the anticipated involvement expected of participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st interview (lasting approximately 1-2hours) • Completion of a research diary, recording thoughts and experiences of following and authenticity between the 1st and 2nd interview (over approximately a 4-6 week period) • 2nd interview (lasting approximately 1-2hours) • Any additional meetings that may be required- these will be agreed between the participant and researcher, as and

	<p>when required or deemed necessary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of interview transcripts from 1st and 2nd interviews (approximately 1 hour) <p>The interviews will be conducted in a semi-structured format with a series of open questions or discussion points, and further probing questions being asked throughout the interview.</p> <p>The 1st interview will look to explore the participants' understandings and experiences of following and of authenticity. After the 1st interview, participants will be given a research diary, in which they will be asked to include images and photographs based on the phenomena of this study. The 2nd interview will be a Photo Elicitation Interview (PEI) whereby the participants will share the images and photographs with the researcher and engage in conversations based on them. In the 2nd interview, the researcher will also look to delve further into certain issues that arose in the 1st interview. With regards to the PEI the following ethical considerations will be agreed between the researcher and participants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If participants choose to take photographs on their organisations' premises they will need to follow all relevant procedures in place in their organisation with regards to privacy. - If participants take photographs that contain identifiable individuals then participants must seek permission from them verbally. - If participants take photographs that contain members of the general public they should not include children or vulnerable adults. Unless members of the general public are identifiable they do not need to seek individual permission from them. <p>The interviews will all be conducted on an individual basis, with only the participant and researcher present. Each interview will be recorded using an electronic Dictaphone, and the researcher will then transcribe these into a word-processed</p>
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	<p>format in preparation for data analysis. The researcher may also utilise visual prompts in the interview (for instance images/diagrams) to aid discussions.</p> <p>All participant names, as well as organisational names and other individual names will be made anonymous during the transcribing stage. Such names will be replaced with pseudonyms (e.g. Participant A, or a fictitious name).</p> <p>Each interview transcript will then be emailed to the respective research participant, whereby they will have the opportunity to add any data, or to remove or amend data on the transcript. The participants will be asked to confirm whether they agree that it is a fair representation of the interview.</p> <p>Electronic copies of the data will be stored securely on the computer, and will be backed up to a personal hard-drive, which will be stored at a separate and secure location. All hard copies of the data will be locked away in a secure cupboard. Hard copy extracts of the data may be shared and viewed with the researcher's supervision team, and potentially to fellow postgraduate researchers to enable discussions around data analysis techniques. All documentation will be made anonymous prior to this, by replacing names with pseudonyms for instance, to maintain participant confidentiality. Through engaging in such discussions the researcher hopes it will ensure that the data analysis techniques being applied are appropriate and being carried out effectively.</p> <p>The data collected will be used for the purposes of this research primarily. However, it may also be included in future publications and presentations in a variety of forms and for a variety of audiences.</p>
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Information obtained in this study, including this consent form, will be kept strictly confidential (i.e. will not be passed to others) and anonymous (i.e. individuals and organisations will not be identified *unless this is expressly excluded in the details given above*).

Appendix F- Morris (2014) Paper Published in Journal of Leadership Education (DOI: 10.12806/V13/I4/C7)

Constructions of Following from a Relational Perspective: A Follower-Focused Study

Abstract

The followership field remains overshadowed by the leadership field, with traditional assumptions attached to the *follower* concept further undervaluing the importance of progressive understandings of leadership. This paper considers following as a relational process and provides illustrative extracts from empirical research. Future areas for research are discussed, as well as the importance of incorporating followership into the leadership education agenda.

Key words: Followership, relational social constructionism, qualitative, visual research methods

It is widely recognised that the leadership field has overshadowed the followership field to date, and continues to do so despite recent increases in attention to followership studies. Articles have been published demonstrating the significant differences in outputs for both fields respectively; for instance, Bjugstad, Thach, Thompson and Morris (2006) found that between 1928 and 2004 there was a ratio of 1:120 for books published on followership compared to leadership books. This study adopts a follower-focused approach to ensure that followers are the *central* focus of the study, both theoretically and methodologically. However, as this paper supports, there is growing attention to shift the label of followers from one of passivity to one of valuable contributors to organisations (Raffo, 2013). Similarly, there is a growing recognition to further understand followership from a social constructionist perspective, and from a relational stance. Relational approaches are increasingly

present in the leadership field, recognising the need to understand the interactions of leaders with multiple others (Watt, 2014). Adopting a relational social constructionist approach, this study focuses upon processes of following, acknowledging the complexity of this concept and looking to explore how following is experienced and the different meanings individuals attach to it. The research has therefore been designed to enable insight into followers' experiences, addressing calls for the use of qualitative (Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe & Carsten, 2014), multi-method (Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera & McGregor, 2010) and visual research methods (Ray & Smith, 2012).

Approaches to Inquiry: Conceptual and Empirical

Kelley (1988) was one of the first authors to publish on followership (Ferrell, Boyd, & Rayfield, 2013) and is considered a leading author within the followership field. Although a seminal piece within the field, Kelley (1988) was conceptual in nature and therefore arguably lacked credibility without application to context. Similarly, the next significant publication came from Chaleff (1995) who chose a striking title, introducing the concept of *courageous followers*. Both authors have since gone on to publish and inspire others; however, there seems to be a continued focus on conceptual discussions (Baker, 2007; Carsten et al., 2010). This study therefore addresses this gap by conducting empirical research to further understandings within the followership field.

Approaches to Inquiry: Quantitative and Qualitative

As recognized by Uhl-Bien et al. (2014), research that has incorporated empirical data has predominantly adopted essentialist and trait perspectives, attempting to measure aspects such as follower performance and trait. As a result, qualitative approaches have been largely neglected not only in the followership field,

but also the leadership field (Billsberry, 2009). The followership field is also unbalanced with regards to the ways in which followers are incorporated into the study. For instance, Kean, Haycock-Stuart, Baggaley and Carson (2011) suggest that there are two approaches to studying followership: *follower-focused* which explores the doing of following and how this is socially constructed by followers, and *follower-centric* which places emphasis on understanding the ways in which individuals collectively construct leadership.

There has been a tendency in the extant literature to adopt a follower-centric approach by investigating followers' perceptions of their leaders. Similarly, it has also been common to involve leaders and seek to understand their perceptions of followers. Resulting from this approach is a need to pursue follower-focused studies whereby followers are involved to understand their views on followership and their experiences of following. A qualitative study by Carsten et al. (2010) raised this issue suggesting that there needs to be better recognition that individuals will each have different understandings of followership. Reflective of a social constructionist perspective, an emerging and currently demanded research orientation within the field (Uhl-Bien et al., 2013), this study aims to address this concern.

Understanding followership from a relational perspective

Within the broad approach of social constructionism, this study places particular emphasis on the relational nature of reality and thus draws upon a relational social constructionist perspective. The key premises of this approach are centred around the belief that individuals do not exist in isolation (Cunliffe, 2008; Burr, 2003); instead meaning is created, or constructed, in relation to multiple others and within multiple contexts (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). This approach also allows an appreciation of focusing upon processes of *doing* following, rather than *being* a

follower. This study argues that individuals will continuously engage in processes of following and leading interchangeably, influenced by who they are in relation with, and the contexts that they are in relation to, addressing calls to understand the complex social and relational processes that individuals engage in when following (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).

Research Methods

Qualitative in nature, this research study consists of data collection methods as illustrated in Table 1:

Data collection phase	Data collection method
Phase one	Semi-structured interview
Phase two	Visual research diary
Phase three	Photo-elicitation interview

Table 5: Research Design

The use of multiple methods enables richer insights (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009) into participants' lived experiences (Radcliffe, 2013), and is yet to be used to a great extent within the followership field (Carsten et al., 2010). Participants first engage in an interview before being provided with a diary to insert images and photographs that reflect their understandings and experiences of following. This diary is then brought to the photo-elicitation interview, where the participant and researcher engage in

conversation around the images, achieving deep reflections and co-construction of meaning (Van Auken, Frisvoll & Stewart, 2010).

Each data collection method was designed to explore the lived experiences of participants and to gain insight into their understandings which emerge through responses to interviewer questions and also naturally through the participants' storytelling. Each data collection method enabled open reflection from participants through conversations and also "individual space" away from the researcher in the visual diaries (Ortega-Alcazar & Dyck, 2012, p.109). The study was based within the UK public sector and adopted a purposive heterogeneous sampling strategy to gain insight across a range of UK public sector contexts. Fourteen participants were recruited through self-selection and snowball sampling methods, deemed suitable for the exploratory research approach (Endrissat, Muller & Kaudela-Baum, 2007), and each participant engaged in the data collection process over a period of approximately two months. All interviews were recorded using a Dictaphone and then transcribed verbatim, allowing the researcher to familiarize themselves with the data and to continue to engage in the iterative process of data interpretation (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006). Next, the researcher then analyzed the approved transcripts thematically drawing upon the framework offered by Braun and Clarke (2006). The data was coded, key themes were identified, and thematic maps were created.

Findings and Discussion

This study aimed to explore following as a relational process and to contribute empirical findings to the field which address calls for qualitative research and, in particular, narratives (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). As previously discussed, there are acknowledgements of the need to better understand following as a process and to view followers and leaders as interrelated; the findings presented below contribute

empirical findings to support these requests. This was achieved through direct questions and the wider data set narratives provided by participants. Data relevant to this theme also emerged from the visual research diaries, where participants utilized images to construct their understandings; this then resulted in rich narratives in the final interview. This paper will now present a series of illustrative extracts from the narratives provided in the first and second interviews, relating to the themes of *hierarchies; shifting between following and leading*.

Following and Hierarchies

Arising from the analysis of the interview transcripts, participants' responses indicated that the constructions of followers (and leaders) were more complex than presumed in much of the literature. For instance, one participant commented, "*It's not that simple, ...leadership isn't always based on seniority...it's about how they act and how people react to them as much as your kind of hierarchical leaders.*" This not only demonstrates that following and leading is not always determined by organisational hierarchies, it also places emphasis on followers as having a central and active role in these processes. This is in line with DeRue and Ashford (2010) who recognize the claiming and granting of roles; here, followers are accepting of others as leaders regardless of their hierarchical positioning, and leaders too perform these processes regardless of their hierarchical positioning or ranking.

The hierarchy did however appear to still play a role, albeit adverse, in the ways in which following and leading occur. One participant reflected upon a responsibility they had been assigned, to help facilitate change within their department, and commented: "*...because we don't carry with us the legitimacy that comes from being senior, it makes our task that little bit harder [sic]*". This makes

problematic the claims by DeRue and Ashford (2010), who consider claiming and granting of following and leading roles without giving sufficient consideration to the challenges that may be faced during this process. For instance, from this illustrative quote and the extended narrative, it appears that the rejection and questioning of individuals who are claiming roles can cause difficulties and thus add complexity to processes of constructing following and leading.

When asked what the ideal relations between followers and leaders would be in their experience, responses included: *“feeling that you know you’re all the same, but no one is better than another person...no one is belittled; and “they’re no bigger than you, they work **with** you, they understand”*. These responses suggest that although organisational hierarchies may be present, experiences of following are best when hierarchical positioning’s are not explicit. This opposes traditional followership and leadership theories, which tend to label followers as powerless and passive individuals (Alcorn, 1992). Instead they propose notions of equality and togetherness and are more aligned to contemporary, conceptual, discussions in the followership which search for more balanced terminology to lose the stigma (Bjugstad et al., 2006; Kellerman, 2008; Rost, 2008). This sense of togetherness and equality allows followers and leaders to be viewed as interconnected and perhaps less isolated and distinct from one another, leading on to the second theme to be presented in this paper, which focuses on shifting between following and leading processes.

Shifting between following and leading

As discussed earlier in the paper, this study focuses on following as a relational process. Through participants responses, following began to emerge as less of a constant process but instead one into and out of which individuals move.

Participants described experiences where they had shifted between following and leading: *“if I have a higher level of expertise than my line manager in some cases, then I can take the lead and she’ll follow...it’s like invisible whereby if you’re deemed to have more knowledge or more experience and expertise in a field it’s almost like right, no questions asked you’re automatically put into that position”*.

Furthermore, one participant included in the diary an image of birds flying in a linear formation with annotated notes of *“synchronised”* and *“working together”*. They then went on to describe why this looked like effective following to them: *“they’re all headed in the same direction there is a leader at the front, but one takes over as the one at the front needs a break”*

These responses illustrate how followers and leaders are not static objects; instead, they are individuals who shift through processes of following and leading continuously depending upon the situation and on aspects such as expertise and experience. These thoughts were further reflected in other interviews, with another participant describing following as being a *“circular, kind of thing”*. They go on to explain that their approach to following sometimes involves leading too; they describe a situation where an initiative had been set from upper management and that because they agreed with this and could see the value in doing this, they not only supported the upper management with this but went on to attempt to influence others to see the value and support it: *“the way that I follow is to lead others”*.

The illustrative extracts above portray following as a process in which individuals continuously engage, alongside leading. Through this imagery, following can be understood as a complex process that involves followers and leaders; it is not a simplistic process, but instead one that is continuously evolving and changing as individuals shift between claiming and granting roles of follower and leader (DeRue

& Ashford, 2010) depending upon aspects such as perceived levels of expertise and experience. It is for this purpose that researchers should move from discussing followers and leaders separately to directly focusing on processes of following and leading which acknowledge the interrelatedness and fluidity of them. While hierarchies were recognized as remaining relevant to processes of following, they were not viewed as the sole influence; this should be further explored to understand what other influences are acting upon individuals and the conflicts that occur as a result. This will further understandings of the complexity of following. Furthermore it will shed light on the contemporary views of followers in the literature, providing empirical findings to support more balanced and equal views of followers working together with, rather than for, their leaders.

Implications for Leadership Education Agendas

As an underexplored and unfamiliar concept, this paper argues for the need to further understand processes of following. As a member of staff within a UK Business School, the author recognizes the lack of presence of followership across the programs which offer business-related degrees globally.

Leadership education needs to more actively incorporate followership into its agenda (Johnson, 2009) to prevent the romanticizing of leadership (Meindl, Ehrlich & Dukerich, 1985) to the detrimental effect on followership. As the literature is beginning to recognize, and the illustrative extracts in this paper indicate, followers are no longer passive individuals who are removed from leaders and unable to have influence. Therefore, it is important to not only introduce the concept of followership to students studying leadership, but to warrant this topic sufficient space on the agenda for understandings to move beyond the traditional assumptions and to shift to

understanding following and followers as important and influential in organizations (Raffo, 2013).

Conclusion

This paper has presented illustrative extracts from a qualitative study focused on exploring experiences of following from a follower's perspective. Following should be understood as a relational process and future research should focus on improving our understanding of this process. Future studies should also provide empirical findings to shed light on contemporary views of following which currently tend to be restricted to conceptual discussions.

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Appendix G - Movement in Language Across Data Collection Phases

Movement in Language across Data Collection Phases – Illustrative Examples			
Participant	Phase One <i>Semi structured Interview</i>	Phase Two <i>Visual Research Diary</i>	Phase Three <i>Photo Elicitation Interview</i>
Kathryn	I've never really thought about it, I'll be completely honest with you	<p>Images in diary included ones of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sheep, hands tied together, stress, robots, Jesus and his disciples, a child being told off. Images also included from searches on the internet for terms including freedom, happy, co-design, flexibility, and critical friend. <p>Annotations in diary included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Trying to conform to how my bosses wanted me to be was making me ill... and unproductive</i> • <i>I just couldn't follow any longer and started to rebel against my manager</i> • <i>When I reflected on whether I was a "good" follower, I concluded that I am a good follower, in the right</i> 	<p>And when I suggested ways of making improvements, I was kind of beaten down and told, "Oh well, we've just got to get on with it"... so it really felt like, and in another way when I was looking at this yesterday, I thought I did feel a little bit like a slave.</p> <p>You know I wasn't allowed to show any kind of individuality about things, so the way they saw a follower was like a sheep "you must do what I say...if you stray away from that field, then you're the black sheep...you're not really a follower, you're not really part of us if you're not doing as we say".</p>

		<i>organisation, with the right manager</i>	
Danielle	I don't know a huge amount I suppose about that...I assume that it's something to do with kind of sheep	<p>Images in diary included ones of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hierarchical structures and diagrams, meeting minutes, a person left out from a group, muffins, teacher problems such as marking and complaints from parents, logos of professional bodies and assessing bodies. <p>Annotations in diary included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Not good enough</i> • <i>Responsibility</i> • <i>Not in management clique= forgotten about</i> 	<p>we were talking about a previous job role, which was part of my university placement and like how the manager spoke to me and stuff. I was very much classed as like bottom of the food chain. Ern quote by manager 'the dogsbody' she actually introduced me to somebody else as the dogsbody. And my sister is very loud and outspoken and confident and you know she was like "I'd have given it straight back" and I was like "well yes but then I wouldn't have passed my university year", so again it was putting up to get somewhere</p>
Ben	For me following is, in its purest sense, you could say, it's following orders...this is the plan, they will check your understanding of the plan and then you will follow the plan	<p>Images in diary included ones of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hierarchical structures, buildings, organisational posters and leaflets, images of teams. <p>Annotations in diary included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Top of shop</i> 	<p>I can see now that the work that I do relates to them. As before, all the way through my career, it's been very difficult to have a tangible link between the work that I do and the people that I follow, being able to link all the way to the top...I think what it does, it just adds an element of, erm, seriousness to it. Because what you're, what you're doing is you're, you're genuinely having an impact on</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Spoon fed/ Rigid/ What to do</i> • <i>Still following my dream after 28 years</i> 	<p>the people at the top of that organisation, so, as a follower, you feel as though you have more ability to affect change.</p>
<p>Sophie</p>	<p>It's not one that I would use normally...[there is] less discussion about what actually a follower is</p> <p>You are the person that has a leader or somebody that you're taking notice of</p> <p>Erm (pause) trying to think what else it would mean erm I suppose it is more of a subordinate role</p>	<p>Images in diary included ones of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fish swimming in a group, jigsaw puzzle and pieces, Pinocchio character, diamond, stairs, planted seeds growing, hands shaking, donkey with large luggage, balloons, paths. 	<p>What I find important at work is being committed and working hard so they all work towards being a good follower I would say</p> <p>I feel more intimidated to approach the director... I don't really have many opportunities to speak to him on a daily basis. But if I did need anything, he's always said his doors open. So he's quite (pause) welcoming</p> <p>I feel a bit let down by that... it did change my attitude actually because I felt well if you can't be bothered to tell me what I need to be doing then I can't be bothered to do it</p>

Appendix H- Operationalised Discourse Analysis Framework

Operationalized Discourse Analysis Framework – Illustrative Examples

Operationalized Discourse Analysis Framework – Illustrative Examples	
<p>Participant Extract- <i>Kathryn</i></p>	<p>INITIAL: I've never really thought about it, I'll be completely honest with you</p> <p>ONGOING: If I have a manager who is stressed, sets unclear priorities and is just fire fighting all the time, I just, I get really stressed. If I, if you have a manager who is calm in a crisis, I find it much easier to follow them because you have clear vision about what needs to be done. There might be things going on that are quite chaotic, you know, at the moment we've got a lot going on, but actually, you can still, you still feel like you can follow them.</p> <p>And when I suggested ways of making improvements, I was kind of beaten down and told, "Oh well, we've just got to get on with it"...so it really felt like, and in another way when I was looking at this yesterday, I thought I did feel a little bit like a slave.</p> <p>You know I wasn't allowed to show any kind of individuality about things, so the way they saw a follower was like a sheep "you must do what I say...if you stray away from that field, then you're the black sheep...you're not really a follower, you're not really part of us if you're not doing as we say".</p>

Readings of the Data

Dialogical/Performative Analysis		
	<p>I've never really thought about it, I'll be completely honest with you</p> <p>ONGOING:</p> <p>If I have a manager who is stressed, sets unclear priorities and is just fire fighting all the time, I just, I get really stressed. If I, if you have a manager who is calm in a crisis, I find it much easier to follow them because you have clear vision about what needs to be done. There might be things going on that are quite chaotic, you know, at the moment we've got a lot going on, but actually, you can still, you still feel like you can follow them.</p> <p>And when I suggested ways of making improvements, I was kind of beaten down and told, "Oh well, we've just got to get on with it"...so it really felt like, and in another way when I was looking at this yesterday, I thought I did feel a little bit like a slave.</p> <p>You know I wasn't allowed to show any kind of individuality about things, so the way they saw a follower was like a sheep "you must do what I say...if you stray away from that field, then you're the black sheep...you're not really a follower, you're not really part of us if you're not doing as we say".</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensifiers- <i>really, completely</i> • Intensifiers- <i>really, all the time</i> • Definition of a specific time- <i>crisis</i> / Intensifier- <i>much</i> • Switch from first person • De-Intensifier- <i>quite</i> / Reasoning with others- <i>you know</i> • Switch from first person / Active and positivity- <i>you can</i> • Active verb • Use of metaphor- beaten down (<i>suggesting a sense of defeat, of being outdone, of being punished</i>) • Rephrasing others / Intensifier- <i>really</i> • Use of metaphor- slave (<i>suggesting a sense of being owned by another, being forced to obey others, being controlled, and of hard labour</i>) • Passive and negative / Intensifier- <i>any</i> • Switch from first person / Use of metaphor • Phrasing of others • Intensifier- <i>really</i> • Intensifier- <i>really</i>

<p>Social, Cultural and Political Contexts</p>	<p>There is reference to cultural contexts within Kathryn's responses when she talks about times of "crisis" and chaos with a suggestion of being in panic or fighting back ("fire fighting"), as well as an indication of a busy time with her reference to "a lot going on".</p> <p>There is reference to social structures within Kathryn's responses where she refers to the notion of slaves. This indicates a sense of strong hierarchical and power differences being felt. There is an indication of structural forces here being constraining.</p> <p>The issue of power is present within Kathryn's constructions of her experiences of following. She suggests a real sense of powerlessness in comparison to her leader, and seems to position herself as being lower down than them and almost under their control through her reference to feeling slave-like.</p> <p>There is also a suggestion of being part of a collective with Kathryn having negative connotations of this.</p> <p>Interestingly, Kathryn rephrases others on several occasions in her telling of her experiences.</p>
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END OF APPENDICES

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