

ON THE LATERAL AXIS:

A Systems-Psychodynamic Study of the Lateral Relations
of Collaboration amongst Senior Leaders
in Corporate Organizations

Petros Oratis

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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the dynamics of lateral collaboration in corporate organizations by focusing on how senior leaders experience lateral relations in such contexts. Increased business complexity and the nature of organizational challenges require enterprise collaboration across boundaries, where leaders cannot exercise their formal hierarchical authority. This research is an in-depth mapping of lateral relations and the dynamics they induce. It studies the inner experience of role-holders. It allows those leading and studying organizations to consider enabling conditions for enterprise collaboration at a senior leadership level.

The study comprises four independent cases of senior leaders, using the biographical narrative interpretive method (BNIM). Each in-case analysis surfaces subjective inner relational and authority models that influence the subjective experience and choices of a role-holder within lateral relations. Discerning patterns in dynamics and experiences across cases allowed the development of an ontological picture of lateral relations in leadership that could be studied independently.

The findings showed three distinct phenomena of relational dynamics: mental ranking (MR), relational dimension confusion (RDC) and relational morphing (RM). Studying their causation produced a definition of the attributes of lateral relations and the evolved nature of formal authority in contemporary organizations. These findings can aid leaders and organizational practitioners to navigate challenging dynamics and contextualize their experience, whilst becoming more task effective in collaboration.

Finally, the thesis places these findings within the historical evolution of systems-psychodynamic thinking of the lateral and the vertical axis. It highlights the need to continuously re-examine ontological definitions when studying highly subjective relational phenomena within contemporary organizational paradigms in which authority and hierarchy keep evolving.

Keywords: lateral relations, lateral axis, authority, hierarchy, leadership, authorization, autonomy, dependency, interdependency, power dynamics, competition, envy, rivalry, organizational politics, collaboration, enterprise leadership

To Andrés, my most important lateral relation.

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Finally, Andrés Felipe Rodriguez, thank you for your love, your limitless and constant support to complete this journey and for always catching me when falling.

“Living is a horizontal fall.”
Jean Cocteau

Figure 1. M.C. Escher, *Relativity*, lithograph, 1953

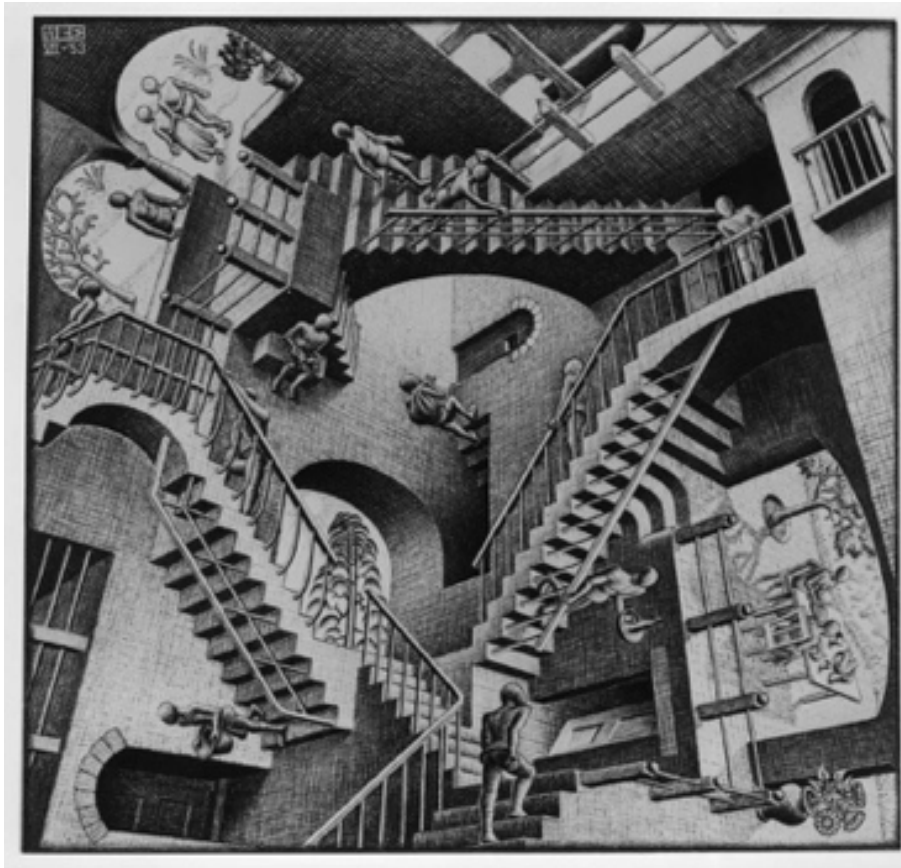


Figure 2. Interior of Oude HBS Arnhem, used as Escher's model for "relativity"



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Definition
BDA	Biographic Data Analysis
BDC	Biographic Data Chronology
BNIM	Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method
GRC	Group Relations Conference
LR	Lateral Relation
LRC	Lateral Relation for Collaboration
LRP	Lateral Relation amongst Peers
MR	Mental Ranking
NSS	Narrative Structure and Sequentialization
ORA	Organization Role Analysis
PIN	Particular Narrative Incident
RDC	Relational Dimension Confusion
RM	Relational Morphing
S-P	Systems-Psychodynamics
SQUIN	Single Question aiming at Inducing Narrative
SS1	Interviewing Subsession 1
SS2	Interviewing Subsession 2
TFA	Thematic Field Analysis
VR	Vertical Relation

PREFACE

Figure 3. A description of the River Po's geographical coordinates



“The stories in this book are set in a part of the Po Valley: and here I need to state that for me, the River Po properly begins at Piacenza. The fact that upstream from Piacenza it's the same river is neither here nor there. The road from Piacenza north-west to Milan is the same road as the one which goes from Piacenza southeast to Rimini, but only the latter is properly the Via Emilia, built as it was in 187 BC.

You may object that you cannot make a comparison between a river and a road, because roads belong to history, while rivers belong to geography. But humans don't make history any more than they do geography. They undergo history, as they undergo geography. And in the end, history is no more than geography in action.”

Giovanni Guareschi (1951)

From the introduction of “The Little World of Don Camillo”

This research studies the dynamics amongst senior leaders when collaborating outside the formal hierarchical authority system, by zooming in on their inner experiences. Such in-depth exploration can inform our understanding of human challenges involved in contemporary corporate organizations and illuminate dimensions that can be elusive and covert. Studying *authority* and *power relations* on the lateral axis produces a complex conundrum. As the paradigms of organizations and their ecosystems keep shifting, *power* and *authority* keep taking on new forms. As aspects of their qualities remain concealed, other attributes retain timeless qualities. Whilst the lateral axis is neglected in studies and management, when operating on it, it is the vertical axis that becomes more difficult to locate and study.

Conducting a qualitative study on this topic raises the complex challenge of its ontological framing. If what is studied is so elusive, covert, and its definition keeps changing, what constitutes its framing? This challenge is inherent in organizational laterality, and this study seeks to illuminate why and how the lateral axis can be perceived as arbitrary, as “not how we are supposed to do business.” Guareschi’s quotation above (1951) sets Piacenza as the starting point of the River Po, which runs horizontally. His comparison of history and geography is a reminder of the abiding interplay in organizational dynamics. This study considers whether lateral collaboration is the product of the individuals involved or is inherent to their nature. It reviews this two-way interplay and considers how its causality can be examined.

This study explores these questions by using the biographical narratives of four senior leaders in different organizations. Dwelling on the subjectivity of their stories, by following principles of phenomenology and interpretivism, enabled the unraveling of a

multidimensional world of power dynamics involving survival anxieties and existential quests. Escher's illustration *Relativity* (Figure 1) resembles how I lost a sense of orientation in a relation's organizational coordinates. This study had to constantly check whether such strange phenomena were an outcome of how participants thought about them, or the relations' actual product, or a result of how data were interpreted by the researcher.

To examine causality within such subjectivity, an ontological frame was needed to contextualize the meaning-making process. Figure 2 shows the entrance to Arnhem's secondary school, which was used as Escher's model for *Relativity*. I use this as a metaphor for an ontological frame, which is required to study relational subjectivity. In contrast to "bricks-and-mortar", it is challenging to consider ontology in human phenomena, whose definition is ever-changing. The value of this study is to help define the ontological nature of the lateral and the vertical axes in organizations, despite role-holders experiencing them subjectively, as in Figure 1.

The structure of this thesis allows the reader to follow my journey of discovery in the sequence I experienced it. I, therefore, present the findings gradually, with the subsequent methodological choices made from in-case analysis to cross-case theorizing.

The thesis is divided into four parts.

Part I frames the lateral axis by outlining the study's specific focus and motivation (Chapter 1). It locates it within the existing understanding from systems-

psychodynamic studies, and outlines the topic's evolving definitions (Chapter 2). Finally, it discusses the research's epistemological grounding and describes the research methods (Chapter 3).

Part II presents the study's findings, through a vertical view. Chapters 4 to 7 present leadership experiences from the idiosyncratic vertical flow of leaders' career evolution.

Part III presents the findings from a lateral view. Chapter 8 discerns patterns across types of relations. Those patterns reach limitations for theorizing, which led to new analysis and findings in Chapter 9.

Part IV discusses these findings by proposing a relational model to study relational attributes and revisiting theoretical definitions of the lateral and vertical axes (Chapter 10). Finally, I return to my researcher's journey to discuss epistemology more broadly (Chapter 11).

Astypalea, August 27th 2022

PART I: FRAMING THE LATERAL AXIS

Part I frames the lateral axis by outlining the study's specific focus and motivation based on own consulting practice and observations, its relevance and potential benefits (Chapter 1).

Chapter 2 contains the literature review, locating it within the existing understanding from systems-psychodynamic studies and outlines the topic's evolving definitions.

Chapter 3 scopes further the study and research questions, its epistemological and research implications and describes in detail its research methods.

CHAPTER 1. LANDING ON THE LATERAL AXIS: Selecting an Area of Research, its Relevance, and Personal Motivation

In this chapter, I share how I arrived at the topic of lateral collaboration amongst corporate senior leaders, having been inspired by observations from my consulting practice, new organizational practices, societal trends, and autobiographical references.

1. Observations from my consulting practice

As an organizational consultant, I coach corporate executive teams or leaders to work across boundaries to collaborate more effectively. Through this practice, I have become increasingly aware of the human challenges involved due to the nature of organizational challenges, which require continuous alignment, improvisation, and adaptability. These challenges are despite of and in parallel with the organization's operating model, which in most cases is complex. This conundrum results in coexisting structures, multiple priorities, combined roles, and conflicting loyalties. Consultants are then often approached because leadership teams are unable to collaborate and hierarchical leaders feel unequipped to effectively address this.

When coaching teams in such contexts, I would encounter a variety of “bizarre” group behaviors. The first assignment that inspired me to explore this topic involved a collaboration breakdown between functions. My colleague and I were fascinated by the avoidance of direct lateral interactions by a senior team and their choice to follow the hierarchical escalation route. This choice was clearly damaging for everyone and we thought it a behavior that one expects to see lower in the organization. We wondered what was so powerful that it made these executives avoid lateral collaboration. I discussed my observations and initial questions in a paper at the ISPSO (International Society for the Psychoanalytic Study of Organizations) annual conference (Oratis, 2019). As consultants, we worked hard to maximize discussion between the staff team without executive presence. We had to be creative concerning surfacing conflicts, so differences could be explored and a final alignment could produce a plan. This approach resulted in not laying off senior leaders, who had been caricatured through the hierarchical escalation routes as responsible for poor results. As a systems-psychodynamic practitioner, I wondered whether our existing thinking was keeping aspects of executive lateral experiences hidden and unexplored.

My hunch connected with a theoretical frame when reading a paper by Armstrong (2007) that explicitly named *lateral relations* and reversed a conventional understanding of causality. Armstrong suggested that the lateral axis was prominent in systems-psychodynamics thinking but was overshadowed by a vertical model of authority, despite organizational trends reflecting a reverse reality. This made me ask which axis was more prominent, how could the axes be examined, and why were they so elusive. There has been some academic research on the importance of

organizational lateral relations with fascinating initial findings but, overall, previous exploration of this topic has been limited.

Reflecting further on my assignments, I realized that even in the clearest forms of hierarchical authorization, there is still a significant collaborative terrain left for leaders to address through their lateral relations. A business unit executive may initiate collaboration with a counterpart executive after realizing that a customer need can only be addressed through joint product development. Several executives may organize themselves to investigate implications of an external change to an organization's business model. A management team of senior leaders may temporarily function without a hierarchical boss, having to make transformative decisions as opposed to keeping business as normal. In all cases, there are authorization issues. A core role of leadership is to navigate and enable decision-making on crucial topics with inherent authorization vagueness. Decision-making in a top-down model is a predominant mental model of thinking about this context. But this decision-making needs to be enacted laterally, across all parties, with such vagueness involved. In these cases, I observed a persistent innate avoidance, a gravitation towards autonomy and escalation, which inhibited a resolution that could benefit everyone. I was, therefore, fascinated to explore what it means for a senior leader to be in such a conundrum.

2. Observing broader organizational trends

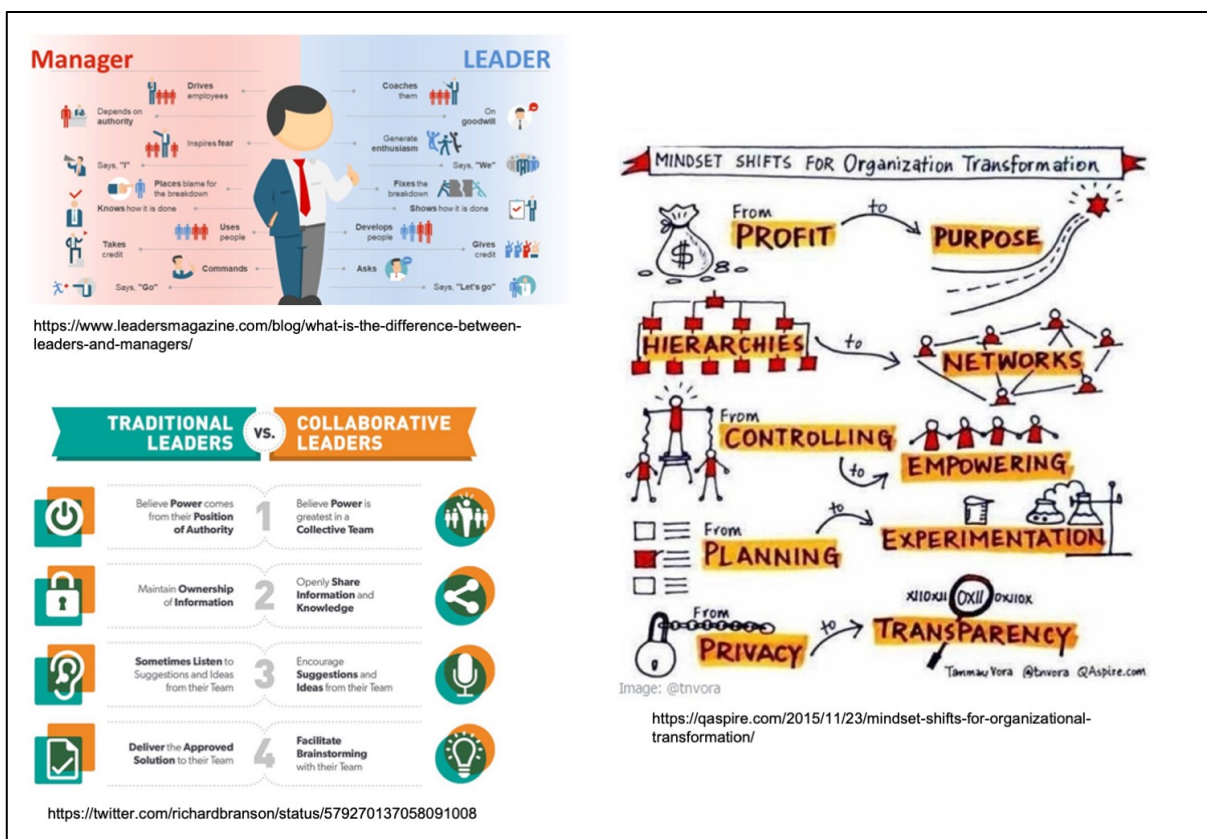
The trend for more lateral collaboration is directly linked to the new market and business models, which are redefining hierarchy and the role of a leader in collaboration. The research literature on the topic has emphasized this link since at

least the 1990s, when major industry shifts and new organizational models occurred. This has further escalated as a consequence of the more recent application of digital technologies to all spectrums of life, which has been classified as a new era, the “Fourth Industrial Revolution”, a term coined in 2016 (Philbeck and Davis, 2018). Organizations placing digital transformation as their main strategic competence and focus have introduced new work practices and management paradigms, which have quickly become the mainstream across unrelated industries.

An example is the practice of “agile work,” initially a project management methodology for software development, which also became an organizational structure. Spotify, a digital platform for music streaming, is often referenced as having a flagship agile structure but even banks have been inspired to follow it. ING, one of the biggest Dutch banks, restructured in 2015 into an “agile organization” (Jackobs, Schlatmann and Mahadevan, 2017). The bank’s former hierarchical structure was replaced by “squads,” self-authorized teams responsible for developing and delivering a product to the market. The “product owner” is a team member, but not its leader, which is now a rotating role. Squads are further clustered into interdependent “tribes” with a leader negotiating priority amongst squads. The role of the formal hierarchical boss is now performed through “chapters” of common competence, focusing solely on people-related matters, without direct authority over or accountability for their results. The amplification of self-authorization and self-regulation within lateral teams can be tracked here. A radical transformation of management roles from hierarchical to a variety of positions, focuses, and roles has occurred.

New notions of a good leader emerged. This leader has, but does not exercise, authority, and, instead, is in service, and this is termed “servant leadership” (Sendjaya and Sarros, 2002; Greenleaf, Spears and Vaill, 1998). A simple Google Images search of the term “good leader” brings up the images shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Examples of management blogs portraying traits of a good leader



Whilst the hierarchical pyramid still exists, a new reverse pyramid has been introduced, in the form of “new power” (Heimans and Timms, 2018), which also amplifies new dynamics and mechanisms for transformation to work. The more existential question has recently developed as to whether managers are needed at all (Chakhoyan, 2017; Elliott, 2021), and, in a recent poll to 3,000 American workers, 83%

responded they could do without (Lindzon, 2022). The new power is not just an idea, it is also real. Internal processes, such as employee engagement surveys, have found public forums through blogs and organized digital tools, such as LinkedIn and Glassdoor. These tools can be used for whistleblowing of malpractices or as management's superego, with the threats of exposure and cancel culture consequences. This power reversal does not just live in the "superego," but in the democratization of organizational practices. These organizational practices have been popularized through "flagship" paradigms, like Netflix's culture, which uses radical transparency (Hastings, 2009; Hastings and Meyer, 2020), such as publishing executive remuneration or exposing the reasons for laying off an executive to all employees. While there is substantial debate and investigation on negative consequences, such as inducing leaders' fear and shame (Ramachandran and Flint, 2018; Morgan, 2021), radical transparency is also embraced due to real company and shareholder risks if destructive executive behavior is left unchecked (Isaac, 2017; Warzel, 2022).

Some examples of new power and authority dynamics coexist with conventional managerial practices and impact on senior leaders' inner images, experiences, and exercise of leadership, within which lateral collaboration is expected to take place.

3. Societal and political observations

Broader political and societal trends can be linked to managerial trends. In 2015, I was tormented as a Greek living abroad following the "GREXIT" referendum. I could not conceive that my country would exit the European Union, with its economic benefits

and the values it represented. I could also understand how the imposed austerity policy felt like a suicide mission. In 2016, the United Kingdom with BREXIT and the United States with retractions from global treaties evidenced an increased trend against interdependency. These shifts could be cast as a response to the unconstrained trend for radical societal laterality, globalization, and market democratization (from Bitcoin to the Gig Economy), which have been reducing state and authority interventions. The resulting chaos had to be met with strong authoritarian interventions, rigid boundaries and borders, and reflected in the choices of political leaders. This generation is experiencing an unprecedented political polarization, which is dramatically exacerbated by social media. Digital platforms make it possible to bypass any formal authority (political, scientific, media, news, etc.). The underprivileged can gain a voice, collective power can be organized, and social norms can be shaken, from #metoo to Black Lives Matter. These platforms function as a bypass that has also sprouted “political correctness” and “cancel culture” as ultimate democratic interventions. They host an interplay with organized misinformation, “fake news”, exacerbated conspiracy theories, and mistrust in science and journalism, where there can no longer be trusted, even in what is “real.” This lateral “radical democratization” can often become fertile ground for manipulation by holders of formal authority. Being disheartened and concerned as a citizen, I wondered whether these destructive phenomena are an unavoidable force of laterality on a large scale. This extreme polarization between an almost anarchistic lateral self-regulation and the authoritarian hierarchical regime reminded me of how organizations struggle between extreme views of authority and laterality.

4. Autobiographical references

In Appendix I, I include an extensive autobiographical narrative, that shows how challenging the lateral axis has been for me. Being the youngest of three in the nuclear family and socially challenged at school created an unshakable inner image of not being good enough and not having the same rights as others. Later in life, my identity as a gay man with learning disabilities and a struggle to keep up in educational settings developed a sense of importance that had to be managed through an exaggerated drive to excel. All these factors developed a tormenting inner conflict on the lateral axis between needing to belong and seeking to surpass through competition, often expressed laterally towards people through both intimate tenderness and (hidden) envious aggression. The systems-psychodynamic (S-P) training in group relations conferences (GRC) brought out a shocking side of that aggression, which I could not understand or place. These experiences were not only the driving fuel of my research curiosity, but were put under the microscope as a crucial component of my research. I was grateful to have been able to address them through this research journey, in combination with my psychotherapy. The criticality, however, of not projecting these issues on my data and analysis was significant and I discuss key moments relating to that criticality in the last chapter on epistemology.

5. Conclusions

These observations showcase not only my own curiosity and motivation for this topic, but how emergent and necessary it is for leaders, practitioners, and the studies that support them. In the next chapter, I demonstrate the increased interest in the S-P discipline, where this study is located. I also consider a similar trend in psychoanalysis, with the increased importance of siblings studies.

CHAPTER 2. STUDYING ORGANIZATIONS THROUGH THE LATERAL AXIS: A Review of Systems-Psychodynamic Studies of Lateral Relations

In Chapter 2, I justify my choice of a S-P study of lateral relations (LRs) amongst other organizational disciplines. I locate the topic within S-P's preexisting schools of thought and examine the evolution of organizational paradigms, authority, dynamics at work, and individual inner experience. Then I review focused thinking and dedicated studies on RLs. Finally, I review the psychoanalytic thinking that has been linked with LRs and briefly review the parallel increased focus on siblings in psychoanalytic studies.

1. The choice of a systems-psychodynamic exploration

1.1 Locating systems-psychodynamic exploration in relation to other disciplines

Lateral relations came to the forefront of organizational disciplines as new organizational models responded to the increased complexity of the postindustrial era. The seminal study by Galbraith (1973) of organizational models is considered the first

reference to LRs as a critical organizational attribute responding to the limitations of the vertical hierarchical system. Initially, LRs took the form of self-regulating units of task forces or cross-functional focused projects and later became necessary for intraorganizational coordination of arrangements through LRs amongst managers.

Evolved organization design models departing from simpler hierarchies and exacerbating matrix structures formalized the lateral axis across units and leaders (Vantrappen, 2016; Galbraith, 2008; Davis and Lawrence, 1978) and further lateral processes became a structured, integrated part of critical organizational processes (Galbraith, Downey and Kates, 2002).

Formalizing the functioning outside formal hierarchical controls increases the need for governance and enterprise alignment. The tensions of lateral enterprise priorities and vertical accountability are explored in the literature of management control systems through approaches in designing effective models of accountability and reward systems (Govindarajan and Gupta, 1985; Berry, 1994; Chenhall, 2008; Chenhall, Kallunki and Silvola, 2011). The complexity of human processes operating horizontally and outside clear vertical accountabilities also raised the question of cost-benefit of such models (Joyce, McGee and Slocum Jr, 1997). Lateral collaboration decreases speed and increases complexity due to the human factor, despite the required synergies across organizational boundaries. The role of senior leadership orchestrating the human conditions for effective lateral collaboration was also articulated (Van der Meer-Kooistra and Scapens, 2008). Others pointed to the importance of relationship building (Windahl and Lakemond, 2006) that inform how competing priorities are surfaced and explored. In bridging organizational design to

actual performance, the importance of hiring leaders with the right profile was emphasized (Kesler and Kates, 2015). This profile incorporated the ability to operate across boundaries and to resolve organizational dilemmas.

The popularized concept of “psychological safety” (Edmondson et al., 2016; Edmondson, 1999) was used to address the phenomenon where collaborative contexts were often experienced as unsafe and, therefore, ineffective. This concept is primarily focused on the anxieties of role-holders over shaking the status quo or appearing incompetent. In the context of horizontal cross-boundary collaboration, scholars have argued the need for a compelling vision, implementing agile practices, and cultivating psychological safety (Edmondson, Harvey and Chesbrough, 2017).

These approaches provide essential understanding that is critical in informing principles when designing structures and governance models that aid the horizontal functioning of organizations. These principles create the aspirational functioning of an organizational design and culture. The gap, however, between the aspired to and what actually emerges through human behavior cannot be fully understood or explained by a simplification of individuals not adhering to principles. It is typical that the phenomena of nonfunctioning despite thoughtful designs is to be traced back to a lack of leadership capabilities and traits of individual leaders. But way too often, highly competent leaders fail to display their own intended behaviors, even in explicitly and commonly acknowledged needs to collaborate laterally. This gap is what S-P as an organizational discipline aims to address through an in-depth understanding of less rational human behavior and organizational functioning (Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2020; Neumann, 2010).

1.2 Why choose a systems-psychodynamic oriented study and what it entails

My study's primary focus is on *how* senior leaders *experience* LRs within collaboration. The gap between intention and behavior can be better understood if observable actions and behaviors are to be studied from the role-holders' subjective experience. What are inner motives, difficulties, states of mind in such situations? How does it feel? Much of these behaviors are less conscious but drive actual behavior, decisions, and impact on effective collaboration. Systems-psychodynamic is an interdisciplinary field integrating psychoanalysis, group relations studies, and open-systems thinking (Fraher (2004), and studying the interplay between the whole organization as a system and its subparts. It attempts a multidimensional exploration, including its environment, purpose, context, structures, practices, and the inner human experiences, inner images, emotions, motives, anxieties as they manifest in behaviors, processes, and actions (Vince and French, 1999; Neumann, 1999; Miller et al., 2001).

This two-way interplay, referred to as "psychodynamic," has its roots in psychoanalytic thinking concerning unconscious intra- and interpersonal processes introduced through psychoanalysis and, more specifically, object relations (Freud, 1936; Freud, 1938; Klein, 1946; Klein, 1957; Klein, 1959; Winnicott, 1960; Bion, 1967). These processes are contextualized by the organization's systemic nature, including its primary task, external environment, boundaries, internal structure, and roles (Miller and Rice, 1967; Miller and Rice, 1990; Obholzer, 2019; Roberts, 2019; Hirschhorn and Gilmore, 1992; Hirschhorn, 1990; Hirschhorn, 1999; Hirschhorn, 1998). These elements are manifested in interpersonal behavior and intra- and intergroup dynamics (Bion, 1961; Stokes, 2019; Turquet, 1974; Lawrence, Bain and Gould, 1996), which

are influenced by but also engrained in the procedural, technical, and structural aspects of an organization (Jaques, 1955; Menzies, 1960; Krantz, 2010; Armstrong and Rustin, 2018; Hirschhorn, 1988). Petriglieri and Petriglieri (2020) have borrowed the terms “inside-out” and “outside-in” from Gould (2001). They have used these terms as two equally important streams of inquiry studying this interplay. The terms offer a very useful retrospective taxonomy for S-P’s subdisciplines. They have argued that S-P’s unique value lies in using both flows as it uncovers deeper and more essential root causes of what could otherwise be seen as dysfunctional, organizational features and irrational behavior by leaders. Those assumed causes are obstacles in addressing what really matters.

1.3 The surfacing of lateral relations in systems-psychodynamics

Lateral relations as a term was put on the S-P map as an explicit area for further study by Armstrong’s paper 'The Dynamics of Lateral Relations in Changing Organizational Worlds' (2007). It fits, however, within the shifting dynamics of authority since the 1990s due to the postindustrial organizational paradigms. These paradigms have shifted the nature of formal authority, hierarchy, and boundaries, accentuating distributed leadership and the networked form of organizations (Hirschhorn, 1988; Krantz, 1990; Hirschhorn, 1990; Hirschhorn and Gilmore, 1992; Hirschhorn, 1998; Miller, 1999; Cooper and Dartington, 2004; Western, 2007; Boxer and Eigen, 2008). Those studies have explored new challenges and human anxieties. A review of the literature also evidences a sense of new leadership-followership dynamics. Studied through the prism of vertical accountability, the literature has addressed how a leader functions with regard to hierarchical followers in articulating vision, offering emotional support, and orchestrating multidisciplinary work.

The LR term highlights the lateral dimension of a leader's role, shifting the focus to other leaders, peers, or multiple levels. Previously, peer dynamics had mainly been the focus of study of competition, envy, succession, and politics (Stein, 1997; Stein, 2000; Visholm, 2005; Long, 2008; Perini, 2014). These studies have drawn from psychoanalytic theories through the Oedipal and sibling prisms. Inspired by a parallel surfacing in psychoanalysis of the importance of siblings in psychic development (Mitchell, 2003; Coles, 2003), the study of siblings has been brought to bear on organizations. The emphasis has been on sibling transference to work relations and on the interplay of the vertical and lateral axes in organizations, which are comparable to those of the nuclear family. Inter- and intragroup dynamics informed by systems and group relations thinking have offered relevant explorations on the topic of collaboration across boundaries (Stokes, 1994; Stokes, 2019; Roberts, 2019; Vince and French, 1999; Roberts, 1999).

The need for a thorough conceptual definition of changing terms relating to this topic has surfaced. Aside from surfacing differences in schools of thought, which is to be expected, the definitional nuances most importantly reflect the ontological challenge of LRs. This underlying epistemological complexity is considered throughout this study.

2. Systems-psychodynamics definitions of lateral relations and their attributes

2.1 Lateral relations definitions

Armstrong initially defined (2007) lateral as “a relation between collaborating persons, role-holders, groups or teams that is unmediated by any actual or assumed hierarchical authority.” His characterization of this definition as “at best provisional” reflects his own perplexity. Later scholars inspired by this topic (Huffington and Miller, 2008; Baker, 2014; van Beekum, 2014; de Gooijer, 2018; van Beekum, 2016) have cited this definition for conceptual framing and it remained unchanged. Throughout this study, I consider how the term, at times, creates confusion, which is inherent to the nature and challenges of relations. The definition’s ambiguity lies in two areas:

A. The absence of hierarchical authority. Armstrong questions whether any organizational relation can exist without vertical authority, even in the mind. This raises a definitional consideration about the degree of the authority’s form, presence, and potency, which defines a relation as lateral. The immediate requirement raised is a definitional exploration of *authority* and *authorization*. Even when authority has an explicit form, how can mediation and authorization be located if they involve subjective inter- and intrapersonal processes? The direct ontological challenge here, which is also intrinsic to LRs, is whether the specific relation to be studied is a lateral one. Epistemologically, therefore, the question is raised of how to study such a fluid, subjective definition.

B. The relation’s primary task and boundary. Armstrong determines *collaboration* as the relation’s primary task, formulating its boundary and definitionally distinguishing it from other peer relations with laterality. The ontological implication

is that, in practice, the collaborative need may remain latent and hidden as it is also not initiated through formally authorized roles. Therefore, LRs can be missed, avoided, or disputed amongst role-holders and those studying them.

To review the relevant research implications of such definitions, I consider a brief S-P exploration of these attributes.

2.2 Authority and lateral relations

Obholzer's definition of organizational authority (2019) as "the right to make ultimate decisions, that are binding to others" is probably the one most used or cited within S-P practice. Its popularity might be linked also to its simplicity and its use as a heuristic concept. Aside from the hierarchical top-down, it included the bottom-up flow as an interpersonal process and its intrapsychic within processes and it departed from a conventional definition. Nevertheless, it definitionally retained a solid, vertical model reflecting hierarchy, which excludes the processes of lateral authorization amongst senior leaders. The emphasis on *decision rights* does not explicitly capture the *accountability* that is vested in the authority holder, which may or may not correspond to levels of decision rights. Beck and Visholm (2014) have critiqued this aspect of Obholzer's definition and have suggested a split of authority between a "right" (coming from above) and a corresponding "duty" (from below), as an interaction between institutional authority and authority assigned by followers (Degeling and Carr, 2004). Again, I find the vertical flow indicative of a perhaps ingrained view, as "duty" can be institutional or linked to enterprise citizenship (Miller, 1999; Krantz, 2011), which may not necessarily depict verticality.

The need to redefine authorization as a multidimensional process also reflects a leader's and practitioner's predominantly vertical mindset. In literature, it depicts the sudden jump from the hierarchical to the networked paradigm, having skipped the lateral axis, which persistently remains hidden.

2.3 Power and lateral relations

Power and *informal or personal authority* are terms often used interchangeably to refer to the personal attributes comprising the "ability to act upon others or organizational structures" (Obholzer, (2019). These terms belong to the individual and are distinguished from formal authority vested in a role. Obholzer outlines power sources, as internal (e.g., skills) and external (e.g., money). Beck and Visholm (2014) use the policeman's gun as an analogy to illustrate that power can be derived from role authorization and should be used as such. Formal authority and personal power are operating in a continuum (Foresti, 2016) and the "right ratio" is essential for effective leadership (Obholzer, 2019). While power has definitionally been derived in vertical relations (VR) it is central in LRs as it immediately raises the issue of power-authority disparity and how exercise of personal power without formal authority impacts on the emotional experience of role-holders.

2.4 The primary task of lateral relations

Lateral relations are formed amongst role-holders because a targeted outcome can only be reached through collaboration (Armstrong, 2007; Baker, 2014). This acts as the LR's "primary task" (Miller and Rice, 1967) and is meant as a heuristic concept (Roberts, 2019). It is distinct from normative, existential, and phenomenological tasks (Lawrence, 1977), which are imposed as ontological challenges. Based on the primary

task's definition, the quality of LR dynamics can be examined and task and antitask behavior can be distinguished (Bion, 1961; Turquet, 1974; Roberts, 2019). In simple terms, it is useful to ask whether conflicts within or avoidance of LRs are due to differences of opinion over what serves the organization's primary task or whether they are phenomena resulting from a role-holder's defenses against unwanted parts. The LR primary task is typically surfaced outside the formal hierarchy.¹

2.5 The boundaries of lateral relations

Armstrong has proposed that the task is what constitutes the relation's boundary, which also classifies the nature of LR's boundary from an open system's theory (Miller and Rice, 1967) within the more invisible and permeable (Alderfer, Alderfer and Cooper, 1980; Diamond, Allcorn and Stein, 2004). Within this paradigm, LR role-holders are understood to be operating within "sentient systems" composed of human beings who seek to fulfill their emotional need for belonging (Miller and Rice, 1990; Rice, 1969). In Section 3, I consider S-P studies on how new organizational boundaries shift the nature and concept of boundaries, impacting directly on the experience of LR role-holders. The boundaries of lateral relations are permeable, invisible, and highly disputable for role-holders as a direct result of the nature of the tasks.

2.6 Roles in lateral relations

Systems-psychodynamic thinking distinguishes *role* from the formal job on the org-chart by viewing it as a dynamic field of intrapersonal negotiations by its role-holder.

¹ Such examples amongst executives were presented in the previous chapter.

The role-holder has to balance tensions that arise between the personal idiosyncrasy, task demands, organizational constraints, and contextual conditions (Reed, 2001; Lawrence, 2018; Reed and Bazalgette, 2018; Long, 2018b). It is important to consider this heuristic concept and organizational role analysis (Lawrence, 2018; Biran, 2018; Reed and Bazalgette, 2018), its derivative executive coaching tool for role-holders. Formal role authorization is insufficient to guide role-holders towards the right leadership choices. Due to the absence of hierarchical mediation, but also in coexistence with hierarchy, it is useful to consider Long's classification (2008) of roles based on three interactive systems of organization. These systems are the task-system: organizing task division through workflows and hierarchies; the political-system: distributing informal power beyond the hierarchical flow; and the emotional-system: addressing inter- and intrapersonal, conscious, and unconscious needs. Lateral relations are surfaced when the task-system cannot prescribe task-roles. Leaders have to consider lateral relations and the notion of not being authorized formally indicates that informal power is being used, which is highly relational. Through Long's classification we can imagine that the emotional experience and dynamics of negotiating roles in the political and emotional systems can entail challenging work and is an additional reason that makes LRs ontologically and epistemologically challenging.

2.7 Leadership-followership and lateral relations

Obholzer's "leadership-followership" (2019) encapsulates the lateral authorization that is missing from authority dimensions. This term sees leadership as an emergent process, which is not necessarily attached to an authority role, and even when it is not formally authorized, it is considered on task. He further defines *followership* not as

passive dependency, but a participatory process of active engagement with leadership. The fluidity of leadership residing outside formal roles has been central in Hirschhorn's postmodern organization studies (1988; 1990; 1998). In the next section, I explore how such studies have reviewed the impacts of shifts in authority dynamics, which are relevant to the study of LR. Within this frame, leadership is not associated with authority holders. In one illustration, Hirschhorn referred to the complex dynamics of subordinates having to lead initiatives where their bosses were members. The leadership-followership definition captures such fluidities. Despite demonstrating the opposite, it may connote a hierarchical verticality in leadership and the dependencies that come with it. This verticality can be explained by formal authority being still important and visible in organizations, despite their having shifted away from the bureaucratic paradigm, so the connotation continues to exist.

2.8 Conclusions

The definitional issues and nuances explored in this section are imposing research challenges, since, ontologically, LRs are hard to define as objective, independent entities. This section has also outlined my epistemological orientation on the nature and attributes of LRs, but indicates how challenging studying causality has become.

3. Systems-psychodynamics studies of experiences within lateral relations

In this section, I first consider what knowledge derived from S-P studies of shifts in authority dynamics can indirectly inform understanding of LR role-holders' experiences. Then, I consider studies solely on LRs in organizations and expand to review studies on interorganizational LRs, and within leaderless groups, as additional

sources of understanding these phenomena. Finally, I consider scholars, using the GRC model to call for the need for further S-P studies on LRs.

3.1 Studies of the systemic and contextual conditions impacting on the experience of lateral relations

Systems-psychodynamic studies have focused on the shifts from the bureaucratic organization (Tirole, 1986; Jaques, 1976) as a predominant paradigm to the emergent postmodern organization (Parker, 1992). Trist (1981) has taken a sociotechnical approach to examine how organizational interdependence, technological automation, self-authorized work, and elevated workforce skills impact on work dynamics. This has been a response to the bureaucratic paradigm, post-WWII, of struggling to survive in a new reality (Trist, 1977). He argued that what was manifested as interpersonal conflict amongst leaders was actually an expression of deep existential anxieties resulting from the unprecedented interorganizational connectivity.

Hirschhorn has extensively studied the postmodern organization in its new environment (1988; 1998; 1990; 1992; 1999; 2002) with existential anxieties derived from primary task vagueness of “what business are we in?”. He coined the “primary risk,” indicating how wrong choices may directly imply annihilation. The multiple and complex task-system boundaries need to be managed, crossed, negotiated, mainly without hierarchical authority (Miller, 1993). This situation generates complexity that leads to a relentless drive for internal boundary abolition, which Hirschhorn and Gilmore (1992) refer to as the “boundaryless organization.” Necessary boundaries that are required for any organization can be seen as taboo leading to boundary invisibility, abolishing the compass to navigate through what is potentially a minefield. The shifts

of formal authority in the postmodern organization, therefore, also impact on the anxiety of role-holders exposing them to what could previously be perceived as safe and predictable (Trist, 1977; Krantz, 1990; Hirschhorn and Gilmore, 1992; Hirschhorn, 1988; Hirschhorn, 1990; Hirschhorn, 1998). The term "vanishing organization," from Cooper and Dartington (2004), introduces the notion of the organization expanding outside its formal boundaries by distributing work across ecosystems. The workplace is experienced as a network with individuals losing a sense of it as an entity. The impact of vanishing boundaries no longer provides an identification process for individuals, enabling them to make their own choices without dependency (Boxer, 2014; Hirschhorn, 1998; Miller and Rice, 1990; Hirschhorn and Gilmore, 1992), which is a requirement due to shifted authority relations.

Krantz (2010) has raised a key question of what provides containment after the impacts of globalization and digitalization on the conditions of contemporary organizations. These impacts include the collapse of hierarchy, having to negotiate authority, and the shift from horizontal rather than vertical authorization. He has questioned whether we can grasp the nature of workplace anxieties if we sustain a hierarchical paradigm when we study organizations. He has further suggested that hierarchical structures might themselves be "social defenses" (Jaques, 1955; Menzies, 1960) against the anxieties of working in new paradigms where horizontal collaboration is paramount. Boxer (2014) has suggested that existential anxieties are central experiences for role-holders, as a result of turbulent external environments. The term "asymmetrical leadership" was coined to study the disparity between clients' demands and internal organizational structures (Boxer and Eigen, 2008).

Scholars have asked whether senior leaders are “using” the challenges of LR to distract themselves from the existential anxieties associated with the task at hand or if the magnitude of unauthorized choices is raising such existential anxieties. They have asked whether interpersonal tensions could be better mitigated through formal hierarchy.

3.2 Studies of new authority relations impacting experiences of lateral relations

The more relational focus on the experiences of LRs is concerned with the dynamics of authority and interpersonal experiences. Recognizing the shifts away from top-down hierarchical control, scholars have examined how the new nature of authority impacts on the containment of individuals’ anxieties expressed in the interpersonal domain.

Miller (1999) has explored how shifts from the life-long employment paradigm have moved the authority holder away from the role of protector. These shifts have exacerbated the drive for autonomy in individuals, which manifests itself as a basic assumption of “me-ness” (Lawrence, Bain and Gould, 1996) and getting out of touch with increased interdependencies. Such mentalities can obscure LRs in a world that celebrates autonomy.

Kahn and Kram (1994) have studied the different models of internalized authority in connection to hierarchy and linked them to attachment patterns (Bowlby, 1979). They have differentiated between dependent, counter-dependent, and interdependent authority. These patterns could manifest themselves to be used by role-holders to interpret the LR dynamics of reluctance, invasion, or negotiation.

Huffington, James and Armstrong (2004) have examined the emotional experience of *distributed leadership*, primarily through the lens of the shifted, hierarchical leadership role. They outline similar anxieties related to the uncertainty of tasks and vulnerability, with a further focus on their relational manifestations. They have argued that the transfer from vertical, hierarchical authority to laterally distributed authority is generating anxieties about one's abilities. Authority figures can no longer provide containment, even as figures of projection, idealization, or envy. The authors have asserted that leaders hold the same levels of accountability, with hierarchical responsibility over others, yet with less authority to control decisions, resulting in a heightened sense of vulnerability. The authors have highlighted the ambiguity in taking up roles and not always having clear boundaries between autonomous leadership, authorization from above, and lateral authorizations. Their central premise is that the collapsing vertical structure and its bureaucracy eliminates the holding effect that allows difficult feelings to be processed and sustains the capacity for thinking. They have argued that this change impairs the ability to exercise the required agency.

Western (1999) has distinguished between leadership functions of containment as paternal, which relate to the task, boundaries, and vertical aspects of authority, and maternal, which represent sentient and holding aspects. He has further argued for the possibilities of distributing strategy development beyond the board level (Western, 2008).

Emotional impacts of such shifts have encouraged scholars to suggest new necessities for leaders, such as their vulnerability; to be psychologically available; to articulate a compelling vision (Hirschhorn, 1990; Hirschhorn, 1998); to offer metaphors

and images that allow followers' autonomy in synthesizing vision (Huffington, James and Armstrong, 2004); and holding a systemic understanding and multidisciplinary collaboration skills (Krantz, 1990). The extensive study of leadership models by paradigm by Western (2007) has followed the shifts from a *controller* focusing on managing bureaucracy to a *therapist* leading through the wellbeing of the workforce, to the *Messiah* who leads through the control of a culture and workforce's identification with a vision, to *ecoleadership* as the orchestration of networked, distributed leadership in interdependency with the macroenvironment and concern for its sustainability.

3.3 Studies solely focused on the experience of lateral relations

In this section, I examine dedicated studies on LRs. Huffington, James and Armstrong (2004) have reviewed three cases that can inform understanding of LRs. The first two concern the vertical authority flow where the scholars observe two extreme responses by role-holders either resisting detaching from dependency or defending against absolute autonomy. Whilst the scholars do not yet connect these responses to the nature of LRs they might explain why LRs are not activated. The third case, however, focuses solely on the lateral axis of interorganizational collaboration. Leaders could not effectively explore differences out of fear of conflict. To avoid the fight or flight dynamic, they form a pseudo-pair, which waters down any hard choices and an explicit outcome. This proposed hypothesis could inform understanding of dynamics between leaders in intraorganizational LRs, but a robust understanding of the relations' dynamics is still missing.

A comprehensive action-research study by van Eeden and Cilliers (2009) has focused on the inability of managers to shift from “transactional” to “transformational” leadership, of role-holders operating outside prescriptions due to the lack of vertical authorization. The study has illuminated social defenses that have kept management’s focus on tactical issues, instead of critical decisions, and offers a complete cycle of defenses on the vertical axis. The study, however, does not connect the leaders’ transactional leadership to the nature of LRs. This leadership is seen as a sole response to a lack of authorization and an inability to let go of control on the side of the vertical leader. Avoidance of exercising lateral collaboration is seen as a direct consequence of insufficient authorization, ineffective and overly controlling hierarchical leadership. This is an oxymoron, however, if we consider the definitional nature of LRs. Lateral relations amongst leaders develop due to insufficient clarity or lack of authorization, which, from experiences in my consulting practice in large complex organizations, could never be clarified sufficiently through hierarchy. Hierarchy might be seen as substituting the lack of executive capability. Perhaps a common denominator of the findings of these studies, aside from the hidden nature of LRs, might also be attributed to the fact that they are based on cases of smaller organizations or subunits.

Challenging the role of vertical authorization is the other major contribution of Armstrong’s paper (2007), turning the hypothesis on its head by questioning whether social defenses are a result of vertically uncontained existential anxieties. He draws on sibling psychoanalytic thinking. He uses the experience of working through the paradox between “sameness” from roles operating within the relation’s boundary and context, and “differences” in vertical roles, motives, seniority, and competences. He

proposes that potential feelings of envy and rivalry are so unwanted that they should be avoided rather than entered and explored.

These ideas have been further explored by other scholars who have increased the focus on LRs. Linking RLs and sibling psychology becomes almost inseparable. Huffington and Miller (2008), drawing on siblings' relations, have explicitly focused on the LR difficulties of envy and rivalry as innate to peer competitiveness, leadership succession, and fairness in any organizational paradigm. They have presented these difficulties as exacerbated. Despite linking their explorations to organizational paradigms, their study does not fully synthesize the interactions between the vertical and the lateral axes, but rather hypothesizes on missing relational capabilities. These missing capabilities are attributed to limited sibling experiences in the new generations and their cultivation of the basic assumption of Me-ness. They further draw from Armstrong's attention to Bion (1946) ideas of leadership as an emergent group's function in service of the task to suggest that the vertical paradigm has been institutionalized, obscuring the lateral. These scholars argue that leadership activities, such as strategic direction-setting, can be taken up laterally instead of driven through vertical leadership. Whilst these arguments have some merit, they also reveal that the enthusiasm of the lateral dimension imposes an existential questioning of the vertical axis's value. This antagonism between axes can be seen as natural when a new focus emerges and a paradigm shifts. In this paper's discourse, such antagonism is also revealed in linking vertical leadership with patriarchy and lateral leadership with the female gender. This might have been also triggered by the notions of paternal and maternal containment (Western, 1999). The hybrid experience of leaders in large organizations having to navigate between both axes might get lost. It may glorify the

lateral self-steering of a subunit, which may have limited complexity, and from that draw links to enterprise leadership which entails greater level of complexity. In my practice, I experience similar attempts when organizations apply the principles of a small unit's agile work to enterprise level without considering the complexities of enterprise alignment.

Baker (2014), with "Sibling relations at work," has summarized and expanded on the previous scholars and offered a case that illustrates the struggle of a leader with hierarchical authority to navigate between the vertical and lateral role. Her second case within professional associations amongst "equal parties" explores the potential of envy in situations where differences remain covert as a hidden hierarchy. She is drawing on ideas from Long (2008).

Van Beekum (2014) has argued that the epistemology of psychotherapy, group relations, and their applications to organizational consulting are ignoring the lateral axis. He has focused on the transference roots of the lateral axis from early sibling relations. He has attributed this transference to an epistemological stance that favors the Oedipal and overshadows the lateral but could also be a result of the authority holder (leader, therapist, GRC staff) retaining the vertical dynamic as a defense against the narcissistic injury of being "demoted" to a sibling. He has argued that this keeps the horizontal aspects of experience hidden and often misinterpreted through a vertical lens. This hypothesis seems very well suited for leadership roles in the paradigms I wish to study, where experience may also contain anxieties around the loss of power, status, increase of vulnerability, and annihilation for vertical authority holders who need to operate on the lateral axis. He has emphasized the importance

of not splitting the lateral from the vertical axis and, instead, studying their intersection and interactivity.

3.4 Studies on lateral relations in multiparty cross-organizational collaboration

Studies of interorganizational LRs can offer links to intraorganizational LRs. Prins (2010) has conducted systems-psychodynamics-informed research on a multiparty collaboration between foster care service organizations seeking synergies, motivated by their competition for funding and a need to respond to macrosystemic shifts. The research offers a rich account of phenomena illustrating defenses against collaborating, despite a compelling survival motive. The research report shows evidence of social defenses that are destructive to collaboration, for example, segmenting stakeholders and proposing collaborative pseudo-targets that water down and avoid difficult choices. The study illuminates powerful defense mechanisms to conceal actual and perceived differences. Those differences, real or perceived, were of identity, ways of working, ideological, but also of power amongst parties. The study illustrates the gaps between guiding collaboration steps, as set out by organizational management theory (Huxham and Vangen, 2004) and the actual human phenomena. It illustrates how competent role-holders, with a critical necessity and intention to collaborate, end up in unconscious self-sabotaging. The study, however, drew academic critique (Neumann, 2010) for not addressing this gap. Due to the detailed nature of the report, it was critiqued for its action-research choices. This debate is a result of the ontological and epistemological challenge that have already developed a red thread of how we understand and study the LR phenomena and how elusive they can be.

Walsh and Whittle (2009) have researched the concerns amongst interorganizational collaborating consultants. They also cite the same collaborative conditions by Vangen and Huxham (2003) and argue that it is often not clear what stands in the way of meeting them. They have conducted comparative analysis of literature and cross-referenced their own case analyses as data. As the study aimed to offer pragmatic aid to consultants in the midst of collaboration, they offer a taxonomy of collaboration and a practical model of conscious, subconscious, and unconscious concerns, which could be used for executives in LRs. However, they do not contain the existing hierarchical bonds between role-holders within an enterprise setting.

3.5 Studies of lateral relations through the group relations conference model

It is relevant for a S-P study of LRs that much of the discipline thinking on unconscious dynamics around authority originates from Bion's work on groups and the GRC tradition (Dicks, 1970; Fraher, 2004). Group relational conferences are experiential events with a methodology developed by the Center for Applied Social Research of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, based mainly on the work Bion. GRCs are aimed at understanding unconscious intra- and intergroup emergent processes by studying the group as a systemic entity, separate from its individual members' attributes (Rioch, 1970; Rice, 2001; Vince and French, 1999; Obholzer, 2019; Roberts, 2019). Below, I consider scholars who draw from the GRC tradition to think about LRs.

Sirota (2012) has argued, similarly to others (Visholm, 2005; van Beekum, 2014; Armstrong, 2007; Beck and Visholm, 2014; Huffington and Miller, 2008), that the GRC model follows an Oedipal, vertical authority model, which often obscures the working on and the exploration of the lateral axis. Sirota has reflected on her experiences of a

conference in Bilgerate, which was intended for peer GRC practitioners across institutions with differences of experience, seniority, and formal roles. She has argued that differences could not be seen and explored as they were unconsciously threatening the lateral but also the vertical, hierarchical model of succession. She draws parallels of this to patriarchal roots, in which authority is passed from father to oldest son, having established an unconscious mental model, which in contemporary organizations conflicts with increased laterality. She draws from Mitchell's work on sibling trauma (2003) to explain how laterality creates fear of annihilation, which might explain the pull towards vertical succession.

De Gooijer has drawn from psychoanalytic thinking on LRs and sibling dynamics to explore the lateral and vertical dynamics of the interinstitutional collaboration for a GRC. She argues that the typical co-sponsorship model implies a vertical authorization from the bigger to the smaller institutions and is preferred from a joint-venture type of lateral model. Her hypothesis is a defense against opening to the power dynamics of lateral competition. Based on her experiences within lateral co-directorship, the author highlights the importance of her lateral authority role, not just the vertical one, with the lateral being most challenging. She has experienced how power differences amongst institutions steers competitive dynamics, which remain on unconscious levels. The author argues that a thoughtful focus and space on the directors' lateral axis can provide systemic holding for the systemic lateral relations. Despite its interinstitutional context and the "simulation" type of a GRC temporary venture context, this paper is the closest I have found to an argument on how conscious balancing of the leader's vertical and lateral roles can impact directly on institutional containment.

Halton (2010) has outlined the dynamics of the institutional event of a specific GRC, referring to a “leadership vacuum” created when staff require members to self-manage and differentiate in formal roles, with its aspiring leaders having to use their personal authority and obtain authorization from peers as their followers through a democratic system. Halton has challenged the design, arguing that such a mechanism would not occur in real life organizations. However, part of my research curiosity stems from having observed the opposite in organizations. There are always substantial ungoverned intraorganizational spaces of strategic importance, in which executives navigate almost like entrepreneurs in an open market, until hierarchical authorization finally stabilizes.

Therefore, I believe that the GRC lens of authority might create ontological challenges. It directly draws parallels from a simplified mental model of authorization, which assumes that explicit authorization from above is required for lateral authorization to emerge and not be considered anti-task.

Due to similar limitations, variations of GRC design have been improvised (Halton, 2010; Beck and Visholm, 2014; Western and McDonnell, 2017) to explore different models and paradigms representing current reality issues. In my view, one of the significant problems is theorizing authority dynamics in contemporary organizations from what is observed in the GRC design. A major difference is the model’s explicit and artificial split of formal authority between staff and members’ roles. Scholars have emphasized that Bion’s notion of authority is also an emergent quality. Certainly, it is

exactly due to the GRC's design that the fluid and the subjective can be studied, offering a brilliantly constructed ontological space.

3.6 The leaderless functioning of groups

The final set of studies I considered involved the group functioning as a leaderless entity. Lateral self-regulation can be understood in the context of its systemic influences through the landmark study by Trist and Bamforth (1951) of the coal-mining industry. The authors' study examines self-management work units in mining, pre- and post- major mechanization and technological shifts. Self-functioning of the mining unit was due to the physical separation, when underground, from supervisors. The scholars outline an entire systemic—organizational and societal—equilibrium enabling the effective unit's self-regulation, including its own target-setting, people selection, supervisory and resource management. Aggression was directed outside the unit and between groups in the form of competing fiercely for resources, which was sanctioned to specific worker roles. The workers interacted in different community contexts through societal relations, which contained aggression to avoid becoming destructive. With the introduction of technology, the equilibrium was disrupted. Unprecedented complexity made long shifts possible. Activity was segmented and redistributed creating new group boundaries with roles of various competences. Social status differentiation was imposed, whilst being laterally highly interdependent and self-regulated. Management had to sort out coordination and complexity issues, which were split off from the workers' influence, increasing their dependency on authority. The authors have documented four ineffective responses to complexity: self-organization with the old system in mind, in the form of private arrangements, which however was systemically ineffective and created antisocial phenomena; reactive

individualism through victimization as a defense against complexity; mutual scapegoating, a form of fights between shifts, which sabotaged the functioning of all parties; and increased absenteeism as a form of flight defense. The most remarkable finding of this study was that the least effective in self-regulation was the group with the highest systemic interdependence, the “cutter team,” which could not exercise lateral authority amongst the different levels of skills and status of roles it contained. In contrast, the “ripping team” was highly self-regulated despite internal differences, but would often be regulated as a closed group.

This landmark study has been referenced for the principles of self-authorized work groups. Links between these phenomena can be discerned with contemporary agile work principles. These links are probably underused in relation to failures of enterprise coordination of agile work, especially in highly complex organizations. The challenges of an organizational unit or its management to hold in mind and manage systemic complexity, as outlined here, have only been exacerbated since this study. This seminal study shows that the combination of interdependency and differentiation between parties is highly challenging and requires a variety of systemic conditions for effective lateral self-regulation.

Several scholars (Armstrong, 2007; Western, 2008; Huffington and Miller, 2008) have drawn attention to Bion’s earlier writings on the unconscious functioning of the self-functioning group, originating from the “Leaderless group project” (Bion, 1946). This research emerged as an assessment to address a shortfall in quality in officers in WWII. The candidates found themselves in a selection process, requiring them to operate army tasks as a leaderless group, without direction. They were assessed on

“how any given man was reconciling his personal ambitions, hopes and fears with the requirements exacted by the group for its success,” which Bion argues created a close parallel to a real officer situation. In other words, a leader’s capacity was assessed not on their vertical authority skills, but on their lateral capability. Current assessments for corporate leadership roles or MBA assignments sustain such leaderless group practices. Nevertheless, the predominant performance and career indicators for leaders are focused on vertical accountability within or across boundaries. Bion also argued that the assessors, who were army officers, often could not resist intervening. He draws links to the therapist’s intervention in therapeutic groups, obscuring emergent group leadership:

“as long as the group survives, the psychiatrist must be prepared to take his own disappearance from the scene [...] Even quite timid people can perform prodigies of valor so that there should be plenty of people to take his place.”

Finally, Bion notes how emotionally distressful the artificial experiences in the selection board were, despite the tasks not being complicated, revealing the struggles on the lateral axis.

On a more theoretical level, Bion’s later writing on groups (1970) presents two opposing attributes: the *group* and the *mystic*. He refers to how the work group, as the institutionalized dimension of the group, can cope with operating without its leader or creator (in religious terms, God), having internalized the leader. The *mystic* is the form of charismatic leadership waiting to take form through an individual or an idea. Bion suggests that the group is in continuous search of the new charismatic leadership, which can replace the old mystic (in religious terms, the Messiah) and the *work group* and *mystic* coexist and interact in various ways. The institutionalized structure of the

work group is required to operate as leaderless, but it reaches its limits if the *mystic* is not emergent. The links that can be drawn is that lateral functioning wants and gives rise to new emergent leadership that introduces verticality and the two are in paradoxical tension. According to Bion, they interact in three forms: (a) the commensal, a harmonious coexistence without however producing something; (b) the symbiotic, which is a creative interaction between the two but comes with tensions; and (c) the parasitic that damages both sides, group functioning, and the genius (or mystic).

The dark side of the leaderless group can be understood by Stein's psychoanalytic exploration of the gang (2021), inspired by *The Lord of the Flies* (Golding, 1958). This rich analysis offers compelling arguments about the gang's functioning and the dangers of the group's emergent leadership. He looks through a predominantly vertical analytical axis, linking to the traumatic impacts of the loss of parental holding and the trauma of survival in the leaderless group's inability to contain existential anxiety and loss, preferring to perversely detach from reality, through denial and self-destruction. The significance of this study lies in the understanding of perverse phenomena of lateral functioning, both in organizations and society and their connection to the vertical axis. If the lateral group cannot internalize containment but experiences absence of authority as a traumatic abandonment, this gives rise to perverse states of functioning, which do not allow leadership to emerge. It is common even for the most senior executives to feel abandoned and even betrayed by hierarchy, even if it is inherent to the job. The other important direct link is to the risks for transformational leadership when working on aspects of organizational survival and exposing leaders to unbearable reality, that might perversely be denied. Golding's book's plot has been

used as an analogy (Baker, 2014) to portray the most primal fear of what might occur if one enters the lateral group. These psychoanalytic ideas on the links between the leaderless group's capacity for containment and emergent leadership merit further exploration.

Finally, Western (2014) has studied the philosophical principles of anarchist social movements, suggesting that the needed leadership for their sufficient organizational functioning might also be denied due to philosophical opposition against formal authority and hierarchy. He proposes the term "autonomist leadership," which recognizes the philosophical ideals of anarchist movements and allows for the emergence and functioning of leadership. This study triggers a question of effective forms of lateral leadership that is not contested or distorted in its functioning.

3.7 Conclusions

In this section, I considered the body of literature exploring the experiences of LR role-holders and associated phenomena. Studies on new organizational paradigms with shifting authority relations have pointed out the increase of laterality and have suggested existential anxieties resulting from the turbulent systemic context, which are exacerbated by the absence of containment that the hierarchical system provides. The focal LR studies have argued for the increasing need for further research. They have suggested that the challenges of dealing with differences amongst role-holders have their origins in envy and rivalry and need to be defended against. Leaderless group studies have suggested that effective lateral functioning requires systemic conditions that enable sufficient processing of aggression. Enterprise alignment and high interdependency might overwhelm role-holders emotionally with complexity.

Those who draw attention on the lateral axis often also surface an epistemological debate that appears to antagonize the lateral and the vertical, which might be indicative of its interplay struggles.

4. Relevant psychoanalytic thinking informing the understanding of lateral relations

Various scholars discussed in the previous section have drawn from the psychoanalytic studies of siblings. One stream of thought has focused on the influence of individual early-life sibling relations in experiencing LRs in organizations (Huffington and Miller, 2008; Baker, 2014; van Beekum, 2014; van Beekum, 2016; Sirota, 2012). Familiar sibling relations models are unconsciously and often “involuntarily” activated in present LRs through the process of “transference” (Freud, 1912a; Klein, 1952; Joseph, 1985). Even though such processes were originally observed in vertical therapeutic and authority relations, they were later studied in multidimensional relations. The work by Shapiro and Carr (1991) is an illustration of family roles as the “first organization” developing unconscious models of taking up roles in work relations in organizations. The significance of transference for my research is that it can reveal internalized images that reflect how organizational LRs are unconsciously experienced or influenced.

Another stream of thought draws from the more general psychoanalytic understanding of vertical and lateral axes and how it is unconsciously experienced in organizations (Armstrong, 2007; Visholm, 2021; Visholm, 2005; Beck and Visholm, 2014; Mitchell, 2014; Mitchell, 2003). Oedipal psychology is drawn on to explore leadership

succession, and sibling rivalry which is used to understand unconscious aspects of competition. As LRs contain competition, a core focus has been on envy and rivalry, which tracks back to sibling dynamics (Long, 2008). I explore the psychoanalytic studies of envy in organizations in the following section.

4.1 Envy and rivalry

Stein (1997) has made the case for the necessity of studying envy in leadership as a commonly experienced emotion and its connection to experiences of in-fight rivalry amongst leaders. Based on Klein's (1957) original ideas of envy, Stein explains that it "involves the relation to another, who is perceived as more fortunate or better off than oneself and feelings of ill-will or 'mortification' towards that other." The felt hatred and the destructive actions associated with envy are to a large extent unconscious. Through infant observations, Klein has suggested that unconscious envy is most powerfully experienced towards the one we are dependent on, as the baby envies the mother's ability to take care of it. Stein (2000) uses the biblical story of Cain and Abel to suggest other links. Cain kills his brother, who he might be most dependent on, illustrating how the envious attack results in damaging both the attacked and the self. I find this amplification of the link between envy and dependency seen from the lateral axis to be very important, as typically lateral rivalry is interpreted through the eyes of vertical succession.

In the "Othello Conundrum" (2005), Stein expands the notion of dependency to a broader state of vulnerability, suggesting that it gives rise to envy. His original analysis of the Othello story is seeing Iago as the impersonation of Othello's own internalized envious feelings that are a result of his vulnerability. Through this analogy,

Stein argues that destructive envy is an “inner daemon” of a leader’s inner world. He further connects the state of vulnerability to the absence of authority from above and from below, resulting in exacerbated dependency as a lack of a supporting system. As with Cain and Abel, Othello and Iago can be seen as a lateral interdependent unit. Both essays are important in shifting envy and rivalry towards a lateral view, which makes vulnerability and dependency central.

The link to organizational LRs is the heightened state of vulnerability of leaders due to their inability to exercise formal authority over others, on whom they are dependent or interdependent (actually or assumed). In this context, Obholzer (2019) has noted that interdependency, as a result of the limitations of own role, can give rise to envy. A similar link was also made by Hirschhorn (1998), who has argued that, in the postmodern organization, the dynamics of negotiation of roles and authority, based on task and not on structure, inevitably give rise to states of vulnerability that activate distractive envy. Because of the paradoxical link between dependency and the desire to destroy the other, Long (2008) has argued that envy is the most clearly perverse emotion, as in expression it destroys self and other. The envious want power over the other, to take from the other all that is desired and to destroy it, which ultimately is an attack on goodness.

Perini (2014) has linked envy to workplace competitiveness. He has argued that, in collective settings, envy is rooted in social comparison, which often entails feelings of injustice and fictitious superiority. This can be linked to Long’s argument (2008) that envy is most powerfully generated amongst the closest and is fueled by the competitive situations that transform it into rivalry. He claims that overly competitive

organizational cultures exacerbate such types of envy and argues that organizational processes which entail internal competition, such as resource allocation and downsizing, arouse envy.

4.2 Sibling relations from a vertical view

Through Freud's Oedipal complex, envy is an effort to dethrone and replace the authority-holder. Kleinian envy is a result of dependency and directed at the capacity to be taken care of. Freud's ideas of lateral functioning are formulated through or as a response to the vertical axis (Hinshelwood and Winship, 2006). In "Totem and Taboo," Freud (1912b) sees the sibling bond as an effort to kill the father. Brotherhood internalizes the father through cannibalistic rituals and the despised patriarchal authority is replaced by a democratic functioning, which entails a shared parricidal guilt. In contrast, in "Group psychology and the analysis of the ego" (Freud, 1921), the bond between members of a group is based on devotion to a leader rather than hatred or guilt towards him or her. In "Civilization and its discontents" (Freud, 1929), the social bond is aimed at controlling and repressing innate destructiveness. Psychoanalytic scholars of siblings have argued the need to explore the lateral axis outside the sole influence of the vertical.

4.3 Sibling rivalry through the lateral axis

Mitchell's lateral view on siblings (2003) has provided a new dimension to envy and rivalry. She suggests that, in the Oedipus complex (Freud, 1923), murder is redirected to the father and sexuality towards the mother, whilst, in siblings, both are directed to the same person. The prohibition is much stronger towards the parents than the siblings, making the sibling impulses more real and hence more dangerous. Conflict

on the lateral axis directly links to annihilation, whereas on the vertical axis, the Oedipal prohibition of crossing the generational boundary contains aggression (Wellendorf, 2018). Mitchell also distinguishes lateral envy amongst siblings as more dangerous than the Kleinian towards the mother. In the latter, there is a possibility for repair of destructive feelings through the gratitude of having received enough from the mother. Thus, for the sibling, it does not matter whether I exist.

Instead of interpreting psychic development as a fight for succession, as seen through a pure extension of the Oedipal complex, Mitchell counterbalances the Oedipal significance with “sibling trauma”, which she argues is at the core of sibling rivalry. When the sibling baby is born, it “dethrones” the older from being “His Majesty, the Baby”, an abrupt attack on his narcissism by reality. Therefore, it is also experienced as a fear for annihilation, and hence rivalry is the immediate response in the sense of “kill or be killed” (Mitchell, 2003; 2014; 2018).

4.4 From rivalry to coexistence

The developmental process that comes from working through the trauma centers around mourning for the loss of the grandiose self and organizing narcissism into self-esteem, through individuation and coexistence with the other. For this to happen, the vertical axis is essential. Mitchell (2003) introduces the “law of the mother,” through which siblings are prohibited from acting on their murderous and incestuous drives, contrasting with Freud’s view (1921) that sibling rivalry is prohibited through a paternal law of equality. She suggests the newcomer sibling creates the possibility of recognizing it as “not-me” and hatred allows to separate from. The newcomer creates seriality amongst siblings, which she institutionalizes by differentiating between them.

With her law, she restrains hate from becoming murder. In combination with paternal law, which imposes equality, maternal law creates an equilibrium in which seriality can be internalized. Seriality is also key in differentiation. Studies on twins have shown the difficulties of identification (Bisagni, 2018), and similar studies have considered siblings of similar age (Kahn, 2014). Mitchell claims that this is the basis for the ability to hold both differentiation and equality amongst peers in mind, vis-à-vis authority (teachers, boss) in adult life. Unresolved aspects of sibling trauma endure throughout life and can be activated through transference when experiencing loss of power on the lateral axis. According to Mitchell (2014), for the processing of sibling trauma, the mother pushes the toddler to the social arena, in which he or she develops multiple horizontal relationships that allow him or her to separate from the duality of the family dynamic.

Within these notions of differentiation through seriality, Visholm (2005); (2021) has coined the “promoted sibling” as one authorized by the parents as the substitute parent towards the other siblings. This creates a hierarchy within the family’s laterality, with the unpromoted siblings feeling intense hate, despite the promoted not having crossed the generational boundary (no access to the bedroom). He uses these notions to explore organizational dynamics of differentiation amongst peers through authority.

Within these notions of managing sameness and difference, rivalry and coexistence, a sibling bond is created, which is self-regulating, self-managed, and wherein siblings also become care-takers of each other (Bank and Kahn, 1997; Kahn, 2014; Enekvist, 2018).

Coexistence and companionship was already central in Anna Freud's studies (Pretorius, 2018). Going back to earlier studies, "An experiment in group upbringing" by Anna Freud and Sophie Dann (1951), also known as the "Terezin children", provides very interesting findings on lateral functioning. It concerns six German-Jewish orphan siblings who were brought up in institutions after their parents were killed in gas chambers. The study was conducted during therapeutic care by Freud and Dann at the Hampstead Clinic. The siblings operated as a tight unit refusing treatment or activities in which one of them might not participate. Within the sibling unit, however, there was competition and aggression. Aggression, however, was predominantly directed towards the adults who could only join them for as long as they would adhere to the siblings' rules. The study suggests that siblings have the capacity to form a survival bond on their own, in which necessary envy and lateral individuation can still occur but, when challenged externally, the bond functions as one. These nuances of the necessity for envious rivalry and the possibility of their self-regulation within the sibling bond can provide more understanding when exploring the dark side of the lateral group. Most importantly, they raise the question of what constitutes the group's necessary lateral boundary, such as the sibling bond that restrains aggression from becoming perverse, parasitic, or destructive.

4.5 The role of authority in managing rivalry and envy

The role of authority as response to lateral envy has been explored in organizational settings arguing that a typical ineffective response from management to rivalry is to impose pseudo-equality (Long, 2008; Perini, 2014; Obholzer, 2019) as a democratic system, which might disarm the envious attacks but may not transform envy into a generative function. Hirschhorn (1988) has further noted the importance of the vertical

role as a catalyst in processing such dynamics. In a case vignette, he argues that the psychological presence and openness of the hierarchical leader enables the peers to effectively process their envious feelings and rivalry. He further makes the case for leaders being mindful of and working through their own feelings of vulnerability. Long (2008) has also suggested that envy is usually effectively managed through the presence of a “surrogate paternal authority,” which becomes challenging in horizontal structures that miss such authority, requiring lateral parties to self-manage envy.

Long (2008) suggests that corporate structures that make use of the bureaucratic model of hierarchical accountability (Jaques, 1976) create a master and slave dependency model of authorized power. This notion is based on the fact that anyone who is joining a hierarchical organization is willingly accepting for part of their personal authority to be delegated to their superior (Obholzer, 2019). She uses the “sado-masochistic relation” notion as a form of sustained dependency accepted by both ends of the vertical axis, which remains generative. It is the agreed collective task that keeps it from becoming perverse. This notion explains how the voluntary acceptance of distribution of formal authority within a hierarchical system keeps destructive forces at bay. She agrees that informal power is distributed through other systems but argues that the hierarchical is still very basic in sustaining its master and slave dynamic. As LRs lack hierarchy but still may distribute power amongst role-holders, the submission-domination might be now psychically more problematic than within hierarchy.

Through an example of a lateral professional association, she suggests that by navigating between the hierarchical system (their work organizations) with parent-

child-like authority structures, and the horizontal system (the association) with sibling-like authority structures, members can experience a combination that operates as an “envy management” machine. Envy is created in one and repressed in another, keeping the destructive parts of envy at bay. This theory of the two systems of organizations for senior leaders in LRs could be extended with one being the vertical system of formal, hierarchical roles and the other the collaborative system of informal, lateral interactions.

Halton (2004) has connected envy to the disruptive nature of leadership’s creativity. This creative leadership is an essential part of the initiation and sustaining of LRs. He uses an illustration that could be seen as representative of frequent “leadership-followership” dynamics in GRCs, when a member is attempting to take leadership and, instead of followership, is attacked through envy. This link is relevant to LR dynamics, since, as mentioned, they entail unauthorized leadership.

4.6 Debates about the psychoanalytic focus on the lateral axis

When reviewing psychoanalytic studies of siblings, one immediately encounters the discipline’s effort to claim space and establish itself in a predominantly vertical psychoanalytic focus, originating from the Oedipus complex. Coles (2003) and Mitchell (2003) have made the case that psychoanalysis has neglected the lateral axis and the importance of sibling relations to the development of the psyche. They have argued this was a result of the epistemology’s patriarchal stance and the power of the analyst’s authority over the analysand, which sustained a vertical view. Others (Kahn, 2014; van Beekum, 2014) have argued that the lateral has been overlooked as early

sibling experiences have been regressed due to the difficult feelings they contain, hence it became difficult to explore in the therapeutic relationship.

Sherwin-White (2014), however, has counter-argued this by offering a comprehensive overview of Freud's work on siblings, highlighting how they have been at the core of his work. She argued that this was due to work being unpublished due to confidentiality laws in Austria, but further due to authors cherry-picking his limited writings on siblings, which, with republications, became an institutionalized view on Freud's work on siblings. The same book offers extensive study of Klein's thoughts on siblings (Sherwin-White, 2018) and of Anna Freud (Pretorius, 2018). Beyond this debate, the emphasis on laterality and sibling studies in psychoanalysis only increases with a new focus expanding in group analysis (Parker, 2019) and a new book (Ashuach and Berman, 2022) that was just published at the time of this thesis submission and, therefore, could not be considered.

4.7 Conclusions

This exploration of psychoanalytic thinking was limited to what S-P studies have drawn from psychoanalysis and surfaced a different lens for understanding envy, rivalry, anxieties, the development of the lateral unit, and its interactivity with the vertical axis. It also highlighted the curious debate between vertical and lateral studies on whether the focus is new or has always existed and remained hidden.

5. Concluding discussion and research implications

Studying the evolution of S-P studies linked to organizational paradigms and their shifting authority dynamics has surfaced an abiding importance of LRs in organizations. This focus, however, has been used to frame from the perspective of the leaders' vertical role as opposed to their lateral role. I have argued that this shift of dimensional focus on a leader's role merits a research focus. There are limited studies through this prism, which already shows that it can yield substantially new understanding.

Much of the newer LR thinking has linked to sibling relations. A substantial stream focuses on transference of the leader's sibling relations to peer relations. Whilst this can be useful, it also implies that the view of LRs contains (or risks to) a focus on hierarchical peers. Even within the realm of sibling transference, it has already been shown that adopting a lateral vs a vertical view on sibling relations changes a deep understanding of rivalry, envy, and coexistence.

Comparing psychoanalytic and S-P studies that have attempted to establish the importance of the lateral axis, has also surfaced an antagonism between the vertical and the lateral. Curiously, this antagonism between two axes, as to which is more important, is traced in S-P studies, in psychoanalytic sibling studies, and in contemporary management views (Chapter 1). This may have to be studied as innate to a confusing organizational and societal paradigm. The risk of this debate is to get carried away and focus only on the lateral axis, whereas in contemporary organizations exacerbated laterality coexists with clearly sustained vertical authority and hierarchical systems. Studying the interactivity between the two, therefore, is an

essential focus for this study. I have concentrated on the senior leadership population as role-holders with substantial vertical accountability who are operating on both axes.

Armstrong (2007) explicit focus came with two important challenges: an ontological one that stems from its definition and one on causality that concerns its unconscious life:

A. **The ontological:** The definitions of authority, authorization, and laterality have been evolving over time due to organizational paradigm shifts and societal trends. How those are defined for the purpose of the study is of high ontological importance. Based on their definitions, LRs can be covert, latent, elusive. All their attributes from hierarchical mediation, to roles, authorization, and task can be highly disputed. I suggest that their nature is heuristic, especially at senior management level, since their task arises from confusion, lack of clarity, opportunism. Even in cases of explicit hierarchical authorization of lateral collaboration, vagueness of roles, task, boundaries can never be resolved vertically and must be addressed in the LR terrain. Such vagueness of the entire LR or their attributes imposes a critical ontological challenge that I am treating as actuality and condition in this research.

B. **On causality:** Are LRs avoided or ineffective because they lack vertical authorization or is vertical authorization used by LR role-holders as a defense against their nature? I have already explored thinking and studies that give merit to both sides of the argument. I have also linked other thinking that proposes the anxieties to be much broader than the LR boundary and are using the LR drama

to defend against them. This challenge becomes more complex considering that intra- and interpersonal dynamics are interpreted differently based on the axis studied. Are they inbuilt to the task and its complexity? Are they necessary qualities of an LR relation?

These challenges also constitute the necessity for better understanding of LRs and reasons why such a study can contribute to existing thinking. The complexity and limitations of what LRs can address have already been introduced. With these in mind, I embark on the research journey and, in the next chapter, I clarify the research focus, the epistemological stances behind its approach, and the chosen research methodology.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCHING THE LATERAL AXIS: The Research Scope, Epistemological Considerations and Methodology

Chapter 3 focuses on the research's scope, questions, and methodology. It starts by connecting to the conclusions reached in the previous chapter to detail the research scope and research questions. I then discuss the ontological implications connected to the choice of studying relations through their subjectivity, positioned with a frame of S-P assumptions, and examine my personal stance as researcher. Finally, I present and motivate BNIM as methodology and outline in detail all steps taken from data collection to theorizing.

1. Research scope and epistemological orientation

1.1 Research scope

Having reviewed the topic of corporate senior leadership collaboration with the S-P schools of thought, I have chosen to focus on what I perceived to be less explored areas. These are the lateral dimension of leaders' authority, which is greatly unrepresented and hidden, and the relational aspect of unauthorized collaboration. Exploring the inner, subjective experience within relations and associated dynamics,

conscious and unconscious, offers a different in-depth understanding of what is manifested on this topic.

1.2 Research questions

Based on the above scope, my research questions are formulated as follows:

A. How do senior leaders experience lateral relations when collaborating on joint challenges?

- How do senior leaders experience the relations and dynamics that are associated with lateral collaboration?
- How do organizational context and systemic factors impact on their experience?

B. What impacts on leaders' ability to take up task-effective roles within lateral collaboration?

- What are sufficient organizational and inner sources of authorization for leaders to take up roles, without formal hierarchical mediation?
- What are the sources of good-enough emotional containment for leaders to collaborate laterally?

2. Epistemological and ontological stance

2.1 Epistemological considerations

The epistemological assumptions that I base this research on are linked to how I have explored literature in the previous chapter, where I attempted to compare my own

views as informed by my own consulting and organizational experiences. More specifically, within the identified research scope, I treat the relational terrain as a subjective and dynamic field that is co-created through an interplay between system and individuals as role-holders, as framed through the S-P concepts of role (Reed, 2001; Reed and Bazalgette, 2018; Lawrence, 2018; Long, 2018b). Role-holders' subjective experience is informed by how they uniquely internalize the "Organization-In-The-Mind" (Armstrong, 2005) or a "Workplace Within" (Hirschhorn, 1988) as to how it works, including demands from their roles, how they perceive being authorized and to which extent. This subjective understanding of *role* and *relational terrain* is assumed to be influenced by unique relational patterns and mental models of authority relations that have been shaped throughout personal biography and intersect with the leadership role's history as a position that also had previous incumbents (Long, 2008). Such leadership roles, as they interact, contain multiple loyalties derived from multiple groups tied through explicit hierarchical connections (Miller and Rice, 1967; Miller and Rice, 1990; Boxer and Eigen, 2008; Roberts, 2019) or based on implicit or unconscious priorities and incentives.

I have experienced the benefits of the heuristic nature of these considerations in consulting practice with individual leaders and executive teams. These benefits allow the creation of space for more holistically informed decisions and resolutions in the midst of intense human dynamics and the breakdown of collaboration. These benefits lie in exploring the gap between what is intended and the actual, what looks over and what lies under the surface. Such benefits have fueled my motivation behind conducting research that aims to illuminate this gap. In Chapter 1, I have outlined how this gap may manifest itself in organizations due to the ever-changing meaning given

to *leadership* and *authority relations*. In Chapter 2, I have attempted through literature, a conceptual definition of LRs, concluding that the nature of tasks for senior leaders is to typically resolve and negotiate what cannot otherwise be addressed within the explicit assumptions, as defined by formal hierarchy and authorization. This results in an ontology for my research that can be covert, highly disputed, and up for negotiation.

This ontology has motivated my choice to conduct psychosocial research (Clarke and Hoggett, 2019; Hollway and Jefferson, 2012; Boydell, 2019; Gilmour, 2019), which focuses on exploring the subjective experiences of participants (psycho-) and uses interpretivism (Crotty, 2020) to derive understanding of collective human phenomena (-social). These approaches are treating ontology from the principles of social constructivism (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) as a shared meaning which is socially negotiated (Collier, 1994; Westra, 2019).

2.3 The implications of ontology

As reflected in my literature review, I have found it critical for my research to sustain constant proximity and to keep defining the topic's ontological dimension, realizing how it keeps shifting historically through societal and organizational trends, as reflected in public discourses that are influenced by the differences of social power. These ontological considerations sit within the realm of Bhaskar's critical realism (Bhaskar, 1975) attempting to counterbalance an open-ended interpretivism of subjectivity (Collier, 1994; Archer et al., 2013) by "bringing ontology back in" (Westra, 2019). Keeping a close check with the world as mind-independent reality is what allows social science to benefit the world it studies (Bhaskar, 2013). The tension between the subjective experiences of role-holders in LRs and their nature as

independently existing has been constant throughout my research. Because this study concerns the lateral and vertical dimensions of authority as they manifest themselves relationally, researching subjectivity implies confusing dimensions. I have, therefore, used the analogy of entering the world of Escher's illustration *Relativity* (Figure 1) when dwelling in and interpreting subjective experience, which then has to be placed within an ontological frame. The constant challenge of this research is not to lose sight of its ontological dimension despite not being able to treat it as "bricks-and-mortar" like the actual building Escher used in Figure 2. In the next section, I outline how I attempted to manage this challenge through the methodological choices made.

2.4 The causality challenge

Another epistemological consequence of this challenge lies in causality. My research curiosity is to understand the interplay within and amongst the relational patterns that manifest themselves. S-P's unique epistemological value is generated by studying the interplay between "inside-out" and "outside-in" forces (Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2020). I have often encountered confusion because of this reiterative form of exploration. Perhaps because I followed an undergraduate education in economics and econometrics, I retained such curiosity, which in this study was managed by staying obsessively close to data throughout. There have been a few moments when that was a challenge, feeling I was making a leap to theorizing. The concern of causality is also integral to a critical realism orientation (Baehr, 1990; Radulescu and Vessey, 2008). I explain how I approached this in methodology and return to these points in the discussion on epistemology at the end of the thesis.

3. The biographical narrative interpretive method

The biographical narrative interpretive method (BNIM) falls within the category of psychosocial interviews that use narratives, like in semistructured interviews, to elicit subjectivity (Hollway and Jefferson, 2012; Boydell, 2019). Interviews are analyzed following the principles of interpretivism (Chowdhury, 2014), including the narratives' texture, language, and the dynamic between interviewer and participant, attempting to go beyond what is stated. This approach has been crucial for researching topics that are sensitive, such as racism or abuse, that may trigger defences, as participants become unconsciously defended about difficult aspects of their narratives or are concerned with how they might come across (Hollway and Jefferson, 2012; Gilmour, 2019). While my research topic is not as sensitive, as in other psychosocial research projects, the idea of what *good leadership* is in the context of collaboration, what is acceptable socially or within their organizations, and the gap with their realities might generate defences.

Within this interviewing approach, biographical narratives (Wengraf, 2001; Petrov, 2009; Ross and Moore, 2016) allow studying experience over time, both in terms of the participants' different life phases and the social, or organizational in this case, evolution. Linking to the epistemology of *role* as presented previously, use of biography can be very useful in studying the participant's unique patterns over their life spectrum (Long, 2008). Following an individual's life track allows the observation of shifts in authority dynamics and organizational paradigms over time through the participant's unique perspective. As methodology, BNIM is particularly concerned with and keeps a close eye on the analytical steps of the social and historical context of

each incident narrated. That is why it carefully places each incident in the actual time it occurred (Wengraf, 2000; Wengraf, 2001).

BNIM has been used in its current design for over 20 years and has produced a substantial body of PhD and professional doctorate research projects (Wengraf, 2018). In comparison to other semistructured interviews, BNIM is minimally steered by the researcher who, by asking one *single question aiming at inducing narrative* (SQUIN) (Wengraf, 2001), hands over the full control of the narrative to the participant. The uninterrupted narrative happens in the first session (SS1) and, in the second (SS2), the interviewer follows-up with more detailed questions to induce detailed descriptions of *particular narrative incidents* (PINs), but only within the events that were presented by the participant and by strictly following the sequence of the SS1 narration, treating it as an expression of their *gestalt*.

BNIM considers the stories as contextual representation of the lives, as opposed to treating them as *the truth*, and, therefore, follows the principles of phenomenology (Kockelmans, 1967; Csordas, 2004). The data analysis methods it uses to discern themes and patterns across data are based on the coding methods of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). The methods follow elaborate cycles of analysis, each concerned with a different view on the data. Through these cycles, BNIM pushes the researcher to continuously examine what can be considered “facts” and to keep hypothesizing about the gap between actual “lived life” and “story told.” Those two threads constitute two distinct data analysis tracks within each participant case. Comparing the two is a further analytical step and depicts the tension between the narrative’s phenomenology and ontology. I have found BNIM to continuously navigate this tension, throughout all

steps of data analysis. Sometimes I experienced them in simultaneous gears, and too often, in my topic, I had to go back and re-examine facts.

Finally, the findings of each in-case analysis are examined for the cross-case theorizing. I found this to be one of the most critical phases for analysis in the study. Whether that was inbuilt to this study's specific dataset or it reveals my personal analytical orientation, I expanded this step when attempting to theorize on the patterns across cases by continuously seeking to re-examine data. I describe these steps in this chapter. To allow the reader to follow how that links to the findings, I present these in the sequence that they emerged. I return to discuss the findings more broadly within epistemology in Chapter 11.

4. Data collection

4.1 Determining sampling criteria

The sampling criteria for selecting the four participants can be found in Table A in Appendix II. A main consideration was senior leaders who had substantial vertical accountability, sitting on one or two levels of their organization's management, and coming from organizations that had substantial enterprise complexity. The implication of this decision was a participant sample of similar age and career phase. I considered studying this population well-suited for representing the large, more "conventional" organizations and examining the impact of new leadership trends in existing hierarchical structures.

4.2 Ethical considerations

It was important that participants did not feel forced to participate by how they were introduced to the research by their organization contact person. Anonymity and confidentiality had to be protected throughout the study. For the thesis write-up, I changed or completely omitted names, locations, functions, and all identifiable information, while not diluting the presentation of the data.

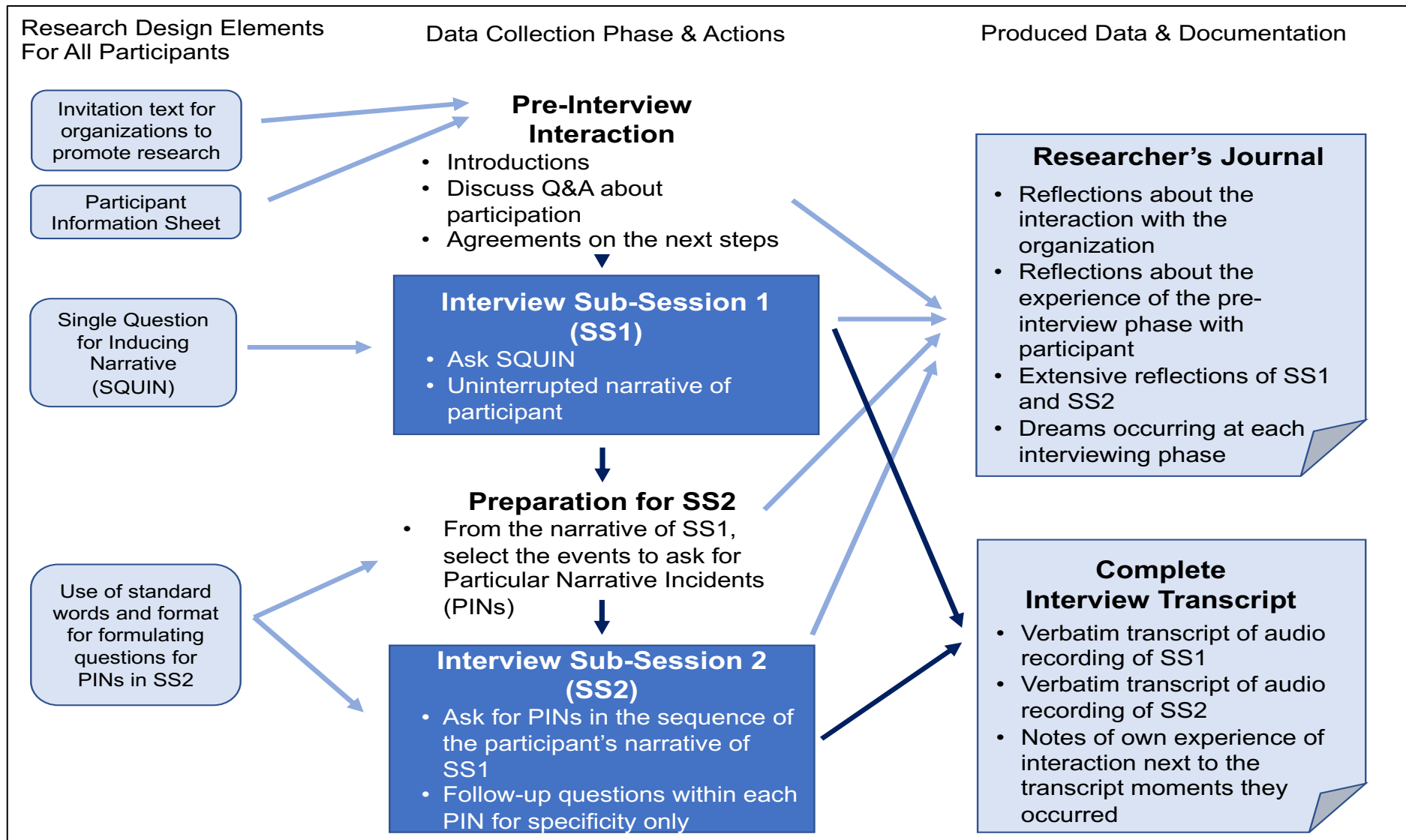
I omitted listing full lived-life tracks per participant as it would resemble their professional bios, which was a consequence of narratives being a full account of careers. I also decided not to include the full participant biography write-ups as I had originally composed them, but instead presented selective early life (when available) and organizational illustrations that allow the reader to first follow their idiosyncratic patterns. I shared with participants upfront the possibility of being surprised during the interview by difficult emotions and I identified routes to mitigate that, in case that would impose hardships.

These aspects were outlined to participants through the Participant Information Sheet (found in APPENDIX II). Anecdotally, these risks did not occur. Some participants mentioned that the process was uncomfortable, but never to the degree of risk, and others called this process “cathartic” or “great to be able to tell my story.”

4.3 Interviewing design

Figure 5 shows the total interview and data collection process and its documentation, designed as per the steps outlined in BNIM’s comprehensive guide (Wengraf, 2001).

Figure 5. BNIM data collection and interview steps



The formulation of SQUIN can be seen in Figure 6. This question was asked at the beginning of SS1.

Figure 6. SQUIN Formulation

<p>[Topic Introduction:]</p> <p><i>“As you know, I wish to explore the dynamics, the challenges and the nature of lateral, that is nonhierarchical, relations and interactions amongst senior leaders.”</i></p> <p>[Actual SQUIN:]</p> <p><i>“I’m interested to hear about your life and career story, with all the events and experiences that you think have shaped your personal leadership, when it comes to collaborating with your peers.”</i></p> <p>[Standard procedural part of SQUIN:]</p> <p><i>“Start wherever you like, and please take as much time as you need. I will listen to your narrative without interrupting. I will be making some notes today, which will allow me to come back with further questions in the second part of the interview.”</i></p>
--

Already in the participant information sheet and email communication, I had provided participants with a consistent explanation of the topic. The SQUIN’s topic introduction here acts as a reminder of this, providing the explicit focus on the research topic without, however, overwhelming participants conceptually. The terms “nonhierarchical,” “relations,” and “senior leaders” aimed to elicit participants’ subjective internal images related to the topic. The actual SQUIN contained “life” and “career” to prompt participants to think throughout their lives and careers. “Personal leadership” was used as a recognizable term for corporate leaders, emphasizing the unique idiosyncrasy in taking up a role. Finally, “collaboration” and “peers” were providing the definitional context of LRs. Looking back and critiquing this formulation,

I would have replaced “peers” with “other senior leaders”, but this formulation reveals how I was definitionally influenced also by previous literature. It proved also from the narratives that peer, in terms of level, can never be taken literally in lateral collaboration, which is a significant definitional outcome and impacts on experience.

4.4 Interviewing (SS1 and SS2)

After asking the SQUIN, every participant began their uninterrupted narrative, which lasted between 35–45 minutes. At their natural end, I followed-up with a question, checking whether they had more to add. This prompted all of them to continue for another 10–15 minutes, which had a different nature for each participant. Based on the draft transcript of SS1, I identified the key events, which I would follow up with questions in SS2. The formulation of the PINs question is strict, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Example of formulating a question for PIN

Event narrated in SS1	Referencing the event using participant’s exact words	Asking for a PIN by using the standard words: incident, moment, day, example
<p>[i1.2] Interaction with classmates at secondary school <i>“...even my fellow classmates, but they didn’t seem to understand. And I didn’t understand why they wouldn’t understand...”</i></p>	<p><i>“You mentioned that your fellow classmates didn’t seem to understand and that you didn’t understand why they wouldn’t.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Can you remember a particular incident, when you felt that your classmates wouldn’t seem to understand you?”</i></p>

The follow up questions on a PIN were only probing to continue the narrative until the incident was fully narrated and, importantly, there were absolutely no interpretive questions in the form of “why do you think that was?”. Each SS2 would fit between 10–15 PINs within the scheduled one hour.

4.5 Conducting virtual interviews

All interactions and interviews were conducted online via Zoom as they took place between March and December 2020, coinciding with the first COVID lockdown. Given that this was a relatively new paradigm for that time, I had to investigate the implications of conducting virtual interviews for the interviewer-interviewee dynamic. A retrospective study documenting virtual research (Lo Iacono, Symonds and Brown, 2016) was helpful in validating the use of the virtual forum within the research community using BNIM. The following recommendations were also distributed:

- BNIM can definitely be undertaken successfully online
- Countertransference can be communicated online
- It can be helpful to have the half torso at least visible, rather than just the head
- It can provide opportunity to work with the video recording as opposed to only audio.

5. Data analysis overview

Table 2 provides a qualitative overview of the data to give a sense of the total dataset. The entire overview of data analysis steps is depicted in the next two figures. Figure 7 contains the steps applied for each case. Figure 8 contains the analysis across all cases to produce cross-case findings and the subsequent steps towards theorizing.

Table 2. Quantitative view of the data

Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 participants • Gender: 2 female / 2 male • Current Age: late 40s / early 50s • Career span: 20–30 years • Large multinational corporations • Mix of functional and general management roles
Narrative Length	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 virtual interview subsessions, lasting 2 hours in total per case • Average 16,000 words of transcript per case
Events Narrated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In total, 195 referenced events or narrated incidents • On average 45 per biography
Life Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out of those, approximately 40 related to personal and early life • Approximately 20% of total narrated events or incidents • Only one participant provided a full biographical account of their entire life, one referenced none and the other two a couple.
Organizational Incidents Narrated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 organizational incidents were narrated extensively and required microanalysis (average 10 / participant) • Those had the nature of what gets presented in executive coaching or organizational role analysis sessions
Incidents in Lateral Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In total, 14 organizational incidents concerning roles in LR (average 3 / participant) • This constitutes approximately 30% of all narrated incidents as opposed to vertical roles (supervisor or subordinate)

Figure 7. Overview of In-case Biographical Steps

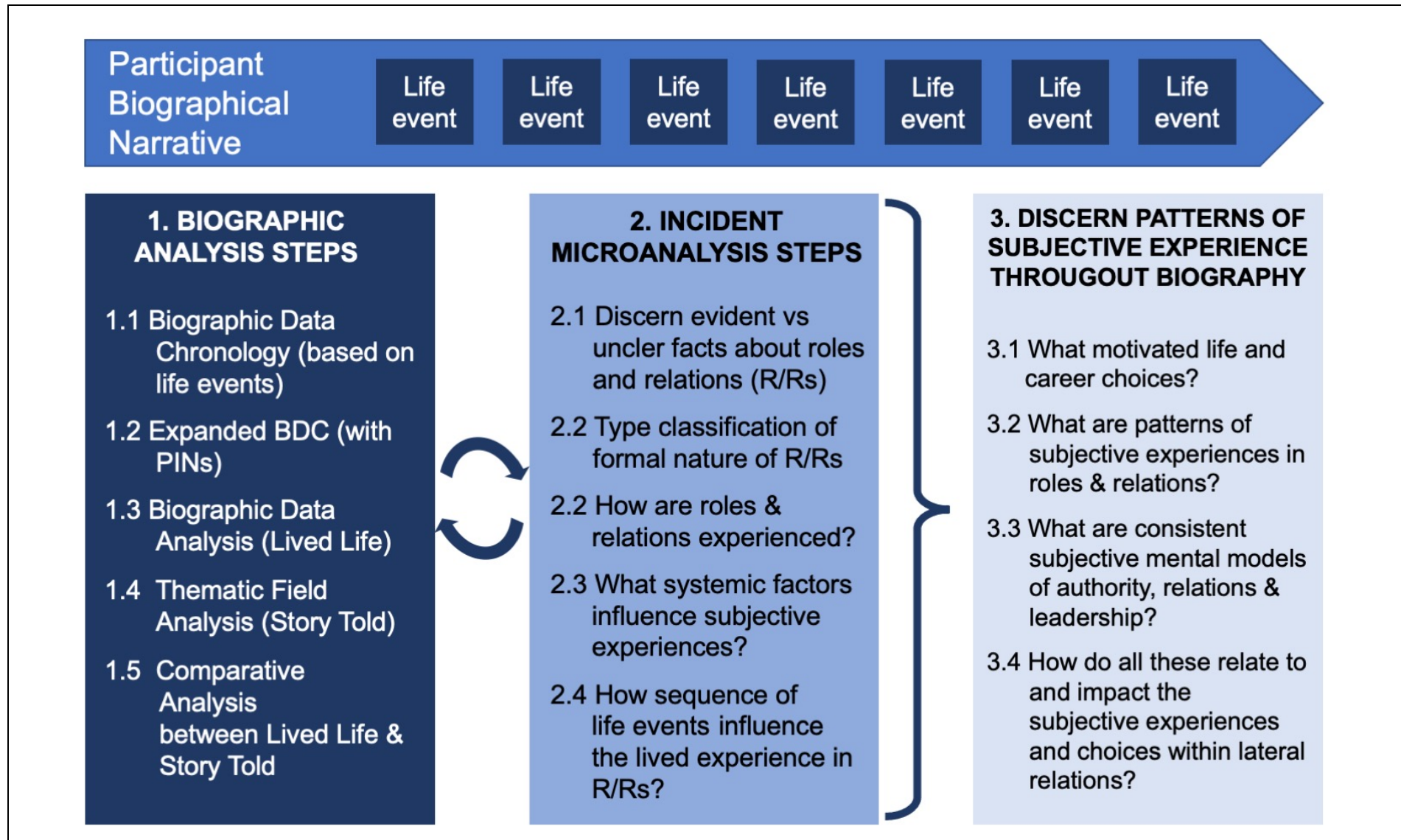
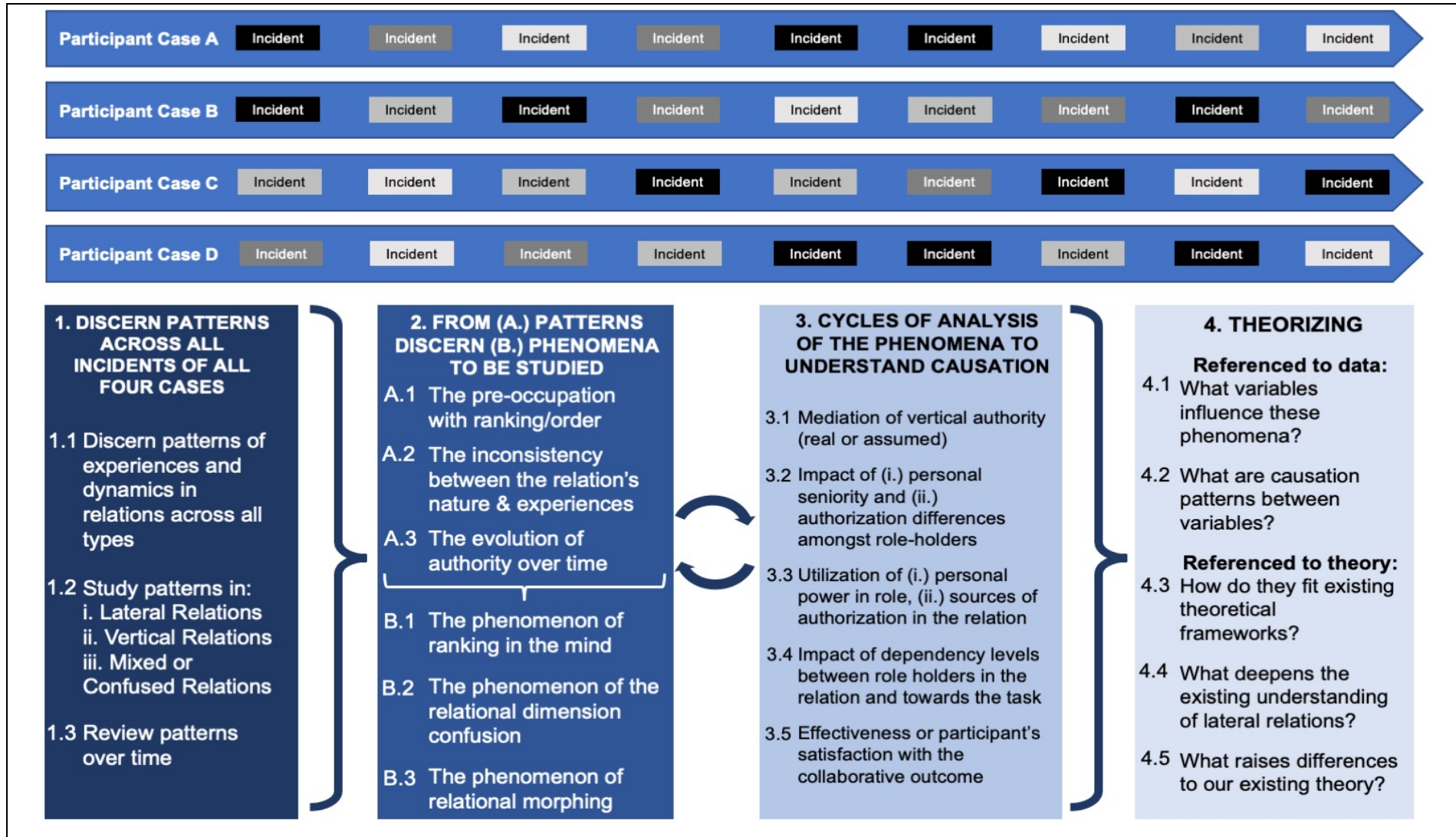


Figure 8. Overview of Cross-Case Analysis Steps



6. In-case analysis per participant

6.1 Biographic data analysis

The biographical data chronology (BDC) was derived from the narrative and outside data that was publicly available (e.g., LinkedIn profiles). As most narratives concerned a career track as opposed to an entire lived life, I had to treat BDC as such. I had to include more organizational focused hypotheses as opposed to solely societal. I conducted the biographical data analysis (BDA) by developing a series of hypotheses, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Modified focus of BDA hypotheses

Hypotheses	BDA hypotheses ²	BDA PINs hypotheses
Experiential Hypotheses	<i>How could the event be experienced in relation to the context of age, personal development, family, generation, milieu?</i>	... and organization's context, role, relation and primary task?
Shaping Hypotheses	<i>How could the sequence of events so far shape the lived life?</i>	How could the sequence of events (and which life and working role incidents) shape the lived life (as manifested in working roles)?
Following Hypotheses	<i>What would I expect to occur next or later in the sequence of the lived life?</i>	What would I expect to occur in next or later incidents in the roles and relations of the lived life?

² As found in Wengraf, T. (2001) *Qualitative Research Interviewing: Biographic Narrative and Semi-Structured Methods*. SAGE Publications.

6.2 Incident microanalysis steps

These steps concern the middle column of Figure 8 and were applied to all PINs.

Most PINs concerned working roles in organizations. Considering the research focus, I used the logic of the heuristic model of ORA in developing the hypotheses, as shown in Column 3 of Table 3. This was in alignment with the logic and original format of the methodology, but was adapted to an organizational study. Whilst doing so, there are extra levels of PIN microanalysis that concern ontology. Here I was concerned with questions, such as: What are the roles at hand? What seems to be the primary task? Does this concern a lateral vs a vertical relation? Is there hierarchy present? In connection to this, and since the relation's dimension of every incident narrated was key, I classified all relations throughout, including those of early lives, by using the typology of Table 4.

Table 4. Relation classifications based on formal nature

Relation classification codes (Based on participant's role in relation)	Classifies the relation, based on the formal nature of roles involved (defined by formal authority, org structure, hierarchy, task). Guiding Questions: "How would it placed on an org-chart, a work contract, presented in public?"
1. Bottom-up vertical relation ↑	The participant is in a bottom-up role within a vertical relation (e.g., the subordinate in a relation with the supervisor, investor, board; the child in the relation with its parents).
2. Top-down vertical relation ↓	The participant is a top-down role within a vertical relation (e.g., supervisor in a relation with subordinate or team; a parent in the relation with their children).
3. Two-way vertical relations ↑ ↓	The participant is in a role containing two-way vertical relations as subordinate and supervisor and the incident concerns the combined role of two. It is unclear which relation prevails in their role of the incident.
4. Lateral relations ↔ 4a. Lateral relations in collaboration 4b. Lateral relations amongst peers	The participant is in a role of a lateral relation with peers or colleagues or friends and siblings. Interdependent roles that are expected to or actually collaborate (e.g., leaders having to resolve an issue, students in a study group). Those concerning peers and colleagues sustaining their autonomy (e.g., other leaders of the same level, other students of the same class).
5. Confused or unclear relation	Lacking the factual data to define what type of relation it is or relations that have multiple roles and unclear which one prevails (e.g., peers in an MT, also a vertical secondary hierarchical reporting line).
6. Autonomous role	An autonomous role and possibility to act freely (e.g., taking up an entrepreneurial role; going on sabbatical).

The coding here is ontological and concerns the “actual” nature of the relation, based on the data provided. I treated “actual” here based on the principles of an organizational chart or how a role gets formally agreed as a position, but often data was not available in the narrative. As the texture of the narrative was making the relation’s dynamic more prominent, the facts of this process proved to be very challenging and key for the study’s core findings. To stay with “actual” in case of confusion, a pragmatic hypothesis was formed. If, however, that would enter the space of speculation it was coded as “unclear.” This scrutiny here proved to be key in sustaining proximity to a consistent ontological reference. Often, I felt deceived by the narrative and even after a number of cycles, I would correct the facts. I discuss these tensions and their significance in Chapter 11.

Table 5 provides an example of all steps described above contained in a PIN, following the BCA track.

Table 5. BDA & PIN microanalysis

Incident 2.35	Presented Facts	Unclear Facts	Experiential Hypotheses (How experienced based on factors)	Shaping Hypotheses (used after comparison with TFA step)
<p><i>“A good example would be recently, we did a, um, we obviously with the COVID situation, having to discount product.</i></p>	<p>Context: COVID lockdown, closed stores for 2 months</p> <p>Task: apply discounts, in order to manage the high product stock</p>			
<p><i>Um, and I had to have a very lengthy conversation with one of our senior leaders, um, one of our most senior leaders about how I didn't think we should discount absolutely everything.</i></p>	<p>Roles: Business Unit Leader (Participant) and Senior Leader. SL appears higher in rank, “one of our most senior leaders” but otherwise not explicit how.</p> <p>Relation: (5-Unclear) In the interaction, they appear to have equal decision rights, but there is a vertical nature, based on hierarchical levels.</p> <p>Incident key point: Conflict in points of view on task's decision</p>	<p>What is the role of the senior leader?</p> <p>What is their relation w.r.t. hierarchy?</p>	<p>Systemic: Senior Leaders exercise hierarchical authority, but also over tasks that they don't have formal decision authority</p> <p>Relation: Her formal role authority prevails his in this incident, (assuming no direct hierarchical lines) but he seems to have authority rights on the decision, leading them to “negotiate”</p> <p>Dynamic: Seems LR, seem like negotiating the decision. It could however be her having to justify her decision based on role authority's autonomy. Lateral negotiation may be functioning to get his blessing “approval” (vertical authorization)</p>	

<p><i>Cause there's certain product that we don't have enough stock of [and are of high demand].</i></p>	<p>Her argument is that this situation is the reverse of the general rule: stock is low and demand is high</p>			
<p><i>Um, and it's kind of like I'm spending half an hour and this happens a lot. I'm like, this is just this, there shouldn't be a conversation. This is so simple (laughs).</i></p>		<p>Was senior leader concerned about exception to the rule? Or was he impacted practically in his domain by her decision?</p>	<p>Systemic: Use of other forms of power when decision rights are unclear The organization is too complex, has created unclarity in decision rights. It also flattens levels in executive interactions Experience In Role/Relation: Craving autonomy Frustrated w dependency on hierarchy</p>	
<p><i>Um, so I think my life of aligning, um, and I have to use every skill I've got in the book.</i></p>			<p>Experience In Role/Relation: In order to survive one has to use personal skills (Personal power) as opposed to justify their formal authority</p>	
<p><i>Like I feel sometimes I'm trying to be the negotiator. Sometimes I'm trying to be the influencer. Sometimes I'm being just an outright dictator."</i></p>			<p>Systemic: Role authority is not differentiating on decision rights between the two roles. Experience in Role/Relation: This makes the relation feel like a negotiation Experience In Role/Relation: Personal power has to be used to influence when not using formal authority Experience in Role/Relation: Exercising formal authority to set boundaries feels like being an "<i>Outright dictator.</i>" In this incident she is not a "dictator" but holding territorial grounds through the merits of role authority against a hierarchical senior, might feel like it.</p>	<p>H1 Experience of Relation: Having different point of view from others, risks not being understood. (Incidents i2.3, i2.7, i2.11, i2.18) H2 Exercising Formal authority: is to be avoided as it can contain wrong judgment (i2.8, i2.18) H3 Exercising Formal authority: is to be avoided as it can cause damage: ● i2.14: boss aggressive alert not to make mistake cause panic attack ● i2.30: boss was experienced as "outright director" developing bad image H4: In negotiation without authority, she feels powerless and risks losing. (i2.21)</p>

6.3 Thematic field analysis (story told)

This process is concerned with why the story is told in its specific way. It examines the participant's current view, in the present day, of past events and how they evaluate them and also captures the story's emotions (how did it feel back then). For this analysis, some additional steps had to be taken in segmenting the narrative transcript. I incorporated the notes from my experience of the participant-interviewer interaction.

6.4 Thematic field analysis focused on the narrative structure

In the text segmentation, the sequence of the narrative that might have deviated from to its actual chronology was important. Based on such deviations, I developed hypotheses that were linked to how events were experienced by the participants and added them to the preexisting BCA. In Table 6, I provide an example of such an analysis that helped connect an underlying emotional thread that linked with certain events. Participants almost clustered those events themselves through these jumps.

Table 6. Example of TFA focusing the narrative structure and sequentialization (NSS)

Transcript Incident 2.29	Thematic Field Analysis (TFA) Story Told
<p>New job and relocation to location A): <i>I didn't have a reputation in Mmm [new location], because I'd grown up through the [other regional office]. Mmm.</i></p> <p><i>And I, that was the hardest,</i></p> <p><i>I think the hardest job I ever did was with the woman who just didn't want me to succeed.</i></p>	<p>Report: reports challenge of entering the new role without reputation in the region.</p> <p>Evaluation: Hardest role ever had.</p> <p>Evaluation: To re-evaluate, jumps back in time and compares this hardship to incident 2.21 hardship. As if to scan throughout entire career in order to get an objective evaluation of "hardest role."</p>

<p><i>That was the hardest time.</i></p> <p><i>But the personally hardest time was when I moved to [role].</i></p> <p><i>Um, cause I, I getting a promotion, not knowing anybody, not having a reputation, not having any background or detail about the entire [region] business was, um, the toughest time, one of the toughest times of my life.</i></p> <p><i>Um, and that, that was this, this whole [business unit] experience has been fascinating for me,</i></p> <p><i>because I think we've now got some point at [current company] where it just, it doesn't work.</i></p>	<p>Evaluation: by doing so confirms past incident evaluation.</p> <p>Argumentation: differentiates hardship.</p> <p>Report: enlists all the factors that contributed to hardship.</p> <p>Report: the list of factors makes her think about the part of organization in general, where is currently.</p> <p>Evaluation: That concerns current experience and struggle in role.</p> <p>(Third out of six times of jumping from past narrative to present time hardship.)</p>
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In this example, the participant remembers the struggle of a past experience, which triggers a jump in the narrative into a similar past role, which then brings us to the struggle of the present time. Other aspects that are considered here are how fast an incident is brushed over or how extensive it becomes in the narrative.

6.5 Text field analysis focus on the interviewer-interviewee dynamic

In a separate column, I was enlisting my own countertransference as an interviewer, based on the dynamic in the moment. In Table 7, I provide an example of using my experience as additional data for the TFA.

Table 7. Example of TFA using researcher's own experience with the participant

Transcript	Notes of Own Experience used in Thematic Field Analysis (Story Told)
<p>Incident 3.39 <i>"So, when I, I look back, uh, over my career and it's, uh, um,</i></p> <p><i>you, you said that we'll be also, uh, some thoughts about when you take me in this process.</i></p> <p><i>Uh, uh, and you warned me upfront there will also be some, (laughs) some moments that you think, hm. "That hurts!"</i></p> <p><i>Uh, when I started thinking about, uh, your questions and preparing for, uh, this first session, uh, yeah, I, I felt a little bit of hurt about being how many years did I lose in, uh, in doing work, uh, in a situation and in an environment which I now know that I'm not, uh, suitable for?"</i></p> <p><i>"So, did you make, did you make me happy? No you didn't. (laughs)"</i></p>	<p>Refers to the Participant Information Sheet and the introduction call about possibly surfacing unexpected emotions of the past.</p> <p>"Warning" reveals a sense of danger as opposed to having appeared "concerned" for or "thoughtful" of his experience.</p> <p>Preparing in thinking upfront might reveal a desire of what will get presented, but perhaps also a control of the narrative, not to risk becoming vulnerable. Links to my own frustration of feeling out of control to ask questions of my own curiosity.</p> <p>Using humor to defuse the emotion of the incident. But jokingly calling me out for my process that surfaced unpleasant career memories.</p>
<p>End of Uninterrupted Narrative</p> <p>Petros: Great. Is there, [participant name], any other incident or part of your career or your life that comes to mind?</p> <p>Participant: How many examples, uh, do you have? (laughing) I mean, how many do you need here? [narrative continues]</p>	<p>I should have actually asked "Is there anything else that comes to mind you would like to share?" Perhaps I reveal some of my frustration not steering to curiosity I had.</p> <p>This may have come across as judgmental, as if the narrative was not good enough. This gets expressed in quantity. I felt guilty and shameful for not coming across as a respectful researcher.</p>

These are examples, of how participants may deal with the full control and power that BNIM grants them in their narrative. Their control is, however, in a total process that I control as researcher. The power dynamics that develop between us because of that are of importance (Wengraf, 2001; Jervis, 2019). Interviewing on certain topics, as mentioned, can induce vulnerability or anxiety (Gilmour, 2019; Hollway and Jefferson, 2012) and as researcher, I am also vulnerable, concerned about the research's success, my authority, and how skilled I come across, and holding my accountability on ethics. I am also dependent on the participants, not only for what their narratives result in the data, but also, in case our interaction dissatisfies them, they might retract their participation. In the above two incidents the participant is reminded of my overall control of the process, which contrasts with their overall experience of having been in absolute control of their own narrative. This exposes the participant to a lack of control and also to the uncertainty of whether "my story is good enough" or "how will it be processed; how will I be seen?" Each participant developed a different transference of my researcher's authority role. Often my personal attributes (age, career tenure, nationality, etc.) were mentioned as a way to develop a position in our relation and to build a dimension, whether lateral or vertical. These synthesized a power dynamic of this relation based on our level differences as well. These explorations were central to my topic. Using carefully my own countertransference in meaning-making (Jervis, 2019) was an additional check on hypotheses in relational patterns that had emerged from the data analysis.

6.6 Coding based on the phenomenology of relations

A focus that proved critical in the study was the comparison between the "formal nature" of relations (as per Table 4) and how they were uniquely experienced by the

participant. The guiding question here was, “if one didn’t know anything of the context of the relation, what would be the guess of its type, purely based on the participant’s narrative?” This step was created in this study as I was getting confused between the phenomenology and ontology of the relation. The first attempts of thematic analysis were messy, and I found myself being deceived into trying to classify types of relation. This led to surfacing the phenomenon of *relational dimension confusion* and further *relational morphing*³.

In Table 8, I provide an example of such coding by using the same typology as before. The same coding allowed an easy comparison of differences between what is the common definition of the relation and how it is uniquely experienced or even shaped.

Table 8. Example of coding relation’s phenomenological dimension

Coding narrative based on how the dynamic of the relation is experienced	Association
<p style="text-align: center;">Relation Classification Codes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Vertical experience bottom-up ↑ 2. Vertical experience top-down ↓ 3. Two-way vertical relation ↑ ↓ 4. Lateral experience w peers ↔ 5. Confused / Unclear experience 6. Autonomous experience 	
<p>...a good example is the fact that on the first day that we had to um, uh, uh, work together, um, of course, you- you- you sit together somewhere, uh, and you discuss what the approach will be, et cetera, et cetera. And that's immediately when he mentioned, um, uh, "I like people, uh, I'm part of the Works Council for [Company A], I- I find people and staff very important, but I'm not very good at interacting with people."</p>	<p>As if P. here becomes the supervisor and the subordinate explains his strengths and weaknesses.</p>
<p>Um. (Laughs), literally I'm sitting there saying, "Well, actually, you're doing a pretty good job, because I feel really comfortable in you actually telling me this."</p>	<p>Giving him positive feedback assessment. P. shares this as a subordinate would feel comfortable to hear this from the boss.</p>

³ Presented in cross-case findings in Chapter 8.

<p>So good on you, this is one of your- your- your key elements, this is a strong point. Perhaps if you bring this forward a lot more, then your own team, your current team, will understand better where you're coming from."</p>	<p>Coaching him on how to utilize his strength to his team, as a level higher leader.</p>
<p>Um. And- and he started laughing, saying, "Hang on, I'm supposed to coach you, you're not supposed to coach me." Um,</p>	<p>Reversing the dimensions back to their formal working roles. But also implicitly formalizes that it is ok for P having shifted the direction top-down to the supervisor.</p>
<p>but that's basically when we clicked, and hit it off. And I said, "Well actually, I'm really good in - in the interaction with people. Um, I'm pretty - pretty good at picking up new things, and picking up, you know, content-related stuff, knowledge, or experience. Um. But just let me go about my business. And let's see how we can actually, um, move this team to - to a better, more stable, happy bunch of people."</p>	<p>Establishing an equal partnership dividing the management accountabilities amongst the two.</p>
<p>Um, and funnily enough, what I noticed, almost straight away, is that he started to act slightly different towards his, uh, his team, than, uh, before.</p>	<p>Noticing his improvement after coaching, as a supervisor would caring about and feeling proud of the performance of the subordinate.</p>
<p>At least that was the feedback I received from the team members, you know, "This is funny, ever since you've been here, he's been much more open, transparent and more human, than he was before."</p>	<p>Receiving feedback from the subordinate's team about his performance as a manager.</p>

The above contains a representative example of a relational dynamic that is inconsistent with the formal nature of the relation. In this case, the participant is a subordinate and assistant manager to the supervisor. The hierarchical proximity in roles, allows a shift in dynamics. In the incident, they discuss how to divide managerial tasks, with P taking the people management as preferred. This coding picks up on different dynamic shifts and allows showing how the dynamic at times is deviant to its formal nature. The color coding also allows visually seeing which dynamic dimension prevails throughout the incident's narrative. Here the green ↓ and blue ↔ are prevailing in a formal relation that is classified as yellow ↑.

6.7 Comparative analysis between lived life and story told

Comparing the two tracks of analysis focuses on the phenomenology-ontology tension. As the material was so rich, this comparison, at first, felt it could encompass

everything, but the core focus was derived by my research questions and can be seen in the third column of Figure 7. Some of the links made between the hypothesis developed in BCA and TFA can be seen in the example I present in Table 5. An additional step of comparison concerned the gap between the relations' ontological classification (as in Table 4) and its phenomenological classification (as in Table 8).

7. Cross-case analysis

The cross-case theorizing aims to discern the study's findings across all cases by returning to the research questions. The first part concerned discerning cross-case themes and the second theorized them. Those steps are shown in Figure 8. I was attempting to move from the second column to the fourth, but that proved to be missing a step, which was critical, and I called it *studying causality*. I outline its steps here, but present the findings in Chapter 9 where I return to what was done to study causality further. By presenting analysis and findings gradually in the next chapters, I allow the reader to follow my own process with emerging findings. Finally in Chapter 11, I retrospectively reflect on this process to discuss its epistemology.

7.1 Identifying patterns and discerning phenomena

Here I identified patterns by clustering incidents, based on the above taxonomies:

- Patterns of dynamics within all VR (each direction)
- Patterns of dynamics within all LR (collaborative or independent peers)

Three consistent phenomena patterns emerged:

1. Phenomenon of *mental ranking*.

2. Phenomenon of inconsistency between relation's formal dimension and experience/dynamic, named *relational dimension confusion*.
3. Phenomenon of *relational morphing* by its role-holders.

7.2 Challenges of theorizing: A missing step

In the first attempts to theorize, I found myself guided by intuition, and perhaps, too much steered by the subjectivity of participants. I found myself also jumping too fast into linking what was observed in the patterns to existing theoretical concepts explored in the literature. Every time I was challenged in supervision with or asked myself more curious questions, I had an urge to return to the data.

It is this gap that led to the more detailed steps of cross-examining ontology more clearly as it presented in the previous steps of in-case analysis. In practice, the in-case analysis and the cross-case analysis became a reiterative process of moving back and forth between the two. Additionally, aside from working with emerged themes across all cases, I could also treat the 40 organizational incidents as an entire dataset, independent from participants, that could be clustered now into LR, VR, and even into more subclusters. This was because it consisted of a spectrum of incidents that had organizational roles, authority, relational, and task attributes in the spirit of ORA, as opposed to heterogeneous events of different case life tracks. Each biography consisted anyhow of different roles in different organizations per participant, so the incidents could be placed into a dataset based on their ontological attributes.

7.3 Studying causality and causation

To theorize the above patterns in phenomena, I wanted to study causality within the relations' dynamics. I conducted a circle of analyses based on additional coding concerning the ontology of the relation, as seen in Table 9.

Table 9. Detailed attributes used to study causality within relational dynamics

Clustering Relations	Emerged Phenomenon	Relational Attributes	Person or System Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vertical top-down • Vertical bottom-up • Lateral relations collaborative • Lateral relations peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relational dimension confusion • Presence of order / ranking • Morphing relation by role holders • Power shifts over time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of hierarchical authority in defining and/or mediating the Relation? • Differences in role-authorization levels between parties • Disparities in hierarchical levels and personal seniority between parties • Differences between dependency levels towards task and amongst parties • Shifts of dynamics within the incident • Use of which relational attribute in the dynamic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How systemic factors impact relational attributes • Use of personal relational patterns • Participant's satisfaction of the incident vs task effectiveness of the relation

These analyses can be found in Column 3 of Figure 8. This step could now be followed not only for the three phenomena but also for other cross-case findings, for example, anxieties within lateral relations.

The final step used to attempt theorizing as presented in the discussion chapters was by asking a series of theoretical questions (Column 4 of Graph 6) on what had emerged in the previous steps.

8. Triangulation steps

In any psychosocial study that involves interpretation, the merits of interpretations have to be cross-examined, particularly the researcher's subjectivity. The triangulation of hypothesis for this purpose is often as an additional analysis step, also referred to as "triple hermeneutics" (Alexandrov, 2019). A process of organizing analysis panels is contained in BNIM, used for lived life, story told, and microanalysis (Wengraf, 2001). I chose to use such a panel analysis in a shorter manner and in an alternative way, mainly for triangulation, for a number of reasons. I could not extract much value by using a "future blind analysis."⁴ That is because the life tracks were mainly career narratives and participants were zooming in on what concerned particular relational incidents. Those were deemed as important in analysis. However, the life track was useful in discerning relational patterns throughout the biography and the consistent patterns throughout all cases. Such panels were used three times, with different members, all with systems-psychodynamic backgrounds, twice for 30 minutes and once for 90 minutes.

8.1 Context-blind incident analysis

Inspired by the concept of "future blind analysis," I selected the incidents with most inconsistencies between the phenomenology and ontology of a relation as highlighted in previous steps. I presented to the panel the transcript of story told by omitting the actual data of lived life and the incident's factual data (roles, context, task). An example of such a transcript is seen previously in Table 8. Then I asked them to come up with

⁴ This panel is used to develop hypotheses based on the BDC about the participant's possible choices in how they would have lived by guessing what would happen next after each life event was presented to the panel and without knowing already what would happen next.

a hypothesis of what was the situation at hand and associations of the experience. It was remarkable that, in several incidents, they struggled to identify the factual aspects, solely based on the narrative and actions described. This made me validate the phenomenon of inconsistency between relations ontology and phenomenology that had emerged from the comparative analysis. Lacking the context of incident and biography allowed them, at times, to give more extreme notions on the dynamic at play than I had coded, for example, “aggression,” “power fight,” “grandiosity,” “seduction.” This pushed me to re-look at my TFA codes. When I compared the two outcomes, the confusion of ontology was most striking, as opposed to describing phenomenology, which was in line with my own thematic analysis.

8.2 Reverse lived-life analysis based on incidents

In PINs that I had deemed revealing of a manifestation of consistent relational patterns, I presented a series of early-life incidents, which I had linked to the identified pattern in the PIN’s taking-up of a role. I then asked them to develop hypotheses of those patterns. Whilst this step did entail my previous preselection of incidents, when reading them through all together, it did validate some inner models of relations and authority identified.

8.3 Additional triangulation methods

Aside from the above steps, additional triangulation processes entailed:

- Review with my first supervisor of all hypotheses developed for all cases to triangulate my interpretations.
- Conducting the same exercises as in the panels with my second supervisor who had distance from the full narratives. My second supervisor was also

engaged in differently critically reviewing of the steps of the process and the relevance of findings to field consultancy and academic positioning.

- Asking systems-psychodynamic trained colleagues to read through the elaborate write-ups of each participant case and challenge the hypotheses that were formulated per case analysis.

9. A critical view in methodology, benefits, and limitations

Initially, I had opted for a different approach, based on the case-study⁵ of one particular executive team, observing the here-and-now lateral dynamics in collaborative tasks, combined with individual interviews. This type of study would have allowed the connection of manifested relational dynamics of authority with the organizational context.

On the contrary, such a study would have been limited to LRs amongst hierarchical peers. I was very pleased as this methodology allowed me to study a variety of roles, relations, and contexts. Due to my lack of control in data collection, I was able to study ontology through the phenomenological dimension and this is key to the findings and is discussed more broadly towards the end of the thesis.

⁵The initial approach had to be abundant, as I could not recruit such a team. Experiencing substantial delays and risking the timelines, I rescoped the study and redesigned its methodology, and submitted a new research proposal for ethical approval. These difficulties had relevance to the topic. By studying the dynamics of those recruitment efforts, I attributed the difficulties to: (i) the perceived threats the topic elicited to organizational representatives, (ii) benefits for a team would require consulting with them, which brought tension between the research and the consulting questions, and (iii) it revealed my own self-authorization difficulties, to “push” for research (my own benefits), as opposed to “be asked” to offer services as a consultant.

Whilst I could not anticipate what the methodology would generate exactly in data collection, looking at the dataset in retrospect, I am grateful that it allowed the study of relational dynamics in such depth and consistently with the research question. It also allowed me to revisit authority relations definitionally and to gain a nuanced understanding of power dynamics in contemporary corporate organizations. It allowed me to understand the in-depth “mechanics” behind the power dynamics of executive lateral collaboration. Nevertheless, it is a phenomenological study of only four participants, so the generalization of its findings is limited and has to be treated with caution.

In short, this study was well-suited to exploring the causality question specifically focused on LRs and raised initially by Armstrong. It did not allow the exploration of whether the “relational drama” of LRs might be obscuring dealing effectively with organizational and existential dilemmas or associated anxieties of this task, or being used as a defence, not to be emotionally in touch with such anxiety.

The findings of the study are presented into stages: in Part II, I follow a vertical view of each biography (Chapters 4-7), by providing selected narrated incidents of each type of relation. This allows to show how unique subjective relational models may be formulated throughout biography. In Part IV, I present the findings through a “lateral view” across all cases, by first showing in Chapter 8 the patterns that emerged per type of relation and the consistent relational phenomena across all cases. Then in Chapter 9, I present the findings that emerged from studying causality through a more tightly defined “ontological grid”.

PART II: A VERTICAL VIEW OF THE DATA

Chapters 4 to 7 are each dedicated to the narratives of the four participants of this study. The original participant chapters contained a detailed account of each biography with themes derived from in-case analysis. This final chapters' structure is significantly edited to contain, what I deemed most representative events, and mainly through participants' own words. This allows the reader to follow the "vertical" chronological flow of each biography and gets a sense of their unique relational and authority models. Names, locations, and all identifiable details, have been altered or omitted to protect the participants' anonymity, without diluting the essence of the data.

Part II allows the reader to follow the phenomenological subjectivity, before the entirety of organizational events will be examined across all cases to discern patterns (Part III).

CHAPTER 4. A VERTICAL VIEW OF EVA'S STORY

1. Early life

Eva was an only child. Her parents would ask her opinion in big decisions, creating a sense of an equal decision maker.

“Whenever there was a big decision to be made, [...] they would always ask me for my opinion. And basically, treating me as a peer, as one of the adults, which sometimes, of course, leads to me behaving like an adult, when I shouldn't, but, you know, that what happens automatically.”

When requiring parental approval, the interaction with parents would resemble negotiations amongst adults, justifying her wishes with logic as an adult and them offering compromises. Whilst this gave a sense that of having equal decision rights, their ultimate verdict would be imposed and at times that would lead to disappointments.

Parents: “Please tell us why you think that is so important, why do you want to become a drummer?”

Eva: “I thought that was really interesting, it will give you structure. It's rhythm,,.”

“I tried to reason with them. They got me a flute which was a big disappointment, but I managed,, to take the flute apart, in two parts and start drumming.”

At school she becomes, an easy target for classmates. She considers that main reason is that her mother was a teacher at school and would at times substitute Eva’s teacher, who would be stricter than necessary with her, in order not to be perceived as being favored.

“I tried to talk to my classmates, saying, ‘Look, you think I’m getting the priority treatment here, but actually I’m being treated more stern,. Whenever I speak up, I’m being corrected straight away, whereas you are not.’ And they just didn’t understand.”

and to her mother:

‘...you’re much more stern with me, than with the rest. But the rest of the class doesn’t see it that way.’

It was kind of odd, because there’s an eight-year-old, talking to an adult, saying, ‘Oh, something’s not right here.’

Her coping mechanism is to “*hold back*” and retrieve at the back of the classroom like “*a wallflower*”, despite knowing the answers.

She finds comfort, by forming a bond with Jane, who is challenged in similar ways:

“She was my, like my little... well, not my little sister, my big sister. The big sister I never had.... She was in a similar position, not feeling very understood. Felt that she wasn't worth it. [...] Great! Soulmates, she's got that too.”

But Jane commits suicide and that's when Eva realizes that if Jane was loved for who she was, this could apply to her as well.

“...brought me the realization, that if that would apply to her, it might just apply to me as well. [...] “I owe it all to her, and to her decision to stop living. It made it to be the turnaround point for me to start living.”

2. First organizational roles

2.1 Subordinate Role 1 (vertical relation VRA1)

In her first role, six months on the job, her supervisor gets astonished with her short tenure compared to her peers:

“ I am really shocked over the fact that you've been with this company for such a short time the amount of knowledge that you have. The seniority that you bring to the company... the logic is something that I would expect from someone who's been here for much longer.”

That when, indeed, we came up with the idea to put me through this management traineeship.

Notably, she describes this not as a supervisors' decision but as a joint decision "we came up with the idea", resembling the laterality with which she described household decisions with parents.

2.2 Subordinate Role 2 (VRA2)

In her second career role, she is an assistant manager, forming a pair with her supervisor.

"He started laughing, 'Hang on, I'm supposed to coach you, you're not supposed to coach me.' but that's basically when we clicked, and hit it off.

And I said, "Well actually, I'm really good in the interaction with people and you know content related stuff, knowledge, or experience. But just let me go about my business. And let's see how we can actually move this team to a better, more stable, happy bunch of people."

Notably the narrative reflects a reserve bottom-up vertical flow from subordinate to supervisor, not just in the coaching, but also as subordinate proposing the allocation of tasks between them. Aside from the phenomenology of their dynamic, the relation also contains a laterality, that stems from the task of the pair coordinating amongst each other managerial tasks.

2.3 Supervisory Role 3 (VRA3)

In an early career role, Eva has to manage a team of subordinates in their 50s and content-experts, whilst she was in her 30s, without any tenure. She seems aware that exercising formal hierarchical authority in explicit terms will not yield followership.

I thought it was one of the major challenges that I had to go through. Uh, especially because they had already, um, (laughing), taken care of, three or four managers before me, within a very short space of time. So I thought, "Okay, this is do or die."

Whilst compared to peers, her young age and short tenure would have exemplified her skills, in this vertical role, the disparity creates risks. Eva consciously uses the seniority disparity and by highlighting her shorter tenure and younger age builds laterality to yield followership.

"Look guys, I know you have a lot of experience, you are twice my age, I know you think that this is a newbie manager coming in, very young, inexperienced, sort of know-it-all character. But hang on guys, we're in this together, we're trying to focus on the same things."

By developing effective followership, she can then exercise formal, even punitive authority, when required, but communicates it as an agreement upon equals, not breaking the installed laterality.

"it's about being consistent, in communication, in structuring, in talking to people, but also, in a punishment way, saying, "Look, you've done this, this is not what we've agreed upon, I do not like this. If you do this again, you will be in trouble."

"And this is nothing to do with the fact that you are more experienced than me. We're made an agreement; you are not living up to your agreement." That is, for me, unacceptable."

In this also lies a careful balancing of power, as in a lateral relation the strongest in power may perhaps win the tension, whereas authority gets communicated in form of equal agreement and the power disparity of content has to be carefully tamed out of the equation.

So literally, taking them away from content, taking them slightly out of the comfort zone as well, because if you're very much used to, you know, having all of the power, because of the knowledge they did have and then taking them away from that, looking... trying to make them look at the bigger picture."

Eventually the team surpasses its results and Eva gets the reputation of being able to transform difficult departments and has series of such roles throughout her career.

3 Leadership roles and maturity

3.1 Supervisory Role 2 (VRA4)

In one such leadership role she struggles to get the team aligned on direction.

I was coaching them, but I felt after a couple of years that it took me quite some effort to stay genuine and to be honest and to be open. So I wanted to, um, stay clear for that for a while. Just basically to, uh, align again with myself on my, um, well, basically my own core values. Will I be good enough for them if I feel I'm not completely honest, open, genuine in every conversation that I have? I

think those things are really important. Also, well, especially as a, as a coach or as a leader, because I consider myself more to be a leader than a manager.

What possibly Eva is trying to explain from not being her genuine self is the sense of vulnerability that one feels of being left alone from followership. But we can link this experience of vulnerability with the feelings of early-life experiences, not being able to use her genuine strengths. In other words, a transference of early experiences with peers. Hence the vertical relation with subordinates gets here experienced as a lateral relation, due to lack of followership, as opposed to lack of formal hierarchical authorization in her role.

"I was struggling at a certain point... with the fact that I had to convince them, it almost felt to me, like I was not being genuine, in having to do that over and over again, I thought, "Guys, really, we've been going over with it, over this for years, I expect you to be bigger than this, and you're not doing that." I did tell them, literally this, at the end of the, of the process, saying, "Look, I expected you to be much bigger in this approach." Um, they were not able to accommodate, uh, they weren't willing to accommodate.

3.2 Lateral Role 1 (LRA1)

In one role she leads an enterprise process harmonization across departments. Stakeholders involve department heads and in the narrative are referred to as *"my stakeholders, my peers"*, who Eva needs to align with laterally ensuring that the project's progress is balanced with the impacts to each division. One division head used to be Eva's manager in the past and in one particular incident, Eva needs to assess seems going through an internal process of assessing seniorities, relational history and current context before approaching this.

I thought, "Okay, I'm in this role, you have a certain expectation of me, as a person, in my role. I am not the person you hired, I've grown, I'm now in a different role, I am proud of what I do, so I know my boundaries, but I also know my strengths. I know what I'm good at, and I know that I need to approach it in this particular way." So I was very confident in the way I brought the message across.

She also assesses the other party's strengths and demeanor.

"she's a lovely person, but she can come across really stern and forceful, not very nice. She's really knowledgeable, but comes across the wrong way, sometimes.

Based on these, she describes how she handled the confrontation.

"We are trying to accommodate, you know, I'm the first one to actually raise my hand saying, 'yep we made a big mistake, we did not deliver what you expected us to do,' I fully agree."

So, literally taking away all of the ammunition that she had to continue on being angry. Uh, and then we continued into the solution, thinking, "Actually, we- we- we got off pretty well." So eventually, she turned over to me saying, "Oh, yeah, you're absolutely right, it was just my emotions taking over, I was just so disappointed."

3.3 Lateral Role 2 (LRA2)

In a recent role as Operations Manager Eva has to negotiate with the Sales Manager who request her department's delivery on an unplanned sales initiative.

"Look, I've come up with this great campaign, we're going to do this we're going to, execute this, and, there you go. So just be advised, there's going to be a lot of work coming your way."

Now, I currently have a very limited team, so I thought, "Great, wonderful. I cannot, you know, support this." So I told him, literally, "I cannot support your campaign. You do that, but it won't get you anywhere. But before you escalate, just hear me out for a moment."

Here the prospect of escalation is explicit, and we could assume that is not favorable for Eva.

"Perhaps if we can actually combine our ideas about this, and your ideas, and your campaign with what I can support, maybe we can come up with alternatives."

You can go about with your campaign, without causing too much stress and difficulty for my team."

So basically, create a win-win situation."

CHAPTER 5. A VERTICAL VIEW OF KATIE'S STORY

1. Early life

Katie looks back at her upbringing environment as nondiverse and standing out from peers impacts her confidence negatively.

As a child, I was painfully unconfident. I was very tall, I always felt uncomfortable cause I was always the biggest person in the room... and trying to make myself smaller... there's a lot of pictures of me as a kid where I'm sort of, you know, standing on one foot as I tried to diminish my size...

I just don't think school was for me... I think school, for me, it was just too much, too many people, too much trying to fit in and didn't like.

In comparison to her older sister and younger brother, Katie's potential remained hidden.

my sister and my brother super smart and I'm like the one that they were 'I don't know what she's going to do'. They really did despair. They put me through secretarial college for three months, 'cause they were like, she's got to at least have some skills. So that's how much confidence they had in me...

Aside from capability, the comparison also resulted in lack of trust in her choices.

So my big sister was so studious and good mum just had no experience of somebody going, you know what, Friday night I'd be like 15 years old... I mean,

I didn't drink till I was 19 or 17 or something, so I wouldn't do anything, but I think she thought I was taking drugs.

Katie decides to travel abroad, far away and by removing herself from the old environment, she transforms.

I think that's when I sort of got the shackles of school off and I ended up, um, getting a great tan. I wore glasses all my life and I dropped them after, so was one of the, you know, you kind of watch those programs where I have these terrible glasses and a bad haircut and I was all pasty and then I came back and I had a tan and you know, hair gone a bit longer, the sort of things. So I think that was kind of, that was a big moment for just stepping out of childhood and stepping into actually who I am.

When returning for studies, in university she finds again surrounded by a monoculture of peers she wouldn't fit.

It was actually just full of white people who had too much money. So it felt, it didn't feel, it wasn't the experience I was expecting in that sense.

I'm a natural introvert and it was a very tight knit hall of residence. So I just was always around people and I couldn't, uh, it was horrendous. Um, and I also did a course that involves seven hours (laughs) lectures a week. So I had a lot of time to sit around and feel inadequate (laughs).

Not fitting in the social environment brings back again familiar struggles.

“I found university really hard because I think I thought I'd shoved all that behind me...”

But she manages to turn around the initial struggle.

I hate this the first year, I loved the second two years. So I think as it, again, the story is that I sort of thought I'd shed that, but actually when they have a university I struggled in similar way for the first year.

After studies, she is not pursuing actively a career. She considers herself lacking ambition. This is also the first sentence with which she began her narrative:

“Okay. Um, so, my history is, I mean, I actually think it's relevant that I was not terribly ambitious as a young adult”

And towards the end of her narrative:

“it's actually interesting to me that given I was a girl without ambition because I didn't know what I could do. Um, and the fact that I happened to become a vice president at [Company]. I mean, it actually makes me laugh slightly because I think it was never part of the plan.”

And she makes sense of that paradox, redefining lack of ambition as lack of confidence.

I think probably 'cause from a young age I was not naturally confident. Um, I think from an early age I was used to, uh, kind of leaning into fear and not letting it stop me. Uh, I also think, I mean, as much as I wasn't ambitious, I think my

lack of ambition came from a lack of understanding of what I could do. So it wasn't that I didn't want to achieve, I just wasn't clear on what I wanted to achieve.

During challenging times, peers can become a source of courage, as Katie gets inspired by her best friend's ability to survive, after an accident. The process of comparison here gives her gratitude.

“Um, and actually she has a huge influence on me because I think, um, whenever I'm in a position where I'm finding something tough or whenever I'm in a position where it's not feeling easy, I have a very real example of somebody who's had the shittiest, one of the shittiest things I think that can happen to..

Um, and it's just, you, you're just constantly drawn back to, you know, my worst day is something she could never imagine.

2. First organizational roles

2.1 Subordinate Role 1 (VRB1)

In one of her first corporate roles, she experiences the first intense performance anxiety as her supervisor warns her about consequences failing her assignment. In an assignment that she didn't like and did not have the skills.

I remember my boss at the time saying to me, don't fuck this up because if you do, they won't give you another chance. And it was actually a job that was very, um, what's the word, um, it didn't play to my strengths.

And I, again, I've got much better as I've got older but that kind of anxiety, that kind of fear would create anxiety which would be paralyzing.

2.2 Subordinate Role 2 (VRB2)

She decides to work for a friend who owns a small firm. Developing a working relation is difficult:

I had a GM, mmm, and there was no levels. So it was, it was totally un-hierarchical and he was technically the boss, but he was also my friend. So it was, it was a weird dynamic.

This laterality defines how decisions amongst them are made and roles taken. Oliver makes Katie responsible also for sales, without her wanting to. The business eventually gets bankrupt, and she feels she has to manage everything herself:

[...] I was kind of having to rally the troops. And, and there were times when I was pretty much holding the business together... it was collapsing...

I felt a lot of, uh, loyalty because they'd given me the opportunity to move. We were friends, so I wanted to help do whatever I could to keep the business going.

However, dealing with the impact of bankruptcy to their partners gives Katie unbearable feelings.

And I'll never forget sitting down with them. And it was sort of the last straw and they burst into tears on me and they said: 'He's ruined everything. You know, he's completely destroyed it.'

Um, and, and it was, it was that moment where I was like, I literally, I have to get out. I'll never forget as long as I live seeing the small business in tears and I felt at the time that he was flippant about it.

3 Leadership roles and maturity

3.1 Lateral Relation 1 (LRB1)

In one of her first leadership roles, Katie is promoted to a sales manager, having to work hand-in-hand with the product development manager, who had previously held sole responsibility for 15 years.

“as much as I try to manage that relationship and we were technically a lateral relationship, she'd obviously been semi-my boss and then she became my, my peer”

The peer covertly strips Katie off from her authority. The two of them appear in the room to share decisions, but the peer would execute her own.

And what would happen is that in those situations we'd have a conversation and I believe we'd aligned on something in that session. And you'd think you'd have aligned in that room and then once we left the room, she'd do something completely opposite.

Their power disparity also becomes apparent.

It was terrible. 'Cause I think at the time as well, I didn't have a ton of confidence, so it was quite easy to... and she'd been my, she was kind of a legendary figure. She was a force to be reckoned with.

And battling that in explicit terms wouldn't yield any change.

"No tactics worked. I tried sitting down and being honest with her, I tried, um, sharing suggestions on how we could do things differently. I tried workshops, I tried, everything. In her reign, these meetings would be, "I'm listening to your opinion but I don't care".

So actually in that, in that instance, I actually had to then bring in leadership to a what's the word, um, mmm, mediate and that still didn't work (laughs).

I learned the importance of trying to, influence laterally, but actually at points you, you, it just doesn't work and um you then need to bring in, ah, authority."

3.2 Subordinate Role 3 (VRA1)

She moves into a division in which she has no reputation or personal relations.

"I didn't have a reputation in [division], getting a promotion, not knowing anybody, not having a reputation, not having any background or detail about the business was one of the toughest times of my life."

These personal seniority traits appear to challenge her confidence in managing the first period in role. Under an authoritative boss, the performance anxiety she had experienced in earlier life phases is awakened. In an incident Katie is struggling to

develop a strategy of a business still unfamiliar to her and her boss gives her direct orders to fix a situation.

“So I remember I woke up, I was so stressed, I wake up at two o'clock in the morning and I was like, I might as well get some work done. So between two and five, um, or two and four, I'd worked on this and then obviously woken up feeling horrendous. Although I have managed to achieve something and it must've been that week when [supervisor] came into my office and it was just his style, you know, I know so much more now it was just his style to fire everything at you... And then he'd come into my office and said, uh, it was like 8:30 and screamed at me, " [This business] is a problem, you need to fix it.". And I remember just being almost winded because I was so exhausted, I was so stressed. Um, and he, he must have left the room and I must have shut the door, I had an office at the time. And I remember just sinking down and bursting into tears.”

She had previously narrated how such authoritative dismissal induced in her catastrophic thinking that if she wouldn't achieve the task, it would be as if she would be permanently destroyed.

3.3 Lateral Relation 2 (LRB2)

In a General Management role of a business division Katie has to interact laterally with senior leaders across the enterprise. The formal decision rights between functions and divisions seem to be blurred, obscuring the autonomy of her organization in decisions and execution, which have to be constantly resolved. In one incident she describes:

“I mean, some of the characters I deal with at the moment, I mean, I nearly killed one of them this week.”

“A good example would be recently, we did a, um, we obviously with the COVID situation, having to discount product. And I had to have a very lengthy conversation with one of our senior leaders, um, one of our most senior leaders about how I didn't think we should discount absolutely everything. Cause there's certain product that we don't have enough stock of [and are of high demand]. Um, and it's kind of like I'm spending half an hour and this happens a lot. I'm like, this is just this, there shouldn't be a conversation. This is so simple (laughs).

Um, so I think my life of aligning, um, and I have to use every skill I've got in the book. Like I feel sometimes I'm trying to be the negotiator. Sometimes I'm trying to be the influencer. Sometimes I'm being just an outright dictator.”

CHAPTER 6. A VERTICAL VIEW OF RON'S STORY

1. Early life

Ron's narrative didn't surface any early-life experiences.

2. First organizational roles

2.1 Vertical Role 1 (VRC1)

Upon graduation he is hired in an industrial company, and he is struck by its hierarchical culture, wherein decision rights on the task, seem to be based on tenure in role, hierarchical levels and compliance to superiors.

*“There were a lot of old men, of what today will be my age, working there. (laughs)
They, you know, the, in the first week they started to explain to me that if I would perform well, within 40 years' time, I would grow slowly to a management position
[...]*

[They] had I think, 14 or 15 management layers. And I started completely at the bottom. And everybody told me that I started at the bottom. (laughs) “

In one of his early projects, he is responsible for HR aspects of the diverstment of a company's division, and conflicts with the project leader:

..And then I run into this very old, experienced project leader who listened, then said, "I don't give a fuck. We have to get rid of the people. And I don't care how we get rid of them..."

..."We're not gonna do it. Uh, I am in charge of this project, you are not. So I'm not interested in your arguments. This is the way we're gonna do it. I've done it, uh, several times like this. We're gonna do it like this." And that was the first time that I experienced that not arguments, and not knowledge, and not content, was the decision-making structure. But the management layer was the decision-making structure..."

These roles appear to be lateral however level differences and responsibilities have verticality, despite not being connected or mediated by hierarchy. Ron seems to hold an egalitarian model in mind in how to resolve tensions. Here the tension seems to be fast execution vs treating the impacted people. This tension seems to be overridden by the decision rights between the two roles, based on hierarchy. Ron evaluates this project and the approach of the project lead against other projects. In the narrative it seems that the frustration of being restricted through hierarchical authority remained over the years.

There were a few projects that we run with a special developed program for the staff to motivate them and to get them, and to make sure that they will be ambassadors for us. And they were, those three that he managed, where it was very brute, and, yeah, cold process, based on the, on structure, and, money. He was the first to deliver his projects. But in the end, it proved to be the worst developed programs to get rid of people. And people know that, and people feel that.

Ron turns to his father for advice.

'You're young, you're full of ambition, you're full of ideas, and you always think that everybody around you is there to get the best, uh, possible result. That's not true. There's also, a political game going on in the company, there's a power game going on in the company. People are protecting their own existence in the company. Part of that is delivering their existence in society, and, you are there, and you are young, and you don't have a family to take care of, you don't have, uh, a mortgage to pay, you don't have a expensive house, you don't have expensive children that are, um, on a university education and you have to pay them... you have nothing'

Petros: "That moment you received that advice, what was that for you like?"

Ron: "I didn't listen. (laughs) Did you listen to your father?"

2.2 Lateral Relation 1 (LRC1)

The next organization in his career is a technology startup and Ron is one of the first employees to join in a leadership position. The team he operated worked in an agile way, where the leader was rotating the leadership responsibilities amongst team members and at times all have to step into common activities regardless of their function. One of the peer leaders is significantly older than the rest. In the following incident the older team member finds an opportunity, despite the equality installed by the team, to use his seniority effectively:

...We had a director I still remember him, in those days, he was 50. 50 for me was... stone age. 'You know, you're dead, but nobody told you. Get away. Start

doing something else'. Everything was one big mess, and we had a tremendous pressure cooker, we had to take decisions every day to keep the- the process running, and, uh, inside the company. And we had this very young group, uh, where I was the oldest one, 29, the rest was younger. And he age 50, uh, came in helping us, 'cause we were not delivering the right name and the right brand and the right logo. It just didn't work. And a funny thing, I still remember in a meeting that we were in a tremendous discussion, and somewhere at a Friday night at 11:00 in the evening, he sat there listened for an hour, and then said, "You guys, you are so old-fashioned, you are so stuck in old ideas, and, uh, let-let go of everything that you know, and everything that you believe in, and let's start together, developing a new, uh, a new name and new logo." And then he- he did some exercises with us to show us how we as people in our 20s were already stuck in our ideas, and- and in frames, thinking in frames that we... ..He took that out of the group, and still, I still remember the moment of the... that he, as the 50 year old guy, which was working for us for three months, and I still thought that he was dead but nobody told him, because he was above 50. That's old. Uh, and he was the guy who, uh, who changed our mind, and unlocked our, uh, our potential.

In the equalitarian and equality functioning of the group the older leader had the risk that his seniority was a disadvantage as opposed to power. The opportunity to use this for the benefit of the group, seemed to be utilized by the older leader portraying his coaching, attempting to bring the young leaders in touch with their youngness and freshness, as opposed to wanting to make them more mature. This form of leadership appears to be effective as it sustained the team members short career tenure, as a

power as opposed to a weakness whereby the older leader would be then appearing superior. Yet the older leader finds a way to take effective leadership and differentiate.

3. Leadership roles and maturity

3.1 Lateral Relation 2 (LRC2)

Much later in career Ron is a General Manager of a division and belongs to a Management Team of GMs of other divisions. In one incident they have to agree on the company wide IT system implementation.

[Division X] is big enough (laughs) and there was this discussion about, uh, about IT systems that we wanted to change. The CEO of X [peer leader] was only, we didn't have a real discussion, it took more than a year, and in the whole year, we were not debating, discussing, the best IT system, and the most effective solution for the company, and for people, and for our customers. We were only, uh, we were only in a tremendous fight about, it should be a [division X's existing] supplier delivering the new IT system. And, uh, and that- that was only a discussion about power and control, and not about content, and all about what's best for the company, what's best for the people.

Ron shares his inner experience of having to influence decisions and align within these dynamics:

Uh, I can see it, I can understand it, I can react to it, most effective way, is to do the discussion for yourself in the same way. Play the game in the same, uh, the same rules as your competitor is playing the game. That's not what works for me.

I can do that in... I can do that in a meeting, and afterwards, I don't feel happy with it.

3.2 Vertical Role 2 (VRC2)

He held successfully the role of CEO in an enterprise, in which however he found himself having to continuously navigate through organizational politics and power fights. This led him to decide to resign. He describes that moment he held the conversation with the supervisory board:

I explained to him why I wanted to leave the company and then he said, after 30 minutes he said, "Well I, I got the message. You don't have to explain it anymore. How much money extra do you want?"

"I don't want money. You didn't get the point. (laughs) I'm not satisfied in, in working together because, you measure in results and you measure me in forecasts and you measure me in, in spreadsheets. And I wanna work together with people and not with spreadsheets. And I wanna achieve, I wanna make it the best company with the best quality of service and, uh, the most, uh, happiest customers [...]"

Uh, and then he said something. "You are very successful." And then I ask him, why do you think I'm successful? And, and then he said, "Yeah, well you proved for, for 15 years in a row that you can outperform your budget," and then I made the remark that was well, a career ending remark I must admit (laughs), "I'm not in the game to have a tombstone when I die which says, here lies Ron, he outperformed 15 years' budget." [Laughs, slamming his hand on the table]

He describes how the next day he was escorted out of the company by security, whilst his intent was to work out a transition with a successor.

After this phase, Ron took another C-suit role at an organization he felt wasn't operating in such cold manners. This gets then described in terms that devalue working for profit and emphasizes the humane face of the organization.

Is a company which doesn't work for the money. Money is not the goal of the company. Money is the way to establish our goals. And our goals are being the most trustworthy partner for our customers, having a really important work for our employees, which is beneficial for them, having a good atmosphere in the company. So we are really changing the way we work together and although it's a very big company, so we need a little bit of structure to have it (laughs) a little bit under control and see what the, what's happening. The funny thing is that, I'm back to the emotional internal feeling that I know works best for me. And, and that is something that I've lost over, uh, the last years.

CHAPTER 7. A VERTICAL VIEW OF MATTHEW'S STORY

1. Early life

Matthew's narrative of early life only contained the images he held about his father as a corporate leader.

Um, and he did it in such a sort of, gentle non pow-... non authoritarian way and yet was able to deliver exquisitely detailed work that was high impact. You know, sort of, whether that was sort of, building motorways that connect communities together or, um, bringing water to different parts of the world and things like this, and sort of, some- some pretty amazing things but in a very humble way and w... and a way that was, um, it was empowering of others.

His dad reached the top of the organization but never managed to become the CEO, despite interviewing 3 or 4 times. As a teenager, Matthew recalls his dad's struggles to follow the newly appointed CEOs and seeking the support of his wife at the dinner table. He brings up one instance, where the CEO wants to introduce an incentive plan for engineers that his father was opposing.

And, um, and I remember, you know, dad coming home feeling the weight of all of this. I mean, you know, the sense of it was... he was frustrated about it... I remember feeling of kind of, what am I doing this for? What am I fighting? This man is come in with a, with a remit. I don't know why I wanna... this is crazy,

that kind of ideas, but a deep sense from him of kind of almost being let down, because, you know he, these were his people. You know, he was passionate about these engineers. He built these teams up, he built these projects up and so on.

He describes the ones that were chosen as CEOs instead.

...he always had this view of these people that come in as CEOs that they came in on a power trick and they restructured things because they needed to do something. And they really never had the tenure and time to get to the root-cause and the ground truth of how a business, how his business truly operated.

These experiences built an inner model, whereby it is extremely difficult to reconcile virtuous leadership with credibility and formal recognition in role. This tension will come up in various phases in Matthew's career.

2. First organizational roles

2.1 Supervisory Role 1 (VRD1)

His first organizational leadership roles were in the army, with unsurprisingly, explicit authority rights and hierarchical structure. Matthew seems to be assessing his seniority against his formal authority and the one of his subordinates:

And there's something about that in the sense that it's not just because you've been educated and you have a smarter way of thinking about problems and a soldier is not, or is worth less in their li... you know, a cable, you know, the

image of a set up troops being out the front. You know, it's easy to talk about this in... from an army perspective, you know, if you sort of... I'm gonna send the soldiers over the front and the officers will stay back and wait to see how many people still survive and they now follow. Now that's not the way. Maybe in the first world war it was a bit like that but most of the, even the stories of those days, and certainly the truly great officers are with their troops. And they're not running out in front of them, you know, to take the first bullet because then they're- they're being irresponsible in terms of their leadership, they're not, you know, actually there to lead.

He recalls an incident as a junior officer, with one of his apprentices talking him through the procedures of maintaining an engine, feeling astonished by the depth of his expertise:

Uh, my experience at that point was literally on, I understand how the engine works. And I remember being both in enthralled, scared and then thrilled all in one, really in a sense of, oh my God, I had no idea that the engine had such specific component in it.

Matthew then goes into comparing his junior officer's specific component knowledge to his own broader engine understanding:

And then it was almost this flip of going over, realizing that, okay, well, what they don't fully understand is how the engine operates...So the combination of

the two of us became quite interesting...But I had such depth in the specific that actually without his specific knowledge or mine the engine could work...

Matthew in such interaction is retracting from thinking about formal authority and hierarchical levels and connects to the actual knowledge and expertise of each role-holder. In this incident, he finds in his mind an equilibrium, between the subordinate's expertise and his, and in such way, he justified internally the fact that he leads subordinates of older age with deep expertise. This internal self-authorization process is built on a lateral internal model, based on task and expertise, as opposed to hierarchical authority.

3. Leadership roles and maturity

3.1 Supervisory role (VRD2)

In an engineering organization he leads a team of 15 engineers. In one particular incident a complex and expensive equipment used is damaged and about to get destroyed. In this crisis he has to lead in "command and control" ways.

So is this feeling of I'm the engineer, I'm the person responsible for the equipment in the hole, it's my time. I need to lead with clarity. So, it was, I mean, in my way, which is not just shout at people, but, you know, it's just literally very clear, right. I'm in charge...

...It's very blunt and specific instructions about how to move to the next piece of the puzzle. And after a couple of hours of right, everybody's doing what they need to clearly do...

...So it was almost a next conscious step was to go back to all of those people and just explain my decisions, explain how I thought about it, check with them how they were feeling about that and also check with them as to whether they thought that I'd made the right choices and just to listen in a couple of cases, to things that I had missed...

...And I remember the sense of gratitude and also of, um, of pride in both my team. And actually I let myself be of myself, um, at having achieved this. And, you know, and one of the things was the most senior clients on the site was a much older person than I was at that stage, um, who came said to me, you know, "Well done Matthew!" And I can still remember his tap on my shoulder to say, well done and a sense of, okay, that was the correct actions to take...

But, you know, while that tap on the back was really powerful, you know, actually it was then the team who said that they'd been and felt that they'd been part of something and that they still o- and I guess the point I would make with that, they still owned it, even though I had had to.

This style is clearly not the preferred mode of leading for Matthew, but he derived authorization from the crisis to do so, which solves the situation. Having done so, he now needs to revert to his previous inclusive, participatory leadership. Notably the sense of recognition comes from the most senior person, who despite being a client, could symbolically be seen as vertical authority.

3.2 Lateral Relation (LRD1)

After the first half of his career Matthew returns to school for an MBA. This incident is an interesting process of how a diverse group, is being built based on differences without developing destructive competitive dynamics.

- a. At first he is exposed to the full cohort:

“you all kind of met and there was a big mayhem, uh, presentations, and, you know, I think we were 220 people in my class...”

- b. In the second day he gets introduced to his study group of seven:

the first couple of days of feeling like I'm part of this amazing thing, and then I'm suddenly in this really tiny, highly diverse community, group of people. And I remember some fear in that and some specificity of kind of like you know, "bloody hell, you know, I was expecting this really big diverse group and now I'm in this tiny group, is it diverse enough?"

- c. The anxiety of whether the study group will be successful, manifest itself in the form of whether it is diverse enough. And the way to cope with it is by forming alliances. Next is concerned about differences.

... you're looking for allies in the group and, and things like this.

- d. Thereafter the program divided them in groups of nations:

So we were all separated into these country groups, and then those country groups were allowed to celebrate their diversity, their things. So the French played a game to be very French..

- e. The caricaturing of their national identity seemed to have had an empowering effect in being different also in the small groups and to speak to others about their differences.

When he came back to the group, even though he was Klaus, it was, you know, we're each individually different, but it matters where you come from and what you're about, because it helps us understand each other and understand differences and things like that. And you know I was thinking, so that was very much a sort of series of events that helped us formulate a bond.

The study group was a self-managed group, with an interdependency wherein team assignment grades would account for 50% of the individual grade. Within this context an interesting incident occurs:

And there was an event later on, a marketing paper that we had to do, which was all about brand....we had two branding experts, one from PR and another one from marketing on the team. We could have just let them do it, but, you know, all, all of us stood up to contribute something to that paper.

It was just Joey, is just seem to go... be absent from the activity. Um, and, and so we a- you know, we, we agreed together that we weren't just going to get the paperwork done and leave this person behind, we were gonna find out why they were not there and what was going on and all of the rest of it. And that helped them

do better in their, in their paper. But, but, but that, that the sort of action was dividing up the puzzle using the cognitive differences between each individual and experiences, and then being able to create more of a whole again.

The choice of keeping marketing experts less involved might be seen as an opportunity for others to grow but could also be a way for the group to sustain equality in contributions and not put heavier weight on some. Further, comes the issue of the noncontributor. The group strives to make everyone equally deserving their collective grade, than having to themselves rank each other's individual contributions. In that process the noncontributor is given grace and the group avoids differentiating based on individual performance.

4.1 Lateral Role (LRD2)

As a VP in a large enterprise, Matthew collaborates across boundaries to develop complex client propositions. One of those results into a success generating large sales. Matthew's individual contribution however isn't explicitly highlighted internally.

"They told the story in a much more competitive way and a much, uh, a quite a comp- quite, quite a disfranchising way, which has limited some of the opportunities I've had, um, and certainly back in those days...."

There was a selflessness too. I tried to be inclusive with others in their role that they played with my story. So, it's, you know, in this sense of lateral leadership, you know, it was actually a sense of when you're storytelling, you're selling the story of the whole, but just making sure that your role is mentioned."

Matthew associates his credibility in the organization with how his authority and scope translates into remit and resources, with ultimately also implications to his future career development.

if I'm not careful, this other person is gonna get the association about solving for this problem, that I've identified. I came up with the research, (laughs) but they've got the money and feeling, ooh, I'm worried about my position in this because, you know, if I wasn't the one given the money, what does that say about somebody's respect for my role in this.

And focuses on how he can be uniquely valuable in an unranked way better but diversified from others.

I'm not going to get frustrated by their lack of critical thinking on this and, and also realize that it is relatively rare that people think in systems and are willing to be critical of the status quo in a constructive way. Um, so I need to take them on a journey... That it's my strength, not necessarily somebody else's and therefore, actually my responsibility is bringing that to the table and being willing to be challenged on it and for others to not really understand where I'm coming from, but I- I'm responsible to do that. And if I don't do it because others are just not kind of playing the game, I'm not bringing my strengths to the table, therefore, um, you know, it's sort of at one level it makes me feel frustrated because, you know, I wish more people thought in systems and, and but also, you know, feeling confident and empowered.

PART III: A LATERAL VIEW OF THE DATA

After presenting the subjective leadership experiences per participant, this section is dedicated to discerning patterns and phenomena as they emerge across the full dataset (as seen in Table 2. Quantitative view of the data). The “lateral view” cross-examines data for dynamics and not linked to the participants.

Chapter 8 presents the process and final outcomes of discerning relational patterns in all types of relations. It focuses on images of authority and outlines the dynamics and anxieties involved in taking up a role on the lateral axis. These result in the formulation of three phenomena: mental ranking, relational dimension confusion, and relational morphing.

These findings partially address the research questions but do not fully provide answers on the causality of the manifested phenomena. To address this gap, a further data analysis is created that is mainly concerned with the “ontological dimension” of the relational attributes of incidents. All incidents are analyzed in a depersonalized manner and looked at as role-holders, independent from the incumbents who make use of relational attributes. These steps and new findings are presented in **Chapter 9**.

CHAPTER 8. DISCERNING PATTERNS FROM A LATERAL VIEW

1. From in-case to cross-case patterns

The challenge of transitioning from in-case analysis to cross-case theorizing entailed disconnecting from the view of data through the subjectivity of each participant. Having dwelled into their subjective experiences, by following the vertical path of each biography, their unique relational patterns were made prominent and risked overshadowing overall patterns in the data.

The entry point to data was their subjective views of their experiences. The prominent phenomenon of transference from early-life relational patterns to organizational roles would not be a new finding.

1.1 Unique relational models

Eva's stories contained an affinity to navigating challenging hidden power dynamics, potentially due to a flexible lateral model with authority figures from earlier life. Katie's stories of decision-rights' vagueness, which can remind her of anxieties from the past, linked to the feeling of not belonging to the lateral group and the threats of vertical misjudgment. Ron's stories contained the anxieties when meritocracy is threatened by hierarchical or seniority differentiation and a desire to avoid them through laterality.

Matthew's stories revealed the existential anxieties and potential cost of not pursuing explicit recognition of individual contributions.

1.2 First observations across cases

A curious phenomenon across all situations was how VR would include transference of lateral early-life experiences and vice-versa. This is something that merits exploration. The phenomenology of the dynamics involved in certain incidents resembled a relation of a different dimension. Throughout most incidents, there was a persistent preoccupation by participants of comparing their seniority to others. All these persistent patterns across cases were the starting points towards cross-case theorizing. Before exploring these phenomena, I started by discerning patterns across all VR and all LR. I first present those and then return to outline the above phenomena.

2. Patterns within vertical relations

2.1 A predominant vertical view

All narratives were consistently dominated by VR as opposed to LR, which is striking considering the study's topic. It can be partially attributed to SQUIN's formulation (Figure 6), which induced a complete career account that could be associated to the preoccupation of "What is my personal leadership and why?" The significance is that it emphasized a consistent view that a career should follow a vertical continuum of progress. The narrative structures presented careers as such, and any moments of deviation had to be justified, perhaps revealing an instinctive associated shame. This might not be different to a job interview, which was not our context.

“my career went up and then across and then I left and then I joined [Company] and it went up and then across and then I joined [Company]”

And such progress is to be measured quantitatively, getting older (age), better (by learning through experience) and bigger (accountability and power).

“And the content was brilliant and inspiring and [...] but it was less people actually, that were reporting to me, than when I had not been officially a people leader.”

The derivative dynamic associated with such a view is a competitive one, against myself of the past, and / or against others, which is linked, later in the data, to comparison with peers, to gain a sense of self. These dynamics seemed to function less as ambition or fulfillment, and more as a relief from anxieties about self-worth,

“..I realized, I am actually worthy.”

or survival,

“I've got much better as I've got older, that kind of anxiety, that kind of fear would create anxiety which would be paralyzing.”

In contrast, fulfillment and existential concern were not concerned with being compared to others, but rather focused on what do I want to leave behind and be remembered for:

“Achieving some pretty amazing things, but in a very humble way.”

“He was a nice guy. You would laugh with him and I could trust him. [...] I hope it's something like that, on my tombstone.”

“My driver has never been ambition, power, success, money.”

“A much more holistic wellbeing, oriented vision of success. [...] Given what's happened with COVID and then the George Floyd situation, it's actually what's coming to the forefront.”

Whilst these have a contextual quality of the timing of interviews, they reveal how this dimension of personal identity connects to the workplace, which lies at the opposite side of self-image through the vertical competitive view. These ambitions and anxieties seem to be internally challenged within LRs which is considered further in this chapter.

2.2 Internal images of authority

Linking to the last themes are images of “good leadership.” These can be seen as containing an anxiety of being subjected to authority relations. But importantly here they also portray how minimal the exercising of formal authority and nonhierarchical functioning should be.

Table 10. Internal authority images

Images of good (new) leadership	Images of bad (old) leadership
Codes	
Purpose Positive impact in society Wellbeing Best for customers Meaningful work for employees Systems thinking Holistic Common cause Servant Leader Coach	Money Status On a power trick Success Self-oriented Authoritarian Directive Hierarchical Dictator Alpha type Leader Negotiator Manager

Quotes from transcript	
<p><i>“Ariana Huffington’s Thrive [...] and what you need now is a much more holistic wellbeing, oriented, um, vision of success”</i></p> <p><i>“gentle non pow-... non authoritarian way and yet was able to deliver exquisitely detailed work that was high impact”</i></p> <p><i>“We’re not here to earn money. We just earn money so that it helps us give us possibilities to achieve our goals. And achieving our goals is the way... the impact that we have on society, the positive impact that we have on society, and, uh, to deliver meaningful work for our customers and for our employees.”</i></p> <p><i>“There’s the curiosity to understand something, to be critical of it and to use critical thinking and systems thinking.”</i></p> <p><i>“your ability to mobilize people together around a common cause, it requires all of the best of me in terms of servant leadership and, you know, really making it about other people.”</i></p>	<p><i>“How did Churchill truly act? How did (laughs) Jack Welch, how did he really create change?”</i></p> <p><i>“high impact leaders, none of them were Trumpesque”</i></p> <p><i>“the traditional, um, structure of success is very male mmm oriented and very, very built around power, success and money”</i></p> <p><i>“I don’t have to do what’s best for the company, I have to do what you say, because you’re a five years older, you’re on different management level”</i></p> <p><i>“with some characters [...] who still lead in a very old school way.”</i></p> <p><i>“CEOs that they... they came in on a power trick and they... they restructured things because they needed to do something.”</i></p> <p><i>“The big man [...] said ‘Well I, I got the message, you don’t have to explain it anymore. How much money extra do you want?’[...] they try to buy you with more money ”</i></p>
<p><i>“...there’s a great book called Consiglieri, which is basically the second in command to the guy. You know, you’ve got the... the big guy, um, and, um, the CEO, who’s the A type, you know, it’s gotta be about him or her. It’s gotta be that. And then you’ve got the Consiglieri role, who it is all about that person but it’s absolutely about me, but I’m quietly confident in my own ability and I don’t need anybody else to tell me that I’m good at what I do other than the boss, who needs to bloody well know.”</i></p> <p><i>“you could be a servant leader but in an environment where you’ve got a load of other A class players trying to be (laughs) quite hierarchical.”</i></p>	

Taken out of context, these images seem stereotypical despite participants' displaying themselves constructive uses of formal authority. Comparing these authority notions over the career's chronology (Step 1.3 in Figure 8), showed:

- per career phase, early stages as a subordinate contained more incidents of a traumatized effect, being subjected to unfair, aggressive, or failed authoritarianism
- per career chronology there was gradually less mentioning of authoritative supervisors' figures and styles.

This is not due to the 'bad' images of authority having become less frequent through the decades, because those notions continued to exist in the narratives. But it did not involve the intimidation by supervisor's authority as in earlier careers. In contrast, these notions were now used for lateral interactions with leaders, which I found a striking finding.

2.3 Roles in vertical relations incidents

Vertical relations predominately concerned roles as a subordinate (14 incidents of being a subordinate as opposed to 6 as a supervisor) and most contained significantly difficult emotions. The two categories of anxieties were (a.) uncertainty over whether being able to make it, and (b.) frustration at being subjected to unfair and wrongful authority. Being subjected to such authority heightened a sense of vulnerability, despair in absolute dependency, and the "remedy" to these would be to rely to own abilities over time, becoming more powerful and autonomous through skill and performance.

"This has really changed now, that, I felt anxious, that I would fail. So I, I think I was very wired to being fearful of failure versus later in life, I didn't really care. I'll just, I'll dive in."

"Well you proved for 15 years in a row, that you can outperform your budget."

On the contrary, only two incidents as supervisor involved significant anxiety, out of which only one did not have a positive resolution. The significance of this finding is that by slicing the data through relational roles, performance and survival anxieties were linked to roles as subordinate or in LRs, revealing that being concerned with relations with people they managed was not a source of anxiety.

Overall, only 6 out of 40 incidents concerned supervisory roles, despite all participants presenting themselves as thoughtful and intentional about their people leadership. Such concerns were present in LR incidents, revealing that challenges in LRs contained the element of loyalty in representing the team's interest or being concerned about their wellbeing.

In essence, VRs as supervisors were not heightening vulnerability, impotence, and anxieties as in VRs as subordinate or LRs. These themes become significant when linked to anxieties in LR incidents.

3. Patterns within lateral relations

Lateral relations accounted for approximately a third of the narrated organizational incidents. They could be categorized between:

- a) Nontask-based peer relations (LRP), such as narrating perspectives about participants' positioning within the executive peer group or being part of a management development cohort.

- b) The LRs concerning a collaborative need, coded as “lateral relations of collaboration” (LRC), which definitionally constituted the study’s core focus and concerned 14 incidents.

3.1 Nontask-based peer relations

A primary function of the inner experience within LRPs was gaining a sense of self in comparison to others (Table 11).

Table 11. Experiences of lateral relations amongst peers (LRPs).

LRP Function	Example quotes from all participants
Assessing self-worth in leadership performance through quantitative competitive ranking	<p><i>“much to my surprise, I was A, by far the youngest person there, B, the one that was, um, employed by [Company] the shortest of everyone, um, I passed with flying colors.”</i></p> <p><i>“what’s very special for me, we had our yearly summit, with the top 200 [...] they took out a very small portion, two minutes [on published video] there’s a part from me [...] that meant a lot to me.”</i></p>
Assessing self-worth in virtuous leadership through qualitative comparative ranking	<p><i>“it’s much simpler to work within a clear, bounded arena with a clear set of skills alignment [...] sales people working with other sales people. [...] But to go across the boundaries you have to be inquisitive and curious to think critically and you need to really be educated in the way that says, how the heck do I work across these boundaries and - and I think, in a way, to instill in people that true leadership [...] should not be about hierarchical leadership.”</i></p> <p><i>“There are some people at [Company] who still lead in a very old school way. Um, and it’s just really interesting how it’s going to evolve. Um, cause I think we’re going to need to completely change and trust um the ability to allow people to get on with it. I think some leaders have it and some don’t (laughs).”</i></p>
Feeling powerful and exclusive, through the ranking of the peer group	<p><i>“The one that was very kind of powerful, was a conversation about Black Lives Matter and equality [...] where the only people on the phone were VP and above. And I was very aware of the influence that this particular group have on the business in a disproportionate way to, you know, just doing another, um, program on diversity and inclusion.”</i></p>

	<p><i>Um, and so there was something about the exclusivity of that and knowing the, the influence in that group. Um, and I was very aware of the, the, both the, almost the, the level of people in the room, um, was quite kind of, you know, um, interesting. Um, and for some people, it was, you know quite, it was quite difficult to contribute into, into that circle, you know, because they were, you know, maybe not quite as senior as everybody else and, you know, all of the next level of seniority kind of conversations (laughs)”</i></p>
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These are functions of getting a sense of individual or collective value, or exclusivity and a sense of power, through comparison and ranking. The underlying competitiveness of these mental functions do not appear to be conscious and is oppositional to their more consciously embraced and declared leadership values.

A secondary function of these comparisons was to make sense of hardship they experienced in LRCs. From the above, the middle category of comparisons was across all four cases and were associated with hardships in LRC incidents with peers of either winning or losing a battle. This later revealed that a LRC challenging interaction may contain a vertical competitive win-lose dynamic. The role-holders thus empowered themselves in it by sustaining a qualitative superiority as opposed to a quantitative one. This helped to contain negative emotions, such as shame when having been dominated. These are links that are explored further in experiences within LRCs.

Comparing to or being compared to was also present in early-life peer relations, when available, with siblings and classmates, as seen in Table 12.

Table 12. Effects of comparison to peers

Effect of comparison to peers	Incidents	Inter- and intra-processes
Not fitting in (negative)	<p>i1.16 Doesn't want to be seen as privileged in class, because mum is the class's teacher, so doesn't speak up, even when knowing the answer</p> <p>i2.3 Isn't seen by parents as studious in comparison to siblings</p> <p>i2.7 Being tallest of the entire class, induces insecurity, lack of confidence and therefore tries to hide it, by bending one leg in photos</p> <p>i2.11 In university feeling different to other kids in personality/background, impacting confidence, which may be partially the reason for slow progress (identifying differences = not being studious)</p>	<p>Comparing self to peers</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Painfully unconfident</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Hide true self and unconfident about it</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Fitting in, but secretly unconfident about self</p>
Standing out (positively)	<p>i1.20 compares letter length to those of pen-friends feeling better</p> <p>i1.29 compares self in terms age and tenure to peers, realizing is way ahead</p>	<p>Comparing self to peers</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Positively surprised by self</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Continuing to progress (invisibly)</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Secretly confident about self</p>
Compare self to hardship of others	<p>i1.17 after X's suicide, realizes is also loved and is worthy</p> <p>i2.9 and i2.12 two best friends experience hardship in life, putting own hardships in perspective and get confidence - hope</p>	<p>Peer, I identify with, experiences disaster</p> <p>↓</p> <p>It could have been me</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Despite being different they were loved / they survived in life</p> <p>↓</p> <p>I can make it in life despite of / by allowing myself, to be different</p>

3.2 Inner experiences in lateral relations of collaboration

Most LRCs were between leaders unbounded by hierarchy (across boundaries) and several between hierarchical peers (team members). Interestingly, at first, many appeared as if it concerned relations amongst equals, and later in the narrative it emerged that role seniorities had substantial disparities. The majority, if not all, contained situations of decision-rights vagueness that had to be navigated through, but usually not explicitly negotiated as the “rules of the game” most resembled an informal talk to sort things out (over a call as opposed to in the boardroom). All LRC events involved hardship and struggles, apart from one incident that was brought as a positive example. Out of all the challenging incidents, only one participant felt potent for having had the capacity to cope. A more ontological comparison then was conducted by drawing ontological hypotheses, when possible, whether the interaction had a task-effective outcome. In several cases, the outcome was classified as task effective, but the participant had struggled and was dissatisfied. For example, the participant aligned on the decision in favor to their priority, but the interaction was dissatisfying. By this comparison, one conclusion was that participants were only remembering challenging lateral interactions, and as if, when it worked, it simply went unnoticed. If this is an accurate conclusion, the disheartening realization is that camaraderie and containment that can exist on the lateral axis (present in early life or adult social context incidents) is not to be found in senior corporate lateral relations. The other conclusion is that “to get the job done” entails intense relational hardship. This is reflected in Table 13 containing the cross-case overview of concerns and anxieties within LRs. These were a result after each incident analysis, combined with TFA and NSS biographic analysis (steps in Table 6) and is phenomenological from their subjective perspective.

Table 13. Concerns and anxieties, involved in or activated by LRC interactions

1. Rational Task-focused	2. Reputation	3. Relational	4. Safety & Survival	5. Own Identity & Integrity
1.1. Outcome erosion	2.1. Seen by team as not enabler or fighter	3.1. (Having to be) inferior / superior	4.1. Assess own power to predict the interaction	5.1. Not being authentic self
1.2. Delusion of optimal decision	2.2. Seen in org as territorial	3.2. Feeling trust by no superiority differentiation, no competitiveness	4.2. Survival of the fittest	5.2. Forced to play (dirty) politics
1.3. Not being able to deliver	2.3. Seen by peers as self-driven, by org as noncollaborative	3.3. Feeling trust, "we are in it together", whatever it takes	4.3. Be intruded, invaded	5.3. Losing own integrity
1.4. Being slowed down	2.4. Exposed upwards (if escalated) for having sorted laterally	3.4. Being dominated	4.4. Powerless, vulnerable (no potent formal authority)	5.4. Having had impact
1.5. Protect own team's wellbeing and enablement	2.5. Seen as aggressive or authoritarian for using formal authority	3.5. Mistrust on others' real motives (selfish drive)	4.5. Sustain remit, right to play	5.5. Leaving a legacy
1.6. Defend or compete for resources	2.6. Seen as lacking personal leadership for using formal authority	3.6. Having to seduce / be seduced	4.6. Fully dependent on relational outcome	5.6. Be part of something big & virtuous
1.7. Sustain personal performance	2.7. Value diminished if compared to others	3.7. Having to influence, using all powers, full self	4.7. Losing overall formal organizational authority	5.7. Be virtuous, charismatic, impacting lives positively
1.8. Bureaucracy, nonsense work time spent	2.8. Be seen as charismatic, virtuous leader	3.8. Disrespect others' accountability / seniority	4.8. No rules, chaotic complexity, dangerous unclarity	
			4.9. Injustice, can't rely on leadership, the system	

An incident can contain several concerns, innate to the relational interaction and contextual task, but then activates other anxieties related to the overall system and based on own biography. To make this interactivity of anxieties between the different columns of Table 13 clear, I include an extract from one incident, in which the participant (P) had just found out that a peer leader got a research grant for an initiative that P had identified. What emerges in the situation is that the peer leader is more senior based on formal role accountability and/or direct-reports size, in comparison to P. The segmenting of own views within one situation, allows us to follow the level of struggle and anxieties involved, and the inner work one has to do to cope.

Table 14. Anxieties encountered during a leader's introspection of an LRC

Narrative	Thematic Field Analysis
<p><i>1. And you're like, "Oh, wow. Right. How... what, what did I do wrong that I didn't get that funding? What's what... why didn't I get that funding? What's the, what's the thing there?"</i></p>	<p>Asks himself why he didn't succeed and the other did. Competitive win-lose scenario Surprised, with an out-of-the-blue peer</p>
<p><i>2. Um, I'm very aware sort of, hmm, if I'm not careful this other person is gonna get the association about solving for this problem, that I've identified. I came up with the research, (laughs) but they've got the money</i></p> <p><i>3. and feeling, ooh, I'm worried about my position in this because, you know, if I wasn't the one given the money, why, um, what does that say about somebody's respect for, for my role in this and, and, you know, maybe the- maybe these other people have,</i></p>	<p>Becoming anxious that peer will eventually be recognized for his own idea. Anxious about reputation.</p> <p>Funding = sign of formal recognition of individual efforts = public credibility Lack of it = shame, loss of public respect (humiliation)</p>
<p><i>4. you know, maybe it's, maybe it's not what I understand it to be, maybe it is different research.</i></p>	<p>Doubts whether he should feel competitively; maybe it's a different research. Maybe it's the dynamic not the actual situation.</p>
<p><i>5. Maybe it is a different way of looking at things but it feels like somebody's just, you know, um, taken something away from me without asking for permission and taking credit for it.</i></p>	<p>Feeling invaded, stolen without permission, not having real, potent authorization</p>
<p><i>6. And it's how you respond I think, is almost my, you know, sort of, okay, so actually, so this one, I had to decide whether I help the person who's getting this research done or I don't.</i></p>	<p>Acknowledges there is an instinctive possibility of "sabotaging the peer" by refusing to collaborate. This gives a realization that he still has potency, through which (inter)dependency opens up possibilities.</p>

<p>7. <i>And I think my default is always back to, we're all trying to solve, solve a problem. There's a reason.</i></p>	<p>That doesn't feel right, prefers to engage with the task.</p>
<p>8. <i>And trying to understand why that person has got funding versus somebody else is, you know, there's good questions to answer there.</i></p>	<p>Curiosity to find out whether there is a good reason, not related to own wrongdoing (not having claimed budget explicitly and fast enough)</p>
<p>9. <i>You know, is it anything to do with me? Is it because my... I'm not well-known enough in the particular circle? Is it something I've done wrong? or more, you know, so going through those questions and then coming and then coming through to the answer and going actually, well,</i></p>	<p>But this can lead to self-doubt. Maybe it is about not being good enough (network, reputation, part of the inner circle).</p>
<p>10. <i>it's because that person's in a certain position and therefore they're seen to be responsible for this specific thing. So therefore they're the one being asked and they...</i></p>	<p>Linking to the other person's formal role, gives a sense of relief (it's not about my wrongdoing, being less of). Remit based on formal role authority provides safety. But is not favoring egalitarian meritocracy.</p>
<p>11. <i>and I perhaps should be blessed by the fact that this person actually sought to include me.</i></p>	<p>Focusing through formal roles, reverses the relation's direction and can feel grateful for the possibility of collaborating.</p>
<p>12. <i>So you know, that's, that all good. You know, it's all good in the scheme of things 'cause the work gets done. So that's, you know, sort of the work gets done.</i></p>	<p>Focusing on the actual task, gets a sense of containment and hope.</p>
<p>13. <i>The, the warning flag is it's still, you know, you can sense it, right. It's still there because it's like going,</i></p> <p>14. <i>I'm gonna absolutely make sure that we, we do this in a consistent way that I'm comfortable with, that my role in it is clear and I will take the concern of my position into this next phase of working with this.</i></p>	<p>Realization and anxiety about the importance to fight for formal authority, remit, not only focus on the task, agnostic of organizational dynamics.</p>
<p>15. <i>And, you know, there's a couple of emails I've got to write this week to, for example, to just make sure that people (laughs), um, uh, know where all this stuff's coming from.</i></p>	<p>Which makes him decide to take action to seek exposure of his role and contribution.</p>

Apart from the task-specific and contextual concerns, an incident activates multiple anxieties (from Table 13) which may not be directly relevant to the incident. Here, systemic anxieties about how things “actually” work have contradicting effects (e.g. should one take initiative outside formal remit or system provides remit based on formal role authority) and impose dilemmas as one way out might conflict another concern. Finally, inner models from personal biography activate other anxieties. In this case, the participant holds images of own father not being formally recognized despite

actual achievements and virtuous leadership. Formal remit (e.g. number of direct reports) became in participant's minds, a measurement of organizational enablement and survival risk.

Table 15. Experienced LRC dynamics

Experienced LRC Dynamic	Examples
<p>LRD1 Absolute equality Use of power (seniorities) is only for the shake of task; personal differentiation occurs internally and secretly</p>	<p>“The majority is very young, people who had just graduated or had one or two years' experience... He was 50, for me it was stone age. You know, you're dead, but nobody told you. Get away. Start doing something else (laughs) [...] But this guy was so full of new ideas and new thoughts...”</p>
<p>LRD2 Absolute equalitarianism Equal use of authority rights, democratic decision-making; denial of existing authority rights; violation of existing authority</p>	<p>“there was no difference in level,... no formal structure”</p> <p>“I [HR] was in a plane with a half of my project team [traveling to solve supply chain issues] because we, the sales went completely through the roof”</p> <p>“[autonomous decision] was a no-brainer, there should not be even a conversation”</p>
<p>LRD3 Covert Power Fight Exercise of seniority or ability superiority in order to dominate the dynamic; Friendly influence, seduction, explicit reference of the other's dependency on own skills and resources</p>	<p>“Try and leverage to what it is, what type of people they are... and trying to adapt my behavior to them.”</p> <p>“Someone that is more relaxed, mellow approach, very kind, very submissive...”</p> <p>“He's divisive, he's sneaky and he runs a very important part of our business. So, it's really tricky because you have to be on side with him. So it takes a bit of my energy. but actually, I mean, the good thing now is with him, I have his trust, so he thinks we're best friends.”</p>
<p>LRD4 Authority Negotiation Align, challenge or negotiate authority rights; Create implicit awareness of formal role dependency</p>	<p>“Great, wonderful. I cannot, you know, support this.” So I told him, literally, “Great, you do that, but it won't get you anywhere. But before you escalate, just hear me out for a moment...”</p>

LR1 and LR2 were the only dynamics that did not involve challenging feelings, but they also entailed denial or concealing of differences, and did not belong to an executive level of large-scale enterprise. Out of all dynamics, LR3 was the most prominent and LR4 to a lesser extent. Either way, whether to exercise personal power or role authority, it would have to be careful, friendly, constructive, but done almost covertly, implicitly.

4. Patterns across all relations

4.1 Mental ranking

A significant phenomenon that occurred across all cases and types of relations I coded as “mental ranking” (MR) when participants were concerned with seniority levels comparing themselves to others or amongst others (seen already in the examples of previous tables). The attributes used covered anything quantitative from role size and hierarchical level, to tenure in organization and career or actual age and skill. I classified those as seen in Table 16. Using seniority to rank self and/or others appeared as an internal mental process, either conscious or unconscious.

Table 16. Attributes used for *mental ranking* (MR)

Attributes of Ranking	Assess level of self and others based on:
Ranking based on role seniority or role size	<p>Role seniority: company grade, reporting line distance from the CEO, title, tenure in role, tenure in organization</p> <p>Role size: business, team, budget size</p>
Ranking based on personal seniority	<p>Personal/Professional Attributes: Age, level of education, career tenure, depth of knowledge, functional expertise, reputation</p>

The preoccupation with seniority was so prominent throughout the data and was useful to study in VRs. Many can be traced within the participants chapters.

Table 17. Different uses of MR

Uses of Mental Ranking (MR)	Description
MR1. Assessing consistency or disparity between role and personal seniority in self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It entails questioning whether own age justifies the role. • Consistency leads to self-validation, authorization in role, because others will also see this consistency. • Disparity can create either confidence about progressing faster than normal or doubts whether others will justify oneself in role (being authorized by others). • Self-confidence vs meritocracy.
MR2. Assessing consistency or disparity between role and personal seniority in others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It entails assessing others' "real" level when it remains hidden or to understand why others may not act according to formal role. • Higher role to personal seniority may raise questions about meritocracy and injustice. • Lower role to personal seniority may indicate having to treat someone with different "respect" than the role asks or justify why they act in certain ways.
MR3. Assessing consistency or disparity in role seniority between self and others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When authority levels are unclear or not valid it can function as an implicit rule of how to create implicit hierarchy.
MR3. Assessing consistency or disparity in personal seniority between self and others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When authority levels are unclear or not valid it can function as an implicit rule of how to create implicit hierarchy. • It makes the dynamic feel more personal.

Though MR effectively seemed to have two main purposes, one was as a form of self-authorization in role and to authorize others and the second was to assess the situation because authority relations were so confusing. Table 14 presents an example of how a concealed peer's level during an interaction and MR act as a way to assess how such an incident can be treated. This also revealed the difficulties in discerning

the ontological dimension of incidents. I had to go back to the data and recode those disparities if I wanted to see whether they were impacting on the lateral dynamics and how.

4.2 Relational dimension confusion and relational morphing

Before discerning patterns per type, I had to classify all PINs per relation type. My initial coding mixed their phenomenological and ontological dimensions. That is when I first encountered this inconsistency, for which I had to first set up clear ontological rules (Table 4) on how to code and then recode based on the dynamic's phenomenology (Table 8).

After selecting a few for the "context-blind analysis" with others, I could track this inconsistency for 26 out of the 40 incidents, which concerned all types of relations. The phenomenological coding was mostly a result of the participants' inner experience reflected in the narrative. Other times, the co-created dynamic by all parties would result in a phenomenological relation that I could classify as "morphed" from its original nature, as if all parties had agreed implicitly to do so. Table 18 contains examples of this morphing.

Table 18. Examples of *relational dimension confusion* and *relational morphing*

Relational Dimension Pattern	Example
Relational dimension confusion	Incident in supervisor's role with a team that was not changing: <i>... 'We've been going over this for three years, I expect you to be bigger than this, and you're not doing that.' I did tell them, literally this, at the end of the, of the process, saying, 'Look, I expected you to be much bigger in this</i>

	<i>approach' and they were not able to accommodate."</i>
Relational morphing	<p>Incident in leadership role of a startup company, where it was collectively agreed to function laterally:</p> <p><i>"There was no difference in level. Nobody was, uh, and it was a group with directors and junior engineers working together, but it was no, uh, the structure and the split of work was based on knowledge, contents, capabilities, and not on the formal structure that we put on paper to show to the Works Council. This is the way we organized."</i></p> <p>Incident of being in supporting role to MT and momentarily morphed into peer member:</p> <p>"I wasn't a formal member of the MT in the sense I didn't report to [name], I reported to the CEO. So most of the time that would be, I would pick up actions, I would give them and help, provide them education as to what the priorities of the CEO were. Um, and, um, it was mainly, um, uh, more helpful I suppose.</p> <p>The one time I can really remember of bringing the authority of the CEO into the room it was an offsite management meeting, there was an issue with the head of operations for the team, who wasn't in the room. And so I remember sort of almost having to call on the authority of not just my own position, but my own position backed up by the CEO to talk about, okay, um, could I raise the elephant in the room here? What... where is [name]? Um, what's going on with this? W- we're avoiding something as a management team.</p> <p>Um, and I think given my age and seniority in the company, it would have been a very, very brave thing to do to sort of say, uh, where's this, where's this leader."</p>

Whilst per incident we could draw many hypotheses about the systemic, contextual, and group dynamics that led to (momentarily) confused or morphed experience, at first glance, it was not easy to discern patterns or the causality of this phenomena. The in-

case analysis linking these inconsistencies to relational patterns throughout show how subjective relational patterns could “override” the relations’ formal nature. Effectively, one could say it is a result of the phenomenon of transference, which contains no novel understanding. Another initial interpretation was linking this confusion to different aspects and dimensions of the same relation. I wanted to understand what could constitute attributes that resulted in these phenomena. I wondered what were causal forces for it or could there be patterns beyond individual idiosyncrasies. What differentiated a confused to a collectively morphed experience? And how all these relate to LRs. These were the causality questions that were studied in the next phase of analysis.

5. Unexplored questions

At this stage of research, the findings per type of relation provided in-depth and nuanced understanding of the inner experiences within roles and what is required to take up a leadership role on the lateral axis. However, at this stage, certain phenomena remained unanswered:

- a) The MR seems to function to assess own power, authority, and to self-authorize. It also functions as a simplified guide to solve authorization vagueness. But is there any other way to understand this phenomenon?
- b) Relational dimension confusion seems to be informed by inner relational models (transference), but is there any causation within the LRCs nature?
- c) Is relational morphing only a result between two interacting role-holders’ inner models or are there LRC attributes that create such plasticity in a relation?

d) Are there causalities between MR, LRC dynamics, and relational confusion or morphing?

The above questions were too compelling and attempting to theorize such gaps across cases was leading to more questions. In attempting to make causality links, I found myself too close to each cases subjectivity. In Appendix III I include an overview of how each phenomenon could be linked to the unique subjective relational models of participants, but this couldn't explain why consistency across cases occur. Further, I found myself jumping to existing theories which felt like taking a leap, distancing from the data. When discussing theorizations with my supervisors, those felt too academic, which had merit, but still would raise questions like "Why is this happening? How does it really work?" There was an urge to revisit the data.

It was fortunate that I now had a dataset of 40 organizational incidents, structured in such way that could be clustered, based on questions arising. But when the clustering was based on ontological attributes, such as the type of relation, I had already seen how deceptive the data, at times, could be and how I could have missed factual details already in the narrative. Whilst all the steps of BNIM are meant to keep the researcher sharp in mapping out the ontological dimensions, I had missed out a lot because of the heightened empathy required from the researcher regarding how it really feels to be in the incident. This is what sustained me dwelling deep in Escher's *Relativity* world, which developed a substantial vagueness and confusion of the "architecture." So, what could be treated as an ontological grid, if the organizational lateral and vertical coordinates were concealed in the absence of authority level rights? In other words, if the absent hierarchy was the "bricks-and-mortar."

My participants gave me the clue, with the MR phenomenon. It was as if they were in search of an ontological grid to navigate an incident and making meaning of it. They were highlighting seniority and authority disparities for a role-holder and amongst role-holders. The starting point was to ask more detailed questions of the ontological nature of these attributes. The next stage of analysis, which could be more rapid, was now a more robust mapping of the ontological examining of all incidents.

At this stage of analysis, it was critical to “bring ontology back in.”⁶

⁶As presented in Chapter 3, Section “Implications to ontology”, quotation borrowed from Westra, R. (2019) 'Roy Bhaskar's critical realism and the social science of Marxian economics', *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 51(3), pp. 365-382.

CHAPTER 9. STUDYING CAUSALITY THROUGH AN ONTOLOGICAL GRID

The conclusions of Chapter 8 highlighted my challenges of theorizing which felt as if I were jumping from Column 2 to Column 4 (Figure 8) and gave rise an intermediate step, highlighted in Column 3. In reality what was entailed in this column was not entirely new. The rapid cycles of analysis studying phenomena, pushed now to examine the ontological attributes involved more thoroughly, by asking more detailed *factual* questions. Many had already been coded,⁷ but the reiterative progress of questioning led gradually to more specificity.

In this chapter, I present the steps that led to more “ontological” specificity, and how causality was studied. Through this account I present how the shifts within a relation emerged, which gave new meaning in understanding the difficulties of inner experience, as explored previously. This stage also allowed an understanding of what the relation is between MR, RDC, and RM.

⁷ Table 5. BDA & PIN microanalysis

1. Defining a sharper ontological grid for cross-case analysis

The sequential questions started with the clues given by the participants through MR.

What were the disparities they have been implicitly assessing themselves?

1.1 Hierarchical authority vs role authorization

The starting point was to specify formal authority even further. The hierarchical authority had consistently, throughout all LRCs, been coded as nonmediating, apart from one case. But what could also now be coded was whether it existed in the mind as potentially mediating (when available in the data). This also led to disentangling hierarchical authority from role authorization. The hierarchical boss's presence or escalation should be disentangled from the level at which the role was authorized as having executive decisions. The flow of such authorization, in principle, was hierarchical, as initial authorization. But as organizational models entail multiple hierarchical lines, roles can derive different flows of authorization. The coding here was concerned with whether formal role authorization was consistent between parties and, if so, whether it provided a "rule" as to how they could make decisions amongst each other. In most cases, there was authorization vagueness. But in many cases, the "rules" were there and role-holders chose to "override" them by using their personal power. This led to specifying the next attributes.

1.2 Role vs personal seniority

Mental ranking was mainly preoccupied with the person's attributes as opposed to role attributes. But both had to be highlighted. On some occasions, participants were in situations where role-holders were using their size of business to increase their decision rights over those of others. Since formal authorization did not install such

“rules of the game” this could be arbitrary and leave room for the other party to see other types of seniority to counterbalance such shifts. Here the coding was concerned with the evident power disparities between role-holders but also between role and personal seniority. A participant may have been interacting with a more senior role-holder than them in roles that in context have lateral authorities. This seniority disparity could either be used to shift the dynamic, but also if not “respected” in the relational dimension could lead to trouble.

1.3 Use of formal seniority (role), informal (personal) or role authority?

This analysis concerned what parties were using in the incident. By studying disparities, it became evident that the swapping of attributes was used in the incident, and the dimension of the dynamic was shifting, which appeared to be the relation’s dimension. This analysis surfaced a hidden and perhaps most important attribute, that of *dependency*.

1.4 Dependency

Dependency was actually what was keeping the role-holders together. If there was no dependency, they could flee the dynamic, but this attribute was what was keeping the relation together. Dependency can be derived from the task and role-holders’ contributions to it. But it is not simple. An incident could start with the participant feeling they had full autonomy in a role with authorized decision rights. And suddenly they were surprised by another leader questioning their decision. Studying disparities in dependency amongst role-holders showed that those shifted within one incident based on interactions. This also gave a more explicit picture of what shifted a relation’s dimension was actually the shifting of the disparity between the dependency levels

amongst parties. That may not be so surprising when it is formulated, but it was surprising to see it emerging in the data, as it was so concealed and never explicitly named by participants. The phenomenology of incidents was depicting a dimension based on choices by role-holders, of which personal seniority prevailed. But in reality, what was supposed to be vertical top-down based on role authorities, was not because of the personal seniority of role-holders. It was dependency that gave a clearer impact of what shifted a relation's lateral or vertical dimension.

2. Studying relational dynamics through the relation's ontological attributes

2.1. Detailed mapping of relations

In Table 19, I give an illustration of how, within the narrative of an incident, facts can be extracted to examine these attributes. It is important that one has to go back and forth in the narrative to seek for the facts.

Table 19. Mapping relational attributes within an incident

Relational Attribute	Description (P stands for Participant and PM for the other party- Product Manager)
A. Relational Classification: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LRC Hierarchical Interdependent Peers • Inconsistent Experience vs Nature 	P is Sales Manager and has to collaborate with Product Development Manager (PM), hand-in-hand. Prior these roles were combined within PM's responsibility who was a senior to P. Formerly PM held two roles combines and was a senior to hierarchy to P.
B. Contextual Relational Task (relational presenting issue)	P and PM cannot resolve differences of opinions in decisions. The decision-making process isn't always clear. <i>So how you'd negotiate and that wouldn't wanna, uh, didn't wanna add another, product code, 'cause they didn't think we needed them. And what would happen is that in those situations, we'd have a conversation and I believe we'd aligned on something in that session.</i> When decisions are formally made in meetings, PM executes with her team differently.

	<p><i>And you'd think you'd have aligned in that room and then once we left the room, she'd do something completely opposite</i></p>
<p>C. Role Authorization – Hierarchical Flows of Authority</p> <p>7. Authorization vagueness</p> <p>8. Authorization conflict (consistent Hierarchical boss, but separate role authorization)</p> <p>9. Hierarchical mediation has no potency</p>	<p>Each role in scope is authorized, but the ways in which decision disputes are to be resolved, isn't clearly outlined.</p> <p><i>We would all sit together, the product team would present it, the sales team would then be going off to sell it. So how you'd negotiate and that wouldn't wanna, uh, didn't wanna add another, product, 'cause they didn't think we needed them. And you'd think you'd have aligned in that room and then once we left the room, she'd do something completely opposite.</i></p> <p>2a. Director shifts authorizations to each roles differently and covertly. PM gets decrease of scope to Development only.</p> <p><i>So at the time, there was a combined role. The Development Manager had been in the role 15 years and they wanted to get rid of her. Um, but rather than get rid of her, they put her in the product role and they put me in the sales role</i></p> <p>2b. As P gets promoted to Sales Manager gets also individually authorized to drive change:</p> <p><i>Um, I felt very, um, uh, ineffective and inefficient because I've been given this role to drive change and I couldn't drive change</i></p> <p>3. In 3-way meeting to resolve ways of working the Director's authority doesn't have effect.</p> <p><i>So actually in that, in that instance, I actually had to then bring in leadership to a what's the word, um, mmm uuh, mediate and that still didn't work (laughs).</i></p> <p><i>The director was a lovely guy, but I mean, wouldn't say boo to a goose. So, um, he just, he wasn't somebody who would lean in. Um, and, and so we had a session where I was like, right, let's talk about this, let's align on, on our priorities and what we're actually gonna be achieving together. Um, and I called him in, but he just wa- he wasn't an a very effective leader. So it didn't, it didn't really help. And again, we kind of all agreed to it in the room. There was kind of like, yeah, yeah, yeah, and then the passive aggressiveness kind of carried on the outside. Um, so yeah, it was just tough.</i></p> <p>Studying this systemically and over time, it seems that formal authority cannot become explicit and directive, starting from PM not being laid off. Further it seems that the formal authority rights in PM's roles were overridden in action by her use of personal seniority and reputation, which made hierarchical mediation have also no effect. Eventually, PM gets laid off.</p>
<p>D. Role Seniority Disparities & Uses by role-holders</p>	<p>At first the roles appear to be equal. But if we study them over time in their history, PM gets decreased in scope and SM gets promoted.</p>

	<p><i>I took her role of 15 years, but she went into the role that was my side, you know, the person who needed to, um, uh, we needed to work hand-in-hand.</i></p> <p><i>we were technically a lateral relationship, she'd obviously been semi-my boss and then she became my, my peer.</i></p> <p>Use of authority P is trying to use formal role authority (sales decision rights), but doesn't have any potency, next to PM's (mis)use of role authority. Officially the roles are equally authorized in order to solve the tensions between product development and sales. But in reality the incumbents are using the authorization rights unevenly.</p>
<p>E. Personal Seniority (incumbents) Disparities</p>	<p>P is early in career, it is 4th role. P has only 2 years in the company. PM has already 15 years in role. Disparities come also with reputation and personal relations.</p> <p><i>I didn't have a ton of confidence, so it was quite easy to... and she'd been my, she was kind of a legendary figure. But, um, she was quite a legendary figure. She was a force to be reckoned with.</i></p>
<p>F. Use of Personal / Professional Power</p>	<p>PM is using personal reputation and organizational power to substitute the decreased role authority.</p> <p>P is trying to use charismatic, vulnerable, authentic leaderships a another form of power over PM: <i>So with the meeting that I'm referring to, I'd be like, "Hey, let's have a more open conversation." I tried sitting down and being honest with her I tried, um, sharing suggestions on how we could do things differently I tried workshops, I tried, I tried everything. She just wasn't a very kind of authentic person within herself.</i></p>
<p>G. Dependencies</p>	<p>Roles are co-dependent per design, they have to work hand-in-hand for optimal resolution of (wanted) functional tensions. But with PM not adhering to formal decision rights between roles, or with decision-rights vagueness, P is now dependent on PM.</p>

This relational analysis has somewhat depersonalized the situation, by keeping distance from what we know from the participant's history. I have also symbolically anonymized the incident. These changes allow observation of two actors as opposed to following their inner experiences. This also allows seeing the fluidity within one incident. Time is also deceptive here. What constitutes an incident entails a series of interactions that took place perhaps over a year. Narratives can never give a sense of

that. It was important to examine, within the chronology of the story, what could be tracked as shifts. This surfaced another fascinating picture.

2.2. Studying the sequence of relational shifts within an incident

Table 20 reflects the shifts in dynamics as a result of how role-holders and system were shifting the attributes' weight. It depicts in sequence, row by row, what shifts were attempted by role-holders through which attribute that resulted, each time, in a balance shift in the attribute's weight per role-holder.

Table 20. Studying the shifts of attributes within one incident

	Dependency	Authority	Personal Seniority
Δ: shift ↔: equal weight ↑: weight places the participant (P) at the bottom ↓: weight places the participant (P) at the top			
1	↔ Two roles are interdependent on paper	↔ Decision rights appear to be equal between two roles and have to be agreed laterally.	↔ System emphasizes PM's legacy. System emphasizes P's youthful drive for change.
2			Δ PM with diminished authority from the past, counts now on her personal seniority to see whether she can retain her former role authority weigh. That must be tested in the relation.
3		Δ ↑ PM tests in the LR if she can retain her former	

		authority weigh, by pushing her decisions or keep decisions vague or/ and no adhering to formal decisions after meetings	
4		↑ P tries to use her role authority to contest nonadherence to decisions. Organizes workshops of alignment. PM sustains her authority weight.	
5			↑ P uses authentic leadership and vulnerability to have an open conversation with PM. PM sustains her authority weight.
6		↑ P escalates to Director who organizes 3-way and appears to have addressed the issue. PM sustains her authority weight.	
7	Δ ↑ As result this shifts the interdependency between P and PM to P being more dependent on PM for execution and alignment		
8		Δ Eventually the system reorganizes	

Looking at the incidents again in this way felt like having a movie clip that could be paused, slowed-down, moved back and forth. But this time, with an eye focused on what is shifting and how. In reality, those shifts do not follow a sequence in time as depicted above. The narrative moves fast and slow, back and forth, zooms in and out.

If one does not know what to look for, one cannot get a sense of these nuances, despite implicitly knowing them already from the narrative.

In this example from the initial analysis, I concluded that formal role authority cannot be used from the P side and misused from PM side, mostly what is at play is a power dynamic and hierarchical escalation has no potency. I classified this relation as confused from lateral to vertical bottom-up for P. But looking again in this way, formal role authority (as agreement on decision rights) had no potency here, but it is still the visible terrain, is held as something that should exist. The system seemed to value role tenure and company loyalty (the system is not explicit to PMs about demotion nor is laying PM off). At the same time, age does not matter, as P gets appointed in equal authority to PM. But tenure matters, so between the two, PM is tolerated (at least momentarily) so implicitly it is as if the system is telling P, "I understand your struggle, and we want your personal leadership, but PM's reputation and company tenure is of value. So hang in there, your time will come."

These multiple shifts gave a new understanding of power and authority dynamics within a relation. By looking at these attributes and shifts across data, the previously surfaced phenomena could be understood differently. An illustration of the overview of the steps and classifications outlined in this chapter can be found in Appendix IV and contains eight of the LRCs.

3. Conclusive findings

3.1 Synthesizing findings to address research questions

The study generated findings, through different analytical tracks and in different thematic areas, as shown in Table 21, to address the research questions.

Table 21. Overview of study's findings

Study's Findings	Location in thesis (Section Title and page)
1. Inner relational and authority models, from early life (when available) and within the life and career continue.	Unique relational models (Page 127)
2. The inner view of participants of careers (and life's) as a continuum of vertical progression.	A predominant vertical view (Page 128)
3. Mental images of vertical authority.	Internal images of authority (Page 130) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table 10. Internal authority images
4. Experiences in vertical relations as subordinate being subjected to formal authority.	Roles in vertical relations incidents (Page 132)
5. Experiences and functions within Lateral Relations amongst peers (LRPs) with no task interaction, from early life and further in organizations.	Nontask-based peer relations (Page 134) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table 11. Experiences of lateral relations amongst peers (LRPs). • Table 12. Effects of comparison to peers
6. Dynamics of Lateral Relations of Collaboration (LRCs) and inner anxieties involved.	Inner experiences in lateral relations of collaboration Page 137 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table 13. Concerns and anxieties, involved in or activated by LRC interactions • Table 14. Anxieties encountered during a leader's introspection of an LRC • Table 15. Experienced LRC dynamics
7. The phenomena across relations of Mental Ranking, Relational Dimension Confusion, and Relational Morphing.	Patterns across all relations (Page 142) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table 16. Attributes used for <i>mental ranking</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table 17. Different uses of MR • Table 18. Examples of <i>relational dimension confusion</i> and <i>relational morphing</i>
8. The attributes of relation's nature that cause dynamic shifts	Defining a sharper ontological grid for cross-case analysis (Page 150) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table 19. Mapping relational attributes within an incident
9. The shifts of relations dimensions through use of relational attributes	Studying the sequence of relational shifts within an incident (Page 155) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table 20. Studying the shifts of attributes within one incident

These findings seem to create effective links to address the research question of how senior leaders experience LR.

- A. Experiences within LRCs induce substantial anxieties (Finding 6) that are partially influenced by own inner mental relational models and their transferences (Finding 1).
- B. The LR attribute that significantly impacts role-holders is dependency and it affects role-holders' autonomy (Finding 8).
- C. Due to the continuum of human and career development, dependency and inner experiences are associated with VR with formal authority figures, such as parents, teachers, and bosses (Finding 4), and the way to resolve these experiences is by vertical development that increases own power and autonomy (Finding 2).
- D. Situations in LRs that impact dependency give rise to similar early-life experiences of dependency (Finding 1). This can explain why the transferences experienced are of a different relation's dimension and therefore confuse the relational experience (Finding 7). It can also explain why "bad" mental images of vertical authority (Finding 3) become more "used" for peer leaders, within LRs.
- E. With the absence of formal authority and with high interdependencies, role-holders need to manage LRs in different ways. That results in covert dynamics (Finding 6)

that either deny seniority differences or are using them to cope (Findings 8 and 9). Mental ranking (Finding 7) is used as a compass to navigate.

- F. These efforts are resulting in shifts in LRs dynamics that impact on the relations dimensions (Finding 9) which only intensify the confusion and then need to sustain a MR.
- G. This further heightens the anxieties in LRs (Finding 6) and particularly the ones around covert nature, unwritten rules of the game, and survival.
- H. These anxieties are further exacerbated, due to a perception of one's own career development (Finding 2) that has to depict vertical progress and the way to assess it is by using MR to compare with peers (Finding 5).
- I. As the attributes of LRs are hiding the real role, authority, and personal seniority differences (Finding 8) the experience of power fights in LRs dynamics and power shifts might give a sense of fight amongst peers, amongst equal parties. This might further obscure the ability to contain anxieties concerning own value and progress though the function of comparing self to others (Finding 5).
- J. A way for role-holders to cope is by contextualizing the relation's verticality based on actual seniority differences (like the example in *Table 14. Anxieties encountered during a leader's introspection of an LRC*) and when having to compare themselves to others by focusing on the qualitative differences [middle row in *Table 11. Experiences of lateral relations amongst peers (LRPs).*]
- K. The data contained situations when differences were not forced ranked but rather seen as diversity. Whilst this may contain a function of denial of ranking, and thereby denial of real differences, it can also be used structurally to minimize the psychological threats that seniority differences impose. The situations in the data

where this occurred, however, were in an educational setting⁸ or in a tight team of a startup,⁹ or in a corporate team with low interdependence.¹⁰

3.2 A critical view of the findings

The above overview gives a full synthesis of relational phenomena that allow a more nuanced view of the lateral and vertical axis. I consider the usefulness of the study to be the more detailed understanding of the contemporary nature of authority that expands on previous definitions. Whilst the dynamics explored are not entirely new, nor the inner experiences, those can be linked to new trends in organizational authority, which also have been assumed or known, but did not make explicit links to actual human phenomena. The missing link that this study explored gives new in-depth understanding of why lateral collaboration is psychologically so challenging and helps redefine formal authority and authorization in trending leadership situations.

This study is based on phenomenology as a sole data extraction source. The disadvantage of following this route is that there was not an alternative factual source, which led to the challenging quest for ontology. It, therefore, obscured the exploration of the more systemic contextual factors that impact on the task at hand in each collaborative incident. The lack of that source of data is limiting its ability to address systemic causality questions, such as whether leaders in organizations are more sensitive to interpersonal struggles as a defense against the more uncontrollable

⁸ Incident LRD1 in Chapter 7.

⁹ A short vignette is presented in incident LRC1 in Chapter 6.

¹⁰ Incident i2.27 not presented in participants' chapters.

existential organizational anxieties.¹¹ On the contrary, I would argue that we can develop a strong conclusive hypothesis that, in lateral collaboration situations, the intensity of the relational power dynamics is such that it may disorient role-holders from focusing on the actual organizational dilemmas. This is reflected in the data, in the sense that task was described by role-holders minimally and just sufficiently enough (for them) to give color to what their lived experience and too often, to validate their point of view. We saw how lasting their point of view may be over the decades. The contextualization that occurs in looking at a task conflict as an organizational paradox or dilemma that requires contemplation is a space that did not take place in most of the narratives. I would argue that this space was inaccessible due to authority vagueness, mistrust, and the dynamics that induce a struggle to survive. I explore these notions in Part IV and revisit the study's initial assumptions and definitions. I further reflect on my researcher's experience and dilemmas to discuss broader epistemological questions.

¹¹ As outlined in literature, Section 3.1 in literature review.

PART IV: REDEFINING THE LATERAL AXIS

“So, the Po begins at Piacenza! And it has every right to do so; for it is the only respectable river in Italy; and as any self-respecting river knows, the valley is where a river comes into its own, for water is stuff that is supposed to stay horizontal, and only when it is perfectly horizontal does it preserve all of its natural dignity. The Niagara Falls is a fairground attraction, like men who walk on their hands.”

Giovanni Guareschi (1951)

CHAPTER 10. THE LATERAL MAGNETIC FIELD & THE INVISIBLE VERTICAL AXIS

1. Lateral relations as a powerful magnetic field

1.1 Revisiting lateral relations definitions

Whilst the original definition proposed by Armstrong is accurate, it contains some challenges. First, it connotes, without intending to, role-holders to be thought of as peers. I consider that any relation becomes a LR when the parties' formal role authority and hierarchical authorization do not provide explicit guidance on how to take-up roles and decision rights. A LR directly implies that those need to be renegotiated and reauthorized laterally and parties are bound together with dependencies, regardless of whether they acknowledge them.

Definitionally, it should not matter what type of hierarchical connection parties have, if any, even though in the role-holders' experience this is of great significance. Organizationally LRs exist because its hierarchical structure and explicit ways of working cannot accommodate certain situations or challenges. From a strategic perspective, they are a temporary organization that has to resolve what the formal one cannot until it yields a formalized way of working.

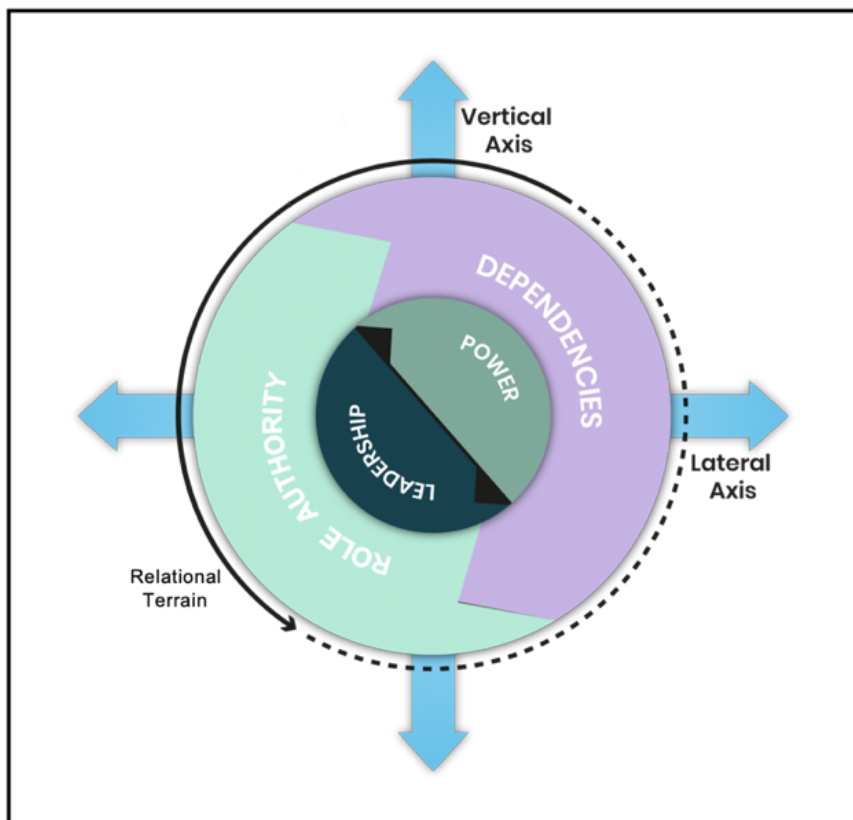
Hence, per definition, one core LR's task is to address decision-rights vagueness, which, I propose, is the core of its problematic nature. As a "hybrid organization", it

temporarily collapses the existing vertical axis, however as a result of the task at hand. Psychologically, relationally, and within the organization-in-the-mind, the “permanent” and formal nature with its formal hierarchy prevails. But rationally role-holders know they cannot just keep escalating the challenge at hand and this is also, I consider, a reason why the strategic dimension of the challenge gets forgotten and it is experienced and treated as a “relational difference of opinions or misunderstanding.” To make all these points clearer, I consider the “relational wheel” as a model.

1.2 The relational wheel

This conceptual model (Figure 9) attempts to depict the four relational attributes discerned from the findings and study their interactivity. It allows an examination of how role-holders use these attributes, explicitly or covertly, treating them as given traits or dynamically morphing them. The wheel enables an examination of shifts in dimensions from such role-holders’ interactive uses.

Figure 9. The relational wheel



The circle of the wheel depicts the *relational terrain* and is formed for role-holders through a particular context that raises a need for a collaborative task. It depicts a certain optionality for role-holders to enter the relation, based on inner drives and systemic priorities. Even with a role-holder's avoidance of the relation, they are still part of the terrain if the task or other relation parties depend on them. The relation then may develop into an "avoidance dance."¹²

1.3 The outer ring: Role authority and dependency

The relation's task forms the terrain that brings role-holders together. The outer ring of the relational terrain comprises the relational *role authority* and *dependency*. It

¹² As in the example of Table 20.

concerns this specific task that created the terrain. Dependencies amongst role-holders might be initially shaped by how role-holders perceive their contributions to the task, whether they perceive their roles as tied to this contribution. In the study's data, the relation's role authority could not be derived by hierarchy. Task (the what) may have been delegated to role-holders, but not the relation's decision rights (the how).

For example, a financial director (FD) approaches the production director (PD) because she has concerns about the cost complexities of the current production model. Even though, on an aggregated level, the two make assumptions about their roles within this task, based on their organizational roles, their first experience entering the terrain might be contesting these assumptions of decision-rights vagueness. Whilst this is an experience of having to resolve an authorization issue, which should not even have happened in the first place, what is behind this is a task that contains highly complex dilemmas, or at least could not be addressed automatically through the current organizational operating model and strategy. It requires accessing different information and assessing those through different viewpoints. When this task is initiated, it already activates perceived risks by either party, initially concerning their vertical accountability.¹³

This absence of hierarchical authorization could be seen as an abdication of required authoritative leadership, as if to avoid favoring parties. But we know from experience and from other studies in the literature, this is done because the contributions to the

¹³ Outlined in Column 1 of Table 13.

task should not be steered by the organizational roles' authority. The PD should ensure and weigh his delivery, based on what this task produces, and the FD should raise viability and future issues. The bureaucratic organization would connect task rights solely based on hierarchy,¹⁴ but then disputes can only be solved with escalations, which slows down the processes. This route is followed because of the complexities explored here. Vertical authorization has collapsed because both roles need to weigh the organizational dilemma.¹⁵ All the general manager or the management team can do is orchestrate the task, but not authorize its roles. In this case, the existence of a vertical axis can provide emotional containment for the relational dynamics in the terrain. My hypothesis about why this does not usually occur is that the role-holder already experiences the relational terrain as something that should not exist, as a conflict of decision-rights perception. A potential escalation to the vertical axis (which often does not even occur) is expressed as an interpersonal conflict. The vertical axis, therefore, pushes back and expects the conflict to be resolved on the lateral axis. If role-holders regress to territorial behavior, the vertical axis resists intervening. Alternatively, to avoid this, if the FD would have first gone to the GM who would then authorize such a task, the PD would feel "betrayed" and possibly implicitly sabotage the terrain. The issue is that the organizational dilemma has transformed into a relational conflict.

¹⁴ Ron, in a hierarchical organization (VRC1 in Chapter 6), was representing the HR priorities and the project leader represented the execution. As the project leader was of higher authority their decision-rights were overriding Ron's, so the organizational dilemma could not be explored.

¹⁵ This inconsistency between hierarchical authority rights and such role-authority within the relational terrain is addressed by the concept of asymmetrical leadership by Boxer and Eigen (2008).

The decision-rights vagueness, the inconsistency of relational-role authorities, and hierarchical-role authorities is in itself a source of anxiety. At times, in the data, the terrain was described as walking on a minefield and potentially trespassing across invisible boundaries. The nature of the terrain is what generates mistrust of others' intentions. If the vagueness creates a void of accessing the real intentions of others, then this void is filled with projections and with information of each other coming from other relations or relationships of their individual histories. What is most experienced, therefore, is the behavioral side of leadership, which I outline in the next section.

Role-holders should care about the other's role authority, which is what creates the dependency that sustains role-holders within the terrain. But beyond perception, dependency probably already exists between roles, based on their hierarchical role authority and their overall organizational interdependencies. Dependency is the attribute that remains most invisible and role-holders defend against it, by denying it. The ultimate objective of role-holders, when engaging in power dynamics, is to shift the quality and potency of the dependencies amongst each other. Based on this researcher's data it is probably the most crucial and the most hidden attribute of LRs. Metaphorically, I picture it as the invisible elastic band around role-holders, sustaining them together, despite their occasional efforts to evacuate the terrain. This attribute is what I perceive as shifting the relation's dimension.

So what is being used to generate a spin in the wheel? If one role-holder depended on the other more, they go at the bottom of the wheel and this can be done in a variety of ways, but the simplest is through increased role authority.

The shifts in leadership-followership can spin the wheel and if role-holders would be able to put forward and address their anxieties in Table 13 possibly the wheel would spin back and forth, based on who is in the lead, but as if it were attached to the lateral axis. But if role-holders perceive that this spinning is actually on the vertical axis so it impacts their authority levels in the organization, this triggers anxieties that may not be explicitly surfaced and addressed and the way out of it is to spin the wheel on the vertical axis. This is done through the inner ring and it attempts to flip dependency differences informally (psychosocially, relationally) or formally as task-based and through official role authority.

1.4 The inner ring: Power and leadership

The inner ring comprises the role-holders' person-based attributes. Power is formed throughout the individual's life and career. It is a result of how the system, in this given context, weighs¹⁶ them as actual power. It also contains attributes that the individual has accessed throughout roles in and out of the organization, such as relations with customers, industry, reputation. Most recently, even social media presence has become such a power attribute.

These attributes are only considered implicitly and rarely discussed by role-holders. That power is felt but not seen is assumed and therefore MR is one mechanism to assess it. Role-holders assess theirs and other parties' power and spot disparities. Disparity between formal role authority and personal power acts as an initial authorization process showing up as meritocracy: "Who are you to enter the terrain?"

¹⁶ In incident LRC1 in Chapter 6, a director in their 50s was less powerful than one in their late 20s. In another context this could be reversed.

Do you have what is required?” and towards self: “Do I have the right seniority to interact with this person in this task? Who am I to raise this? Who am I to push back?” Lack of role authority decision rights in the terrain can be very anxiety-provoking, experienced as an ethical issue of meritocracy or respect. In Appendix VI, part A, I include a research journal entry of such an example from a GRC staff team.

In many LR incidents, the MR function as power-assessment is concerned with measuring the risk of the interaction with the other party, considering that most LRs contain confrontations or conflict over the task. I consider that role-holders know when entering the terrain, that use of formal role authority has limited potency for the entire demands of the relational terrain and, therefore, they assess and have to rely on sources of personal power. This can trigger a very primitive survival experience, which can explain the anxieties classified in Table 13. In the data, words used were as strong as “do or die” or referred to “dirty politics”. It is, therefore, the attribute that is most used within the relational terrain, but it is implicitly, covertly often unconsciously used, whereas what is explicitly talked about is organizational role authority.

I use *leadership* as an attribute that belongs to the incumbent’s character, and it contains all the mental models and filters that allow a person to make sense of their experience being in the relational terrain, which become psychologically important to them as they weigh real and perceived concerns. It is this meaning-making-attribute that transforms experience into decisions and actions within the terrain, conscious or unconscious. It is the attribute that also decides how role authority vs personal power is exercised and how to deal with dependencies. I see it, therefore, as the attribute of role-holders that links the intrapersonal to the interpersonal. *Leadership* should be

treated as a relational attribute within the context of the terrain. It is important to be so termed because this is also how organizations classify a role-holder's behavior and action. Within the terrain, this is the attribute the parties see of each other.

1.5 Spinning the wheel on the lateral axis

In reality, working on such tasks entails constant leadership-followership swaps. For this to be nonthreatening to roles-holders, it has to be understood as if the relational wheel is placed parallel to the lateral axis and therefore it does not matter who is in the lead and who follows. The two self-authorized teams in the data¹⁷ are perfect examples of how such a swap happens willingly and intentionally for role-holders. But these examples show how ranking was absolutely censored and at times even masked¹⁸ so that the spinning of the wheel is not attached to the vertical axis. This is the model of agile structure in teams, however its limitations is that its rituals may work for the unit's wheel and not for the LRs of interunit alignment. This limit was also shown in the data¹⁹ as increased complexity requires vertical accountabilities. Netflix's culture manifesto (Hastings, 2009) declares that formal authority in targets and company policies install bureaucracy and hence amplify the lateral leadership of individuals. But, the same as most organizations, Netflix needs individual leaders to be held accountable for results and seeks the right profile leader based on performance and profile to take up such accountability. This drives competitiveness that has to be balanced out with laterality. Succession can produce an implicit competitiveness that

¹⁷ Incident of Ron's tech project team (LRC1) and Matthew's MBA study-group (LRD1).

¹⁸ In the study-group case, the lack of individual contribution was masked by the rest of the group.

¹⁹ In Ron's incident when the company grew, it bought in a hierarchical structure that was imposed based on individual accountabilities.

makes the wheel vertical, even on an unconscious level. But these findings are not just about succession. It also means that if one takes the lead in the wheel's decision rights. In Financial Director's lateral leadership example, the PD may eventually decide what would happen with production costs, because of his delivery targets. In such case, the FD might become anxious about his or her organizational role authority long term and whether she can impact strategically on the organization. This may have succession connotations, but in reality it concerns real short-term task concerns. The example in Table 14 concerns a much vaguer and nonhierarchical linked task. The fact that P did not get the research grant might be perceived as demotion. In this case, P recognizes he or she can reconcile the needs for credibility and formal authority, with their temporary role in the wheel. It would be naïve to consider that any organization can treat the wheel as based on the lateral axis and, therefore, it never matters what occurs in the spins. The tensions in practice are extremely difficult for role-holders to express and explore. In my consulting practice, every time it is done it yields a more constructive space, but the consultant by having intervened in an otherwise lateral relation has also created a vertical axis that allows for such space. In Appendix V, I include such a vignette from my practice on which I wrote a consulting report for the course.

1.6 Spinning the wheel on the vertical axis

Table 20 shows how role-holders might use authority (role or hierarchical) or power (personal or organizational) to shift their dependency orientation. The RDC or the RL as identified phenomena in the data, concern whether the relation's parties have "agreed" to shift their positions within the relation's dimension differently to what would be expected. This shift can be task effective, regardless of how it looks to the

observer.²⁰ The “What could be the expected relation’s dimension” question has been the ontological challenge of this research.

If there is not an “agreed” shift or an “agreed” relational dimension either way for role-parties, then the power dynamics kick in and may end up in a perpetuating “spinning the wheel” game. In the model, the two rings could be imagined as the wheels cogs, where the inner is used to spin the outer and this might also be done by changing the outer ring’s proportions between authority and dependency. This dynamic, as found in the data, can be so powerful for role-holders that it becomes almost involuntary and pushes them to forget about pragmatism or strategic thinking for the task.²¹ The fact that they are struggling with an organizational dilemma is forgotten. What is experienced is a political power fight. In simple terms, there are no conditions for basic trust; what you see is not what you get. Within these dynamics, role-holders talk on the surface about task and their role authorities and “see” each other’s leadership. But under the surface, they actually use and feel the exertion of power and, whilst spinning, they are tight together by dependencies.

²⁰ A few such incidents (lateral and vertical) can be found in Eva’s case, based on her narrative. The criterion of task effectiveness should not be based on having had a relational resolution but the produced alignment of parties yielding the best choice for the organization. But we cannot track that in the data.

²¹ This hypothesis was presented in the previous chapter’s conclusion, based on the participants’ narratives of all the challenging LR incidents, which did not contain sufficient data about the dilemma at hand. They did not present an organizational strategic challenge that places all LR’s parties as equally challenged, and at times, even decades later, they could not imagine the other’s motivations, other than self-serving.

2. Repositioning the lateral axis

2.1 Why are lateral relations in the organization's shadows?

The contribution this research can have to the field is to offer a clearer and “colorful” picture of the hidden dynamics generated by the complexity of the nature of organizational challenges and paradigms explored in Section 3.1 of the literature review. Therefore, LRs are a “temporary organization” that concerns crucial decisions that cannot be addressed within the formal organizational structure. Due to the nature of the relational attributes, organizations treat this space as an anomaly or as the role-holders’ personal business and most commonly all the dynamics are attributed to personal leadership traits. Doing so can be a defense against existential organizational anxieties (Trist, 1977). Lateral relations’ dilemmas attack the sense of security in the organization’s structure and strategy. The feeling of not knowing, by deviating from strategy, heightens executive level’s vulnerability (Nagel, 2018), which has to be defended against. We could for these reasons see LRs sustained in the periphery, treated as a glitch in the system, as a defense against uncertainty. But I would argue that definitionally, they have a hybrid nature, which sustains them in the periphery.

2.2 A powerful magnetic field

Role-holders have very good reasons for experiencing LRs as challenging. All four participants considered themselves doing what is right for the organization and most, if not all, of them explicitly articulated how they were not driven by power. At this stage, we may not want to be concerned with whether this is a denial, and they are splitting their personal ambition and projecting it to the “other.” Attention should be focused on how all of them have entered a powerful magnetic field, holding a strong sense of

responsibility of that field, and have found themselves involuntarily sustaining a power fight. Observing these dynamics, the immediate theoretical connotations drawn are based on Oedipal envy and the fight for succession, sibling rivalry again with a vertical model for narcissistic maternal love (exclusive organizational love), or competitiveness that is built into the system. I have argued that even though the competitions may be linked to succession and narcissistic needs, in the moment it is a power dynamic between individuals who are fighting for their vertical accountabilities. As all this takes place in the “shadows” and is perceived as “not playing by the book”, it is both fertile ground to play “dirty politics”, but it also is perceived as such, and even concerns difference of functional opinions or unaligned authority rights. Sometimes the morphing or the politics occur so that role-holders’ anxieties and aggression can be contained and defused. But this requires role-holders to see it as such and to reconcile the political acts with their personal values.²² If they cannot bring about this reconciliation, the situation may be experienced as playing involuntary politics.²³

2.3 The phantom of vertical authority and envy

I have outlined why hierarchical authority cannot intervene with orchestrating decision rights. In very important topics, an environment is usually created (e.g., an executive strategic taskforce) to frame strategically the LR for all these reasons. This installs a vertical axis and can contain the dynamics. In this case, more of our understanding of

²² “So, I think my life of aligning, I have to use every skill I've got in the book. Like I feel sometimes I'm trying to be the negotiator. Sometimes I'm trying to be the influencer. Sometimes I'm being just an outright dictator”, Katie.

²³ In an incident Katie protects boundaries from an “intrusive” leader, and we note that she thereafter feels regret for not having been genuine: “He's divisive, he's sneaky and he runs a very important part of our business. It's really tricky because he, um, you have to be on side with him. It takes a bit of my energy. I mean, the good thing now is with him, I have his trust, so he thinks we're best friends. So, I'll actually have a conversation with him this week where I'll give him a bit of direct feedback. He's a tricky character.”

dynamics in the boardroom apply. This study concerns the level to which these tasks are not framed and, when they are, they rely on being worked out in the LR space that contains all of what is explored. Either way, a broader theme emerges about the nature of authority. In this inevitable space, which arguably occurs constantly for senior leaders, their vertical authority when it comes to duty remains the same in organizations and is reflected in targets. But their authority when it comes to decision rights diminishes. In Chapter 1, I offered examples where even to direct reports there is a diminished top-down authority potency.²⁴

This authority asymmetry is the driving force behind the detrimental spinning of the wheel. I consider it also the main source of induced envy. Often the discourse of such dynamics is of “dirty politics.” I have explored in literature how those dynamics are approached through the psychoanalytic concepts of envy and rivalry. Whilst I explored some links to succession, most of the data do not show such a link. The idea that LRs can be linked to sibling rivalry, which contains only Oedipal envy, linked to competitive succession drives (Freud, 1912b; Long, 2008; Huffington and Miller, 2008; Perini, 2014; Cardona, 2020) should be challenged further. I consider this envy to fit more within the nature of the Kleinian one (Klein, 1957; Stein, 2000; Stein, 2005) that is directed to the relation’s other party no matter what is the relations dimension. Within the dependency, the power fight is the envious response to redeem the self from being desperately dependent. It is this quality of envy that may deploy self-destructiveness (by destroying the task or resigning²⁵ to commit political suicide) as the ultimate source

²⁴ As I finish the thesis write-up, “silent quitting” becomes a new such trend. See Krueger, A. (2022) 'Who Is Quiet Quitting For?', *The New York Times*, Aug. 23, 2022. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/23/style/quiet-quitting-tiktok.html> (Accessed: Aug. 30, 2022).

²⁵ The example of the “epic exodus” of Ron in incident VRC2.

of power. In this context, envy is directed towards the dependency itself and not towards the one on whom one is dependent.

But envy in LRs can also be better understood through Mitchell's sibling trauma (2003). Because, in LRs, individuation is a necessary function, so that role-holders separate from the collegial (at least in the task) sameness, which at times is a source of lateral containment (Mersky, 2019) in the sense of "we are in this together." Role-holders here may have to use such envy to separate themselves for the sake of the task or their vertical accountability.²⁶ But individuation has to also occur through *mental ranking* to assess power-levels (for influencing or to fight) or for mutual authorization or for respect. Therefore, there is a notion of seriality as described by Mitchell, through which siblings achieve differentiation, which allows them to see their unique needs met, not through rigid equality or democracy. Unfortunately, seriality in LRs has multiple functions. Per Mitchell's definition, it functions to self-authorize (differentially from the other) and to differentiate how to treat each other. But it is also a form of envy to contain anxieties about impotence in relation to the other and to be deployed for rivalry. These are two forces of *mental ranking*.

2.4 Conclusions

These theoretical notions paint a very challenging picture for senior leaders and there is much in the dynamics that can be explained differently. A more open realization of role-holders within LRs can create more containment and more task effectiveness. This study functions as an invitation to re-examine theoretically what, at first, can be

²⁶ This was the function of qualitative comparison against peers, see Table 11. Experiences of lateral relations amongst peers (LRPs).

seen as dysfunctional, malicious, or perverse. At the heart of this re-examination lies the causality question within the interplay. Often this interplay in S-P creates an impression of magic that cannot be understood, but we need to challenge ourselves and deploy more curiosity, even obsession over the mechanics of the dynamics. While my intent is not to redact everything into a simple mechanics model of a wheel, I do want to propose that there is more than the simple eye can catch that enables alternatives for role-holders and scholars.

CHAPTER 11. THE ONTOLOGICAL MADNESS OF THE LATERAL AXIS: Epistemological Implications in Studying Relational Subjectivity

The structure of this thesis intended to allow the reader to follow the gradual emergence of findings at each stage. This process highlighted the importance of sustaining a focus on ontology and causality to navigate research challenges. In this chapter, I reflect on my researcher's journey, presenting challenging moments to discuss broader epistemological issues when researching subjective experience. I discuss how these tensions are relevant in consulting practice and when theorizing.

1. Dwelling onto the subjectivity of participants and researcher

This research was based on phenomenology and interpretivism and gradually I found myself more and more researching for the ontological dimension because it appeared to be covert and elusive. My researcher's experience of feeling lost in Escher's *Relativity* was due to the methodology itself. I could not impose detailed ontological questions so that the participants were sustained in their own thought process and immersed themselves in their subjectivity. The narratives were already anyhow filtered

through the participants' logical thinking and a natural human preoccupation of how their story would register with the researcher or others. Asking for more factual aspects of their stories would only disrupt a process that allowed them to dwell in their emotional subjectivity. Therefore, the necessary function of contextualizing through an ontological perspective had to be completely dialled down in the researcher's role, in this process. This did not mean that the ontological dimension does not exist, nor that the participants do not have the capacity for it. At times, they searched for or brought it up by themselves.

A very powerful example of an introspective process that one experiences in executive coaching can be followed in the narrative of Table 14. Anxieties encountered during a leader's introspection of an LRC But a general realization could be derived from this methodology that, in moments of amplified emotional subjectivity, the ontological dimension is concealed. The emotional experience of a relational or organizational dynamic is so powerful that the capacity to bring in ontology and contextualize it is limited. This links to Bion's notion of the *capacity to think* (Bion, 1962; O'Shaughnessy, 1981). An indicator of that capacity could be that the longer in the past an incident occurred, and additionally the more minimal the evaluation and contextualization that occurs in the narrative of the present, the more powerful the emotional subjectivity was at that time, which endures over the years. Wengraf (2001) has suggested in TFA to use a "DARNE"²⁷ coding on the narratives. In discerning facts from emotional experience, I encountered some very strong challenges, which I dramatize as

²⁷ Description, Argumentation, Report, Narrative, Evaluation.

“seductions” because as a researcher one has to immerse in these forces and not defend against them, but they can obfuscate the analytical process.

1.1 The seduction of countertransference and projective identification

The “me-search” is a significant part of the research process. One function is to derive analytical clues from my unconscious registers of data by using “self as an instrument” (Jervis, 2019). An example was that I dreamed a participant was crying while in the interview the lived emotion was of potency. By looking into the data, I uncovered how the underlying anxieties of what was expressed as “frustration” was in essence feelings of “impotence” and “despair.” Those themes were overpowered by the “formality” of the interview process, showing the potent side of the participant. When reviewing again the total data, there were very short, limited descriptions of incidents that contained such themes and in those incidents the participant did actually cry out of despair. This example shows how the researcher’s unconscious can emphasize different parts of the data that the rational conscious processing may have de-emphasized.

This process, however, contains the opposite risk that, in other moments, my countertransference (Klein, 1952; Freud, 1912a; Joseph, 1985) in the interview was so strong that it overshadowed the data that my conscious analysis could discern. To use one example to illustrate this, incident VRC1 (page 110) occurred in the first organizational role of the participant, around 30 years ago. The emotional resonance for the participant was still very strong. This also meant that there was a risk for the researcher of missing the ontological dimension or wondering as much as possible about it. The emotional resonance can take over, positively or negatively. In this

narrative the countertransference was very strong. My experience was that of being treated by the participant as a novice who gains the wisdom of a mature leader. The lived experience of the interview was that being treated in the same way that he suffered in his early 20s, despite the fact that I am in my 40s. Potentially, the role of interviewing a senior leader and my demeanour in (not fully) displaying personal authority would allow for this dynamic to emerge. This experience emotionally then becomes a powerful source of experiencing his story perhaps as he felt it. His frustration becomes mine through the processes of projective identification (Klein, 1946; Klein, 1959; Halton, 2019). As the process of surfacing ontology in the data is also through phenomenology (we cannot go into an investigation of the facts of the incident otherwise), then the researcher can be heavily impacted by their own lack of capacity to think in the data, because of their own emotional registers of how the story is told. That is also why the BNIM suggests the steps of panel analysis. However, how can you manage the depth and breadth of analyzing 40 incidents with a panel? To navigate through a concealed ontological dimension, I found it helpful during incident microanalysis to ask myself questions in the ORA spirit: what are the roles in the relation, formal positions, what hypotheses can be drawn about each role's priorities, what is the manifested task, what hypotheses can be formed about the organizational priorities at hand, how is organizational hierarchy differentiating the roles' levels.

1.2 The seduction of the life story

Chapters 4–7 also had the function of depicting what it is to follow a leader through the course of time and see their subjectivity in incidents as a continuum of relational models and authority images. When dwelling in these perspectives, it is then also very difficult to discern patterns that are not solely attached to character. This vertical view

installs, unconsciously at times, a personal filter which influences the meaning-making of experiences and choices made when taking up a role (Long, 2018a; 2018b). But when attempting to discern patterns across phenomena, this finding can in itself be very deceiving. What raised my researcher's attention was when I encountered transference that at first didn't make sense. For example, when a leader described the intensity of not mobilizing subordinates towards change, as a feeling of not "being understood"²⁸, which had the same emotional undertow of the early-life experience of "not being understood" by classmates²⁹, then I started wondering what is this phenomenon of transference? This was the clue to start investigating the segments in any relation that might have contradictory dimensions to its hierarchical dimension. But in this specific participant case, we know from early life that she has developed the ability to morph the dimensions of a relation. So, the easier link that can be made here is based on life-story and attributed to her character. In one of the supervision analyses, in this participant's case (incident Lateral Role 1 (LRA1), page 98), there was a debate as to whether the relation is indeed lateral as opposed to vertical or "diagonal", considering that her counterpart was more senior in the organization. Having followed early-life patterns we could then conclude that transference and her relational subjectivity allows for this relation to be moulded to a lateral one. Because the factual aspects are so concealed and at times only hypotheses can be formulated, it is then very easy to be influenced by the strong presenting subjective patterns and to then, miss out on the fact, that there is laterality build in this relation, regardless of levels and to also miss out examining our ontological definition of laterality. If my research wouldn't entail a phase of "depersonalizing" the incidents, looking at them in

²⁸ In incident Supervisory Role 2 (VRA4) in Chapter 4

²⁹ Incident in Early life (Chapter 4) where the peers didn't seem to understand

totality again, and discern patterns from their ontological nature, but only basing on subjectivity, the findings would only be focused on subjective experiences as opposed to re-examining our understanding of relations' and authority's nature.

1.3 The seduction of me-search

Aside from using "self as an instrument" for analysis, as explored in above paragraph 1.1, the use of "me-search" is was crucial for thinking about the topic more broadly, beyond what the data could offer. In that sense I believe one of the most beneficial impacts of conducting psycho-social research has been to work through very difficult personal themes. Conducting an autobiographic exploration (Petrov, 2009) was one of those processes and I included an abstract of that in Appendix I. The personal story, however, runs the risk of confusing the data. In Appendix VI, B. I include two dreams that I had after each interview session with the first participant. There are some clear links to the narratives, however what I discovered later, is that the two dreams were much more linked to my own anxieties about my researcher's progress and whether I would manage the whole endeavour. The lateral peer group of researchers of the same year, were a place for containment when one would discover that we have the same struggles. But when the group started to differentiate in terms of speed of progress, this containment turned into deep anxiety of how one is lagging in progress. These notions were very helpful in understanding mental ranking in the peer group. But what I was experiencing as mental ranking through my experiences in the peer study group, was very different to the one that took place in the data that functioned as authorization or to calibrate a power fight. If I would have turned my own lived experience into a hypothesis, it would be possible that I would be projecting it to the

data. At a later stage, my supervisor asked me “How do you connect MR to Relational dimension confusion?.” Before I looked into the data, I was looking for theory.

1.4 The seduction of theory

In my first attempts to explain MR, I turned into theory. I connected to birth order (Sulloway, 1996), the notion of seriality by Mitchell (2003), I discovered a concept of gender seriality from feminism (Young, 1994) and ethnic seriality (Anderson, 1998) with ideas about nationalism. All these could constitute valid theorizing avenues, but were missing the link to the data, looking for causality patterns that could give a sense of how these theories were linked to what had emerged. In other words, I believe I was covering a gap of ontological understanding by jumping into theory.

1.5 The seduction of positivism

At the process of writing the final chapters of this thesis, I reviewed my researcher’s journal and one particular entry (Entry C, Appendix VI), shocked me. This entry was at the very early days of data analysis and through a dream, I developed the hypothesis that dependency disparities, between LR parties, generate strong emotions that manifest in the dynamics. Then I went on with data analysis and I completely forgot about this attribute. Only almost a year later, and when going through the “depersonalized” ontological analysis across all incidents, did I discover again dependency disparities as an attribute. The way I understand this lost hypothesis is that dependency as an attribute had stayed completely covert in the data. So, if one doesn’t think about it ontologically, it might be missed from the phenomenological analysis. But then I thought to myself, since I dreamed it, and I rediscovered it in the data, it was probably transmitted to my researcher’s unconscious

from the start. So why didn't I go back to the data and look for it? The way I understand my blockage is, that I was defending against "making up stories." There was a positivist's superego guarding me, maybe stemming from my undergraduate education. One of the key positivism premise on data-based theorizing is testability and empirically-valid theorizing (Eisenhardt, 1989; Su, 2018). As much as I have enjoyed the free-flow exploration in the S-P thinking, that allows me to connect with my unconscious knowing, I often find myself being critical to theories, that I can't see then linked to data. Perhaps this defence is then turned into obsession with structure that may also be reflected in this thesis. But I tried hard to balance that out with all my original thoughts to see whether something didn't get lost. I also believe that it yielded benefits of staying longer close to the data, than I was originally prepared to do and as I mentioned, I almost jumped too fast.

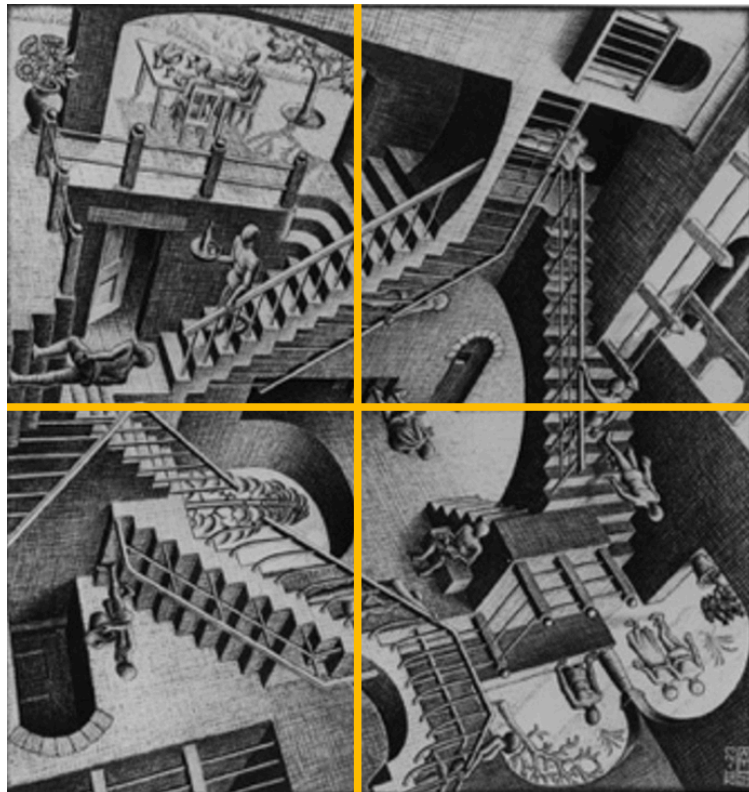
2. In search for and the seduction of ontology

These challenges I believe are innate in conducting psycho-social research, that aims to uncover what is under the surface. The hidden nature of what is being researched. In my experience these "seductions" are important tensions, like paradoxical continuums, and each end of such paradox has important epistemological objectives in research. I see them linking to a main paradox between phenomenology and ontology. Between "Relativity" and "bricks-and-mortar". A psycho-social research that investigates subjective experiences within a certain type of relations, requires an ontological framing of that relational type. Such definitional framing was attempted through literature review, with a critical view from own field experiences. But once dwelling in the data and subjectivity, it becomes unclear whether the research

subject's definition of relational type is different, whether their subjective experience does not fit the definition, or whether the ontological framing needs to be adjusted.

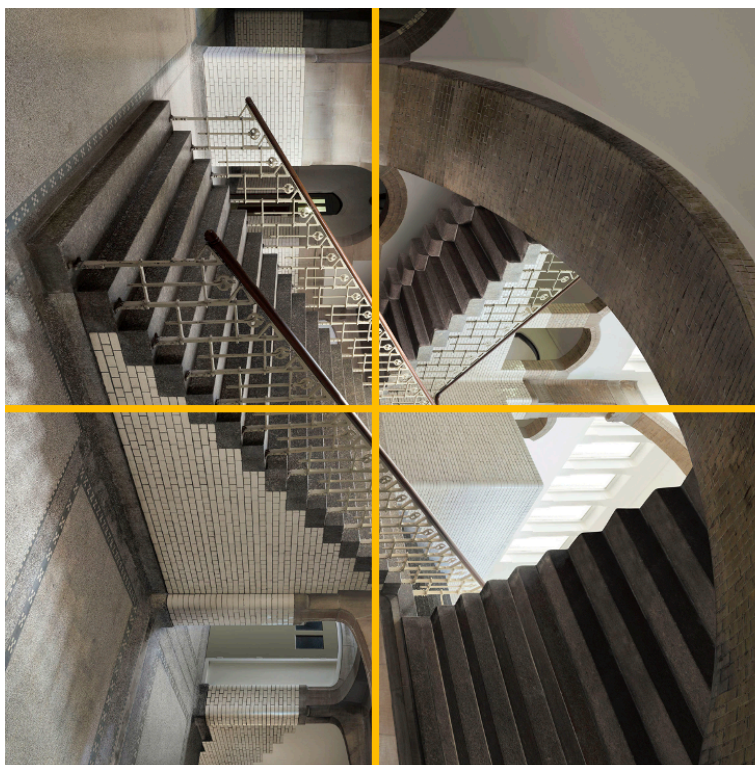
I have mentioned in various stages, my own experience when studying phenomena in this research, that of being inside *Relativity* and losing my orientation. To combat this, I was defining very loosely a grid with vertical and lateral axes, as in Figure 10 (a), based on very broad definitions: "hierarchical mediation," "vertical authority," "peer level." All these definitions were limiting the exploration and making sense of the picture. In figure 10, I have flipped Escher's illustration by 90°. It is so deceptive that it looks like it has the right orientation. That is what I felt in contemplating some of the data, whilst having the ontological grid in my data analysis.

Figure 10. The need for an ontological grid (a)



If I we were to apply this grid on the “bricks-and-mortar” and flip it by 90°, it immediately appears bizarre (Figure 11).

Figure 11. The need for an ontological grid (b)



As mentioned,³⁰ Bhaskar’s stance on critical realism (1975) was that science needs to be constantly concerned with the nature of the world as an independent entity because ultimately it is this world that it seeks to understand and to add value to. The issue is not accessing or interpreting subjective experience. The issue is how to uncover what the ontological dimension is. Because this research topic was concerned with two axes, even visually, perhaps, it’s more accessible to be preoccupied with an ontological grid. But when researching a psycho-social study on e.g., abuse, it would be necessary to be concerned with what current social definitions

³⁰ Chapter 3 in epistemological considerations.

constitute abuse and what the research subject experiences, but those lines can be even more challenging, and therefore even easier to lose sight of what could constitute its ontological nature.

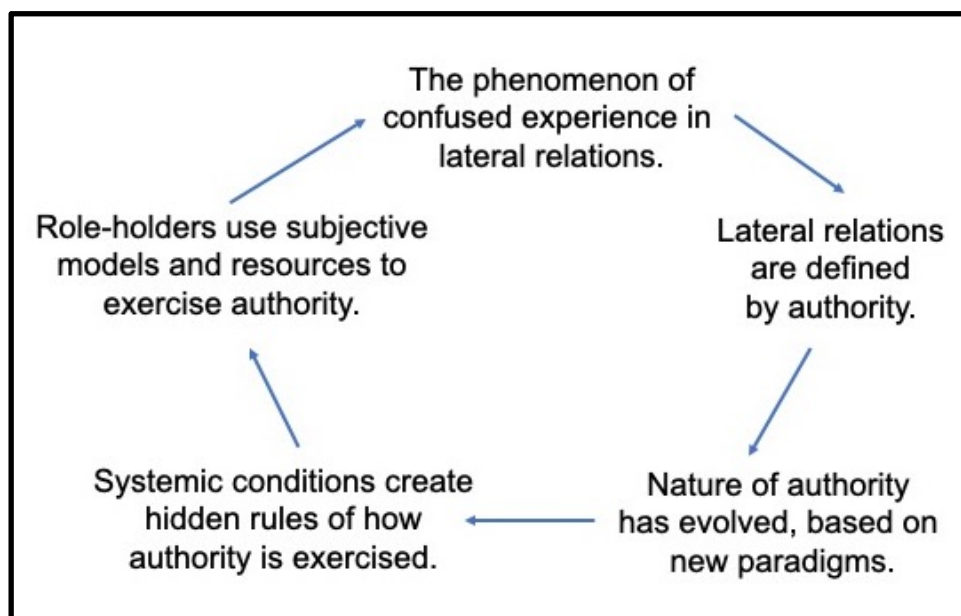
This problem is innate in researching relations and is explored by Donati (2016) who uses the term “relational subject” to examine society as the result of relational interactions between individuals who are also a result of those relations. This approach is central to the *critical realist relational sociology* school of thought. In its epistemological considerations, I found it had a similar basis to the “interplay” approach of S-P. Donati is concerned with the “social relationality” and poses a similar question that runs throughout this research:

“The relation has its own reality in that it has causal powers and its own qualities [...] social relations are the effect or creation of human activities, actions or agency, but they are an emergent phenomenon that corresponds to a different (autonomous and peculiar in its characteristics) order of reality in respect to human behavior/agency. This relationality (the relation as a real entity) is activity-dependent, but has its own structure (Donati, 1991; Donati, 2015) which can be seen in the power that it exercises in retroacting on the terms (Ego and Alter) of the relation itself.”

These notions demonstrate how critical realism attempts to sustain the tension between subjectivity and ontology. It sustains what, in the interplay, is a result of human agency, which can be seen as “choices” of the relation’s parties and what can be considered as inherent structures that influence these choices or the relation itself. My study had these tensions in all its steps. Critical realism, as an epistemology, puts

causality in its core, but a critical review of such studies by Radulescu and Vessey (2008) and a more one (Mingers and Standing, 2017) concluded, that the studies taking deliberate steps to examine causality are limited. The first study compares three identified epistemological frameworks used in research projects that use empirical data to study causality. But as there are only a couple of studies available per framework it is hard to use them as guiding models, and this highlights the challenges of how to study causality, which I have attempted to describe through this thesis. To illustrate this challenge, I give an example of how I studied the hidden nature of authority through phenomenology. A cause-effect flow in Figure 12 starts with the statement of “Lateral relations are defined by authority” and follows a clockwise flow that can explain one of the reasons why the experience in LRs is confused.

Figure 12. Studying the hidden nature of authority



When I encountered this pattern in the data, it surfaced through phenomenology as the statement at the top of the graph. If we can go, from there, through an anticlockwise movement we land at the place of studying the nature of authority to redefine LRs.

This anticlockwise flow however has at each stage a “seduction” tension embedded. Without these seductions, one cannot arrive at the redefinition of ontological nature and the data are embedded within the subjectivity and experiences of those relations.

A further challenge of my study was its non-contextual nature. Authority-relations phenomena have to be understood, not just in their own right, but within the organizational and psychological conditions of role-holders which couldn't be fully explored here. Therefore, the causality question remained very difficult, and yielded more generic but consistent relational dynamics and an evolved view of the nature of organizational authority. I consider that S-P studies of lateral relations are limited, and we have only begun our explorations. The outcomes of this research can hopefully invite for more focal studies of lateral functioning in specific contexts, such as emergent business models, the workforce generational gap, the shifts of dependency in critical organizational competencies, cross-market dependencies, just to name a few.

3. Implications for theory and practice

3.1 The need for an ontological focus in consulting practice

What I am outlining here from my own researcher's experience is not new but at the core of the dilemmas an S-P-informed consultant faces. This research process highlights the tension between phenomenology and ontology, the subjective perspective, and what could be considered as the independent nature of the situation. Systems-psychodynamics is an epistemology based on that question, which lies behind any heuristic S-P approach, such as role, primary task or ORA. The challenges

of phenomenology I encountered during data analysis, arguably aren't very different to my consulting practice. Very often it is hard as consultants to get a sense of the ontological dimension of our clients, especially when we are confronted with a very strong transference at play. Typically, we put a lot of emphasis in enabling the client to separate their subjective model from what is needed in *role* but that I believe very often may obscure from truly exploring the ontological dimension they operate in. That happens, despite the intension and an S-P informed stance, but simply because the ontological dimension is often very hard to formulate for client and consultant alike.

Seeing this through research, I asked more critical questions about my own consulting practice. *Table 14. Anxieties encountered during a leader's introspection of an LRC* shows a very moving process of a leader contextualizing their very tough emotions of being bypassed. His personal experience of having witnessed his father as CEO being bypassed is activated through transference and possibly in his leadership dilemmas perhaps makes some aspects unreconcilable that can now be reconciled. This abstract was how the narrative in the second interview finished and made me almost think that it was an outcome of how an executive coaching session would work. But I hardly did anything aside from asking factual questions. What got him into new thinking was to first be confronted with the consequences of his own thinking (Steps 6–7) that then allowed him to ask himself ontological questions (9–11) leading to new possibilities, which ultimately reconciled his dilemma of how to actively protect his credibility, whilst remaining collaboratively engaged in the initiative (12–15).

This example highlights the importance of consultants having to resist guiding this process and allowing the client to do so for themselves (Bion, 1946; Winnicott, 1971).

To do so, one has to contain one's own anxieties that come from dependencies with the client relation, which brings the consultant in touch with their vulnerability and the feeling of loss of power (Cardona, 2018) that can give rise to overuse of power to flip the dependency direction and feel potent, as per the mechanics of the wheel. Even if this overuse of power is not an unethical misuse, as it was in my shameful dream³¹ they refrain from pushing the client to come close to what they implicitly know. With these notions in mind, I would agree with van Beekum (2014) and Cardona that the relationship is more lateral than a vertical Oedipal model would suggest. I believe the verticality is based on the fact that the consultant is the process owner and guard where the client enters. Regardless of career phases or personal seniorities, there are enough disparities in skills and personal powers to suggest that these roles are not easily ranked against each other. The dependency that is constructed can be laterally interdependent. What therefore occurs within this situation should not be seen as the results of transferences of either side but has to be linked to the relation's ontological dimension.

In my own psychoanalytic psychotherapy, as patient, I experienced that the most powerful inquiries of my therapist have been around "reality testing" and discerning facts as opposed to associating. I point all these out because they stem from my own fascination with the *Relativity* world and the very reasons I enjoy S-P-informed experiential events. I have come to realize, through this journey, the importance of sustaining causality questions and an ontological perspective.

³¹ Dream 3 in Section B of Appendix VI.

3.2 The need for an ontological focus in theorizing

With these points in mind, there is room to reconnect with S-P theory and see what of the ontological dimension has been redefined over time. As I explored, many have argued that the GRC model is not incorporating the reality of the lateral axis (Sirota, 2012; Armstrong, 2007; van Beekum, 2014; Beck and Visholm, 2014; Western and McDonnell, 2017; de Gooijer, 2018). The rigid line drawn between members and staff and the abstract nature of any task at hand create a blurriness in accessing its ontological nature. These of course serve a critical purpose in its methodology. The gap I argue lies in exploring the multidimensionality of authority relations and making sense through an ontological framing. Application groups are meant to contain members in making things practical but are a defense against exploring ontology. As every sense making stays still on open-ended phenomenological interpretation it might benefit from a more focal exploration of ontological nature.

With these ideas in mind, there is so much to be explored in the existing original thinking if we frame ontology differently. Basic assumption behavior (Bion, 1961) can lead to different understanding with an ontological reframing of authority. The data I encountered was filled with basic assumption group behaviors that, if we were to apply them as a rigid interpretation guide, we would miss all the nuances of their current nature. Bion's notions of the *work group* and the *mystic* (1970) highlight a tension between laterality and verticality. The elusive nature of contemporary organizational grids hides or even makes either axis appear as the opposite. Both axes create an equilibrium in which if one axis seems invisible, it can be expected that it still exists but takes a different form. And if one appears dominantly, we can expect that the other also exists in order to sustain the equilibrium, but we have to seek for its new form.

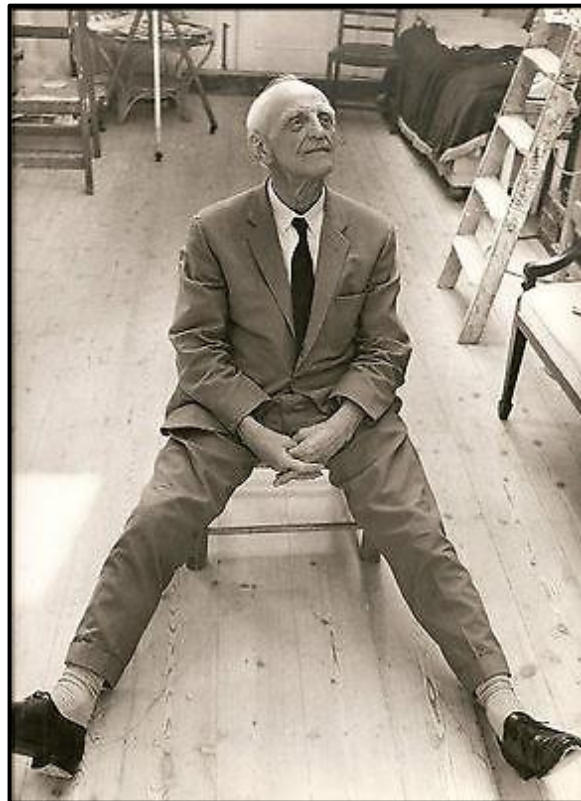
EPILOGUE: Taking-off from the Lateral Axis

Interdependency and the collapse of the vertical axis

This thesis began with Cocteau's "Living is a horizontal fall" (1957). And in Part IV, I began with Guareschi's description of the River Po having dignity for being horizontal, as opposed to Niagara Falls, which he called embarrassing. I use these quotes to connect to the natural, vertical progression in life (and career), from being born in absolute dependency and having to strive for autonomy by developing power (Lazar, 2018). In this study, careers were imagined as such vertical developments. In this journey of developing upwards, the lateral axis is forgotten, which paradoxically expands through life. Ultimately all our relations, even parent-child, become lateral. And what is forgotten is the invisible interdependency. The lateral axis is ontologically real but remains invisible. Contemporary societies and organizations experience an unprecedented collapse of the vertical axis, with interdependencies exacerbated by the complex world. Nobody prepares us for the skill to deal with interdependency, which contains a lateral model and yet requires a vertical axis to contain it, by the sense of an introduced thirdness. The state of the world is not better since the beginning of my journey in Chapter 1. Societies now fight for abortion rights, and an unimaginable war has begun in Europe. The collapse of the vertical axis creates a dangerous powerful magnetic field, which is our fear of the lateral axis not to become a dark hole.

Thinking about personal development, it is the acknowledgment of vulnerability and interdependency that allows for lateral development, which becomes as crucial then as the vertical one. One cannot live without the other. Winnicott (1965) passionately wrote about growing from dependence-to-independence-to-interdependence. This notion seems linked to his lateral authority figure, as depicted in the image below.

Figure 13. Portrait of child psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott

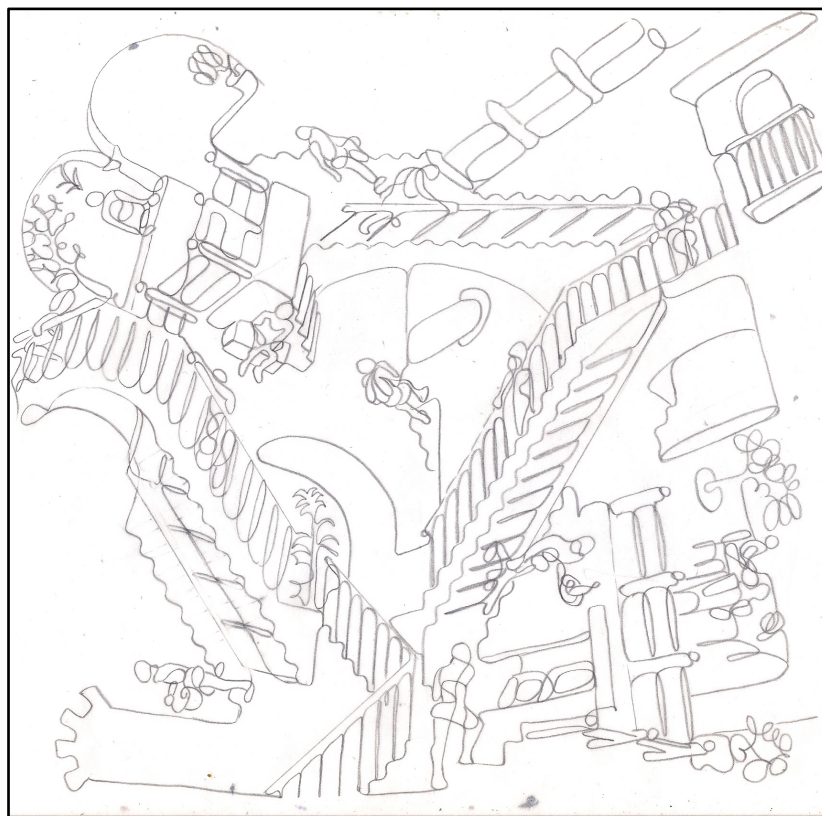


This stance was reflected in Winnicott's practice, where he was the first to laterally play with children, as opposed to observing them. He was humorously described as putting his feet on his desk and a comical body posture with his arms behind his back, tied up like a pretzel (Kahr, 2018).

In the first years of this doctoral course, I transitioned from corporate to private practice or from secured dependency to very fragile autonomy (Miller, 1993), which heightened my sense of vulnerability (Dartington, 2018). Tim Dartington, my practice supervisor held me and inspired me to get in touch with my vulnerability, whilst sustaining my potency. The combination of this course's research and practice components enabled me to transform my power-vulnerability contradiction, from *conflicting* when experiencing it on the vertical axis, into experiencing it as *coexisting*, when repositioning it on the lateral axis.

This resulted into the symbolic memoir of the *lateral relativity* tattoo (Fig. 14), which has marked my skin, as this process has marked my identity.

Figure 14. *Lateral relativity*, tattoo illustration by Aristeos Tsousis, 2022



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APPENDIX I – Autobiographical References

Within this research journey, I was triggered to reflect on my own life and work experiences to understand how I am personally oriented on LR, and what perhaps has been a less conscious motive to explore this topic.

I was born in Greece, youngest of three in the nuclear family, a brother and a sister. From early on, I was aware of my place in this order. Our clothes and toys would circulate from older to younger, me being the last. At times of fights, I would find myself often incapable of winning or to display own power over my siblings. My parents wouldn't mediate, to allow us to develop our own capacities. This, however, institutionalized our power differences, which resulted in my belief, that I was generally weak. Being part of this sibling group was very often painful, because of my inability to deal with sibling rivalry, and later as they entered adolescence and I was still a child, this split made me also feel excluded and envy their access to outside life.

Contrastingly, I quickly became aware of the supporting function of our sibling group. When I was four, our parents got divorced and both remarried. We stayed with my mum and her new husband. My dad's family had now a new son, connecting periodically. I experienced joy with my younger brother, without having the intense sibling dynamics of a nuclear family. The divorce was often turbulent, creating two parallel realities, which we often had to navigated through. In this context, we used each other to make sense of our confused experience. Each of us have had a different relationship with our parents, but we all realized that there were differences between each of our parents' perspective of the other and what we would witness. I felt grateful to be together with them and not alone when dynamics were intense.

This bond, further, spawned a collective power to contest against our parents, something which individually we wouldn't. My older siblings would take the initiate to rebel. Even when I would agree with my parents' perspective, I was compelled to join my siblings, to stay in their group and its safety. Navigating through the different groups, developed in me the ability to hold multiple perspectives, but I wouldn't pick sides not to betray anyone. And being so busy with the family's harmony, I was not in touch with my own needs, let alone to develop the capacity to stand up for them.

These relational patterns helped me in organizations, as crossing boundaries was very familiar, understanding competing perspectives, and I could intervene without becoming threatening. As consultant, I had to be conscious of my innate desire for reconciliation and harmony, when those were not helpful for an assignment. These experiences further developed my resilience to stay and work with anxiety-provoking dynamics. But disadvantaged me when having to confront or negotiate with others. Throughout the years, I became more comfortable to confront my superiors when necessary, but negotiating laterally would be the hardest. This difficulty made me

deeply curious whether it was unique to me, due to my own experiences or whether they were making me sensitive to understand something more universal about organizational lateral relations.

From the start of joining school, I was very anxious, the unfamiliarity of the new kids would make me feel threatened. I wasn't a good student. My mum was deeply concerned, and she and my stepdad would help me study at home, and at times with extra private lessons. This support was very helpful for my cognitive and actual progress, but also kept me feeling inferior and dependent, a dependency I tended to have throughout life on authority figures. For teachers, I was a well-behaved, lovable kid, but a mediocre student. As my intelligence was not in doubt, my mum's assumption was that I wasn't disciplined and methodical enough, which at times made her furious and punitive. The moments of presenting my grades to her would always be petrifying. Comparing myself to others was deeply confusing. I couldn't understand how most others managed. And since I couldn't see myself as rebellious or carefree as most of the mediocre or bad students, I couldn't understand what was I doing that resulted into such bad results.

I discovered one key reason, only a year ago. Through my psychotherapy, I was diagnosed with the ADD syndrome. It was a shock to me to find it out in my 40s, but not a surprise. Despite, the remorse of not having had as a child the resources and methods I have now, this diagnosis gave me a sense of healing about my past. At that time, I perceived myself as incapable and at times irresponsible. In all settings, also later in university or work I would get anxious and often have panic attacks, when I would be behind in progress.

Things turned also more difficult when as teenager I realized I was gay. Already as a boy I was more sensitive and feminine and unsurprisingly, at times bullied. In the Greek society of the 80s and 90s homosexuality was explicitly ridiculed and seen as abnormality. This kept me in denial, because of shame, but also because by feeling abnormal and seeing the rest of my peers as "normal", they were in the safety of a healthy happy life, that I couldn't belong to. At times of feeling intensely desperate, I remember it was the thought that I could ask for my brother's help, that kept me sane. Throughout life my relationships with my siblings, separately or as a group, became a consistent undoubted base for safety, support, joy, love and companionship. This side would always override the sibling rivalry dynamics that would awaken difficult emotions of fairness and equality.

A turning point at high school was learning the saxophone and joining the school band. I found finally a skill, as opposed to sports, that I was good at and still be accepted by my peers as being cool. My confidence grew, I interacted freely with the band kids, and I found myself becoming more popular at school. Perhaps this confidence also allowed me to improve in the last years at school, securing me a place in university.

In university, my peer relations were now different, with more confidence and fun. But with the first cognitive challenges, the panic of falling behind got activated. This time however, it was by forming a study group with peers, that I found support and manage through. Gradually, I was able to excel in difficult courses, leading me to choose concentrations that others would avoid. It was the surprise that I could manage something that many didn't and the joy of accomplishment that motivated those choices. Not the curiosity or passion for the subject, which resulted into never using professionally my concentrations. But this resulted into believing I was smarter, as opposed to being at the bottom.

Right after university, I got hired as a trainee by a reputable global company relocating to the Netherlands. This time to cope with my insecurity, whether I would make it in corporate, I would connect with my inflated sense of self. My uncertainty influenced how I shaped relations. With supervisors, I would build intimate relationships, gain their trust through competence, reason, and loyalty. With my peers, I would enjoy collaboration, but I would also feel aggressively competitive. In the "high-performance" culture of that organization, competitiveness would be exacerbated. I was flagged as a "high-potential talent" which made me feel *better* than my peers, but to be more precise, *safer*. My anxiety and competitiveness would result into envious comparison of myself with peers. I would always check whether those getting promoted in my view deserved it. And when not, feelings of injustice would infuriate me. I would think that the less competent, in my view, peers don't deserve to be on the same level. Often, I am shocked to realize how aggressive and tormenting these thoughts were.

Moving through different organizations and roles, I found myself less or more in touch with the aggressive side of peer competition. Career progress eased some insecurities developing a more realistic judgment of my abilities, which impacted positively my relatedness to peers. Further, through psychotherapy, I managed to relief myself from my self-images, develop more productive patterns of relating to others and learning how to negotiate more effectively.

In my latest career phase as consultant, it was not too long after operating alone, that I sought companionship, resulting to a joint practice with my business partner. We quickly agreed to arrange systems-psychodynamic supervision for us and study our own dynamics. Through this partnership, I experienced the safety in times of anxiety, the joy of cocreation, and being part of something bigger than me. But I also experienced envy and competition, struggling to take up roles, to take the lead or address differences. The benefits and challenges of this experience inspired my curiosity further on this topic. We both got fascinated to orient our practice on the lateral axis of collaboration.

In my relatedness to peers, I would find myself within a spectrum from (a) forming intimate relationships in order to experience companionship and safety, to (b) experiencing envy and aggressive feeling in case I'd consider our level differences

threatening for my self-image. In all my relationships I operate towards the a. side of the spectrum and would suppress or not be in touch with the b. part. So much so that when I'd speak to peers honestly about such emotions, they wouldn't recognize them in my behaviors. But in my first experiences in systems-psychodynamics experiential training, I got shocked to find myself being the one in the group manifesting aggressive competitive behaviors. At first, I thought I was developing new constructive behaviors and was even experiencing gratification as if it was a "new skill." In 2015, I attended a Group Relations Conference as Training Group³² member, through its competitive design and perhaps the contextual dynamics of the particular event, I found myself acting out that aggression, so much so that I couldn't tolerate these feelings, deeply shameful of my behavior and not having the capacity to understand myself. Very short after, I had decided to pursue this doctoral course. My conscious motives were to pursue the joy of learning, to strengthening my practice and seek a holding organization. At my initial critical reflections of my unconscious motives, I connected my decision to that GRC, becoming aware of my desire to strengthen myself, by acquiring knowledge authority, so to not feel vulnerable in competition, especially as a newly freelancer. Nothing in that unconscious strategy seemed new to me.

Within the course, I had the luck to be part of a year group of six doctoral students. This experience has been invaluable for emotional, practical support and conceptual inspiration. It took me the first two years of the course to arrive to the specific area of LRs. And studying myself in this group of peers, through my research lens, helped me illuminate and work through the difficult aspects of myself. It further helped me uncover patterns in the research data, that perhaps I wouldn't have without such reflective learning.

Going through the entire doctoral process, I realize now that my deepest motive has been an attempt to make meaning of the more unbearable traumatic aspects of my own lateral experiences, with that Training Group being their flagship one. The reflection and meaning-making that the doctoral process involved, despite at times being unexpectedly painful, brought healing but also deep personal development. Specifically, to be in touch with and work through my vulnerability and dependency, without feelings of impotence as in my past, which leads to envious and aggressive responses. And further, how to work through the challenges of interdependency in all my lateral relations. I consider these perhaps the most personally valuable products of this research process. I aspire the research results to be also a valuable contribution to the field and those who work with and in organizations.

³² Training Groups are joined by those who have member experience in Group Relations Conferences and with the ambition to develop towards Staff roles in the future. Training Group members take up both membership and staff roles in the conference, which must be decided laterally within the group

APPENDIX II – Participant Sample Criteria

A. Participant Recruitment Criteria and Rationale.

Criterion	Rationale
Type of Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study focused on corporate organizations. Given consulting practice and experience, I sought to understand and promote knowledge to this organizational type. • A diverse range of organization types would challenge me as researcher, but also would have the risk to dilute the data when it comes to systemic influences to roles and individual experience. • I didn't put a criterion on industry, however, considering also that individual participants would have possibly navigated across industries within their personal careers
Organizational size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantial organizational size should be reflected into certain a multidimensional organizational structure (e.g. global vs regional subunits, multifunctional vs functional units, multiple business or product units etc.) • Such complexity would impact the participant's role-holders with multiple objectives, own and enterprise, and multiple team memberships and relations
Leadership Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study concerns the role of senior management of organizations, as I deemed crucial to understand how the layer of authority enables and facilitates organizational collaboration, through their individual leadership within their lateral relations • The participant's role would sit in or one layer under the top team of the enterprise or respective unit, depending on their organization's size • The participant's role therefore should contain both vertical and lateral accountability, meaning managing vertically a team or function and being a member of a team (management, functional or cross-functional) of peers

B. Participant Information Sheet



TAVISTOCK & PORTMAN NHS FOUNDATION TRUST
120 Belsize Ln, London NW3 5BA, UK

D10D: DOCTORAL RESEARCH IN CONSULTATION & THE ORGANIZATION

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Research Study: A systems-psychodynamic exploration of lateral relations in senior management teams of corporate organizations.

Researcher: Petros Oratis
Knollendamstraat 151
1013TM Amsterdam
Netherlands
Email: petros@thelateralspace.com
Tel: +31619021202

Research Supervisor: Dr. Simon Tucker
Email: drsimontucker@icloud.com

What is the purpose of the study?

This research is being conducted as part of Professional Doctorate in 'Consultation and The Organization'.

Project Focus

The focus of my research is the lateral (horizontal) collaboration of management teams in corporate organizations. I wish to explore the nature, dynamics and experience of lateral relations, between leaders / members of management teams, during moments of multi-disciplinary collaboration. A form of collaboration which doesn't or cannot be fully authorized, directed or managed by the hierarchal axis.

Leadership Teams are tasked to resolve complex organizational challenges, that require leaders to approach them with a broader lens than just that of their individual functional role. They way Leaders need to collaborate on such instances requires an interaction that cannot be fully authorized by a hierarchal boss or through their formal functional roles. It requires leaders to exercise own leadership towards each other on a peer-to-peer level, to lead and to follow, to challenge each other, to influence and to take a broader organizational citizenship perspective, rather than only of their own individual accountability.

Research Method and Requirements

To research this topic, I am conducting qualitative biographical interviews with several individual leaders from various organisations. The interview consists of two sub-sessions of 45' to 1 hour each, planned within a few days from each other and will be conducted by me. The focus of the interview is to explore life and career events that have shaped the interviewees' leadership when it comes to collaborating with their peer-leaders.

How are individuals approached as participants for the research?

As a researcher, I have been approaching various organizations of my network with the request to promote this research internally. In some cases, there have been suggestions of leaders that might be interesting participants due to their formal role or leadership style.

Do I have to take part?

No, your participation is voluntary. If you decide to take part, you will be handed a consent form to read and sign. If you decide to take part, but find later on that you changed your mind, then you can stop taking part at any time. You don't have to explain your reason for withdrawing. The only exclusion to this is if withdrawal is requested at the point where

data collection has been completed and the write-up is in process. All information will be kept strictly confidential. You will find a section hereafter that explains this further.

What is expected of me, if I take part?

I will reach out to you to arrange a qualitative biographical interview scheduled in two sessions. Due to the lockdown during the Covid-19 crisis, this interview will take place virtually over Zoom. I will record the interview and will retain only the audio file of the recording without the video. This audio recording will then be transcribed. The transcript will be fully anonymised and will omit any identifiable information, such as names of organisations and individuals. I will offer you a copy of your interview transcript and will welcome any comments you might have. The anonymised transcript or segments of will further be analysed for themes that relate to my research questions. The analysis will be done by myself as well as a selected small group of analysis panel fully anonymised and bound with confidentiality.

Confidentiality

Any identifiable information of the organization and all individuals mentioned will remain confidential to myself. When presenting the observations to an analysis group, all sensitive business information and identifiable information will be omitted, and names will be substituted with replacement names. In typing the transcript, your name and others referred to during the interview will be substituted with replacement names so that they will not be identifiable to anyone else. In any written reports of the research, this confidentiality will be strictly observed so that all information is kept anonymous. The audio recordings will be kept securely by me stored in a digital form with password protection. The audio file will not contain any written names but will be assigned an interview number allocated by me. I will erase the audio recording following the submission of my dissertation which is expected to happen in June 2021. The anonymised transcripts will be deleted six years after the completion of my doctoral program.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

By engaging in this research and through the process of the interview I hope that you can gain further insights and awareness on how you exercise your own individual leadership, how you experience relating to peer leaders on a lateral level and what could perhaps help you to collaborate, lead and follow peer leaders when not having formal authority. Further, you will have access to a report of themes identified, as a result of psycho-social analysis by a leading research institution that in its 100 years of activity has already produced profound knowledge on organizational and group dynamics, as well as individual leadership.

I'd be happy to have a dialogue with you on the findings, which may also inform and deepen your understanding of organisational and individual parameters that inform personal leadership, particularly in the increasing demand of collaborating laterally in organisations.

Finally, your participation may help other leaders and organizations in developing the right conditions for multi-disciplinary collaboration and enrich the academic field that studies leadership in organisations.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

With this research I hope that you as individual can gain more insights about your own leadership. Nevertheless, there might be a possibility through your narrative some difficult emotions might be triggered, or you may encounter topics that you wish to get a sounding board or support. In such cases, I will be available to you as a psycho-socially trained coach to suggest steps further.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of this study will be written up into a doctoral thesis as part of my Professional Doctorate in Consultation and the Organisation at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust. I wish to further submit parts of the study for publication to psychoanalytic and organisational studies journals. In such case, any identifiable details of all individuals and their organisations, participating in this study, including names or locations will remain anonymous.

This project has been approved by the Tavistock and Portman Trust Research Ethic Committee (TREC).

If you have any queries regarding the conduct of the programme in which you are being asked to participate, please contact: Simon Carrington, Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance (academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk)

APPENDIX III – Linking Subjective Inner Models to Discerned Relational Phenomena

	Subjective Model I	Subjective Model II	Subjective Model III	Subjective Model IV
Internal models in vertical relations & images of authority	In roles as supervisor authority needs to be in equity with personal seniority. Authority is not displayed on its own right, but with respect to subordinates who are prioritized. Supervisors who don't understand the depth of their subordinates' risk misusing their authority. This not only can lead to organizational destructiveness and may even be driven by supervisors' selfishness. As supervisor he carefully manages to avoid that, by proximity with supervisors and in-depth understanding and interaction in the content.	As subordinate the tendency to develop laterality with supervisors is consistent to her early-life parent-child experiences of being treated as a peer. Similarly the tendency to develop laterality with subordinates (we are in this together) but clear exercise of vertical authority. Authority will have a fair assessment of her value and the risk of being mistreated is managed through relational proximity.	Being subject to formal hierarchical authority may entail the risk of having to follow illogical rules. The fact that debating with logic may not solve the argument, because authority decision rights prevail creates risk and frustration. To manage the risk, he may choose to deliver excellent results, develop autonomy and lead virtuously.	Vulnerable when supervisor becomes authoritative. Authority contains a risk of wrong judgment and potential mishandling of her, once occurred it may be a challenge to turn around. Best way to manage the risk is to protect her autonomy and to keep a relational distance to supervisor.
Internal Models In Lateral Relations	Driven by virtuous motives of having impact and learning together tended not to be aware of power dynamics and didn't prioritize to seek individual visibility, expecting that others would actively recognize him. That may lead to betrayal and that impact his future role seniority. He would avoid addressing it, because it may resemble a power fight, but with time learns how to become explicit about it.	In LRs ensures not to be dominated. When feeling inferior is seeking at least win-win. That can be linked to early life getting a positive sense of self by being pulled up from peers by superiors and to the experience that to be equal to peers meant not being in her full potential.	Best teamwork experiences come from equalitarianism and absence of display of differences in levels. The display of role or personal differences if used to override decision rights might lead to feelings of injustice and driven by self-oriented motives. The way to avoid this risk is to develop a lateral relation that is based on virtuous aspirations and equality.	When self-assessed as different to others, might lose confidence. Requires conscious reminding that different qualities can be unique advantage. Absence of clear rules of the game makes creates vulnerabilities for invasion, being undermined, slowed down. But lateral alignment risks of been seen territorial and requires avoidance of conflict, appearing constructive and friendly. It costs time and energy.
Links Between Individual Inner Relational Models and Consistent Relational Phenomena Across Cases				
Consistent LR patterns: LR1. Avoidance of explicit conflict, negotiation LR 2. Covert power-fight / display of personal power LR 3. Influence through personal power as opposed to hierarchical authority	LR 1. Explicit conflict would connote to self and others being driven by selfishness. LR 2. Doesn't seem to prefer but being subject of it, can feel overwhelming and anxiety-provoking. LR 3. Based on meritocracy and greater good motives. LR 4. Wants to treat everyone with equal respect but may also feel unrecognized by being all the same.	LR 1. Because collaboration can be more effective through informal influencing. LR2. Seems confident on her abilities, but her espoused leadership paradigm is against explicit power fight. LR 3. Makes sure others can see her power but is careful not to misuse it explicitly. LR 4. Based on her confidence that she can effectively mold into the relationship	LR 1. Preference to do so with equalitarian model in mind. LR 2. When feeling others do so, can "play the game" but feels resentful of playing politics. LR 3. Is based on an equalitarian model, and personal power should be used for the common objective. LR 4. Is his key value in LR and often in VRs, but internally wants to recognize when his strengths are superior than the rest.	LR1. Is based on model of reason and doing the right thing for the job. LR2. Minimal implicit use of power, but when others do it leads for frustration or anxiety. LR3. Have been subject to misuse of authority. Image of good leadership are opposite to use of authority and connote selfishness. LR 4. Is an espoused culture, but may also lead to frustration because standing out, leads to lack of confidence.

<p>Mental Ranking: MR1. Assessing disparity between role and personal seniority in self MR2. Assessing disparity between role and personal seniority in others MR3. Assessing disparity in personal seniority between self and others</p>	<p>MR 1. Uses external ranking facts to ensure that his role seniority is consistent to personal seniority, thereby fair and recognizes his value. MR 2. Keeping alert from potential injustice and self-centered motives of others. MR 3. Compares his and others' seniority to develop an authorization model in both LRs and VRs.</p>	<p>MR1. To get a sense of own value, based on progressing faster. MR2. As supervisor to get a sense of how to develop followership from more older subordinates. MR3. In peers (based on age, value) to get a sense of self. MR3. In peers to understand how power and authority differences may impact the collaborative result and choose how to influence.</p>	<p>MR1. Realized earlier in career that his ambition and abilities might be constrained by role seniority and by his young age. MR 2. The disparities are noted, and might be used to assess the risks that the "right to play" should come based on wanting to contribute to the greater good which is based on what the group agrees. MR 3. The disparities are noted, are used to assess the risk to camaraderie and equality, which is based on what the group agrees.</p>	<p>MR1. As a way to develop confidence for the task. MR2. Challenges if one claims authority rights based on their personal seniority but seem challenged to address it. Can be frustrated realizing that personal seniority (capability) is less than what the role requires. MR3. Recognizing and respective if others' seniority creates more authority rights in a lateral relation.</p>
<p>Relational Confusion / Morphing: RCM 1. From lateral to bottom-up vertical RCM 2. From lateral to top-down vertical RCM 3. From top-down vertical to lateral RCM 4. From top-down vertical to bottom-up vertical RCM 5. From bottom-up to lateral RCM 6. From bottom-up to top-down</p>	<p>RCM 1. Morphing from peers to bottom-up dynamic, based on seniority differences and lack of explicit authorization. RCM 5. Confusion as subordinate, not becoming lateral with the boss, due to a-type authority that may not value his lack of authority display. RCM 4. Morphing as supervisor flipping it to bottom-up.</p>	<p>RCM 1 In lateral relations momentarily to shift downwards to be able to negotiate with not having more authority rights eventually to create a win-win. RCM 2 When having a sense that can be supported through authority, eventually to create a win-win. RCM 3. As supervisor it feels as if she is peers with subordinates this creates a strong bond with the team and followership. But when the team doesn't follow this creates confusion as if being rejected by peers. RCM 5. In pairing up with the supervisor in creating a partnership. RCM 6. Through personal coaching to develop a closer relationship with supervisor.</p>	<p>RCM 1. Confusion early in career when more senior peer (or supervisor) overrode his input with executive decision. RCM 1. Confusion when peer tried to override a team decision based on her business's size. RCM 2. Whilst being in LR, internally can acknowledge own higher level. RCM 5. Morphing occurs collectively in team setting when team manager become one of the members. In line with his personal values of equalitarianism. RCM 6. When supervisor didn't acknowledge his values, resigned and whilst money had no effect was able to display more power than the supervisor.</p>	<p>RCM 1. Confusion and resisting morphing when peer is trying to morph as such and she insists in the lateral relation as per design. RCM 6. Confusion and resisting morphing as the boss is pushing her to manage the entire venture. RCM 5. Confusion, when she is expected to be managed as subordinate but instead treated as peer. RCM 6. Morphs in unclear roles that she perceives has decision rights. The intervention by more senior (personal or role) is perceived as not respecting her authority.</p>

APPENDIX IV - Incident analysis experience vs ontological attributes

Example incidents (rows) 1 to 4. Columns of studied attributes, part 1 out of 2.

	Ontological Dimension Based on Participants Narrative		Phenomenological Interpreted Subjective Experience			
	Context - Roles - Tasks		Inner Experience & Manifested Dynamic (P's perspective)			Task Effect
Org Incident	Organizational LRC Incident (P represents participant, regardless which case)	LRC Contextual Task	participants Inner Experience and Concerns	LRC Dynamic As Appears in Narrative	Personal Satisfaction In Relation / Outcome	Task Effectiveness
1	P is Sales Manager and has to closely collaborate with the Product Manager. Prior these roles were combined within PM's responsibility who was a senior to P. PM executes differently to what is agreed officially in meetings between P and PM. After all efforts to change this, P escalates to hierarchical leader and they have a 3-way conversation, which leads to agreements, but afterwards PM doesn't execute. Eventually the company reorganizes and roles change.	Resolve issue that agreed decisions are not executed and deviated by PM.	Frustration. Despair. Anxious for not being allowed to perform. Subject to invisible aggressive attacks. Lack of camaraderie. Powerless, as formal authority has no potency. Injustice, formal authority doesn't resolve. Shame for not performing as usual.	Covert sabotage. Betrayal of agreements. Friendly exploration. Escalation to resolve. No resolution	Frustrating	Task Ineffective
2	P leaders operations and peer Sales Leader (SL) requires P's help in a new unplanned Sales Initiative. SL appears to take Operation's delivery for granted. P assesses team's feasibility to deliver. Has to negotiate with SL what/how to deliver. Eventually they reach a win-win agreement.	Align on conditions for operations to support an unplanned Sales initiative	Having to protect own team. Having to protect functional delivery. Assessing own power in the situation. Being taken for granted. How to mold own style to appeal to the other.	Negotiation through influencing and seduction. Aiming at Win-Win.	Satisfying	Effective
3	P is Managing Director of a unit and belongs to a MT with MDs of all units. They have to agree on an IT system implemented to all countries. The MD who is overseeing the initiative is suggesting and IT vendor of this MD country and P is concerned that it is driven by MDs country interest as opposed to everyone's.	Resolve dispute on decision, find a principle on decision rights amongst peers	Frustration. Injustice. Mistrust of other's motives. Mistrust on the principle for decision-making. Can play the power game, but goes against own values	Power fight under the table. Feels like dirty politics.	Frustrating	Unclear
4	P is responsible for Business Development and has partnered up with the Sales Leader in a major initiative. P has contributed by orchestrating internal functions to develop a proposition that would be fitting the customer's need. Upon successful signing of the deal the SL communicates the result as a sales win without mentioning P's contribution.	Relation seems to have ended with P's recognition issue unaddressed.	Betrayal Frustration Fear that lack of recognition will lead to lack of career progress Fear of survival of the fittest (the most political).	Betrayal, dirty politics, broken relation.	Frustrating	Task Effective

Example incidents (rows) 1 to 4. Columns of studied attributes, part 2 out of 2.

	Subjective Experiences and Preoccupation with Ontological Attributes				Manifested Dynamics based on Ps Experience		
	Mental Ranking				Power Dynamics Shifts & Relational Morphing		
Org Incident	Hierarchical Authority Role	Hierarchical authorization of each party	Seniority Differences (Role)	Seniority Differences (Personal)	Initial Dependency: Autonomous Interdepend. Co-Depend. Depend on Be Depend. on	Shifts in Dependency Attribute Used to Shift	Consistent, Confused or Morphed Relational Dimension (nature - experience - dynamic)
1	Mediating With No Effect	Consistent authorization. But in practice doesn't have effect	Consistent: Company Grade, Hierarchical Line, Functional level.	B-U Disparity: (seniority, age, tenure, reputation)	Co-dependent	Co-dependent, Shifted to be Dependent on: Co-dependent per role authority. PM uses personal power and shifts P to depend on PM. P fails to shift it back. Shifts through Personal Seniority cannot shift back.	Confused: PM is treating P top-down, instead of Lateral, but P resists based on formal role authority
2	Existing in the mind Un-Mediating	Inconsistent authorization lines. Cannot provide decision-rights rules.	None noted (sales driven organization, sales seem having more organizational power)	None noted	Interdependent	Interdependent: SL depends on P to deliver on initiative. P depends on SL as P's success is through supporting SL. Shifts through role authority.	Consistent: However momentarily was treated B-U (because sales Function is more important).
3	Mediating	Consistent authorization. But doesn't resolve decision-rights issues.	Disparity B-U based on country size and access to vendor.	None noted	Interdependent	Interdependent : All should decide. MD shifts to lead dependency through country size and vendor relation. Shifts by use of role seniority and power	Confused: MD differentiates own decision stake based on country size, but P (perhaps other MT members) resists seeking equal rights in decision.
4	Un-Mediating	Inconsistent authorization lines. Cannot provide decision-rights rules.	Disparity B-U: no direct reports as opposed to other leader	Appears Consistent	Interdependent	Interdependent Turned into Depended on: P depends on BL for project alignment. BL depends on P for project impacts to BL's department. Shifts by use of authority	Confused: Whilst P perceives laterality to be equal, the SLs communication excluding P puts SL in higher power level.

Example incidents (rows) 5 to 8. Columns of studied attributes, part 1 out of 2.

Ontological Dimension Based on Participants Narrative		Phenomenological Interpreted Subjective Experience				
Context - Roles - Tasks		Inner Experience & Manifested Dynamic (P's perspective)			Task Effect	
Org Incident	Organizational LRC Incident (P represents participant, regardless which case)	LRC Contextual Task	participants Inner Experience and Concerns	LRC Dynamic As Appears in Narrative	Personal Satisfaction In Interaction / Outcome	Task & Relational Effectiveness
5	Company has agreed to give discounts during COVID not to carry inventories of unsold product. In P's BU there are products with high sales and is not applying discount. A Senior Leader (SL) is confronting P on this decision. P has to reach agreement with SL	Project Team Work to deliver nonexisting product to the market.	Frustration. Chaotic complexity. Fear to be seen territorial. Being intruded for no task essential reason. Waste of time, slowed down. Disappointed in leadership quality. Regret / shame for having "seduced" him into being "best friends."	Aggressive invasion to autonomy. Friendly justification of own decisions. Friendly seduction.	Frustration	Effective
6	P is HR lead in a project team of a newly created company who will bring a new product to a new market. The team has to come up with a branding strategy and gets stuck. The oldest in age team member (unclear formal function) takes the lead in coaching the team to get unstuck and they come up with a creative outcome which they find successful.	Project Team Work to deliver nonexisting product to the market.	Team work Camaraderie We are in it together Older means "you are dead and nobody told you", young is energy, potency and can do. Older can contribute only if it task effective, not to appear superior.	Camaraderie Equalitarianism If one stands out is for the common good.	Satisfying	Effective
7	P is project leader of enterprise processes alignment across all functions. A business leader, P's former manager in previous role, is complaining that the project deliver is not in alignment with BL's interests. P needs to reach an agreement with BL. In the interaction P takes into account their former relation, but is not allowing this to influence the alignment outcome.	Resolve Misalignment on Projects Delivery to BL's BU.	Cautious not to be dominated. Dispute needs to be sorted. Danger of exposure if not sorted.	Friendly but firm alignment. Decision-rights battle. Sticking to the facts. Aiming at Win-Win	Satisfying	Effective
8	P is reports directly to the CEO and needs to ensure CEO directives are being deployed. P is in supportive role to the MT of a suborganization. It is unclear how P and MT will collaborate, as P's role contains both support and the monitoring of execution.	Align on P's role within the MT vis-a-vie P's other role	Danger to exercise formal role authority if being more junior than the rest. Best way to partner is by being useful, in service to others.	Authority gives seat on the table. But really allowed in by serving the other	Partially Satisfying	Unclear

Example incidents (rows) 5 to 8. Columns of studied attributes, part 2 out of 2.

	Subjective Experiences and Preoccupation with Ontological Attributes				Manifested Dynamics based on Ps Experience		
	Mental Ranking				Power Dynamics Shifts & Relational Morphing		
Org Incident	Hierarchical Authority Role	Hierarchical authorization of each party	Seniority Differences (Role)	Seniority Differences (Personal)	Initial Dependency:	Shifts in Dependency Attribute Used to Shift	Consistent, Confused or Morphed Relational Dimension (nature - experience - dynamic)
5	Un-Mediating	Inconsistent authorization lines. Cannot provide decision rights rules.	Appears B-U to SR who is "one of most senior leaders"	Unclear 5 years ago B-U: P felt had no reputation, contacts or local knowledge.	Autonomy	Autonomy turned into Interdependency turned into autonomy: P depends on BL for project alignment. BL depends on P for project impacts to BL's department. Starts by authority, shifts again through power (Skill)	Confused Unclear decision rights create the confusion. VR appear as T-D and P is treating as L.
6	Un-Mediating	Consistent authorization. Teams agrees to make own rules (if one wouldn't agree, could only resolve it laterally)	Consistent grade, hierarchical role	Disparity: B-U to older guy. Age functions reversely ranking (T-D). OG uses stuckness to momentary reverse his B-U to T-D.	Co-Dependent	Highly interdependent on task. No shifts	Morphed: Older team member momentarily becomes a mentor. Team accepts it because of task and because OM's seniority is explicitly nonthreatening to groups equality.
7	Un-Mediating	Inconsistent authorization lines. Cannot provide decision rights rules.	Not clear: Either B-U or L Corporate Grade, Hierarchical authority.	Disparity: B-U P used to be subordinate to BL	Interdependent	P depends on BL for project alignment. BL depends on P for impacts to BL's department. Shifts through BL authority /personal seniority. P but doesn't allow BL personal seniority. P stays with role authorities to shift into lateral.	Consistent: However lateral means that momentarily in the interaction they will shift positions of power up and down.
8	Existing in the mind Un-Mediating	Inconsistent authorization lines. Cannot provide decision rights rules.	Disparity T-D and B-U: P is lower in company grade but higher in distance to CEO.	Disparity B-U: P feels B-U based on age, career tenure.	Interdependent	Interdependent: P interdependent with rest of MT, shifts to P dependent on MT. Shifts down by use of seniority disparity, shifts up by use of executive authority.	Morphed: From assessing MT's deployment P turns into service to the team. This then turns into confronting the team.

APPENDIX V – Example from Consulting Practice

In Chapter 10, I explore how role-holders get anxious about their future in the organization (their future formal organizational roles) as a result of what happens on the relational terrain, who leads and who follows. A year before I started the data collection, I had a consulting assignment that astonished me and I couldn't explain, by how I perceive it based on the theory emerging in Chapter 10. Whilst in a management retreat that concerned the team's collaboration, I had organized an individual feedback rotation exercise, the team suggested to openly talk about their career aspirations instead. I had written an consulting report within the scope of the advance practice of the doctoral course, and here I include the assignment context and specific incident description.

The assignment concerned a 6-member leadership team of the marketing function of a lifestyle business. The need for developing the team's collaboration came by the team members themselves. They were receiving signals from the entire marketing department that it was suffering from organizational ineffectiveness. Whilst each individual team member was leading successfully their own subfunction within marketing, they were operating in silos and any interdependency was explicitly and implicitly avoided. The result was that multidisciplinary processes were ineffective, handovers had breakdowns, there was duplication of tasks, unclear decision-making processes and the workload of the entire department was unmanageable. These led to increased sickness, high turn-over, finger-pointing between subfunctions, aggression and conflict on the office floor.

These developments became visible in the last six months when Giorgio, the Head of Marketing and their formal hierarchical boss, had left the organization. In that period, they were directly reporting one level up, to Lisa, the Chief Brand Officer, who was part of the top team.

When I have my introductory meetings with Lisa and Mary, the HR Director, they both described the inability of the team work effectively. Their collaboration was on a very superficial and polite. Any individual initiative and exercise of leadership towards each other was still avoided. Further, it was evident that the real intensions and thoughts of each individual were not fully expressed, imposing a pseudo-harmony and a complete avoidance of any form of conflict. That inhibited any real decisions, and often the suppressed aggression was expressed after the meetings, behind each other's back.

These preliminary discussions concluded with their request to me to facilitate a 1,5 away-day for team coaching, in line with the company's team development practice.

In their lateral interactions thus far, I found remarkable how any form of aggression, confrontation or conflict with each other was completely avoided, whilst irritation or disagreement was visible, yet unaddressed. I hinted that the frustration with senior management's mistreatment might have also taken away the attention from addressing important topics towards each other.

There was a session designed to provide feedback to each other in one-to-one rotations. Here is when a remarkably strange incident occurred:

Eric said, "I believe we need to be honest and upfront with each other, about our individual career aspirations." The suggestion was to discuss publicly as team, which position each of them was aspiring to and everyone quickly agreed. I was taken aback from this. In my experience with leadership teams, whilst the phantasy of rivalry is always present, they hardly choose to disclose this in such a space. Nevertheless, I gave space to the discussion. They took turns in sharing by following the sequence of their seating arrangement, as opposed to following a random order based on individual initiative. This had a ritualistic democratic quality and Eric, who was the initiator of this process, was also one of the team members who expressed that he didn't have career advancement aspirations.

Seth was the only team member, who shared that he explicitly aspired to take up the leadership role of this team. In a previous role he had worked closely with the Founder, developing a trusting relationship, which remained. He was, however, bypassed for this role when Giorgio left. Seth and Brian were the most ambitious in the team, something that was constantly visible. During the sharing, each of them had declared that they wanted different jobs, which took away the possibility of fighting each other. Others had ambitions outside of the team and others, like Eric, were happy where they were. This discussion had a profound effect. It was as if the possibility of fight and "murder" of each other was now eradicated.

The team probably had been perceiving a rivalry gravitated between Seth and Brian and wanted to orchestrate it in a contained manner and space. But what astonished me was how their self-authorized roles within the task of organizational effectiveness couldn't occur unless there was a visibility as to how they related to potential impacts of future formal hierarchical roles amongst them.

APPENDIX VI – Research Journal Entries

A. Example of Mental Ranking from a Staff team of a GRC

Journal Entry: September 27th, 2020

Occasion:

The Conference Administrator had to prepare a staff list with our telephone numbers in case members would run issues with technology. In the staff meeting he shared how he became preoccupied with the staff list order. He had put all staff in a sequence. He started using official Conference roles as the sequence. And whilst it was easy to start with the director, how would he deal with the consultants' roles that were all lateral? He started shifting names around per seniority, age, assumed tenure in GRCs as staff. Could this extend to publications or what else could be used? He shared how in some choices he felt guilty. He mentioned that I ended up at the bottom of the list (due to my short tenure as GRC staff) and it didn't feel right to him that I was after him, whilst he considers our experience comparable. Soon, the ordering became a persecutory task. It seemed that ranking staff members, created a formal hierarchy which then would be public to all staff members. Then he began looking for alternative ways to solve this, by for example using an alphabetical order...

B. Examples of researcher's dreams after interviews

Journal Entry: April 24th, 2020

Occasion: Dream 1 – night after 1st interview SS1 with first participant

In Athens having to run the 10k race. Andrés and I already ran one and now we would run again. But I was lost walking in the streets. I call Andrés on his phone and Aggeliki [a friend] picks up. She says "Andrés is already in the run and I have his phone." The race started at 20:00 and it's already 20:10. I have to run to find the race and start running. But I'm thinking, if I'm already running now before I even get to the race, how will I run the race? I'm getting worried, but also sad that I'm not with Andrés.

Journal Entry: May 8th 2020

Occasion: Dream 2 – night after 2nd interview SS2 of first participant

In my dream I am in a strange car of the '50s in what looks like a scenery of US road-trip. I am collecting chocolate bonbons throughout this journey. After I put them in a box, I am transferred to my bed. I turn and next to me Andrés is sat on the bed with his back against the wall. It feels as if he is awake with eyes open but he is also somewhat asleep. A state in between. It feels to me very strange and bizarre and I am somewhat surprised to see him like this instead of sleeping. He looks at my box of chocolates excited like a kid and wants to eat them. He picks up one in the shape of a Smurf and decides to eat it. We are transferred into a strange city center. We are curious where we are and as we are walking outside a stadium, Andrés tells me "I think we are in the early 1990s." As we are debating which part of the 90s we are in a stranger walking by hears our conversation. He is

wearing glasses and has a nerdish look and he seems quite friendly. He asks "So where have you guys been so far?" I reply to him "We have just got here." rushing to move on. He gets quite aggressive and responds something like "So you don't have anything for me to get out of this?." We both feel threatened. We start walking faster and now there is a full gang surrounding us. As we try to get away from them, Andrés and I get separated. I am hurrying to save my life but I'm also worried not knowing where Andrés is and feeling also somewhat guilty not being with him. I manage to escape the gang, but I don't know where Andrés is. My phone rings. I can see on the screen that it is my brother calling. In the dream now it is my brother who I was escaping the gang from in the place of Andrés. I pick up and I don't hear anything for a while and then my brother in a calm voice says "They are beating me up." I get horrified and in panic. I look around for help. I see police cars of what looks like the 70s or 80s. I tried to get their attention by screaming, but no voice comes out. At that moment I wake up from the dream screaming.

C. Example of experience in peer researchers' group, reflection, and dream entry.

Journal Entry: November 8 th , 2019 Occasion: Dream three after a Tavi research group	Context / Reflection
<p>Facilitating a peer intervention group, the first one of a cohort of BA graduates, new hires of a company. When we did a case intervention some members got bored with the case, brought by a female participant. She was talking about failure with her boss. One member stood up, took his jacket and was about to leave the room. I followed him behind and as he opened the door and said why are you leaving? He came back laughing and excusing himself. I began to attack him in a harsh way, telling him that coming back is even worse than leaving: "At least by leaving you took your own authority. It would have been an act of leadership." I immediately thought to myself, by saying this, others will also leave. He put on his jacket and left.</p> <p>When the case intervention finished I asked the group how they reflected on it. I asked "Why you thought this person left? What was he representing?" A female participant mentioned that the problem was that the case was boring. Some members accused me that I chose this case deliberately, because I wanted to found out a way to work with the senior executives of the case for my own work. I started defending myself that I already work with these leaders and began name-dropping.</p> <p>Somewhat disappointed that I couldn't contain myself, I began sharing with them my analysis as to why the group behaved in certain ways and the fact that they were projecting their uncertainty about the early stages of their career to me (and my desire to work with their executives). I felt disappointed and helpless, as if I couldn't get through to them. I felt</p>	<p>This dream I had right after a group session with my peer researchers of the same year. In that seminar, I felt I was lagging behind the rest of the group, as a year had passed from my research proposal, and I hadn't managed to begin with data collection. I would need to change my proposal and reapply for ethical approval. I felt deep anxiety when comparing my state of progress to that of my peers. Up until that point we were all equal in progress but now differentiation began to occur. This anxiety didn't manifest into conscious envy towards my peers. But this dream shocked me and I felt ashamed with my aggressive envious attacks towards the clients, who in the dream perhaps they represent variety of peers of mine, whereby I use narcissistic superiority to attack them. I further abuse my skills and authority in role to display superiority and to avoid losing control. This power fight shocked me.</p> <p>Links to other dreams: As I haven't conducted any research, this dream provides my own lived experiences of aggression and envy that stems from narcissistic wounds. But it follows a life of its own, as when I begin finally my first interviews, the dreams I have can perhaps connect more with my feelings of having now finally began the process. Dream 1, connects with dream 3 in timing as I had dream 3 just two days before running a race, which appeared in dream 1. And dream 2 is full of images of doing biographic research. Brother and partner are LR which in the dream perhaps I am anxious about separation from</p>

<p>under attack without being able to use my knowledge, but also that I had “lost face” in front of them by becoming publicly aggressive, and unable to hold some authority in the room. The dynamic reminded me of a group of teenagers attacking the teacher and felt like an animal fighting for survival. When I woke up, I was shocked and ashamed by my aggression, my abuse of role authority and misuse of my analytical interventions.</p>	<p>and their wellbeing, which I link to my study peers and depressive guilt.</p>
<p>Journey Entry: September 28th, 2020 Occasion: After session with my research supervisor</p>	
<p>Today in supervision with Simon a very unexpected emotion came up and I burst into tears. I have never cried in coaching or therapy as a matter of fact. But there was something so painfully raw today. He asked me how I was doing. I felt the pressure of working coming up again after the holidays and the fact that I was lagging with data analysis. I felt that all my colleagues have been progressing and I was left behind. He challenged me to think why I consider myself not having progress as the steps I am taking and my thinking has been evolving rapidly. And then the emotion of placing myself at the bottom of the rank came up very raw and the tears came up. He asked me where this is coming from. And the most bizarre thing was that a memory from primary school came up which I had suppressed all these decades and forgot about! We had to sit the entire school year for ranking tests, and they would give us our ranking score based on the rest of the class year. I always considered that my feelings of being less came from being the youngest sibling. But this memory gives more answers. I had always had the urge to overtake my peers or I felt that my value is invisible amongst the peer group. That particular event I think had a major impact in constitutionally placing me in a certain position amongst the peer group and thinking of myself based on that rank. The following year they divided us to classes based on that rank and I was of course in class 3 with the last ones. That class I remember had developed a sort of naughty behavior a kind of a rebel culture, which I also couldn't fit it, because I was always doing what I was told, at home and at school.</p>	

D. Example of forgotten hypothesis

<p>Journal Entry: May 23rd, 2020 Occasion: Analyzing a Participants' narrative, registering a dream and linking to own practice</p>
<p>Yesterday, I was analyzing Interview 1. I was struck by the incident [incident of a participant Narrative]</p> <p>Dream This morning I woke up with the phrase "I need you more, than you need me." I don't know why. But this phrase has stuck with me. About the asymmetrical nature of lateral relations. Not just in terms of power and position. But also because of the need. The dependency.</p> <p>Link to my actual work practice Yesterday also [business associate] and I were discussing a conflict he had with B. [external consultant]. It made me think that B. needs him more than he needs B. And that with his decisions to run the project with someone else, makes this imbalance in their relation now very clear. What happens in lateral relations when such dependency asymmetry becomes so evident? How do parties react to it?</p>